

Westcombe NEWS

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A community newspaper commended by the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

Monthly newspaper of The Westcombe Society: fostering a sense of community

New Heart for East Greenwich

GEOFF GARVEY reports on a massive project we had almost given up on – the old Greenwich District Hospital site

At long last plans have been announced for the re-development of the former Greenwich District Hospital at the foot of Vanbrugh Hill – a development hailed over seven years ago as a “New Heart for East Greenwich”.

The hospital closed eleven years ago and the original scheme to develop the area was put on hold because of the financial situation.

Now the scheme has taken an important step forward with the appointment of the preferred development partner.

Hadley Mace will work with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Greenwich Council and NHS Greenwich on the Heart of East Greenwich project.

The 645-home scheme already has planning consent and will transform the former Greenwich District Hospital site into a modern complex offering high-quality homes and new community facilities. These include a library, leisure facilities, an NHS health centre, and a new Greenwich Council service centre.



Almost a third of the new homes will have three or four bedrooms in order to accommodate families.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: "This is fantastic news. It is a landmark regeneration scheme, as part of a determined effort we are making across London to bring forward public land for development. As well as bringing some vital new community facilities it will deliver quality housing that will make a real difference to families in the area."

Jackie Jacob, HCA London Director said: "This is a massively important regeneration project for the borough. Hadley

Mace impressed us by demonstrating their commitment and ability to deliver the scheme. We will ensure local residents are kept fully informed during construction."

Councillor Chris Roberts, Leader of Greenwich Council said: "It is great news for Greenwich. The scheme is a key part of the Council's drive to ensure residents have access to quality homes and modern services in first-class buildings. It will see the revival of a part of Greenwich, which also looks forward to the arrival of a cruise liner terminal in time for 2012, and a new hotel. Residents, visitors and businesses will all benefit from the major regeneration of this part of the borough."

Hadley Mace will work with award-winning architects Make to deliver a family-orientated, eco-friendly development that includes private gardens and a large public square. A start on site is scheduled for before the end of the year and it is anticipated that the first phase of homes and community facilities will be ready by late 2013. The entire development will be completed approximately three years later.

Dick Allard, of the Westcombe Society Environment Committee said: "In many ways this is a well designed scheme which should integrate well into the local neighbourhood. But despite some measures to limit car ownership, if nothing more is done it will still make terrible local congestion even worse. As a start, how about a shuttle bus service to North Greenwich?"

Lorraine Turton of the East Greenwich Traders' Association (EGBA) comments: "We have waited far too long for this great news. It was about 4 years ago that we first met with the original developers (First Base). It was an exciting design and with the extensive residential plan, we recognized that it would mean new customers in our high street. However, also highlighted to the developers, was the need for considerate planning of the available commercial space so as not to turn the development into an 'island' community, and we hope the new developers will see the importance and value of working closely with EGBA."



Virgin London Marathon 2012

PHOTOS: Laura Finch & Neville Grant



The Virgin London Marathon took place on April 22nd. A record 37,00 runners were registered. Many were charity runners, and wore novelty outfits; they included stilt-walkers, clowns, rhinos – and Bagpuss!

Blackwall Tunnel vision

Transport for London has revealed figures showing that a vehicle breakdown in the Blackwall Tunnel is likely everyday during the London 2012 Olympics.

Between July and September 2010, there were 96 breakdowns in the tunnels. This means that on average, there was more than one breakdown per day.

The data was made available following a Freedom of Information request to TFL made by the website Greenwich.co.uk

The tunnel forms an important part of the Olympic Route Network, which is designed to ensure that athletes and VIPs can get to venues. Normally, the tunnel carries around 50,000 vehicles a day in both directions, and there are worries about a breakdown during the Games Time.

Speaking before the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April, Council Chief Executive Mary Ney said: "We've got outstanding issues with TFL around the Blackwall tunnel and contingency planning"

TFL point out that the Met's Safer Transport Command Roads Policing Unit, funded by TFL, has been permanently

based at the tunnel since 2011, and has reduced tunnel closure time by 32 percent.

The policing unit tries to intercept "potentially sub-standard" vehicles to stop them entering the tunnel.

As our report on page 7 of this issue points out, LOCOG's transport plans for London 2012 still need council consent as a condition of the original planning application. Quite apart from the Blackwall Tunnel, serious question marks over bus routes, parking arrangements and "Zil" lanes in Greenwich remain.

Antiques, Collectables & Craft Fair

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Enquiries

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www.r-and-t.co.uk

NEWS BRIEFS

Diamond Jubilee in Greenwich

There will be an extended bank holiday from 2nd – 5th June to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee.

However, the celebrations were due to start before then: as we go to press, HM The Queen was due to visit Greenwich on April 25th, to relaunch the Cutty Sark after four years of restoration work. (See p.3)

Meanwhile, The National Maritime Museum is delighted to announce that – to mark the Diamond Jubilee – Her Majesty has formally approved Royal Museums Greenwich as the new overall title for the Museum, the Queen's House and the Royal Observatory.

To celebrate the Diamond Jubilee, the National Maritime Museum opened the spectacular exhibition, *Royal River: Power, Pageantry and the Thames* which will run until 9th September.

In Greenwich, the big day will be

Sunday 3rd June. On that day, the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant – up to 1,000 boats, assembled from across the UK, the Commonwealth and around the world – will sail down the Thames. The Queen will lead the flotilla in the Royal Barge.

The Big Jubilee Lunch takes place in Cutty Sark Gardens from 11.00 am onwards, when local people will be encouraged to bring lunch to share with neighbours. A good day too to see a fully-closed Thames Barrier!

Greenwich market

Friday late night shopping at Greenwich Market kicks off with a very special Craft & Design Market on 11th May. Friday late night shopping runs until the end of September.

John Roan successes

Ella Statham, already 2011's London Football Association Volunteer of the

Year, is a winner of a Greenwich Shopping Park's award for services to sport and athletics. And well done Christina Ashworth for coming second in a public speaking competition.

The John Roan Girls Football Team have won matches against Tallis and Crown Woods, and won a free Nike football kit. Meanwhile, the Roan Boys have reached the Final of the Greenwich Cup. Well played!

Olympics Live Site

Lewisham will have a 7.6m x 4.8m screen on Blackheath showing live BBC coverage of the London 2012 Games from 27th July to 12th August. STOP PRESS A letter from Seb Coe to residents living close to Greenwich Park provided a contact number for LOCOG's community relations team. LOCOG apologise that this number was incorrect. Residents can contact the team by calling 08000 722110.

The Westcombe Society

OUR AGM: NEW LEADERS WANTED!

Sun. May 20th 12.30 - 2.30- pm (inc. Wine and cheese lunch)

At the AGM members must elect the Society's new committee and officers – especially a new Chairman, as Gordon Baker is retiring this year.

Some members are standing for re-election but we urge members to come forward and stand for all these offices. We would welcome some new faces and fresh ideas so that we can continue to evolve.

This will also be your chance to meet the new manager of Mycenae House Community Centre, Mark Johnson Brown. The full agenda is on page 2.

