



WestcombeNEWS



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February 2016 Issue 1

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

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

Circus Field: local voices heard

Following an extraordinary number of objections from local residents, amenity societies and organisations, the Royal Borough of Greenwich Events team have withdrawn a Licensing application to the Licensing Committee to extend the number of events on Circus Field (the area of the heath just south of Blackheath Gate).

Cllr Denise Hyland said: "This is a very special part of the borough which we are all determined to protect and to listen to the views of local residents whenever proposals come forward".

The application submitted was for up to five separate events on top of the current usage by circuses and fairs and "in perpetuity", thus reducing the possibility of effective scrutiny and change in future.

To give credit where it is due, when asked, the Council did agree to widen the consultation area so that more residents could be made aware of the proposals, and also extended the deadline for responses to the 18th January: actions which were much appreciated.

So why was the application withdrawn? Certainly, the number of objections has a lot to do with it: many people wrote in to the Council opposing the proposals, and the Westcombe Society collaborated with the Blackheath and Greenwich Societies in jointly urging the Council to withdraw the application pending a fuller discussion and

consultation, which would include the Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP). Cllrs Cherry Parker and Geoffrey Brighty supported the societies' objections.

The main concern was the scope of the application which could potentially have extended the use of the Circus Field for events for an additional 110 days per year (including setup and breakdown days); and, as the application did not give any detail as to the nature of the events planned, it was impossible to estimate their

impact. A number of issues were raised, such as noise, nuisance, additional traffic, pollution and loss of amenity. There was also widespread concern the Circus Field could suffer serious environmental damage due to overuse.

The Council have now agreed to apply for licences on an event-by-event basis. The BJWP have since given conditional approval for the 'In the Night Garden' event to take place later this year on the understanding the site be slightly changed to mitigate the impact for pedestrians. There was also agreement that if the event sought approval for following years its total duration would be reduced.

The Council deserves credit for listening to the public: and the outcome may be regarded as a reaffirmation of the value of the democratic process.

The BJWP meet next at The Bakehouse, Age Exchange at 7.30 pm on Feb. 16th. All welcome.

MAGGIE GRAVELLE

"We need the council to make a New Year Resolution," says IAN BLORE

As reported in the last issue of the *WN*, East Greenwich Residents Association (EGRA) has conducted its own air quality monitoring this year.

Harmful nitrogen dioxide (NO2) was measured at 14 sites over two months, in Spring and Autumn. The results, together with those of the Westcombe Society, the No to Silvertown Tunnel Campaign, and Greenwich Borough, reveal that:

- air pollution is bad, being above legal limits on all major roads
- it has barely improved since 2005
- pollution is bad even in quiet streets
- major new developments (eg. the cruise liner terminal) will make it worse.

Research by Kings College, London estimates that up to one in five of all premature deaths in Greenwich may be attributable to air pollution.

Pollution is also a major contributor to

asthma and heart conditions, and it is a cause of stunted lung development in children. So it is high time that the Council made a New Year's resolution to deal with these issues.

EGRA's draft air quality manifesto recommends 21 actions to tackle bad air. These are set out on page seven of this issue of the *WN*. None are of these actions are magic wands. None are costly, and all must be complemented by London – and nation-wide – measures. They include declaring East Greenwich, or indeed all Greenwich, an ultra-low emission zone, providing greater publicity and traffic-free days, and perhaps planting a tree for every resident killed by air pollution. *See p. 7.*

Note: The World Health Organisation has issued a strong warning about deadly levels of pollution in many of the world's biggest cities, including London.



"Hollyman" aka Rich Sylvester



PHOTO: Jacqui Woodward-Smith

"Wassaille the trees, that they may beare You many a Plum & many a Peare..."

Welcome to the New Year! East Greenwich's fourth annual Wassail took place in January in the Memorial Orchard now established in the Pleasaunce. The sun shone and around 70 people drank "Magic Bus" cider from Kent, danced with Greenwich Morris men and sang along with Charlton-based Morrigan*, dressed in their Victorian "steampunk" outfits! Pistachios cafe supplied warmth, food and drink. Thanks, Lizzie!

Children made "crowns" and "Ivy Queen" and poet Jacqui Woodward-Smith led the children to say a wassail blessing, and place bread dipped in cider on the trees.

