



# Westcombe NEWS

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A community newspaper celebrating its Fortieth Year – commended by the London Forum

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

## Mind the gap

SARAH WINTERBOTTOM

In the last issue of the *WN*, we reported on Transport for London's (TfL) proposals to increase the number of river crossings in South East of London.

With the environmental impact of all scenarios not yet available, the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) and Newham Council have joined the fray with a major campaign for what they argue are "vitally needed fixed river crossings between East and South East London." Both authorities firmly agree with TfL that "bridging the gap" – building a new tunnel between Greenwich Peninsula and Silvertown – is essential.

However, they strongly argue for a new bridge at Gallions Reach between Thamesmead and Beckton, rather than the ferry service proposed by TfL.

Dick Allard, the chairman of the Westcombe Society's Planning and Environment Committee (WSPEC) attended the councils' recent press conference to raise crucial questions regarding pollution, congestion – and the cost implications.

### Creating jobs

Those in favour of the schemes assert that their proposals will provide the only viable long-term solution to a problem which has long held back economic growth in this part of London. A spokesman for RBG claimed that a bridge at Gallions Reach would improve accessibility to more than forty sites either side of the river, transforming their development prospects and creating some 20,000 jobs.

It is also argued that the Silvertown Tunnel would provide much needed relief to traffic congestion at the Blackwall Tunnel, and support the development of Greenwich Peninsula and Royal Docks.

Between Central London and the M25 heading west there are 25 bridge crossings of the River Thames. From Tower Bridge to Dartford, there are just two.

### The costs and benefits.

Transport for London has invited public opinion in what we understand is part of a 'pre-official' consultation stage on the river crossings package which closed on 1st February 2013. TfL estimates that a new road tunnel at Silvertown would cost £600m; a vehicle ferry at Gallions Reach would cost £150m; it is estimated that the Council's proposals for a bridge, instead of a ferry, would add at least £200m.

A RBG spokesperson confirmed that, as 'nationally significant infrastructure projects' they will require development consent from the Secretary of State, whose opinion is formed after full examination of

**Community leaders, local businesses and entrepreneurs have thrown their weight behind a campaign for more river crossings in East London. But some local residents have some serious reservations.**

the implications, and a recommendation from the Planning Inspectorate.

According to the two councils the crossings are supported by business and entrepreneurs and together would maximise the economic potential of the former industrial sites on both sides of the Thames.

Cllr. Chris Roberts, Leader of the RBG, said: "New river crossings are vital for this part of London – and we need a viable, long-term solution. For far too long we have put up with congestion, pollution and this barrier to growth.

"We badly need these long-term solutions to ease the pressure on the Blackwall Tunnel and the Woolwich Ferry. The people of South East London have been short-changed for too long . . . The quick-fix ferry suggestion at Gallions Reach isn't good enough – we need a real long-term solution to these issues.

"This isn't just about making the immediate area better – London is expanding east, we need to manage that growth and ensure the right infrastructure is in place to fully realise the potential of South East London. It will aid the UK economy as a whole to be able to overcome the barrier of the Thames here and to finally fully connect North and South London."

His words are echoed by Sir Robin Wales, Mayor of Newham, who said: "Central and West London have long been recipients of investment and new transport infrastructure."

### . . . and who will pay for them?

However, there are serious cost issues: TfL has no money to pay for the proposed projects, and motorists fear they would have to pay a levy to fund whatever plans are finally brought to fruition. As indicated in the last issue of the *WN*, a toll charge of £2 to use the Blackwall Tunnel has been mooted to fund the schemes.

Paul Watters, from the AA, said that "Charging existing infrastructure is always controversial especially as since the 1960s it's been a free crossing.



## The Conservatoire under threat . . .

For the past 132 years the Conservatoire has fostered quality art and music in this community. Founded in 1881 by William Webster, the Conservatoire is Blackheath's local independent arts centre. Each week it provides a broad mix of music, art, drama and cultural classes to over 1,200 people aged 0 to 90.

The *WN* profiled the Conservatoire in November 2011, and ran an interview with its new head, Sydney Thornbury, in June 2012. However, today the Conservatoire is under great threat. Like many charities, it has struggled to survive the recession.

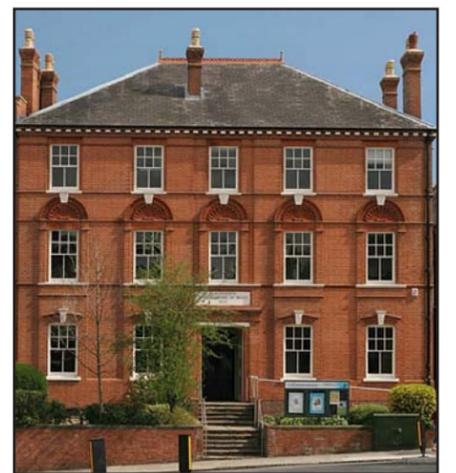
Chairman of the Trustees, Lord Mawson OBE has launched an appeal with these words: "Sydney and our new team of Trustees have a strong track record of transforming charities and developing innovative and sustainable business models. We have a solid recovery plan to not only turn around the Conservatoire, but to transform and reinvigorate it for a 21st Century community.

"But we are racing against the clock. We must raise £175,000 by the end of February or we risk having to close in August, before our new plan can take effect.

"A £75,000 Challenge Donor Fund has been generously pledged by a group of local donors. To claim it, we must match those funds through supporters' donations.

"The situation is truly urgent. Without your help, we may have no future at all. Your donation will be matched pound for pound by our Challenge Donor Fund. And because we can also claim Gift Aid, your donation will be worth an additional 125% on top of the amount you donate. If, for example, you donate £100, it will be worth £225 towards our goal."

**Donations can be made by visiting [www.justgiving.com/SaveTheCon](http://www.justgiving.com/SaveTheCon). See *What's On* on page 5 for a list of Fund-raising events.**



The Conservatoire's stunningly northern Art building includes one of the last Victorian Life Drawing studios still in use in the UK.

"Drivers who use the Blackwall Tunnel and not the Silvertown one will feel like pound fodder for the new crossing even though they have no reason to use it."

The AA points out that drivers already pay huge amounts in Vehicle Excise Duty – only a quarter of which is spent on road and highway maintenance.

### And the side effects?

London Watchdog TravelWatch supports TfL's proposals. A side effect might be that a toll charge might help to ease congestion – good news for pollution levels – but critics point out that the plans might have the opposite effect in South London. Data that Dick Allard, Chair of WSPEC requested from computer simulations indicating the likely resultant levels of congestion and traffic flows are still awaited as we go to press.

There are other issues, too: for years, local councillors have been supporting the residents of Westcombe Hill and Siebert Road on the need for better fencing to reduce noise and vibration disturbance from the A102 – a request that TfL have refused.

If the proposal to increase traffic flows on the A102 are to go ahead, such measures should be a condition. In addition, observers argue that another condition would be that public transport capacity needs to be greatly increased.

**As we reported in last month's *WN*, the public consultation by TfL on these major proposals is set to run until 1st February 2013. If you were unable to attend any of the consultation "roadshows", log on to <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/river-crossings/consultation> to find out more, and to make your views known. A printed information leaflet can also be requested by calling 0843 222 1234.**

**Meanwhile, there are those who argue that these suggestions are a bridge too far. Please turn to page 7 for information about a campaign opposing the new river crossings.**

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Next Westcombe Society event

The Westcombe Society is holding its annual Helpers' and Welcome to new residents' party on Saturday, 23rd February 2013 from 7.00 pm to 10.00 pm at Mycenae House, Mycenae Road. Invitations to our volunteer helpers are going out in February. New residents are very welcome to come and find out what the Westcombe Society is all about. Details are on page 2.