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT SPONSORED WALK

There is still just time to sign up for the walk in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support in Kent (Cobham) on Sunday 6th May (8 miles or 3 miles) Registration fee £10. Dogs on leads welcome too. If not a walker, sign up to sponsor our team!

To participate in either, ring Caroline 0208 8530948 asap

JUBILEE CELEBRATION ON SAT. 16TH JUNE

From 1.00 - 5.00 pm. in Mycenae House and Gardens.

This is a family event, and is combined with a Senior Citizens' Tea Party (by invitation).

Also included: a BBQ, cake stall, live music, races for the children, face-painting, Punch & Judy and much, much more for young, old and in between. Please come along and join us to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Mycenae House & Gardens.

COMMUNITY NEWS

WESTCOMBE NEWS

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<http://westcombe.gold.ac.uk>

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*Back-numbers (in colour) can be accessed
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<http://westcombe.gold.ac.uk/westnews.html>
Westcombe Society's Blog:
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WESTCOMBE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

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The Westcombe Society AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Westcombe Society is on Sunday
May 20th 12.30 - 2.30 pm in Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road.
A wine /soft drink and cheese lunch will be provided.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Approval of and Matters Arising from Minutes of 2011
3. Reports: * The Hon. Chairma * Events Sub-Committee
* The Editor of Westcombe News * Environment Sub-Committee
4. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Audited Statement
of Accounts for Year Ending 31.03.2012
5. Election of Officers
6. Charity of the Year
7. Talk by Mark Johnson Brown, the new manager of Mycenae House
8. Future plans
9. A.O.B.

Jan Barnett Hon. Sec.

Spring Events

It's been a busy time for the Westcombe Society.

April 7th saw the traditional Easter Egg hunt in Mycenae Gardens, which, despite the weather, was very well-attended. Many thanks to Joanne and Patricia for organizing this – and to Jan and Caroline for the yummy Easter cakes. Many children wore Easter bonnets, not forgetting the boys – one had an Easter Viking's helmet!

One hunter left behind a very beautifully decorated basket, please ring 07709571777 if you would like it returned.

The Westcombe Society quiz night hosted ten teams who set to with enthusiasm, high spirits and determination to be Brain of Westcombe Park 2012! We were pleased to welcome a number of new faces including some Greenwich Society members. The fish and chips were provided by Mr Fast Fry, for the second time under the new management, and were much appreciated. The first prize was won by 'The Marrakech Mob.'



Love versus Duty

Who would have thought that Edward VIII would feature on a Royal Mail stamp in 2012 – almost exactly 40 years after his death? There is increasing interest in the life of Edward and his wife, Wallis Simpson: they have featured in at least three films in the last three years.

Time then for a revival of the play *Crown Matrimonial*, depicting the real life drama of the fascinating story of Edward VIII's abdication. This powerful drama provides an engrossing and moving study of both a major constitutional crisis and an overwhelming issue of private and public conflict love versus duty.

A review of a recent revival says the play is even more relevant today than when it was first staged in London 40 years ago. ***Crown Matrimonial* will be presented at the Alexandra Hall, Bramshot Avenue, Charlton SE7 7HX on June 7th, 8th and 9th at 8pm. Doors open 7.30 pm. Tickets £8 (£7 Concs). Tel 07867 627 987 or e-mail alexandraplayers@gmail.com**

Letters

Letters to the editor may be edited through lack of space. Any views expressed are those of the writers only, and are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or the *WN*.

From: Caroline Owens Beaconsfield Road
I have realised that the time has come this year to include in the *WN* a message about the regulations for having bonfires. During the weekend we were completely smoked out from before 3.00 in the afternoon by a very smoky and putrid smelling bonfire which had been lit by our new neighbours. We had to abandon any thoughts of using our garden, instead having to sit in the house with all windows and doors closed.
Ed: Please see page 7.

From: Cllr Alex Grant (Lab) Blackheath & Westcombe ward
There are understandable concerns about the MOD's plans to site surface-to-air missiles on the south side of the A2 on Blackheath as a security measure during the Olympic Games.

I was misquoted in your report on the matter in the April issue of the *WN*. Your report quoted me as saying that "the plans will not endanger anyone, and any presence of military installations on the heath is not going to cause any damage. Access will not be impeded any more than necessary."

I simply cannot give this reassurance – the site of the missile launchers would be over the border in the Lewisham side of the Heath, and are a matter for Lewisham Council and the MOD.

The statement I sent to the *WN* had said "The local community needs to be assured that the plans will not endanger anyone and that any presence of military installations on the heath is not going to cause any damage to the grass and that access is not impeded any more than necessary". The selective quotation of my statement in April's *WN* reversed its meaning.

Local councillors and MPs are seeking reassurances from the MOD that missile launchers are strictly necessary, and that they will not result in any local people being placed in greater danger. These may be an essential part of the security arrangements to protect the Olympic site from terrorist attacks, but after some testing in March, it is essential that the MOD explains why missile launchers need to be put on the heath, how much land will be taken up, and for how long.
ED: We apologize for this editorial error.

From: Cllr Geoff Brighty (Con) Blackheath & Westcombe ward
Although the *WN* reported in its April issue that the

gate " is now due to be unlocked", at the time of writing access between Seren Park and Maze Hill station still remains closed. All of us, local representatives and residents, who have been lobbying for this means of access to be opened up, as marketed by the Seren Park developer, would be delighted if that were the case by the time the May *WN* lands on the doormat.

Seren Park residents have every right to feel aggrieved by the continuing delay and prevarication while their neighbours in Tom Smith Close recently petitioned Greenwich Council – they are concerned that their estate is being used as a substitute means of access. However, there appear still to be a number of hurdles to overcome involving the main protagonists Network Rail, Southeastern and the developer.

From: Joseph Beale Vanbrugh Fields
I was disappointed to read Cllr Wilson's support for Boris Johnson's damaging Thames estuary airport proposal. Adding yet another airport is not in the interests of Londoners or our environment.

The Thames airport idea has already been rejected. I refer to the Cliffe airport idea, and similar reasons exist to reject this latest crazy plan - the high costs involved, increased carbon emissions and severe environmental damage. The area is also internationally important for tens of thousands of migratory wading birds and wildfowl. There are not many places left for such a spectacle in this country. Must we concrete over everything just to satisfy economic greed and political posturing? Even if you don't care about the wildlife, you might remember the plane that had to crash land in New York's Hudson River, was brought down by a flock of geese - well, thousands of Brent Geese winter in the area near the proposed airport, along with thousands of ducks, wading birds, herons and more, all of which constitute an unacceptable risk.

Any new airport will quickly fill to capacity and the skies will be busier than ever. We need to look at our lifestyles, why we "need" to fly so much, and whether we really want to pay this very heavy environmental price. (See also p.7)

Adult learning

Scores of courses for adults are listed in a new brochure published last month. The latest edition of the Greenwich Learns Adult Learning Brochure 2011/12 includes information on a huge range of part-time courses. These offer local people the chance to gain new skills, qualifications, experiences and opportunities, and can help jobhunters get the skills and experience they need to find a job.