Organiser Pip! welcomes help in pruning and weeding the trees – and any creative ideas for Wassail 2017! Contact via Facebook Pip! Planting in the Pleasaunce

* Their CD *As the Crow Flies* can be obtained from <http://www.morrigansong.co.uk>

The Arches to be sold Maggie Gravelle

The purchaser of the former Arches Leisure Centre is to be Meritcape, which is a development company based in Hertfordshire. The company intends to redevelop the property for a non-leisure use, subject to planning consent.

The report to Council states that "the land upon which the Arches Leisure Centre is built is subject to a 1922 covenant that restricts the use of the site to public baths, wash houses and other buildings for Municipal purposes". These purposes "shall not injuriously affect the adjoining

and neighbouring properties of the Vendors." So in principle the developer might have to pay compensation if they were in breach of the covenant. However it is not clear who might make a claim for compensation, a fact which Meritcape have probably considered.

Regret by many local former users of the Arches, but, sadly, no surprise . . .

No development can go ahead without planning permission so the Westcombe Society's Environment Committee will remain vigilant.

Our MP rocks the boat

Politicians come in for a lot of criticism, so it is good to give credit where it is due. At a meeting with members of the Greenwich Society on January 16th, Matt Penycook, described his first hectic nine months as our new MP.

Apart from dealing with constituents' problems in the five surgeries he has every month, he gets some 200 emails every day. Immigration queries alone amount to 200 every week.

At the meeting he expressed concerns about the Council's proposals on Circus Field; he said he had come out against the proposed Silvertown Tunnel, and was appalled at the effects the government's housing bill would have on society.

The *WN* has looked at the work that he has been doing in the House of Commons. Apart from committee work (eg. on the Housing and Planning Public Bill) here are a few samples of his interventions on the floor of the House, as reported in *Hansard*:

In December, our MP commended the government for the part it played in the negotiations on climate change in Paris, pointing out that Britain would need to be more ambitious regarding reductions in emissions: the Government is struggling to meet its renewables target, particularly on heat and transport. He called for more action to decarbonise that sector.

In a long speech in November he raised the question of refugees from Eritrea, which has been described as "the North

Korea of Africa." He cited evidence from one of his constituents, Habte Hagos, who owns and runs the award-winning Blue Nile restaurant in Woolwich.

He called on the government to review the UK's guidance to ensure that asylum is being granted to people who are genuinely being persecuted, in view of detailed UN reports of the oppressive and cruel rule of President Isaias Afwerki.

In October he asked why one of his constituents was arrested for waving a Tibetan flag and called for an investigation into how demonstrations are policed.

He also voted against extending the bombing campaign to Da'esh positions in Syria. In sum, last year, our MP has made 18 interventions in Parliament on such issues as mental health services, child poverty, welfare reform and work, social landlords, off-patent drugs, tax credits for working families, air pollution and the economy. Phew!

WN reporter

Newsbriefs

Happy Birthday, Ursula!

The distinguished architect, and founder and lifetime President of the Greenwich Society, Ursula Bowyer, celebrated her 90th birthday on December 18th. Belated birthday greetings!

Good news

Westcombe Society walkers raised an amazing £972.72 for Macmillan Cancer Support at the London Three Bridges Walk in October; that's in addition to the £700 raised by the Westcombe Society's

coffee morning.

The Westcombe Society has donated £500 to Age Exchange in Blackheath Village to buy 28 urgently needed chairs.

And the International Art Auction organised by the local United Nations Association raised £1200 for the refugee agency UNHCR.

Lewisham against the tunnel

Lewisham Councillors unanimously passed a motion opposing TfL's controversial Silvertown Tunnel. They

claimed it would lead to traffic congestion in the area, and could also affect the health of residents.

The BJWP

The Blackheath Joint Working Party is a consultative body made up of councillors from Lewisham and Greenwich, various amenity societies and other interested bodies. Its remit is to look after the interests of the heath; some members expressed concerns about the Council's Circus Field planning application. (see p.1)

The Westcombe Society

Annual Helpers' Party

Sat 20th February 2016

8.00 - 10.00 pm

in

Mycenae House

All volunteers and helpers at Westcombe Society events are invited to join us!

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ALL EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Neville Grant, The Editor
wnews@westcombesociety.org
Tel. 020 8858 8489

ALL MATERIAL TO BE SENT TO:
wnews@westcombesociety.org

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ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Emily Norton All queries and comments to: 020 8853 2756
environment@westcombesociety.org

DISTRIBUTION Emily Norton and volunteers.