### Park road closure

Greenwich Park has announced that road works

in the park will continue until 28th March. During this time the car park will remain open, but the Avenue through route will remain closed to all vehicles, and cyclists. See also page 7.

### Monty met Rommel

As the 70th Anniversary of the end of the WW2's North Africa Campaign approaches in May, a startling photograph has emerged of Field Marshall Montgomery with his opponent – Rommel – sitting on his lap.

Winston named his pet spaniel Rommel, and

a photograph has just emerged of Winston and Monty – with Rommel on Monty's lap.

### A tomato a day keeps the psychiatrist away

According to a study led by Dr Kaijun Niu at China's Tianjin Medical University, eating a tomato every day reduces one's risk of depression by 52%.

This is because tomatoes are packed full of lycopene, an antioxidant reducing stress, and repairs brain cells. The study appears in the Journal of Affective Disorders.

### Arctic convoys medal

In October last year, the *WN* reported on the heavy price paid by veterans of the Arctic Convoy, and the fact that no medal had been awarded in recognition of their contribution to the war effort. The Arctic Convoy featured in an exhibition at the NMM.

In December, David Cameron announced medals will now be awarded to the veterans. He said that the brave men who ensured supplies would get through German blockades to the Soviet Union "richly deserved" recognition.

# COMMUNITY NEWS

## WESTCOMBE NEWS

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

### DISTRIBUTION

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<http://westcombe.gold.ac.uk/westnews.html>  
 Westcombe Society's Blog:  
<http://westcombe.blogspot.com>

## WESTCOMBE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Please send this membership form to:  
**Mrs Margaret Ellis, 4 Ingleside Grove London SE3 7PH**

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Address.....

Tel.....

Email: .....

Please enclose payment as appropriate:

Family Membership	£12	[ ]
Individual Membership	£8	[ ]
Senior Citizens/unwaged	£4	[ ]

## Westcombe Society's plans for 2013

**The Westcombe Society's celebrates its Fortieth Birthday this year!**

Last year, we raised £3,000 for our Charity of the Year – Woodlands Farm Trust. We hope to celebrate our fortieth anniversary by raising a record sum for our charity of the year, so we are asking our readers to send in their nominations. It must be a locally based charity or one that supports/helps those living in the Westcombe Park area. Please contact Marilyn Little with your nomination or for more information on 0208 853 1312.

The events being planned include:

**Feb 23rd** Helpers' & Newcomers' Party – Main Hall, Mycenae House 7.0-10.00pm

**Mar 9th** Daffodil Tea – 2.00 pm Teas served from 2.15. (Invites will be going out in February but if you don't receive one or are new to Westcombe Park and would like one then please ring Caroline on 020 8853 0948).

**Mar 16th** Children's Nearly New Sale – Main Hall, Mycenae House 2.00 - 4.00 pm

Tables and rails can be booked from Joanne – please ring or text 07709 571777 or ring 020 8293 3429 for details

**Mar 30th**, Easter Egg Hunt – gardens

**Apr 20th**, Quiz Night Main Hall

**May 12th**, AGM, Main Hall, lunchtime/early afternoon

**Jun 15th**. Summer Picnic and Senior Citizens Tea Party

**Sept 7th**. Members' Evening, Main Hall,



Some volunteers in the Westcombe Society shared a delicious Christmas Dinner at Moca's in Old Dover Road. Moca's serves a variety of meals, most with an Italian flavour; and also offers free wi-fi access.

**Sep 27th**. Macmillan Coffee Morning, bar/ Main Hall Mycenae House

**Sep 28th**. Nearly New Sale, Main Hall,

**Oct 26th** Quiz Night, Main Hall

Note that this year, we are combining the Summer Picnic with a Senior Citizens' Tea Party – the latter replacing what we used to call the Chrysanthemum Tea.

This was an idea we tried out last year for the Jubilee celebration, and we thought it worked out well.

*The Westcombe Society will also be celebrating its 40th anniversary this year – watch this space!*

## Ken Clark 1927 – 2012

We regret to announce the death on December 17th of Ken Clark at St. Thomas's hospital following a heart attack.

As a former soldier he served with the Royal Engineers in Jamaica, where he liked to claim he played a crucial role in the defeat of Hitler.... As a journalist, he started life with the Bexley and Kentish Mercury, but most of his working life was spent at the Colonial Office, which included work on Bechuanaland (Botswana). Ken was an occasional contributor to the *WN*, and was even persuaded to edit it for

a month when the *WN* was in crisis (in June 1991). He was the author of a book called *Greenwich and Woolwich in old photographs* (1990. pub. Allan Sutton.)

As he cycled round in his khaki, Foreign-Legion style cap, Ken was a familiar figure in Westcombe Park. He lived here for many years with his wife Betty (who was a teacher at Prendergast School in Lewisham) and was widowed twenty years ago.

His funeral took place on 25th January. He leaves a daughter and a son and six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

## 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: Ivy McGeorge Vanbrugh Fields**

There has been a great deal of discussion in the area about the planning application to remove the Horse Chestnut tree on the corner of Westcombe Park Road and Vanbrugh Park Road West.

It is very distressing to see a mature tree being cut down, and I understand the concerns raised, and those who are objecting have done a great job voicing their concerns.

The current proposal is for the tree to be removed and a substantial tree of 60-70 cm girth planted in its place – the tree will be cared for for five years by the Nursery supplying it. When the plans for the new school were done, an independent Tree Company was asked if the tree could be saved. In their opinion it was possible. Now excavations have been started and the roots of the tree have been exposed it is clear that the tree cannot be saved if the building proceeds as planned, and the independent specialist has confirmed that it will not be possible. A measured decision was made and it proved to be wrong.

Given that a substantial tree will be planted in its place I firmly believe that in the interests of everyone it is a good compromise. The cost in human terms of changing the plans at this stage would be huge, with delays in completion dates and the education of many many students being disrupted. (e.g the John Roan students are being temporarily accommodated in the Royal Hill site, which is due to become a primary school – that will be delayed.) Neighbours will have to put up with building works longer than planned. On top of which the financial cost which you and I pay is massive.

The positive note long-term note is that the new tree will still be there in 100 years – the expected life of the current tree is 20 years.

The building that has just been demolished,

having been up for only 30 years was never "fit for purpose". This was due in some part to some compromises made at the planning stage following objections from the neighbours who did not want a school on the site. The main objection was the height of the building, which was reduced – and therefore the classroom ceilings were too low. It would be a tragedy if the proposed building followed the same route.

**From: Colin Fancy Combe Avenue**

How can local Councillor Alex Wilson claim there is a "silver lining" to the local hospital cuts? (*WN Dec/Jan*) Like many local people we have used both Lewisham and Queen Elizabeth Hospitals. As your report showed, waiting time at the A&E at QEH is already over 4 hours on average – just imagine how long it will be if the people currently using Lewisham A&E are forced to travel to QEH.

The government is threatening cuts across the NHS while ensuring PFI shareholders are guaranteed their profits; while the rest of us who pay for the service are facing a future without the health service we need. I urge everyone to sign the petitions and join the campaign.