A wide range of courses are on offer at Greenwich Community College, Ravensbourne City Lit, The National Construction College, Community Systems and Flower Skills this summer.

Subjects covered include improving your skills and employment opportunities in business, construction and DIY, digital media, languages, creative arts, health, catering and hospitality, horticulture and many more.

Some price concessions will be available for residents on reduced incomes, while 'basic skills' or 'skills for work' courses are usually free.

Look out too for news of Adult Learning Week, taking place 12th - 18th May. More information can be found on display in libraries.

For more information, visit www.royal-greenwich.gov.uk/adultlearning

Local Art Festival

Blackheath Art Society's Spring Festival continues in the Mulberry Tea Rooms at Charlton House until 19th May.

There are also "Open Studio" events on the weekends of 12th - 13th and 19th - 20th May from 12.00 - 6.00 pm. Leaflets with full details of the artists are available from libraries. In addition, members' work is on display at Blackheath Halls.

Visit www.blackheathartsociety.org.uk or contact 020 8853 2269.

From: A local resident

I haven't seen in your letters page anyone praising the brilliant display in the windows of the Cats' Protection Charity. I think they should get an award. A picture would be nice!

Ed: A lot of local traders deserve an award – there are a number of quite outstanding displays in local shops, and it might be invidious to single out any one of them! That said, if you think your window deserves wider publicity, send in a photo!

From: Sarah Winterbottom Westcombe Park Rd.

The Standard end of Westcombe Park Road was closed off as well as the top of Westcombe Hill well after midday after the Marathon, and when we asked the woman who was on duty she said that they weren't allowed to open the roads until 3.00 pm. When I asked her for a number / details of whom we could contact to get the road open she wasn't able to provide either. Where is the common sense in keeping roads closed – hours after the runners have gone?



Estate agents & surveyors, established in 1975. Branches in Westcombe Park, Blackheath, Greenwich & Lee, alongside dedicated branches for Lettings & Commercial. Contact the Westcombe Park branch on 020 8858 6101

John Payne

johnpayne.com

LOCAL NEWS

Road rage killers **GEOFF GARVEY**

A ROAD-RAGE spat over a clipped wing mirror which escalated into a 'Starsky and Hutch' style car chase saw an innocent pensioner mowed down at the roadside at Stratheden Road, a court heard. As a result two men were jailed.

Jaswant Bains, of Cambridge Row, Woolwich, was jailed for six years after being found guilty of causing death by dangerous driving of Miss Audrey Walker, aged 79, from Plumstead. Marcus Bailey, from Clapham, was jailed for two years for causing death by careless driving.

The two men were sentenced at Inner London Crown Court on Friday, March 23.

Detective Inspector Mark Cam, who led the police investigation, said: "Miss Walker lost her life because of Bains and Bailey's reckless behaviour, which started from a minor dispute on a public road.

"They both drove dangerously, recklessly, above the speed limit and without any consideration for members of the public.

"This wasn't just a case of bad driving, there is no excuse for either man's behaviour - I am pleased with today's verdict. I hope it goes some small way to providing comfort to Miss Walker's family who have acted with great dignity throughout."

Pedestrian Audrey Walker, 78, was killed by the first of two cars being driven at what was described as 'lethal speed' after an argument between the drivers escalated into a deadly pursuit.

Bains, aged 30, who denied a charge of causing death by dangerous driving, ploughed into the elderly woman after losing

Farmers market relocated

The farmers' market which takes place every Sunday in Blackheath station car park is due to relocate to the Heath for the weeks of the Olympic Live site, i.e. 22nd July to 12th August - and also to allow for work being done in the car park.

The recent increase in car parking charges, has had a clear effect on trade, so this may be just the injection of business that the market stall holders need.

While a farmers' market on the Heath sounds just "perfuck" (*sic*), there are some concerns around the Heath's fragile soil, and its ability to support a market on a regular basis without sustaining lasting damage.

Log on to: <http://www.lfm.org.uk/markets/blackheath/> for more information.

control of his Vauxhall Corsa, crashing into a roundabout at the Standard.

Witnesses said he appeared to be "driving for his life" as he sped away from the co-defendant Marcus Bailey, who was following at speed in his Vauxhall Astra.

Bailey, 22, also denied causing death by dangerous driving.

"Wanted to be hidden"

After crashing through the iron railings and landing on the roundabout, an injured and bloodied Bains crawled from his car and fled to a nearby estate agents, where he asked staff to help hide him from Bailey.

A jury heard how, a short time afterwards, Bailey and a friend pulled up at the scene asking where Bains had gone - telling witnesses they were going to "— him up."

Witness Victoria Penner was overtaken by the two cars moments before the fatal crash. She described the chase as like "something from the movies.... It was mental driving, I've not seen anything like it in 20 years of driving. I couldn't believe it."

Defending Bains, Richard Bentwood said his speed was motivated by fear. A witness, who helped Bains from his mangled car immediately after the crash, described his frenzied state. Michael Singlehurst told the court he went to Bains' aid, but said the Indian man seemed "confused and scared."

Dripping with blood

After helping Bains into an estate agents on a nearby road, Mr Singlehurst said he was approached by Bailey and a friend who had pulled up in his Astra. He said the pair were aggressive, saying they were going to kill Bains after he "clipped his mirror."

"They were aggressive, shouting 'where the — is he, I'm going to kill him' I told them to calm down, the man had been in a crash."

As the police took Bains away, Bailey is alleged to have carried on the verbal threats, saying he was going to "— him up."

Representing Bailey, Nicholas Corsellis claimed that even after colliding with an elderly woman at high speed, Bains had had no thought for her safety.

He said: "He (Bains) did not show any concern for the woman who he had just hit - only himself. He did not ask about her, but wanted people to help him leave the scene."

Prosecutor Zubair Ahmad said that both men should be held accountable for the tragic death of Miss Walker, who had been to a bank and some local shops when the crash happened.

The Cutty Sark:

GEOFF GARVEY welcome back this much-loved vessel

Like a Phoenix, the Cutty Sark has risen from the flames - and what a grand re-birth!

This stately sailing ship, one of the world's last surviving tea clippers, was ravaged by fire five years ago as restoration work was being carried out.

At first it was feared that the ship was lost forever - but she has returned ... brighter and better and more beautiful than ever after a £50 million make-over.

Before the Queen's "re-launch" of the ship on April 25th., the *WN's* news editor Geoff Garvey had a look round.

"Even though workmen were still scurrying around, fixing up cables, manhandling bulky displays of wool and tea and putting finishing touches to the dramatic display of ancient ships' figureheads, it was obvious the ship has been transformed. I'd not been on board for many years - and the new look is breathtaking.

"Particularly eye-opening is the fact the ship has been lifted three metres above her dry dock, so that visitors can now walk underneath the 963-ton vessel and admire the elegant lines of her hull."

Naturally, in these modern times, the space will be let out in the evening for 'corporate events.' But for visitors to the ship, it is all freely available.

It's a new chapter in the extraordinary life of one of the world's most famous ships. The last surviving tea clipper and the fastest and greatest of her time, she is a living testimony to the bygone, glorious days of sail - and a monument to those that lost their lives in the merchant service.