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Marilyn Little, 163 Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP 020 8853 1312
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Detroit Soup comes to Greenwich

The *WN* reports on the visit by the initiator of the International Soup Movement

In November, Amy Kahil, who started the Soup movement in Detroit, visited Mycenae House to run a meeting of Soup organisers from around the country. The meeting explored the different ways of organising Soup events, and led to a very helpful exchange of ideas.

The meeting followed the highly successful Soup event in Mycenae House in September last year. Soup events are a way of gaining support and raising funds for local initiatives that help the community. They are now a worldwide phenomenon. This country alone now has over a 100 local "Soup" projects, and the number is growing. Mycenae Soup was among the first in the UK.

"We were very honoured – chuffed perhaps is the best word – by Amy choosing Mycenae House to host one of her meetings," said Mark Johnson-Brown, manager of Mycenae House.



PHOTO: Neville Grant

PICTURED: Amy Kahil (seated on the floor) and participants from Bristol, Brighton, Wolverhampton and Tower Hamlets. Also in attendance: Mark Johnson-Brown and Barbara Ward from Mycenae Soup (www.mycenaesoup.wordpress.com)

Local History Group Wendy Higgs

The Mycenae House Local History Group has just celebrated its 20th birthday. We meet in term-time on Mondays between 10.15 and 12.15, with a refreshment break mid-morning.

In the Autumn and Spring terms we have talks, usually with overheads, from a number of excellent speakers. In the Summer term we have guided walks and visits to areas of historical interest, often locally but sometimes in central London.

In previous years the subjects have included: Pepys' connections with Greenwich, the Bermondsey Society, the origins of the railways in the South East and a visit to the Bank of England Museum.

Originally the group was part of Further Education at Goldsmiths, but funding was withdrawn in 2005. Participants decided,

with the encouragement of ex-tutor and local historian Diana Rimmel, to continue meeting. And here we are now!

The group is run by volunteers, and we keep our costs as low as possible. Each year a small team of members organises the programme, and contacts and makes arrangements with our speakers.

The current fee for a term is £20. Many of us find meeting up on a Monday morning is a great way to start the week. New members are very welcome and our programme this coming term includes – The Regent's Canal past and present, Dockers go to War, and Plumstead – a village, a common and a Victorian suburb. We meet on the 1st floor at Mycenae House though as yet there is no lift. **Contact details:- Sylvia Eley – 020 8313 3384, and Pat Verity 020 8852 6821**

Architecture Lecture

The Annual Richard Grierson Architecture Lecture on 24th February 2016 is entitled *The Cultures of City-Building*, and will be given by Alison Brooks of Alison Brooks Architects.

Alison Brooks Architects (ABA) won the 2008 Stirling Prize for her Accordia Brass Building for high density housing in Cambridge, and has had a number of other awards. In 2013 Alison Brooks was named Woman Architect of the Year by the *Architects Journal* and in 2014 was named by the *Sunday Times* as one of Britain's most influential people.

She arrived in Britain from Canada in the late 1980s, setting up her own practice in 1996. Alison Brooks is especially known for fine sculptural housing. **Blackheath Halls: Lecture on Wed. 24th Feb. at 8.00 pm. £12 (£10), £6 students**



Letters to the editor

Any views expressed are personal, and are not necessarily those of the *WN* or the Westcombe Society.

G. Bailey Westcombe Park Road
In the past, the *WN* has appeared hostile to the Garden Bridge project in West London, but, it now appears, to no avail: the project is to go ahead. The sticking point was the amount of money pumped into it by TfL.

TfL has now agreed to pay £10 million towards the cost – and is offering a £20 million 'bridging loan' (geddit?) So in Joanna Lumley's words, "It will bring peace and happiness to Londoners who cross the Thames every day."

Not much peace or happiness to those living next to those who cross the Thames every day – such as the inhabitants of Seibert and Invicta Roads. TfL can afford £30 million for a Lumley vanity project, yet says it has "no funds" to help those whose dwellings abut onto the A102 and who continue to suffer noise, air pollution and structural damage to their homes.

TfL have finally succumbed to pressure from Greenwich and promised to provide fencing to mitigate noise reduction – but only if and when the Silvertown Tunnel is constructed: no new tunnel, no noise reduction.