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## Helpers and Welcome to New Residents' Party 2013

**The Westcombe Society is holding its Annual Helpers' Party on Saturday, 23rd February 2013 from 7.00 pm to 10.00 pm at Mycenae House, Mycenae Road.**

This is our chance to thank all those who have helped the Westcombe Society in the past 12 months in running events, supporting and participating in the work of the various committees and producing and delivering the *Westcombe News*. We are very grateful for this help and couldn't keep everything running without you.

We do hope you can come along and meet some old, and some new, faces as we are combining this with our Welcome to Newcomers Party. So if you are new to Westcombe Park we'd love to meet you.

The invitation is open to all new residents of Westcombe Park and we hope you can come along, meet fellow neighbours and find out more about both Westcombe Park and the work of the Westcombe Society. There will be a welcome drink and a light buffet available and the bar in Mycenae House will be open.

We are sending out personal invitations to those helpers for whom we have postal or email addresses.

If you are a helper and don't receive an invitation, perhaps because we don't have an address for you, or you are new to the area and would like to join us on the 23rd February, please contact Joanne by post at 41 Glenluce Road, SE3 7SD or by phone on 020 8293 3429 by Friday 15th February so that we can cater for the right numbers

*We look forward to seeing you and thanking and welcoming you in person. If you are interested in helping with the Westcombe Society's activities, and would like to get involved, please give Marilyn Little a ring on 8853 1312 for more information. We are currently seeking a Membership Secretary and someone to help with the Bazaar organisation.*

## Get Greenwich

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*If you want more information or need help with the app, email [help@getgreenwich.co.uk](mailto:help@getgreenwich.co.uk). We'd love to hear from you so please let us know what you think of the app in Review*

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# LOCAL NEWS

## Documenting the High Street

At the foot of Royal Hill there is a building that houses a small gallery called Linear House, in Peyton Place, next door to Greenwich Dance.

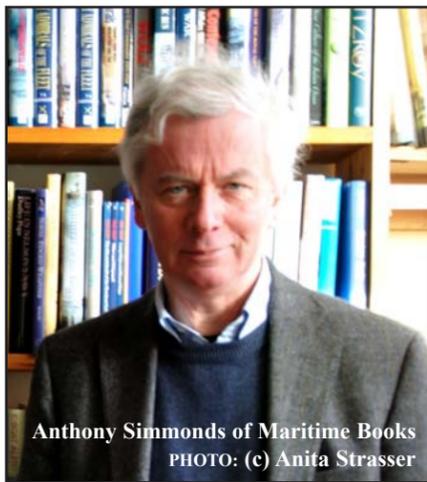
Linear House is the brainchild of Events Organizer Tony Othen (once very active in the Westcombe Society when he lived in Humber Road) who has run photographic, audio visual and production companies in Greenwich for more than 40 years.

It was there I went to see an exhibition of photographs by talented local photographer Anita Strasser. Anita is fascinated by street scenes: she has produced a book on Deptford High Street, and her latest exhibition – now a book - features Royal Hill.

The beautiful photographs are accompanied by commentaries by local luminaries – Tony Othen of course, as well as Janis Tilling, Jerry Button, Michael Jones, Daniel Persson (founding father of Meantime Breweries) and many others.

Says Anita: “The idea to capture Royal Hill came as a response to the London Villages Project organized by London Independent Photography (LIP), of which I am a member.”

These establishments on Royal Hill demonstrate that the traditional High Street in English towns is still very much alive – and traditional local traders keep it alive, despite “the usual suspects”, the big battalions like Boots or Smiths.



Anthony Simmonds of Maritime Books  
PHOTO: (c) Anita Strasser

Anita's photographs show how very attractive the shops and traders' premises can be. Next stop, the Standard? N.G.

*Her exhibition is now over, but you can still obtain her book (£12.00) Royal Hill from [anitastrasser@gmail.com](mailto:anitastrasser@gmail.com). You can see samples of Anita's work on [www.anitastrasser.com](http://www.anitastrasser.com)*

*If you missed Peter Kent's wonderful exhibition of art at the same venue, which depicted Greenwich during the Jubilee, and his impressive Portfolio of Ports in Britain and around the world, they are still obtainable from the artist, or from Tony Othen.*

## The future of policing

There is deep concern about the proposed cuts in policing numbers in this ward – and about the reduction in police stations.

Proposals to use Post offices as police stations have been described as “ludicrous”: police stations have had private interview rooms; who wants to have their concerns listened to by a queue of people buying stamps?

In January, local MP for Greenwich and Woolwich wrote to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, raising his concerns about the future of policing in Greenwich. Nick Raynsford was responding to the announcement that

the Metropolitan Police proposes to close Woolwich and Greenwich Police Stations.

Nick Raynsford told the *WN*: “Whilst I recognise the need to look for efficiency savings, if these closures go ahead many of my constituents will be left out on a limb.

“I have repeatedly stressed to the Met. that it should consider looking at co-locating at other civic buildings, to ensure that there is an accessible Police presence for loyal residents whilst at the same time, saving money”.

**STOP PRESS:** The fire stations in New Cross and Woolwich are also to be closed. In response, Nick Raynsford has again lodged a strongly-worded protest.

## BGHS in Guinness Book of Records

Guinness World Records have confirmed that Blackheath High School has entered the record books by taking part in the world's biggest practical science lesson in multiple venues.

On Tuesday 13th November, 62 girls from Blackheath High School took part in the world record attempt by conducting two science experiments to measure the value of acceleration due to gravity, involving 2,215 girls in total at 26 schools across the country.

Pupils conducted one experiment which measured the time taken for an object to drop a set distance, and another which timed a swinging pendulum.

All the schools were members of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), which celebrates its 140th anniversary this year.

“We're hugely excited to have been part of making science history”, said Lisa Laws, Headteacher. “Studies have shown that women who go to girls' schools are more likely to study stereotypically male subjects like physics and chemistry, both at school and at university. We know this to be true from our own experience, with around 25% of our girls studying A-level physics, compared to the national average of 1.6%. This world record has created even further enthusiasm around science in the school”.

## Dramatic opportunities

BARRIE SMITH

Are you interested in acting – or working backstage? If so, then an opportunity to indulge your passion exists right on your doorstep. Capital Theatre Company – a small, locally-based amateur theatre group – rehearses on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at Mycenae House.

Exercising considerable ingenuity in its choice and presentation of plays, the Company seeks to make a virtue of its modest circumstances by placing the actor firmly at the centre of its productions. Bold play selection, spare but imaginative presentation, and first-rate acting are the Company's hall-marks. Two productions are put on each year. These are presented in The Old Bakehouse Theatre, Blackheath and St Margaret's Crypt, Lee – whose intimate surroundings allow the Company to play to its strengths.

The Company receives no financial support, relying only on box office revenue and members' subscriptions. Nevertheless, the Company has an impressive track record of achievement and takes pride in its high standards. Its adventurous and eclectic choice of plays includes: *Teechers* by John Godber, *Five Kinds of Silence* by Shelagh Stephenson, *Baby with the Bathwater* by Christopher Durang, *The Five Wives of Maurice Pinder* by Matt Charman, *Joseph K* by Tom Basden, *Mine* by Polly Teale, *Sylvia* by A.R. Gurney and recently, *The Country* by Martin Crimp.



A scene from Joseph K

Membership is open to anyone willing to commit themselves to high standards and a professional approach. Whether you want to act or help backstage, we would like to hear from you. If you want to act, why not come along for an audition?