She was originally built in Scotland in 1869 to bring tea back from China, but in 1871 the Suez Canal was opened.

The result - the graceful sailing ship was becalmed in the desert-skirted waterway as steam ships raced past. Without any wind to fill her sails, she had to find a new role - bringing wool from Australia.

After that work ended she became a



SPOT THE ODD ONE OUT . . . ?

Geoff Garvey, the news editor of the WN, who visited the Cutty Sark in his role as a member of the Greenwich Tour Guides Association, pictured with the world-famous collection of ships' figureheads on display on the tea clipper.

training ship, and then she was spotted by a retired sea captain, who mounted a campaign to bring her back to Britain.

After first being employed as a training ship at Greenhithe, she ended up in a specially built dry-dock in Greenwich.

Work was being carried out to conserve her when the disastrous fire broke out.

Thankfully her masts, sails, rigging, figure-heads and other fittings were away at Chatham Historic Dockyard. The hull and decks were very badly damaged - but she's come back sailing fit.

So why is she called *Cutty Sark*?

Well, the name is from a poem by Robert Burns. She was named after Cutty Sark, the nickname of the witch Nannie Dee in Robert Burns' 1791 poem *Tam o' Shanter*. The ship's figurehead shows Nannie in a stark white carving of a bare-breasted woman with long black hair holding a grey horse's tail in her hand. In the poem, Tam spotted the witch dancing in a church as he was riding his horse nearby.

She wore a linen sark - or chemise - that she had been given as a child, which explains why it was cutty, or in other words far too short. The erotic sight of her dancing in her short undergarment caused Tam to cry out "Weel done, Cutty-sark". In a fury, Nannie and her fellow witches chased after Tam through the graveyard.

He was hotly pursued and as he reached a stream he recalled that witches couldn't cross running water. He spurred his steed on to jump the water, but as he did so, Nanny reached out and grabbed the horse's tail - which came off in her hand.

Luckily, Tam escaped - and the legend is depicted in the ship's figurehead that shows the witch holding the horse's tail.

In memoriam

A special Thanksgiving Service in memory of Spencer Perceval, the only British Prime Minister to be assassinated, will be held in St Luke's at Charlton in 3pm on Saturday 12th May. The service is open to anyone, but an official invitation is required as the Duke of Gloucester will be attending.

To get an invitation ring 8856 7373. Tickets for the Spencer Perceval Concert at 7.30 in the church that evening are for numbered seats. To book, ring 8856 7373 to **See Rick Newman's article on page six of this issue of the WN.**

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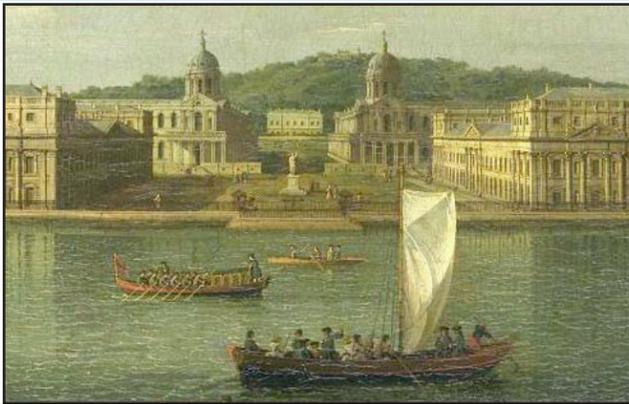
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FEATURES

Bringing history to life

25 years of Tour Guiding



This year The Greenwich Tour Guides Association is celebrating 25 years of guiding in Greenwich.

The Greenwich Tour Guides is an Association of fully trained local history tourist guides working within the Royal Borough of Greenwich. They are full of enthusiasm about Greenwich, and their main aim is to show off this amazing Borough to the world.

The Association was formed in 1987. The founder Fred Sage, who died in 2005, worked on the river and on retirement turned his attention to a subject that had always fascinated him – local history.

Fred saw the need for tour guides for this major tourist destination. Through hard work and persistence, a training course for local history tourist guides was set up with the help of the ILEA and the local community college. Fred Sage was the course tutor until 1993. The course was a great success and continued to run on a regular basis until 1998. In 2006 and again in 2011 the Association ran its own very successful training courses.

The Association is based in the Greenwich Tourist Information Centre and from there conduct two walking tours daily. These walks take place at 12.15 pm and 2.15 pm and last 90 minutes.

International tourists, UK visitors along with many locals are welcomed to Greenwich. On the tours they discover the main history of the World Heritage Site

with its Royal and Maritime connections, along with the importance of time.

Entertaining and informative guides will tell you about Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, both born in Greenwich, the building of the Old Royal Naval College as a retirement home for sailors, and tell you why time starts in Greenwich. Tailor-made group tours and specialist walks can also be arranged.

The future is looking very exciting for Greenwich, and for the tour guides. The honour of Royal status given to Greenwich has attracted world wide attention and will bring more visitors to the Borough. The eyes of the world will also be on Greenwich as a host Olympic Borough.

Tours run daily from Discover Greenwich (subject to availability) at 1400. For groups of 15 people or more, call 020 8269 4799 or email tours@ornc.org to arrange group tours coach drops, and catering packages.

Want to “meet” figures from Greenwich’s rich and varied history? Try the following free events, in which character actors perform in the Painted Hall:

Meet Joe Brown – life as a Greenwich Pensioner Sunday May 6th 12.00, 13.00 14.00 & 15.30

Meet John Deman – a black Greenwich pensioner in the early C19: Sunday May 13th, same times.

Meet Samuel Pepys – tales from the famous diarist Sun. May 27th same times

The hand of history

CLARA DALY, TOM GRAY & SARAH LEWIS



Hamilton Scott-McDonald displays work done by him and other pupils at Halstow



PHOTOS: Clara Daly

If you go into the Painted Hall down in Greenwich, look at the picture of King George I and his family. But wait – there’s someone missing: Mother!

Or is she? Look carefully and you will see the ghostly image of a hand sticking out from the rug beneath the king’s feet.

This faintly drawn hand is thought to be that of Sophia Dorothea, wife of George I, himself involved in numerous affairs. She was divorced for her alleged infidelity with a handsome Swedish count named Count Philip Christoph Von Konigsmarck (who was later murdered). She was locked in a castle until her death, 32 years later.

According to the story, Thornhill, the artist (later Sir James Thornhill) asked the King if he wanted his estranged wife in the picture. “For all I care, you can paint her under the carpet,” declared the king.

Thornhill took him at his word; the ghostly hand is said to reflect how the matter was 'swept under the carpet'.

It was this picture that caught the eye of teachers from Halstow School as they prepared for a school project, working with Jo Hall, Learning Manager at the Old Royal Naval College.

The project was assisted by Greenwich Learning Consultants Team and was co-ordinated by the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Learning Group which assists schools in using local resources.

Halstow pupils had previously worked on projects such as the National Gallery's

Take One Picture, so they wanted to develop this at a local level in this, the year of the Diamond Jubilee.