Those residents need a noise abatement scheme *now*, regardless of whether a new tunnel is constructed or not. What do the mayoral candidates Messrs Sadik Khan and Zac Goldsmith have to say on the subject?

From: Edward Field Greenwich

I am writing from an organisation called GoodGym. We are a group of runners who get fit by doing good. We run in groups to help out local community groups, charities and public spaces. You can find out more about how we work on our website here:

<https://www.goodgym.org/about>. You can also watch a short video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGmu8EkiKuY>

We are looking for tasks for our runners to complete. The task can be anything physical that our volunteers can work on for 30 - 45 minutes. Examples include:

- Gardening, weeding and clearing parks or open spaces
- Moving heavy furniture or items
- Painting, sanding or decorating
- Tidying communal areas
- Setting up for events

Interested? Give us a ring: 020 34323920
<http://www.goodgym.org/>

From: Marilyn Little Westcombe Hill

Many thanks to all those who went a-carolling with the Westcombe Society and St George's before Christmas: a total of £238.44 was collected – an amazing sum. Very well done.

The money collected went towards St George's Night Shelter project.

From: Simon Howell Burgess Hill

Last year I helped launch an NHS campaign to get more people talking about organ donation and signing up to the NHS Organ Donor Register. I was filmed for 14 hours to highlight how frustrating it is waiting on the transplant list. It's six weeks later, another Christmas gone, and I'm still waiting for a kidney. And I am not alone, thousands of people are waiting for a transplant in the UK.

I've spent six Christmases in a row waiting on dialysis, and a seventh back before my first failed transplant. Seven out of 41 years. By 2016, I'll be on haemodialysis (where your blood is filtered by a machine). My hope is that 2015 saw my last Christmas on dialysis; that next year I'll have a working transplant and boundless energy to play with my growing kids.

So this New Year, how about making a res-

olution about organ donation? Why not take a moment to turn to your loved one during an advert break and say 'If something happens to me, please let me donate'. Please visit www.organdonation.nhs.uk and sign the register. Give the ultimate gift – and give someone a life. **Editor's Note: Every day, the NHS needs 6000 people to donate blood. At present, 6,578 people are waiting for transplants in the UK.**

From: M. Little Westcombe Hill
Mr. Rose (*WN* Dec.2015) is entitled to his opinion as he unfavourably compares Greenwich Park with Hampstead Heath: but he should compare like with like. Greenwich Park is a park: Hampstead Heath is a heath. It is possibly true, dare one say, that Hampstead Heath compares favourably with the heath here in Blackheath.

But his other views are questionable: for example, varnishing the remains of Elizabeth's Oak would negate the ecological benefits of rotting wood, a haven for insects and wildlife. And we now have a flourishing Elizabeth's Oak planted by Philip, Baron Greenwich, some thirty years ago. I for one greatly prefer the current Cafe in the Park, with its greatly improved menu. But we can agree on the snow: it gives the Park a wonderful ethereal look.

From: Louisa Le Marchand GFMA
Local arts charity Global Fusion Music & Arts needs a Trustee/Treasurer to work closely with the Project Manager overseeing all the financial aspects of GFMA. The appointee would play a key role in the smooth running of the charity, to enable GFMA to provide the important services they give to the community. Please check out our website www.globalfusionarts.co.uk
Please phone 020 8858 9497 or email info@globalfusionarts.co.uk

LOCAL NEWS

Fixed odds betting: licensed to thrill?



Your editor once checked into a hotel in Gaborone, Botswana and was given a room key and two gambling chips for use in the hotel's casino. The casino was not filled with James Bond characters, still less any "Bond girls": for the most part, the clientele were local workers hoping to eke out their earnings by winning some semi-mythical jackpot.

One was a lorry driver who could ill-afford losing his money; still less could he afford to develop a gambling habit. I threw my chips randomly onto a roulette table, drew a blank, and thankfully walked out.

According to a report by London Councils, two hundred years after the first recognisable betting shops appeared in London, fixed odds betting (FOB) terminals are now the biggest source of gambling losses on the high street. The report argues strongly that London's boroughs should have more powers to restrict them.

The report by London Councils – which represents London's 33 local authorities – states that FOB terminals, which allow up to £100 to be wagered every 20 seconds, can seriously harm individuals and their

families, local communities and economies.

In 2014, nearly £459 million was lost and more than 1.5 billion bets – worth £13 billion – were placed on the 7,000-plus terminals in London.