If successful, you can be sure of getting a part, because we select plays that involve as many people as possible. We don't like people sitting on the sidelines; so if you're available, we'll try and cast you. But if lavish staging and large-cast spectaculars are what you crave, then we may not be for you! But if small-scale, actor-centred drama is your thing, please give us a call. **Further information is available from the Company's director Barrie Smith (telephone: 020 8852 3258 or e-mail: [msmith51@supanet.com](mailto:msmith51@supanet.com)).**

## Hospice charity calls for volunteers

Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice on Bostall Hill, Abbey Wood in South East London is calling for local people of all ages to join its friendly volunteer team.

The Hospice, a registered charity, offers specialist care and support to local people with a life-limiting illness. Last year, the Hospice supported around 2,500 local people and their families, friends and carers in the boroughs of Greenwich and Bexley.

“Our volunteers make a big difference to the quality of life of people who have a life-limiting illness,” said Vanessa Hill,

Volunteers Manager at the Hospice.

“We have all sorts of volunteer roles, with something that can suit all abilities and availabilities.”

Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice has a dedicated team of over 500 volunteers working in a variety of roles from charity shop work and fund-raising to working directly with patients and their families at the Hospice.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION contact Vanessa Hill, Volunteers' Manager on 020 8320 5812, email [vanessahill@gbch.org.uk](mailto:vanessahill@gbch.org.uk) or visit [www.communityhospice.org.uk](http://www.communityhospice.org.uk)**

## Share fraud warning

A local resident wrote: “I was recently approached on the phone by a very persuasive American lady about a small quantity of shares I have: the dividends from these have marginally increased each year, but being less than £100 I would have been quite willing to sell them.

“But a friend was suspicious and checked out the company on the internet, and very quickly discovered that it was a share scam. I reported this to the FSA (Financial Services Authority), Action Fraud, and the company that pay my dividends, all of whom were very helpful.”

The FSA says that share fraud includes scams where investors are called out of the blue and offered shares that often turn out to be worthless or non-existent, or with an inflated price.

These fraudsters operate in “boiler rooms” mostly based abroad. The FSA estimate that around £200m is lost in the UK each year in this way.

The FSA's advice is to get the name of the person and organization contacting you; check [www.fsa.gov.uk/fsaregister](http://www.fsa.gov.uk/fsaregister) to ensure they are authorised, and use the details there to contact the firm. Call the FSA Helpline on 0845 606 1234 if there are any doubts at all. Also search the FSA's list of unauthorised firms or individuals to avoid doing business with.

In general, if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is. **If you are approached about a share scam, use the share fraud reporting form at [www.fsa.gov.uk/scams](http://www.fsa.gov.uk/scams), where you can also find out about the latest investment scams. If you have already been defrauded you should contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.**

## Mycenae House community centre

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# FEATURES

## The Art of Self-Defence

PAUL CARTER

How do I punch someone? was the final thought that went through my inebriated mind when I was robbed on Trafalgar Road.

It was late on a summer evening in June 2006. I fell for the classic ruse of 'Have you got the time, mate?' and believed the fellow when he shoved his hand in his pocket and told me he had a knife.

I handed over £10 and my cheap watch .... I clearly wasn't thinking as phoning the police didn't enter my mind.

The childhood aggression which leads to so many playground fights dissipates as you mature and realise the futility of violence, but you are allowed to defend yourself if someone tries to rob or attack you.

The problem is knowing how. Krav Maga is a martial art focused on self defence moves for real world situations. It originates from Israel and is Hebrew for 'hand-to-hand combat'. Stewart McGill is an expert and runs classes all over London, including a 7.00pm Monday night class at St Michael's Church Hall in Blackheath.

With other experienced martial artists he developed his own style called Urban Krav Maga, which in Stewart's opinion, offers a more leveraged approach.

Stewart said: "If an attacker has a knife then give them your money or phone – your life is more important. But if the attacker won't go away then you strike first. Attack is a great form of defence.

"If you train enough then you improve your fitness and the moves become instinctive. It's important you know how to strike and get leverage over your opponent. So come along and give it a go. It is a good exercise class, too."

Around 18 men of different ages, shapes and sizes attended my first class. We warmed up by jogging round the room, aiming punches and kicks at invisible targets to get the heart pumping. Then comes the tricky part: remembering how to do the moves that Stewart demonstrated.



Stewart McGill in action

My partner grabbed me so I stepped on his foot, struck out with an elbow then pushed him to the floor and twisted his arm until I found his pressure point. We worked on a number of other moves, too.

I have poor coordination, and held on to my judo white belt for two years before accepting I didn't belong in the white suit. So I was quite amazed when I was able to execute some of the moves and put my partner on the floor.

I learned that you should not punch with a clenched fist – and a rolled-up newspaper can be effective. Also consider carrying a purse or wallet with some coins and foreign notes and an old mobile phone which you can throw to one side as you run off in the other direction. I look forward to my next class but hope I never have to escape a dangerous confrontation.

**Men and women are welcome to the class. To know more about Krav Maga and the class locations then go to [www.kravmaga-eastlondon.com/index.htm](http://www.kravmaga-eastlondon.com/index.htm)**

**The first class is free and £60 buys your first 10 lessons, which you can arrange around your diary.**

**The bronze, silver and gold memberships range from £40 to £60 a month depending on how many classes you want to attend.**

## Have book, why travel?

MICHAEL GOLDMAN on the joy of book clubs

"Each country Book-club bows the knee to Baal..."

This quotation from Byron shows that book clubs, book groups, reading groups – call them what you will – go back a long time. And over the last twenty or so years they have flourished as never before, giving the lie to those who mourn the decline of reading.

Typically a reading group consists of a dozen or so members who meet monthly to discuss the chosen book, sometimes chosen by the members in turn, sometimes chosen at the start of a season by collective decision. The majority of groups consist solely of women, many are mixed but all-male groups are rare.

A major virtue of reading groups is that they widen the literary horizons of members, encouraging them to read books that they would otherwise miss.

The social aspect is also important. The level of seriousness varies: wine and gossip sometimes predominate over literary discussion. Most groups concentrate on contemporary fiction but some read classics from the past. There are even groups, mostly in America, which only read James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

Some reading groups are linked to local libraries which provide multiple copies of the chosen books. Bookshops have

realised the value of reading groups and many branches of Waterstones, including the one in Greenwich, host monthly groups. These are open to anyone who turns up. Websites list groups all over the country, including some in SE London.

Most local U3A (University of the Third Age) branches include reading groups on their programmes – three, for example, in U3A South East London.

One of these has been going for eighteen years and meets weekly. This is unusually frequent and is testimony to the dedication of the twelve members who devote several sessions to each book, depending on its length and complexity.

The U3A reading groups usually have waiting lists because they meet in members' homes, where room is limited, and also because coherent discussion is difficult with more than a dozen or so people. Hearing others's opinions, as well as voicing your own, is one of the joys of reading groups and discussion tends to be most lively when opinions are sharply divided.

**The South East London U3A website is [www.u3asites.org.uk/london-se](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/london-se) or information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary, Anne Richards, 30 Little Heath, Charlton, SE7 8HU, Tel. 020 8854 4645 (please mention that you saw this in the Westcombe News).**

## For those who like schoolgirl novels . . .

The Alexandra Players next production is *Daisy Pulls It Off* by Denise Deegan. This bears NO resemblance at all to the girls of St Trinians ..... but still retains much of the old-world charm of Angela Brazil's schoolgirl novels.

*Daisy Pulls It Off* engagingly captures the uncomplicated innocence of Angela Brazil's schoolgirls. It is about the attempts of superachiever Daisy Meredith to submerge her poor elementary school background and find acceptance in the snobby confines of Grangewood School for Young Ladies.