Having looked at the painting of the royal family portrait on the West Wall of the Painted Hall, the teachers decided that the story behind the painting had many elements which would intrigue children and inspire their writing.

The children went on trips to the Painted Hall, one class at a time, over a two-day period. There they studied the painting, and developed theories and ideas about who the people in the painting were, and what the mystery could be.

The teachers said that it was lovely to do a whole school project in which families with both young and older children and groups of different age children could talk about what they had learned.

There were many instances of children taking their families down to visit the Painted Hall over the weekend to explain all the things they had learned, and the project inspired some beautiful writing and a whole school display. The children also enjoyed lots of drama activities as part of the literacy teaching sequence.

And the project led to an exercise in persuasive writing: the children wrote letters from the queen to her children, asking them to intercede with their father, and to free her from the castle.

Sadly, these letters are some 300 years too late ...

The Old Royal Naval College has a series of events celebrating the Queens’s Diamond Jubilee. They include:

Choral Pilgrimage 2012: The Earth Resounds on Wednesday May 9th:

The world-renowned choir The Sixteen’s UK tour comes to the College singing Renaissance music. Tickets: £16/£26/£36 at the chapel.

For information, ring 01904 651 485

The Big Jubilee Lunch Sunday 3rd June: Celebrate to Queen’s Diamond Jubilee for free: with free entertainment, and spectacular views of the pageant passing by at the Old Royal Naval College.

The Greenwich+Docklands International Festival runs for ten days from 23rd June, and there are many events over the first weekend in Greenwich.

Local music rules!

Euphonia Works (President Prof. Robert Winston) was founded in 2010 by Alisdair Kitchen and Joseph Timmons and, with Tamsin Waley-Cohen is already making waves in the music world.

Invited to perform at Rye Arts Festival in 2011, this summer they have been invited back to Rye, as well as doing a tour of Suffolk, including a performance in Aldeburgh.

Local musician Joseph Timmins says: “We are delighted to announce that our inaugural chamber music series is taking place here in Blackheath.”

The recitals themselves will be given by some of the countries finest young professionals in the beautiful surroundings of St Mary’s Hall, Cresswell Park, Blackheath SE3 9RD (a minute from the station).

Tickets are £12 (£10 concs) per concert. The dates are: May 5th at 4.00 pm and June 9th at 7.30pm. For more information or to reserve seats or to join the Euphonia Works mailing list, contact: euphoniaworks@gmail.com.



Tamsin Waley-Cohen

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**For further information please contact:
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We welcome participation by local schools in the *Westcombe News*, as they are an important part of the community. The WN looks forward to receiving other contributions from local schools in the coming months.

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WHAT'S ON

National Maritime Museum

"Titanic Remembered"

To mark the centenary of the Titanic disaster

Until September

ARTS

BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY, St Mary's Church Hall, Cresswell Park, Blackheath 4th Thursday of every month, 2.00 for 2.30. Next meeting: Janusz Karezewski-Slowikowski Are you sitting comfortably? The development of the chair from ancient times to the 19th century Non-members £5 on the door. See www.artsinblackheath.org.uk or ring 83187550

GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY King William Court, the University of Greenwich NEXT LECTURE: Monday 11th Jun Rock Around - Stonehenge and British Stone Circles - the history, art and archaeology of these great landmarks - William G Forrester see www.gdfas.org or ring 020 8852 6248 Non-members £8.00

BLACKHEATH ART SOCIETY SPRING FESTIVAL OF ART www.blackheathart-society.org.uk or contact 020 8853 2269

Open Studios Taster Exhibition 2nd April -19th May Mulberry Tea Rooms, Charlton House, Charlton Road SE7 8RE, 020 8856 3951 open Mon - Fri. 9am-10.00pm (café 9-4) Sat. 9am -5 pm (café closed).

Open Studios 12-13th and 19-20th May from 12 - 6.00 pm. 11 venues across Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley. Leaflets with full details are available from libraries and community centres from April.

Spring Exhibition 3rd - 31st May 10.00am-5.00 pm and one hour before evening performances at Blackheath Halls, 23 Lee Road, Blackheath, SE3 9RQ Tel 020 8318 9758 www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/blackheathhalls or see www.blackheathartsociety.org.uk or contact 020 8853 2269.

CHILDREN

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SUMMER SHOW July 1st Details TBA

GREENWICH HERITAGE CENTRE
Artillery Square, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich SE18 4DX 020 8854 2452
FREE Saturday mornings: 10.30am to 12 noon. Free art and craft activities for 5 to 12 year olds.

The Greenwich '48 Club brings our senior citizens together with young people to talk about the past and change. To share memories contact the Greenwich Heritage Centre. Tel: 020 8854 2452

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14.45-15.45 Toddler Montessori (12-24months)
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COMMUNITY

The Westcombe Society

6th May - Macmillan Cancer Research Sponsored walk in Cobham, Kent
20th May - AGM
16th June - Jubilee Tea for Senior Citizens (Also to be the Summer Picnic)
22nd Sep - Members' Evening
28th Sep - Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning
29th Sep - Nearly New Sale
17th November - Dickensian Christmas Bazaar

BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY
May 18th 7.45 Wildlife Photographic Techniques Mr David Pressland MYCENAE HOUSE, 90 MYCENAE ROAD, SE3 7SE Visitors are welcome at all meetings, and are requested to donate £3

BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB welcomes all players to duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon. & Thurs. 7.15 pm & on Wed. at 1.15 Tel. 8851 2609

WESTCOMBE WRITERS' CIRCLE 1st. Thursday each month, 2.30-4.30 at Mycenae House. Ring Joan Paice on 8305 1652 or Rosemary Gill on 8858 5088

BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE: First Wednesday of every month at 7.30 pm at Sunfields Methodist Church, Old Dover Road, SE3 8SJ eileenflanagan194@btinternet.com

SECOND CHANCE CHOIR We rehearse Thursday evenings during term time, in Blackheath. New members welcome, contact Margery Nzerem 0208 858 3544 gery@nzerem.bbmax.co.uk

POETRY ON THE WATER
Fri 4 May, 7.00 pm Poet and performer Patience Agbabi reads at Greenwich Yacht Club. Also readings from Greenwich Poets; open mic. Free entry, panoramic river views, bar. Greenwich Yacht Club 1 Peartree Way, SE10 Info:oonachantrell@yahoo.co.uk

EVENTS AT DAVY'S WINE VAULTS.
Summer tasting and four course lunch - Saturday 12th May 10.30am -1.30pm
A superb selection of wines will be open to sample with experts on hand to advise, followed by a chef inspired four course meal. Tickets cost £47.95

Cigar and Wine Tasted tasting - 30th May 7pm
Davy's Wineshop and Segar and Snuff Parlour join forces for the first time to host a tasting that will pair vintage Havana Cigars with different styles of wine to bring out the best in each other. Tickets cost £25

BLACKHEATH HALLS
Wed 16th May, 8:00 pm - Dickens of a Year - c.1848 Compiled and presented by Gabriel Woolf

CHARLTON HOUSE, open on Sun. 13th May for guided tours by The Friends of Charlton House: 10.15 am, 12.15 pm and 14.15 pm. Pre-booking is essential. Tickets: £10, includes tea and cake.