That's a lot of cash down the drain. But FOB terminals can also harm local economies due to 'clustering' of betting shops. This reduces retail diversity, potentially increases anti-social behaviour and can mean less money is spent with local businesses.

London Councils' report outlines the social ill-effects of problem gambling. It recommends measures to support the capital's high streets, including promoting the value of markets and supporting outdoor arts and culture.

Commented a local resident: "We have our own local clusters here around the Standard; let's hope that none of the empty shops in Old Dover Road are turned into betting shops."

The problem gambling treatment charity the Gordon Moody Association estimates that for every problem gambler ten other people are also directly affected.

Desert Island Poems Barbara Ward

In December, a special poetry evening organised by Helen Eastman, the Director of 'Live Canon, in collaboration with Made Greenwich Gallery, the poet

Blake Morrison discussed his chosen Desert Island poems, and each poem was the electrifyingly performed by three 'Live Canon' actors, part of this group specialising in reciting poetry 'from the old canon.' Blake's considered and illuminating discussion of his choice of poems was followed, after cake and mulled wine, by the performance of the seven highest entries from the popular vote – a somewhat surprising 'hit parade' (painstakingly collated by N.J. Hynes) of moving and sometimes humorous works.

Full marks to Blake and Helen, whose dialogue was informative, witty and entertaining, and congratulations to Made in Greenwich and the organisers for a rare and special evening praised by all. Raffle prizes of Champagne, chocolates, wildflower seeds and other 'vital luxuries' for anyone stranded on a desert island had been donated by Poetry Network for SE London as a means to fundraise for its support to future poetry events at Made in Greenwich, and added to the general enjoyment of an exceptional evening. *Blake Morrison's most recent poetry collection is 'Shingle Street' (one of your editor's favourite places on the coast of Suffolk). The collection is described as 'a bravura performance that's also solid and heartfelt' (Observer, March 2015)*

Blake Morrison's Poetry selection:

Philip Larkin - *Dockery and Son*
Ted Hughes - *Daffodils*
Tony Harrison - *Marked with D*
Elizabeth Bishop - *Filling Station*
Thom Gunn - *Touch*
Seamus Heaney - *The Skunk*
Thomas Hardy - *In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'*

The People's Choice:

Daddy - Sylvia Plath
Dulce et Decorum est - Wilfred Owen
Prayer - Carol Ann Duffy
The Sunne Rising - John Donne
Fern Hill - Dylan Thomas
Dover Beach - Matthew Arnold
Snow - Louis MacMeice



PHOTO: Barbara Ward

Helen Eastman talking to Blake Morrison

From Frank with love

A special Valentines event takes place on February 11th at the Greenwich Heritage Centre in Royal Woolwich Arsenal. The romantic evening performance of 'Your Devoted Frank', follows the true story of Frank O'Keefe and his sweetheart, May O'Malley.

Frank O'Keefe was an armourer in France during the First World War and he wrote to May almost every day. In this performance visitors can hear their love story, taken from handwritten letters which are stored in the Heritage Centre archives. The event which takes place on Thursday 11th February from 6 - 7pm includes a free glass of Prosecco, a piece of wedding cake and the opportunity to visit the Heritage Centre exhibitions.

Tickets £5.00 Book online:
<http://yourdevotedfrank.eventbrite.co.uk>
Tickets also available on the door.

Improving the odds

The *WN* has learnt that town centre locals are spending almost £50,000 a week gambling on one armed bandits.

The council is stepping up its efforts to tackle gambling-related problems and protect vulnerable residents by launching a new pilot scheme in General Gordon Square, Woolwich.

Betwatch will see the council working with the Met Police and local betting shops to share information related to crime and antisocial behaviour.

Woolwich town centre currently hosts 48 fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) which are making an average of £1000 profit a week each. Punters can place bets of £100 a time on the casino-style betting machines. The council is now taking part in a larger campaign to restrict the stakes on FOBTs to £2.00.

For further information on gambling responsibly, visit www.gambleaware.co.uk. Think you may have a problem? Go to: <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk/>

Libraries under threat?

Greenwich Conservative councillors have warned against what they see as Greenwich Council's "creeping centralisation" of library services in the Woolwich, Greenwich and Eltham Centres.

They have proposed a new 'Library Lock' policy to protect smaller libraries and combat the centralisation process.