Our plucky heroine undergoes a number of obstacles before, being honourable in all things, all comes right in the end.

***Daisy Pulls It Off* will be presented at the Alexandra Hall, Bramshot Avenue, Charlton SE7 7HX on Thursday to Saturday February 21st, 22nd and 23rd at 8pm. Doors open 7.30 pm.**

Tickets £8 (£7 Children and Concessions).

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or e-mail alexandraplayers@gmail.com

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PayPal, visit our new website at <http://www.alexandraplayers.org.uk>

Seats booked by telephone or e-mail must be collected no later than 15 minutes before the performance or they may be resold. Seats booked and paid by PayPal will be held until collected and not re-sold.

**The Alexandra Hall in Bramshot Avenue is attached to Charlton United Reformed Church, who support the Players and enable them to put on productions there.**



## Karen Storey goes national

Clearing out unwanted items is becoming a country-wide trend in 2013 – and local decluttering expert Karen Storey of Homespace has gained national exposure. Articles in the most recent editions of *House Beautiful* magazine, *Yourwellness* and men's styling newsletter *SartorialLab* all quote Karen as they advise on how to clear unwanted stuff from your life.

All these articles can be viewed via Karen's Homespace website.

Karen, whose Westcombe Park-based business has been running since 2007, has seen the business grow as people aim to streamline their lives and their belongings.

JKaren told the *WN*: "Initially, people found the idea of hiring a decluttering expert strange, but now I find people really embrace the idea. It's a major trend for the pared down, austere times we live in, and can be hugely cathartic."

**Contact: 07951 191086/info@homespace.biz See also the Small Ads on p. 5.**

## Potty Pancake races

The 1st Annual Royal Greenwich Potty Pancake Race is at 11.00 am on Tuesday, 12th February at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich.

Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice is hosting the event. Teams of four will take part in the competition to find Greenwich's fastest pancake flippers, optional fancy dress. The fastest team will be crowned "The Fastest Flippers of Greenwich" and will receive a Winners Frying Pan.

Entry to The Old Royal Naval College is via the Cutty Sark entrance and is free for spectators. All funds raised go to Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice.

Pancakes are also for sale between 11.00 am and 2.00 pm.

**Entry is £10 per person in teams of 4, FREE for spectators. For more info email [info@gbch.org.uk](mailto:info@gbch.org.uk), call 020 8319 9230, or visit the website [www.communityhospice.org.uk](http://www.communityhospice.org.uk).**



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](http://johnpayne.com)

## Ansel Adams: not to be missed

The NMM's current exhibition is *Ansel Adams: From the Mountains to the Sea*, a rare chance to see, close-up, Ansel Adams' photography in the UK, and view some of the most pioneering and iconic black and white photographs of the 20th century.

**Ansel Adams runs until 28th April Booking now open at [rmg.co.uk/anseladams](http://rmg.co.uk/anseladams).**

**Members go free Adults £7 Concs £6 Children £2**

# WHAT'S ON

## ARTS

**MADE IN GREENWICH** Gallery, 324 Creek Road SE10 9SW. [www.madeingreenwich.co.uk](http://www.madeingreenwich.co.uk) January 29th – March 10th.  
**New exhibition:** 'The Body, Movement and Dance'  
**Poetry events:**  
 5th February 7.30 pm Greenwich University Poets;  
 20th February 7.30 pm WordArt  
**BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY**, St Mary's Church Hall, Cresswell Park, Blackheath 4th Thursday of every month, 2.00 for 2.30. **28th Feb. Dr Patrick Conner THE BRITISH ARMY IN INDIA** Non-members £5 on the door. [www.artsinblackheath.org.uk](http://www.artsinblackheath.org.uk) or ring 83187550  
**GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY** King William Court, the University of Greenwich Next lecture **Mon. 11th Feb. 8.00 pm THE LEGENDARY LEE MILLER** by Antony Penrose 020 8852 7873. Non-members £8.00

## Blackheath Conservatoire

This series of benefits features an amazing range of artists – and some very special surprise guests. The programme includes:  
**Sun 3rd Feb. Family Sunday - Peter and the Wolf**  
**Thurs. 7th Feb. Jazz concert**  
**Sun 1th Feb. Scratch Messiah**  
**Thurs. 14th Feb. MoTown Concert**  
**Sat 16th Feb. London Print Club Workshop**  
**Sun 17th Feb. Family Sunday:**  
 Fairytales including Silent Film with piano accompaniment  
**Thurs. 21st Feb. Classical meets Street Dance**  
**Thurs 28th Feb. Professors at Play Concert**  
 Please go to [www.conservatoire.org.uk](http://www.conservatoire.org.uk) for event details, prices and times (8852 0234)

## CHILDREN

**WOODLANDS FARM**  
 331 Shooters Hill. Tel. 0208 319 8900 Every Thursday Toddler Club 10am - 12pm £2 per adult, children free. Animals, crafts – or just play.  
**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. Under fives must be accompanied by an adult. Please wear suitable clothes.  
**SE LONDON DADS GROUP**  
**DADS ALERT:** Regular stay-and-play for dads and children under five @ Sherington Children's Centre, 14 Sherington Road every Wednesday from 9:30 - 11:30am. Contact: [www.SELondonDads.org.uk](http://www.SELondonDads.org.uk) or email: [info@selondondads.org.uk](mailto:info@selondondads.org.uk)  
**BLACKHEATH CONSERVATOIRE**  
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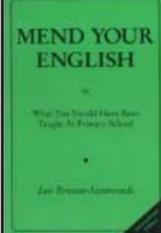
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[www.stolaves.org.uk](http://www.stolaves.org.uk)



## COMMUNITY

**FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK**  
 Sunday 3rd February 2013 at 11am  
**Annual Lecture: Cosmos and Culture**  
 The King William Lecture Theatre, University of Greenwich, at the Old Royal Naval College  
 From the earliest times the motions of the heavens have played a central role in human cultures. Marek Kukula of the Oyal Observatory explores the cultural influence of this very visual science, from blockbuster films to ground-breaking astronomy images.  
 Tickets are £10 (to include a glass of wine) from Friends of Greenwich Park, 3 Orchard Drive, SE3 0QP (tel 8852 8831) or on the door from 10.30am  
**FRIENDS OF BLACKHEATH HALLS**  
**The Friends' Annual Architecture Lecture is Wed. 6th Feb. at 8.00 pm: JOANNA VAN HEYNINGEN on Advancing Traditions** Tickets: £12 (£10 seniors, £6 students) Information on [www.blackheathhalls.com](http://www.blackheathhalls.com), or box office 020 8463 0100  
**BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY**  
 Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road SE3 7SE  
**Feb 15th CSI Universe: Using Spectra to Understand Space** Dr Radmila Topalovic of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. Visitors are welcome, and requested to donate £3.00 to Society funds.  
**INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
**19th Feb.** David Watts on Johnson and Jorgenson Meeting are held at The Old Bakehouse, Bennett Park, SE3 (at the back of Age Exchange Shop. Please use the car park behind the station. Meetings start at 7.30 and non members are charged £1.  
**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 FLOWER CLUB** Meets third Friday of every month at 1.45 pm at Mycenae House  
**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](mailto: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](mailto:gery@nzerem.bbmax.co.uk)  
**PERFORMANCE JAZZ IN MYCENAE HOUSE** Every Monday evening. £5.00. Bar!  
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**GREENWICH HERITAGE CENTRE**  
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## THEATRE & OPERA