GREENWICH HERITAGE CENTRE
MADE IN GREENWICH, the new gallery and events space is focused on local and locally inspired creativity. Greenwich Park exhibition runs into May

From May 24th: the Thames.
www.madeingreenwich.co.uk, 324 Creek Road.

IRISH DANCING CLASSES at Mycenae House taught by Tanya Dirrane-Hobbs ADCRG a very well established teacher and adjudicator. Please contact Tanya for further details on 07775 943723

GREENWICH INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY 15th May at the Old Bakehouse, Blackheath: Diana Rimel on BAZALGETTE TODDLER WADDLE AND FUN DAY in Mycenae House Gardens, 30th May. Face painting and games, all profits to the Meningitis Trust.

LOCAL COUNCILLORS

Labour: Cllr. Alex Grant Tel. 8855 7292E-mail Alex.grant@greenwich.gov.uk
Surgeries: 1st. Friday of each month, 7.00 - 8.00 pm, Mycenae House; 3rd. Saturday of each month, 3.30-4.30 pm, St James Church Hall, Kidbrooke Park Rd.
Conservative: Cllr. Geoff Brighty Tel. 8921 5663 (Town Hall) or 8858 9731 (Home) geoffrey.brighty@greenwich.gov.uk
Cllr. Alex Wilson Tel. 07783 611607 Email: alex.wilson@greenwich.gov.uk Surgery: 1st Monday of the month 6 - 7.00 pm Blackheath Library, Old Dover Rd.

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THEATRE & OPERA

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THE GREENWICH THEATRE Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8ES 020 8858 7755
Tues 1st - Wed 2nd May COFFIN UP by the Village Idiots theatre company. Superb farce
Thurs. 3rd May ON THE TRACKS 1890: a train pulls out of Moscow with three fretful passengers ...
Fri 4th May BIG DADDY VS GIANT HAYSTACKS At 4.00 pm every Saturday, from 1976 to 1988, millions of Britons, and countless more world-wide, were in the grip of an extraordinary sports phenomenon: watching two fat men (aka Shirley Crabtree and Martin Ruane) pretend to fight each other. This is their story.
Thurs. 10th - Fri. 11th May MY SECOND LIFE by Anna Jefferson and Alice Trueman
Monday, 14 May THE SEAGULL EFFECT Idle Motion present a stunning visual kaleidoscope of images and stories to captivate their audience.
Wed. 16th. May THE VANISHING HORIZON Idle Motion's show selected for the British Council
Mon. 21st - Wed. 23rd. May MACBETH
Tues 29th & Wed 30th May FEAR AND MISERY OF THE THIRD REICH
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MUSIC

ST MARY'S HALL
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June 9th 7.30 pm Mozart Violin Sonatas
£12.00 on the door (£10.00 concs.)
To book email euphoniaworks@gmail.com

BLACKHEATH HALLS
Blackheath Sundays:
13th May 11:00 am April Fredrick (soprano), Emma Johnson (clarinet), Amy de Sybel (piano)
Sun 27th May, 11:00 am Carolin MacPhie, soprano & Joseph Middleton, piano
ENGLISH FOLK MUSIC
9.00 pm every Tuesday at the Lord Hood pub, Creek Road; mainstream jazz every Thursday.
GLOBAL FUSION MUSIC & ARTS
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FEATURES

Spencer Perceval: In memoriam

RICK NEWMAN on the life, times and untimely death of Spencer Perceval

If you go to a Quiz Night, perhaps one organized by the Westcombe Society, or in a local pub, sooner or later you might hear the question “Who was the only British Prime Minister to be assassinated?”

There may be a number who in your view might deserve such a fate, but only one did so – and he did not deserve it: Spencer Perceval, who lies buried, along with his wife, at St. Luke’s in Charlton.

Born in London on 1st November 1762 Spencer Perceval was the seventh son of John Perceval, 2nd Earl of Egmont, and the second son of his father’s second marriage to Catherine Compton. Educated at Harrow and Trinity College Cambridge, he was by profession a lawyer, and a good one at that.

He trained as a barrister at Lincoln’s Inn and was called to the bar in 1786. Much of his legal career was spent in the East Midlands. He entered politics as Member of Parliament for Northampton and, as with his legal career, his ability, dedication and integrity saw him rise to the highest offices in the land. However, it is the misfortune of Spencer Perceval to be remembered principally for the manner of his untimely death on 11th May 1812.

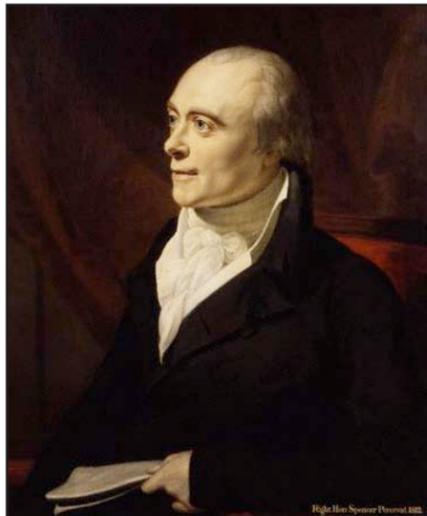
To be strictly accurate, he was not called “Prime Minister”: the term Prime Minister only gained formal acceptance when first mentioned in a royal warrant in 1905. At the time of his assassination in the lobby of the House of Commons, Spencer Perceval was not only the First Lord of the Treasury (the office later referred to as Prime Minister) but as with other commoners he held up to 1826, he was also Chancellor of the Exchequer.

He had previously served as Solicitor General (1801) and later as Attorney General (1802) before becoming Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Leader of the House of Commons.

Spencer Perceval is buried here at St Luke’s in Charlton, interred in the Egmont family vault in the crypt (now sealed). There is a modest monument at the back of the church beneath a portrait bust by the celebrated sculptor Sir Francis Chantry.

Troubled times

He lived in troubled times: Britain had been involved in wars on and off for thirty years. At home the Industrial Revolution



was changing the nation and followed upon the earlier transformations brought about in agriculture and transport. The population doubled in number in a generation; towns and cities expanded rapidly. The British Empire was growing despite the recent loss of the American colonies. All this was against a backdrop of constant threats both at home and abroad.

Across The Channel, Europe was in a state of rapid change as Napoleon brought order first to post-Revolutionary France and then sought to impose himself on the rest of the Continent. British trade thrived and the wealthy prospered – but there was the ever-present threat of invasion and challenge to the supremacy of the Royal Navy that protected both trade and shore.

It was an epic period of British history. Despite the massive growth in trade the government struggled to maintain order and security at home. In 1811 Luddites rebelled against new technology. Many smallholders and farm workers had been driven off the land, and forced to seek employment in the growing towns and cities. Government wrestled with issues of Catholic emancipation and slavery, with Spencer Perceval a leading voice against both. An admirer of William Pitt the Younger, Perceval entered Parliament as MP for Northampton in 1796 aged 33.