The move follows the council's recent decision to consult on closing the Greenwich mobile library service. There is also growing concern for the future of the eight smaller libraries in the borough in New Eltham, Coldharbour, Charlton, Blackheath, Plumstead, Slade Centre, Thamesmere and West Greenwich.

In a move described as 'ominous', a separate report on the performance of the library service focused almost entirely on the larger 'co-located' libraries in the Woolwich Centre and Eltham Centre.

These two large libraries have now been joined by the Greenwich Centre, which has absorbed the East Greenwich Library. A

new library at Abbey Wood as part of the Crossrail development is also proposed.

A local resident was "horrified" at the thought of losing the local library in Old Dover Road. "We ought to organise a petition if that happens," she said.

The Royal Borough is proposing redesigning the existing Library Outreach Service, which currently stops at 18 roadside locations, 6 primary schools and 27 nurseries, and issues 30,000 items a year. The plan would be to focus on vulnerable house-bound residents who need the service the most. Some staff claim that this is the thin-end of the wedge, leading to cuts in library services.

The Council also propose investment in new technology and tablet computers to allow customers to see the full library catalogue in their home, allowing them to select from the full range of material on offer, rather than the more limited choice available within the confines of the current mobile library vehicle.

The closing date for comments is Friday 18th March 2016.

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Merriel "Peggy" Hawkes

We are very sorry to record the death of Mrs Merriel Hawkes ("Peggy"), who for over forty years ran Pegga Stores, one of the best little shops in the Standard. Its striped awning and decorative metal grill made its own distinct statement on the street.

Peggy was always full of fun: she was a semi-professional dancer who entertained troops in the war, before settling down and getting married.

She was best-known for her shop, a tribute to her good taste. There she stocked an amazing range of first-class items, from calendars and diaries with Art Nouveau designs to greetings cards

and wrapping paper – and very attractive small gifts to go inside the wrapping paper.

Merriel Hawkes was almost always there, always ready for a friendly chat, active almost to the end of her years, (her 90th birthday was to have been in January).

Merriel Hawkes came from a well-known Blackheath family – her father, Mr Boon, paid for the shelter on the Standard that was sadly demolished some years ago, as it was vandalised, and attracted street people who some locals found threatening.

The funeral was on January 11th. Our deepest condolences to her husband and family.

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FEATURES

BOOK
REVIEW

The Establishment – and how they get away with it

Peter Greaves reviews *The Establishment – And how they get away with it* By Owen Jones, 2014, 2015

According to the author, “Today’s Establishment is made up – as it has always been – of powerful groups that need to protect their position in a democracy... (It) represents an attempt... to ‘manage’ democracy, to make sure that it does not threaten their own interests....”

Just who are “they”? Jones writes: “The Establishment includes politicians who make laws; media barons who set the terms of debate; businesses and financiers who run the economy; police forces that enforce a law which is rigged in favour of the powerful... It is unified by a common mentality... ‘Because I’m worth it.’”

The term was brought into common usage by Henry Fairlie writing controversially in 1955, meaning “a network of powerful people who socialised together, looked out for and helped each other as the need arose.” At that time, there was a belief, in that era of welfare capitalism, that active government was necessary for a healthy, stable society.

However, there were others, such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, arguing for “laissez-faire at home and free trade abroad – or, to put it another way, the diminishing of state intervention in economic affairs.”

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) founded in 1955, pushed free-market ideas in what was at the time a hostile political climate. Other think tanks appeared, including the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) founded in 1974 by Thatcher and Keith Joseph, and the Adam Smith Institute founded in 1977, followed later by the right-wing Tax Payers Alliance, Reform, Policy Exchange – with Michael Gove its founding chairman. All have less than transparent funding. (“A lonely exception to these organizations is the New Economics Foundation (NEF), a progressive think tank that remains studiously ignored by most mainstream media.”)

These groups and their ilk connect together the worlds of business, politics and the media, abetted by a revolving door culture; their views have not so much entered mainstream intellectual opinion: they have become the mainstream.

Jones proceeds to examine in great detail the ways in which the Establishment in its current manifestation operates, in chapters headed *The Westminster Cartel*, *Mediaocracy*, *The Boys in Blue*, *Scrounging off the State*, *Tycoons and Tax-Dodgers*, *Masters of the Universe* (the banks), and *The Illusions of Sovereignty*.