**THE GREENWICH THEATRE** Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8ES 020 8858 7755  
**35MM [NOTE: at Pleasance, Islington]**  
**Tuesday, 29th Jan. - Sun 10th Feb. 2013 7.45 pm 35 MM.** In 35MM, each photo provides the source for a different song .....The sell-out Off-Broadway hit now makes its European premiere, in association with Greenwich Theatre. Tickets: £10.00 (concs. £8.50) Box office: 7609 1800  
**MY BIG GAY ITALIAN WEDDING**  
**Wed 30 Jan. - Sun 3 Feb. 2013**  
 Following its critically acclaimed UK tour, this comic tour-de-force is coming to Greenwich  
**SILLY SONGS OF SHAKESPEARE**  
**Thurs. 7th Feb. an evening with 'Fearg & The Sonnettes'** serenading you with hilarious "synop-songs" of some of Will's most famous works  
**JOURNEY'S END** Sat. 9th - Sun 17th Feb.  
 R. C. Sherriff's anti-war classic

**THE SPACE** 269 Westferry Road London E14 3RS 0207 515 7799 / [www.space.org.uk](http://www.space.org.uk)  
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 Until 3rd February: **THE ONE FESTIVAL**  
 a showcase of monologues that feature work from a wide range of theatre pros. Tickets £12/£8  
**HAMLET** 12th - 16th Feb. 7:30 pm £12/£10

**THE ALEXANDRA PLAYERS**  
 Thurs Feb. 21st to Sat Feb. 23rd **DAISY PULLS IT OFF:** this feel-good play at the Alexandra Hall, Bramshot Avenue, SE7 at 8 pm. £8 (£7 Conc) 07867 627 987 or [alexandraplayers@gmail.com](mailto:alexandraplayers@gmail.com)

## MUSIC & DANCE

**BLACKHEATH HALLS** Tel 020 8463 0100  
**Thurs. 7th Feb. 7.30 TRINITY LABAN WIND ORCHESTRA** Concert: Tickets £10. (£5 concs.)  
**MONDAY LUNCHTIME RECITALS**  
**Mon 1th Feb Badke Quartet** play Britten  
**Mon 25th Feb. James Brawn** plays Beethoven  
**Say 2nd March OPERA GALA NIGHT** Our major Fundraiser! Tickets £30 (£275 for table of 10)  
**GREENWICH DANCE AND TRINITY LABAN**  
 Borough Hall. Royal Hill Tel. 8293 9741  
 presents an exclusive double bill of new work by Robert Clark and Theo Clinkard at The Borough Hall on Sat. 23 Feb. 7.45pm. **AMSTATTEIN** is an allegory on fear & confinement. Choreographed by Robert Clark, it draws on stories of kidnapping & hostage situations from the news over the past 30 years and presents the audience with a beautiful and disturbing representation of the experiences. Followed by **ORDINARY COURAGE** the inaugural work by acclaimed designer Theo Clinkard. With an original score by Alan Stones that incorporates Scarlatti and Bach, it uses visceral, eloquent and life affirming dance to examine the nature of loss and the process of healing. Tickets £12. (£9 concs.)

## LOCAL COUNCILLORS

**Conservative:** Cllr. Geoff Brighty Tel. 8921 5663 (Town Hall) or 8858 9731 (Home) [geoffrey.brighty@greenwich.gov.uk](mailto:geoffrey.brighty@greenwich.gov.uk)  
**Cllr. Alex Wilson** Tel. 07783 611607 Email: [alex.wilson@greenwich.gov.uk](mailto:alex.wilson@greenwich.gov.uk)  
**Surgery:** 1st Monday of the month 6.00 - 7.00 pm Blackheath Library, Old Dover Road.  
**Labour:** Cllr. Alex Grant Tel. 8855 7292 E-mail [Alex.grant@greenwich.gov.uk](mailto: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.



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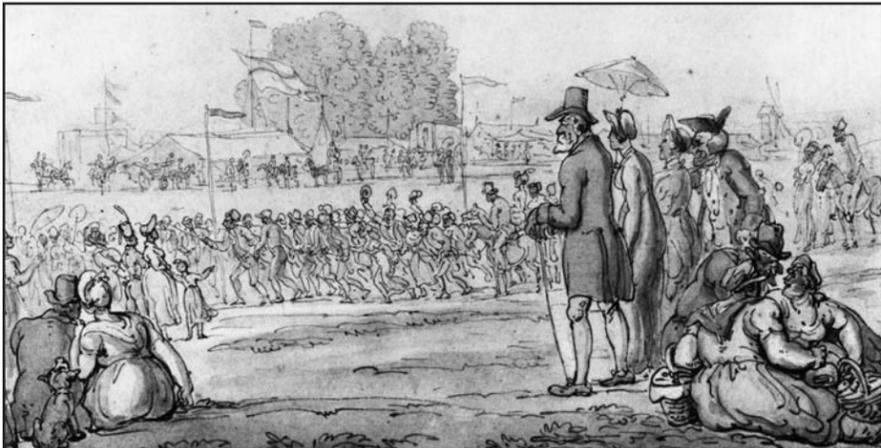


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# FEATURES

## A Visual History of the Heath



Thanks to the Blackheath Society for supplying this image from their superb archive. Pedestrianism (competitive walking) c 1795 by Thomas Rowlandson (1757-1827)

In November, the Blackheath Society was awarded a grant of £7,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for its exciting project to develop a new digital archive called 'The Story of the Heath.'

The images in the archive, which is led by volunteers from the local community, focus on the use and development of the Heath next to Blackheath Village since the 19th century. The project will also enhance the Society's growing digital archive and could lead to national publicity on BBC television.

The entry was accepted for the HLF's project All Our Stories, which supports a planned BBC2 programme 'The Great British Story – a People's History' due to be screened from the end of next year. The application for the grant was headed by one of the Society's volunteers, Allan Griffin.

Under the terms of the grant the Society has to digitise 1,500 images of the Heath by October 2013, and then make them generally available to the public.

Good progress has already been made: over 1,000 Heath images have already been completed, and well over half of its 15,000 photographic images of Blackheath

and the surrounding areas have been stored on computers.

The Blackheath Society will now be asking its members, and the general public, to search their attics for any interesting photographs of the Heath which could supplement the images it already owns.

The plan is to create mobile exhibitions of the images of the Heath to be shown in local schools and churches, at the library in the newly re-opened Age Exchange in the Village, and at the Blackheath Concert Halls.

Other plans include using the project to update and reprint local historian Neil Rhind's Heath trail guide and putting a rotating selection of the images on the Society's website.

The grant brings the Society's 75th anniversary year to a fitting end. Commenting on the award, the Society's Chair Howard Shields said:

"We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and are confident the project will encourage Blackheath people to become more involved in their local heritage. The grant will also greatly enhance our archive of local photographs."

## Wassailing in the Pleasaunce

The community orchard in the East Greenwich Pleasaunce had a winter treat on January 6th, when a crowd gathered to sing to the trees. Wassailing is an ancient tradition, prevalent in cider-making areas of the country. It's an occasion for tending the trees, for making lots of noise to scare any ill-wishing spirits and relieve the gloom of winter, and for enjoying a good drink of cider (or other, less alcoholic drinks!).

A very enthusiastic crew of youngsters delved into the piles of mulch supplied by Greenwich Council's Parks and Open Spaces Department, and helped pile it around the twelve trees. Planted in 2010 and early 2012, the orchard is still very young and will benefit from this care, which keeps the grass from competing for nourishment.