Perceval in office

When the Duke of Portland put together a coalition of Tories in 1807, Perceval served as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. But the

Duke of Portland was in poor health, and Perceval was effectively the first minister and moved into 10 Downing Street, then as now still the official residence of the First Lord of the Treasury. (The Prime Minister has no official residence apart from Chequers in Buckinghamshire). On 4th October 1809 Perceval formally succeeded the Duke of Portland as First Lord of the Treasury; he declined the knighthood that was traditionally offered to ‘commoners’ who took on the position.

Perceval proved extremely capable: he had to address the consequences of the serious illness of King George III – what we now know was porphyria, but what was at the time seen as his “madness”. Spencer Perceval played a key role in setting up the arrangements for the Prince of Wales to rule as Prince Regent.

In addition, his economic wisdom enabled the country to fund Wellington’s campaigns in the Iberian Peninsula.

Links with Charlton

Perceval had strong links with this part of London. He spent part of his childhood in Charlton when his father, who was First Lord of the Admiralty, was based nearby at Woolwich Dockyard. Perceval was christened in the parish church in Charlton.

A decade later, when he and his older brother Charles rented a house nearby, they returned to visit Charlton House, by then occupied by the family of Sir Thomas Maryon-Wilson – including his daughters. Spencer’s older brother, Charles, was attracted to Margaretta, and they married in the Chapel in Charlton House in 1787.

Spencer was attracted to her sister, Jane, but Sir Thomas was less well disposed to the younger brother, a lawyer of seemingly limited prospects.

Nevertheless, Jane and Spencer contrived to marry the month after Jane became twenty-one in June 1791. They married in secret in East Grinstead on 10th August. According to legend, Jane exited Charlton House by a rear window, and married still wearing her riding clothes.

In time her family accepted the marriage, which subsequently produced six sons and six daughters. (A seventh son did not survive.) By all accounts he was a good man and loving father. By July 1792, Perceval’s circumstances had so improved that he was able to move into a

home at 59 Lincoln’s Inn Fields.

Even after he entered Parliament he continued as a lawyer, and he distinguished himself in his ongoing legal career (his only source of income – MPs were not paid) when he defended Princess Caroline, the estranged wife of the Prince Of Wales, against accusations intended to secure a divorce for the Prince. The princess set up house first (in August 1797) at The Vicarage or Old Rectory in Charlton, and later at Montagu House in Blackheath.

Murder!

When Spencer Perceval was assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons at 5.15pm on 11th May 1812, it quickly emerged that the murder was not the start of any insurrection, as was first feared, but was the act of one man, John Bellingham, a bankrupted merchant who had been imprisoned in Russia and who felt he had been abandoned to his fate by the Government.

Bellingham made no attempt to escape and his only defence was that he had meant to kill someone else. Although the sanity of the assassin was questioned, Bellingham was immediately put on trial. He was hanged on 15th May, 1812.

Perceval had died within minutes of being shot. He was taken to 10 Downing Street and remained there until 18th May when the funeral procession made its way to St Luke’s. The funeral at St Luke’s was a private ceremony at his widow’s request.

Perceval’s assassination occurred at a time of the Luddite riots and elsewhere in the country the news of his death was greeted with celebrations.

However, the news was greeted with shock and disbelief in the capital. He was mourned as a man of learning and integrity, a man George III said was “the most straightforward man I have ever known.”

At the time of his assassination, Spencer Perceval lived in Ealing. His ascent to high office had brought scant financial reward and he reportedly had only £106 5s 1d in his bank account when he died. Parliament immediately ensured that his wife and children were provided for with a settlement of £50,000 for his children and additional annuities for his wife and eldest son.

Jane Perceval subsequently married Peninsular War hero, Sir Henry Carr, in 1814, but was widowed for a second time in 1821. She died in 1844 was interred alongside her first husband in the family vault in St Luke’s where there are memorials to her and other members of the family.

Perceval is remembered in a bequest by his daughters, and, on the site of their former family home, in 1905, was consecrated All Saints, Ealing - the Spencer Perceval Commemoration Church.

(The story of Spencer and Jane Perceval is told in Hugh Gault’s book, *Living History: a family’s 19th Century* – Cambridge: Gretton Books 2010).

May Fair & Craft Market

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ENVIRONMENT



Planning applications can be viewed in the library, or at Strategic Planning, Peggy Middleton House, 50 Woolwich New Road. They may also be viewed on www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning

LOCOG's travel plans . . .

GORDON BAKER asks "What plans?"

Reflecting growing local concern over the continuing lack of proper consultation about Greenwich Park Olympic transport planning, Westcombe Society Chairman Gordon Baker has written to Nick Raynsford, M.P and local councillors pointing out that:

- * No serious effort has been made to engage the local community in a constructive dialogue about Olympic transport planning.
- * The Royal Borough of Greenwich has made no systematic attempt to set up the Olympic Transport Group as a forum for consultation with local amenity societies about transport plans, as envisaged by the March 2011 Planning Board Decision. It is still not clear which organisation has overall lead responsibility for co-ordinating Olympic transport planning
- * Local amenity societies have had no contact whatsoever with TfL or any of the bus companies involved about their Olympic transport plans and timetables.
- * The sole contact with SE Trains has been one meeting about the closing of Maze Hill Station, from which it was obvious that the company had no intention of listening to local concerns or changing its plans to accommodate local needs.
- * The whole thrust of LOCOG planning has been to meet the requirements of Olympic contestants, officials and spectators without sufficient regard for the local impact

- * The Royal Borough of Greenwich does not appear to have taken the trouble to understand local concerns, let alone defend them.
- * Nor has the Borough displayed a sense of urgency in dealing with the situation. When are the Planning Board considering the Olympic transport planning application? Why has that meeting so often been postponed?
- * Any information about Olympic transport plans has been handed out as a fait accompli rather than as a proposal for discussion.

Gordon Baker added that the Society doubts that the plans for traffic circulation in the centre of Greenwich will be workable. Severe consequent disruption is likely to be caused in surrounding areas. Having had no access to TfL traffic modelling, the Society cannot judge the validity of the assumptions based on it, but the Society is not confident that local bus services can cope with demand. The reduced train services will not meet local needs. More should be done to clarify the Council's parking plans.

With the opening of the Games only months away, the Society is fearful of the consequences. Gordon Baker contends that failure to provide soundly-based traffic planning with full local consultation risks severe embarrassment to the Royal Borough, as well as to the Olympic authorities, and lasting damage to the reputation of the UK Olympic effort.

Thames Gateway - or 'Borisgate'?

Local resident KENNETH MAY gives a personal view on new road proposals for SE London.

Clr Wilson (*Letters page, April*) really has swallowed 'hook, line and sinker' the Mayor of London's recent so-called 'consultation' about additional Thames crossings – a shallow piece of work which purports to be a consultation on major roadworks and construction in the East Greenwich area and further downstream on the River Thames.

I can only conclude that this flimsy document is some cynical pre-election device and stunt (published prior to the period of 'purdah' which applies before local elections) to mislead residents in Greenwich, Bexley and Bexleyheath into thinking that such a set of proposals would not impact on their local roads and their quality of life.