He has a remarkable ability to engage positively with the hundreds of people he has interviewed, and to present their positions fairly but often devastatingly.

The book has had rave reviews. Richard Godwin in the *Evening Standard* wrote: “...the sections on corporate tax-avoidance, the lobbying industry and the sell-off of the NHS ought to have genuine British taxpayers spitting with rage. Jones ultimately sees his Establishment not as the guardians of British values but as a threat to them.” This reviewer was frequently filled with fury as he read.

A frequent refrain in the text: the tax payer shoulders the risk, while the profit is privatised. One example: “Between 2007 and 2011 alone, the UK’s five largest rail companies received nearly £3 billion in state subsidies... The five companies enjoyed operating profits of more than half a billion pounds in this four-year period, nearly all of which was paid out in dividends to shareholders.”

Businesses depend on a state-funded education system to train their workers, and continually lobby for the state to tailor education to suit the needs of employers. There is a fundamental contradiction in the Establishment’s position: while it seeks an ever smaller state, it nevertheless relies entirely on the state when crises occur – as with the banking sector.

The mantra of the Establishment – There Is No Alternative – has to be challenged. As Owen Jones writes in his foreword to the updated 2015 paperback edition: “One day, this Establishment will fall. It will not do so on its own terms or of its own accord, but because it has been removed by a movement with a credible alternative that inspires. For those of us who want a different sort of society, it is surely time to get our act together.”

A version of this review first appeared in the magazine *Prospero* (the *Journal of New Thinking in Philosophy of Education*)

Painters and the Park

Pieter van der Merwe MBE DL, General Editor for Royal Museums Greenwich, will be giving an illustrated lecture about the artists who, since the 17th century, have been inspired by the Park.

Sunday 21st February 2016 at 11.00am
The King William Lecture Theatre,
University of Greenwich, at the Old Royal Naval College Tickets are £10 (to include a glass of wine) from Friends of Greenwich Park, 3 Orchard Drive, SE3 0QP (tel 020 8852 8831) or on the door at 10.30am.

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How dance can tell a story of love, loss and creation



PHOTO:
Chris
Nash

In immersive theatre, the audience become part of the performance. But immersive dance? Why not? Up-and-coming choreographer Tara D’Arquian presents her new immersive dance drama *Quests*, a site-sensitive work set in the many spaces of the Borough Halls at Greenwich Dance. *Quests* is the second part of the *In Situ Trilogy*, an exploration of the multiplicity of identity.

Guided through the building by the performers, the audience (separated into groups) will sway between the reality, memory and dreams of the director and they themselves become characters in the story. D’Arquian’s company of dancers and actors will be joined by two casts of 20 volunteer performers of different ages and backgrounds, drawn from the community around Greenwich Dance, dancing to a new score by Bruno Humberto and Philippe Lenzini. **Greenwich Dance from 17th to 20th February 7.30 pm**

Outlawing domestic violence

Domestic abuse can take many forms: research indicates that in their lifetime, one woman in every four in the UK will be affected by it. Domestic violence happens across all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Overwhelmingly, it is women, not men who suffer from it.

Women’s specialist services – including women’s refuges – have had very serious funding cuts: from 2010 - 2012 there were cuts of some 31% by local authorities, and further cuts have taken place since. In 2014, 6,428 women were turned away from refuges due to lack of space: there were 3,652 women for every refuge bed.*

In Greenwich, the council is reminding residents who experience or witness abuse about the range of advice and support available as part of its ongoing campaign to tackle the problem.

By the summer of 2016 the royal borough will have invested £675,000 in the campaign designed to support victims and encourage perpetrators to get help.

Support services are co-ordinated under the Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse Service (GDVA) which works with a range of organisations to help families move on from abusive and violent relationships. They include the council-funded Domestic Violence Intervention Team (DVIT) based at Plumstead Police Station. The team provides an emergency response, and follow-up support, and directs victims

to other organisations that can help.

It also works with perpetrators who want to change their ways by directing them to services that can help.

Housing for Women is a charity and housing association which last month celebrated 40 years of supporting women in London. The group has five refuges in the borough and runs a domestic violence helpline. Their helpline is 0208 317 8273. (10.00am to 4.00pm, Mon-Fri). In an emergency always call 999.

The Her Centre in Woolwich supports more than 1,000 local women offering free and confidential advocacy, counselling, and emergency housing to women victims – and men, too. Call 020 3260 7772.