Once the digging was done, the entertainment began. Local resident Peter Hamilton-Dyer led the way through a quirky take on the *Twelve Days of Christmas*, before rushing off to appear in the Globe Theatre's acclaimed production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

Story-telling followed, with tales with an apple theme presented by Nick Hunt and Rich Sylvester. The Charlton-based group Morrigan wove harmonies with traditional wassailing songs before leading a procession among the trees, which were given a little cider to encourage them into new growth.

Traditionally, a wassail can include election of kings and queens; here, children were able to create their own crowns, using leaves and bright Christmas cards to decorate them.

The Holly King, leading the way, wore a truly impressive top hat, and explained that the oak and the holly trees have a friendly rivalry, but that the holly always



PHOTO: Sharon van Goens

Mulching as well as wassailing ....

takes precedence during the winter months. There was more music, from the delightful May Birds, and inspired free-form dancing by Marta Polak, who is studying at the Laban Centre in Deptford.

Naturally, the refreshment of the day was delicious mulled cider, supplied by the Orchard Press Cider Company. Based in Greenwich, its cider maker Morgan Clark-Ward travels the country to find the very best of ciders and perry; he is also often found selling on Greenwich Market. Pistachio's café did a roaring trade in hot food and softer drinks, much appreciated given the chilly weather.

The final procession around the trees was led by Martin Guha of the Charlton Folk Mob, who inspired everyone to raise their voices and beat out the rhythms with sticks of hazel. Singing *Here we come a-wassailing, Among the leaves so green* was a perfect way to see out the holiday period, and to usher in the New Year for the orchard and for the Pleasaunce.

ANNE ROBBINS

Find out more about the Memorial Orchard and how to help nurture it at <http://transitionwestcombe.blogspot.co.uk/> along with other news from Transition Westcombe. Photos of the Wassail, and film of some of the entertainment, can be seen at <https://www.facebook.com/events/443419475721364/>



The Holly King holds forth PHOTO: Gavin McGregor

## Greenwich Housing Society: volunteer needed

For over 50 years, the Society has offered affordable, one bedroom flats at its two sites, Glenluce Road and Heathway, both easily accessible to the Blackheath Standard and all the facilities offered there.

The Society was established to help those of 60 years of age and above and who have a link with the Royal London Borough of Greenwich.

The Society has always been run by a volunteer Management Committee and currently, we are seeking a volunteer to replace our Treasurer who, in due course, will be moving out of London.

The role of the Treasurer is to oversee the finances of the Society. A book keeper and a firm of accountants are employed by

the Society so no day-to-day involvement is required.

The role is one of keeping an overview on the book keeping work and occasional liaison with financial institutions and the Society's bank.

The Treasurer is expected to attend Committee Meetings at Mycenae House 6 - 8 times a year.

If you have a financial background, are interested in joining the Committee or would like further information on the role, please contact our Chairperson, Dorothy Martin on 020 8850 3991 or write to her at the Society's registered address, 12 Glenluce Road, London SE3 7SB.

## 2013: It's Time to Dance!

2013 is Greenwich Dance's 20th anniversary, and there is no better time to sign up for a course. On offer are Flamenco, Contemporary, Lindy Hop, Salsa and Greenwich Dance's brand new Street Dance class Xpress Yo'Self.

Caron Loudy, Artistic Programme Manager at Greenwich Dance said: 'This is a great way to get in shape and try something new. There are so many dance and exercise classes out there, it can sometimes be difficult to know where to start. And don't worry if you've never danced before, all our evening classes are suitable for

complete beginners, and our professional teachers will set you your own pace.'

'Greenwich Dance want to encourage more people than ever get involved – whether that's taking up a new class, joining in at a tea dance or a ceilidh, or just coming to watch. We have something for everyone, from babies to Over 60s, so get down to The Borough Hall and help us make this a year to remember.'

Sessions run from 7.00 - 8.00 pm at The Borough Hall on Royal Hill. To book call Greenwich Dance on 020 8293 9741 visit [www.greenwichdance.org.uk](http://www.greenwichdance.org.uk)

## Parallel Horizons

The Stephen Lawrence Gallery, Queen Anne Court, University of Greenwich, Park Row is showing a new exhibition until the end of February called Parallel Horizons, curated by Saif Osmani.

This is "a multi-disciplinary showcase examining how bamboo has been appropriated in a context of space, in place-making and within the process of establishing national boundaries." Each project "explores cross-cultural interaction and linkages, forged through material and spatial syntax in the formation of cultural codes and future identities across borders."

Hope that's clear. Ed. Contact: 020 8331 8260 or email [slg@gre.ac.uk](mailto:slg@gre.ac.uk) website: [www.stephenlawrencegallery.net](http://www.stephenlawrencegallery.net) Opening Hours: Monday-Friday: 10am-5pm, Saturday: 11am-4pm



PHOTO: Saif Osmani

Bamboo Bridge (Taiwan)

Architect Benjamin Garcia Saxe will be talking about his building made of bamboo in Costa Rica on 18th February, 5.00 - 7.00pm at the Stephen Lawrence Gallery.

# ENVIRONMENT



Planning applications can be viewed in the library, or at the Woolwich Library on the lower ground floor of the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington St. They may also be viewed on [www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning](http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning)

## Stand-off at New Roan Lower School

As we go to press, we learn that Greenwich Council has reluctantly accepted the application to fell the horse-chestnut tree at the NE corner of the John Roan building site in Westcombe Park Road. LAWRENCE SMITH gives the background to this news

When local residents were consulted about the new school building, they were shocked to hear that a Deodar Cedar, the most striking evergreen on the site, was to be felled.

Pressure to preserve such trees was so strong, that a key condition of the Planning Consent for the new school was that the other trees were to be protected. Before excavation was undertaken, the developer was required to survey all the areas subject to excavation using the most appropriate method. The Developer acknowledged that failure to do so could constitute 'negligence'.

A subsequent application to fell the majestic flowering Horse Chestnut at the north-eastern corner of the site understandably triggered a wave of protest. Although the original application had claimed that the design of the sports hall had been revised to mitigate damage to the roots, it was admitted that 'ground penetrating radar' which can precisely locate roots had not been used.

The reason given for felling the tree was that the roots extended unexpectedly into the area needed for excavation for the sports hall. The developer's tree specialist had reported that the tree was healthy, showed vigorous growth, and had many years of life remaining.

The Council at first rejected the developer's application issuing a Tree Protection Order and telling the developer to explore other design options for the sports hall that would preserve the tree in accordance with the planning consent.

However, a new application to fell the tree was submitted without any other design options appearing to have been considered. The developers claimed that any redesign would delay completion of the school and that this would incur costs the school would be unable to bear.

## 'Stop the crossing'

An online petition has been launched to oppose London Mayor Boris Johnson's and Transport for London's plans to build a road tunnel between the Greenwich Peninsula and Silvertown, in effect creating a third Blackwall Tunnel.

The petition is in response to the Bridge the Gap campaign launched by Greenwich and Newham council, which purports to represent local people's views and urges the Mayor to press ahead with the project.

Those who sign the petition will also generate emails to Boris Johnson, TfL, Greenwich Council leader Chris Roberts and Newham's mayor Sir Robin Wales, expressing opposition to the tunnel.