A fact – all road studies show that new roads, instead of solving traffic congestion, simply create additional journeys and impact on a wide area including what would become 'feeder roads'. Thus all of us would be affected negatively by this ill - conceived proposal, which ignores huge swathes of data.

The evidence produced for past consultation exercises has shown the negative impact of any road developments in South East London such as the Thames Gateway Bridge, East London Crossing.

No alternatives are given in the report! Why has no consideration been given to develop policies to reduce the need to travel -

one of the core problems?

Air pollution in Greenwich is already too high. Indeed, concern is already being expressed by the authorities about the potential impact of poor quality air on the forthcoming Olympics.

The evidence shows that all new 'road improvement' projects significantly increase traffic in the local area and often lead to the reduction of usage of public transport.

Additional public transport schemes providing a reliable alternative to the use of cars have been shown to have had a major impact on improvements to air and noise pollution, safety for pedestrians and cyclists and regeneration and job creation.

My view is that the consultation was a sham, was poorly publicised, provided insufficient time scales for appropriate response and presented a narrow view of the alternatives. And, simply an attempt to 'bounce' public opinion and to influence the forthcoming Mayoral election.

Even the online consultation document was flawed and unbalanced in terms of its construction, making it easy for the policy makers to create a favourable response even if there was none. Well done Clr Wilson for following the party line. Sorry the evidence doesn't support your case!

ED: Other readers' views welcome!

End Bonfire Misery!

We've all been there – it's a lovely sunny day, ideal for hanging out the washing, perhaps, or sitting out in the garden with a cup of tea, or a drink, and a chat with your friends.

And then you smell the acrid smoke from a neighbour's bonfire!

"It happened to us after a long cold and grey February," said one resident. "It was the very first day that one could enjoy the sunshine. And it was ruined by a neighbour burning a lot of damp stuff on his bonfire!"

Bonfires generate around 30,000 nuisance complaints to local authorities each year.

As well as preventing one from enjoying

the garden, opening windows or hanging out washing, bonfires can cause health problems for people with breathing or heart conditions.

A lot of bonfires may be unnecessary – a compost heap deals with most green waste, and municipal green waste bins solve a lot of problems these days.

But if you feel you really need to have a bonfire, it would be courteous to warn the neighbours – and to avoid having them on a sunny day: thoughtful neighbours will have their bonfire as the sun goes down, when people are not out enjoying their garden.

It's as well too to take a few precautions, too, like having a bucket of water ready in case a fire gets out of hand, and not lighting it near sheds or fences. Items such as paint, plastic, household or commercial waste should never be disposed of in a bonfire.

If your neighbours have a bonfire and it affects you, speak to them and explain the problem. They may not even be aware of the distress they are causing – and may have not thought about other ways to dispose of the waste, like composting.

If speaking to your neighbour fails, you could contact the council's environmental health department. Usually, they will try to deal with the problem informally.

To be considered a nuisance, bonfires need to be a regular occurrence and seriously interfere with your well-being. If the bonfire is only occasional it's unlikely to be considered a nuisance in law. If the council considers a bonfire to be a nuisance, it can issue an 'abatement notice', and your neighbour must stop having bonfires or risk paying a fine.

The Boundary Commission – which side are you on?

The Westcombe Society has written to the Boundary Commission registering objections to the Commission's proposals to split Greenwich. In particular they split West Greenwich from East Greenwich and the World Heritage Site – and bundle Westcombe Park in with Deptford.

The Society's objections to the proposals are the same as those given by Richard Baglin in his submission on behalf of the Greenwich Society and those given by our MP, Nick Raynsford. In a letter to the Commission, the Chairman of the Westcombe Society, Gordon Baker says:

"We fully support the alternative proposals put forward by Nick Raynsford as they

keep Greenwich in one constituency. We also support the inclusion of Blackheath Ward in the Greenwich and Woolwich constituency. Our area shares close links with Blackheath and we often work alongside the Blackheath Society on issues that are important to residents on both sides of the heath..."

Nick Raynsford's proposals would maintain the current links between East and West Greenwich, and Westcombe Park, with the added benefit of including Blackheath. These areas collectively include the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Buffer Zone. The proposals also retain Charlton, which has similar concerns and is linked by proximity to the others and by shared interests.

Christopher's column



You can't always get what you want



Recently I've been trying to track down plants specified for a highly 'designed' border. Many nurseries list them but few actually have them. They have the latest variety, dwarfed or unusually coloured, but not your 'ordinary' version. Novelty value has reached out to plant nurseries it seems, not just to garden centres. In consequence, the original plant often becomes a rarity.

A good example is our native, dirty blue, Gladwyn Iris (iris foetidissima). A pale yellow version 'Citrina' appeared everywhere in the 1970s (but apparently dates from 1877) and the blue one is now hard to find. Then there's a mythical white flowered version...

The history of hybrid roses is a similar one - bred to produce flowers, many lost their scent in the process. Thankfully, there has been a rethink, and scent is once again seen as an integral part of the appeal of roses.

Colourwise, breeders seek the impossible (blue roses or tulips) or produce varieties in fashionable shades (often maroon or 'black'), which fade or lose their flowers very quickly. Such plants - roses included – are often stunted and so top heavy with flowers they quickly fade. Or so highly bred they can't survive the slightest frost, drought or neglect...

When it comes to choosing real garden plants, then, the species or old varieties often give a better shape, or scent, with a more natural look. I've been using more 'herbs' (with a medicinal or culinary use) which can be bought from a specialist grower. 'Sweet cicely' (myrrhis odorata), woodruff (galium odorata) and angelica are amongst my favourites and are easy to grow. English mace (achillea ageratum) and orach (atriplex hortensis) are both lovely and edible, while sprinkling herb seeds from the cupboard (fennel, dill, caraway, coriander) will produce a mix of heights and shades. Add marigolds or nasturtiums for a pretty edible 'meadow' anywhere which gets some sun.

Christopher Raven

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(See also <http://westcombe.blogspot.com/>)

178 WESTCOMBE HILL ref 12/0491/F
Construct rear infill extension, new shop front, and relocate airconditioning units

27 VANBRUGH PARK ref 12/0871/V
Extend use of timber outbuilding as classroom for further 10 years until 2026

100-102 HUMBER ROAD ref 12/0807/CP
Access to garages - install iron security gates

41 FOYLE ROAD ref 12/0790/F
Construct single storey rear infill extension and rear dormer window

15/15A ULUNDI ROAD ref 12/0357/F
Install hardstanding and front boundary treatments

TREE WORKS
20 HUMBER ROAD ref 12/0925/TC
Fell eucalyptus in rear garden

17 WESTCOMBE PARK ROAD ref 12/0863/TC
Reduce by 30% holm oak, eucalyptus, holly and yew

7 CHARLTON ROAD ref 12/0838/TC
Fell ash, sycamore and laburnum. Reduce height of two eucalyptus by 50%, and birch by 30%

24 GLENLUCE ROAD ref 12/0840/TP
Crown reduce chestnut in front garden by 30%

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