The most recent figures released by City Hall reveal that 150 people died from air pollution in Greenwich borough alone in 2008. Despite this horrifying statistic, Johnson, Roberts and Wales are still keen on funnelling more traffic along the A102 and A2 through Greenwich.

Greenwich's Woolwich Road flyover, the Kidbrooke interchange and Eltham Station are among London's worst spots for air pollution. The scheme's backers claim a third tunnel will relieve congestion. Opponents claim that although there may be some temporary relief northbound, southbound where the A102 and A2 converge, the jams and pollution will be much worse.

Furthermore, the new road will result in more traffic trying to pass through the

The Westcombe Society feel that the costs should have been borne by the developer who should have done an earlier root survey. They also believe that the risk to the tree if the roots were cut is small if the excavation were not beyond the building line. This is stated in the arboricultural report obtained by the developer. The concern is that even if the replacement tree were a different species, it would take many decades to achieve the screening effect of the existing tree.

Nevertheless, Council officers reluctantly recommended that the Greenwich Area Planning Committee should approve the latest application to fell the tree at their meeting on 21st January, despite the many objections residents raised, and the petition to preserve the tree.

Many Greenwich taxpayers resent paying to remedy the developer's failures either by delay to the school or by the loss of the tree. They feel the Planning Board were misled when they were assured at the time of the original application that the tree could be saved. Had the risk to the tree been identified earlier the architects could have been required to redesign the building to accommodate the tree.

As it was, the Greenwich Area Planning committee were put in an impossible position given that a redesign would delay completion resulting in huge costs to the school or a lengthy legal battle with the developers. Sadly, sacrificing the tree may not ensure the Lower School reopens on time, as other elements of the project seem already to have fallen behind schedule.

The critical date is September 2014 when the temporary relocation of students to premises in Royal Hill must finish, and the students will be returning to the Westcombe Park Road site.

The schools's Maze Hill site is due for completion later, in the autumn of 2014.



PHOTO: Jenny Bates of Friends of the Earth  
The Council's campaign to "Bridge the Gap" ran somewhat aground when it was launched on the waterfront in Woolwich – at low tide. So those in attendance were confronted with a banner flaunted above the mud with the legend "No new Roads". The demo was mounted by FoE, Roads To Nowhere and Stop City Airport. This photo appeared on the 853.blogspot.

area, thus negating any temporary benefit a tunnel would bring. The organisers of the petition believe planners should look at alternative schemes to send traffic away.

Petition co-organiser Darryl Chamberlain, of Charlton, says: "I was horrified when I saw this proposal . . . building a new tunnel will make matters worse, not better.

"Local councillors should be defending their communities, but if they won't do that, then hopefully this petition will prove to them just how wrong their decision is, and will give them the opportunity to change their minds."

**Editors' note: For more information, email [silvertowntunnel@yahoo.com](mailto:silvertowntunnel@yahoo.com), or call Adam on 0752 542 3473, or Darryl on 0797 100 3039. The petition can be found at [www.silvertowntunnel.co.uk](http://www.silvertowntunnel.co.uk).**

## New year, new park?

After last year's Olympics, Greenwich Park has been undergoing a substantial reinstatement programme to restore the Park "to its pre-Games condition or better". Graham Dear of Royal Parks anticipates that work will be completed by the end of February.

The final phase of this restoration overlaps with a significant road and pathway revamp which started in January. While the car park remains open, the Park is closed to through traffic (motorists and cyclists) and will remain so for a total of eleven weeks. Works include:

- \* A reduction in the width of the tarmac path in Bower Avenue, described as 'one of the most beautiful historical tree-lined avenues' in the Park – the aim to improve the health of the trees by replacing tarmac close to the roots with turf. There will be a cycle route along the avenue.



- \* Resurfacing of the road network from Blackheath Gate to St. Mary's Gate along with the parking bays on Blackheath Avenue

- \* As part of the Blackheath Avenue works, the crown of the road will be levelled off to improve the experience of visitors using the car park

- \* The Avenue's granite gully on both sides is being relaid

All things being equal, these improvements, along with the completion of work on the Blackheath Gate will see a safer and enhanced Park open in time for Spring.

## Hyde Park today – Greenwich tomorrow?

The Royal Parks have announced a new five year partnership with AEG Live to deliver six summer concerts each year. The income received by The Royal Parks from the concerts will be used to maintain and manage all eight Royal Parks across London.

The Royal Parks are now under Boris Johnson's control "with strong safeguards to protect their traditional character."

The Mayor took over day-to-day management of the eight historic green spaces – including Green Park, Hyde Park and Regent's Park as well as Greenwich – after the Olympics.

There are concerns that the Royal parks will become overly commercialised to the detriment of the local community.

However, the chain of command seems

somewhat murky. In an interview in *Horticulture Week* in September of last year, Linda Lennon said:

"The Royal Parks are an agency of the Government's Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) and we get a grant from them. Boris has appointed a Royal Parks board, which reports to him, while I report to the DCMS but meet with him once a month. We all want the same thing — to protect and preserve the parks for future generations."

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## Christopher's column

### Cutting cornus

Apart from noting what's in flower on January 1st (at home, winter jasmine, buds on summer jasmine, osteospermum and a lone climbing nasturtium; elsewhere choisyas were going strong), this year we have a Feb. 14 deadline to think about.

I'm involved in a cutting garden project: this is funded by the Happy Museum ([www.happymuseumproject.org](http://www.happymuseumproject.org)), which we hope will produce its first blooms for Valentines Day.

We have planted around 5000 bulbs in and around the grounds of the Garden Museum, using mainly early species of narcissus and tulips, bluebells and allium. We have also planted native hedging shrubs within the grounds of the Museum, including three shoulder high winter flowering cherries, which arrived before Christmas when the ground was frozen, but already have blossoms.

Our emphasis for the Happy Museum commission is on creating a winter cutting garden which will provide simple posies and bouquets as an alternative to the supermarkets roses and lilies.



We will use seedheads, stems and buds as well as ivy, and forsythia, early prunus, cornus mas (from the dogwood family) and hazels will all produce flowers and leaves if cut as bare stems and kept indoors in a deep vase (in a coolish room) for a week or two. Over the Christmas period, our stems of willow sprouted roots as well as leaves.

Like the debate about importing ash trees, this project has revealed how tricky it is to buy UK grown plants and especially trees – many are started off here as seedlings, then go to Italy or Holland, to be grown on in natural warmth or polytunnels, only to be imported back into the UK as saplings or fully mature trees.

The question of 'flower miles' – we read that most cut flowers are traded through the Netherlands, regardless of where they are grown – is just one of the issues which an accompanying exhibition 'Floriculture' will consider. It just so happens that it opens on February 14th. . . .

*Flower, Love and money runs from Feb. 14 - April 28 .at the Garden Museum Lambeth Palace Road London SE1. ([www.garden-museum.org.uk](http://www.garden-museum.org.uk))*

*Admission £3 - £7.50.*



Christopher Raven

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**37 GLENLUCE ROAD ref 13/0005/F**  
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**TREE WORKS**

**91 HUMBER ROAD ref 13/0034/TC**  
Fell bay tree at front and eucalyptus at rear. Crown reduce olive by 30%

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**Global Fusion Music and Arts (GFMA)** is celebrating Fair-Trade Fortnight with a free Net-working Event – offering free stall space at Charlton House on Friday 22nd February from 6.30 - 9.30.

Louise says: “Come and be part of this exciting Networking Event! There will be stalls, a photography exhibition and an open mic with music, poetry and dance.”

**Information: 020 8858 9497.**



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