Cllr Jackie Smith said: “The message is clear – the actions of those who engage in abusive and violent behaviour are damaging and totally unacceptable. The council is committed to standing alongside victims, giving them support while taking the strongest action against perpetrators.”

For more information, visit www.royal-greenwich.gov.uk/domesticviolence
*** Figures come from Solace Women’s Aid www.solacewomensaid.org**
Freephone helpline: 0808 802 5565
NOTE: From Dec. 29th 2015, coercive or controlling domestic abuse became a crime punishable for up to five years in prison. Domestic abuse cases in England & Wales rose by 31% from 2013 - 2015.

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WHAT'S ON



ARTS

NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM
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BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE FINE ARTS SOCIETY 4th Thursday of every month St Mary's Church Cresswell Park. **Thurs 25th Feb. 2.00pm** for 2.30pm **Susie Harries' Stories in Stained Glass: extraordinary subjects in stained glass**

GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS
King William Court, University of Greenwich
Mon 8th Feb. 8.00 pm Anthony Gormley and Anish Kapoor Lecture by Rosalind Whyte
 Explores the common ground between the two artists

MADE IN GREENWICH GALLERY
324 Creek Rd SE10 Thurs 11th Feb.- 7.30pm
 'Valentine for Nature' event Haiku! - try haiku in a fun way Fiona Moore, Mick Delap, Graham High Gail Cotton et al **11th - 14th Feb.** Other nature related events www.madeingreenwich.co.uk

FAN MUSEUM 12, Crooms Hill
Sat 16th Jan - Sat 05th June 10am-5pm
 'Treasures of the Fan Museum' Exhibition
 Celebrating the museum's twenty fifth anniversary

CHILDREN & FAMILY

MYCENAE HOUSE
Sat 6th Feb. 3.00 pm The Boy who Bit Picasso by Untied Artists. (70 minutes) Age 4+. Tickets £7.00

GREENWICH THEATRE CROOMS HILL, LONDON SE10 8ES BOX OFFICE 8858 7755
Sat 6th Feb. 2.00pm The Sorcerer's Apprentice
 A little boy dreams of being a world class magician £13.50/ Children £8.50

Mon 8th-Thurs 11th 7.30pm The Girl Who Fell in Love with the Moon Puppets, poetry, movement & live music £16 (cones £13.50)

Sat 13th & 14th Feb - The Lost Things A boy's magical journey into the world of lost things,
Mon 15th Feb. -12pm & 3pm Hans Christian Anderson tale of the misfit duckling. Puppet characters, live music & story telling, £11 (children £8.50)

Thurs 18th Feb. Rapunzel: a family musical

BLACKHEATH HALLS Children's Theatre
22 Lee Road, London SE3 9RQ Recital Room,
Sat. 20th Feb 3.00pm The Ugly Duckling Hans Christian Anderson tale with shadow puppetry & live music. A magical show for the whole family £7.00

SHERINGTON CHILDREN'S CENTRE
DAD'S STAY AND PLAY session every Wednesday 9.30-11.30 Sherington Childrens Centre, all Home Dads welcome. Address: 14 Sherington Road, Charlton SE7 7JW (0208 853 0900). Continues even in school holidays and half-term. **Contact Dan Hall on daniel.hall1985@hotmail.co.uk for more details.** www.selondondads.org.uk

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SARAH CALLAGHAN
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'Herring is hilarious'
 The Guardian

Sat 27 February at 8pm
Tickets: £ 14/12

BLACKHEATH HALLS

23 Lee Road, Blackheath, SE3 9RQ



THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

All events are in the Main Hall of Mycenae House unless otherwise stated:
 * **Helpers' Party Sat 20th February**
 * **Daffodil Tea Sat 19th March**
Easter Egg Hunt - Sat 26th March Mycenae Gardens. (The toilets and bar open)
Spring Quiz - Fri 15th April
Spring Nearly New Sale - Sat 23rd April
AGM May, date and venue to be confirmed
Members' Evening - Fri 17th June
Summer Picnic Sat 25th June Mycenae Gardens
Macmillan Coffee Morning - Fri 23rd Sept.
Autumn Nearly New Sale - Sat 24th September
Chrysanthemum Tea - Sat 15th October
Autumn Quiz - Friday 4th November

* **The Helpers' Party and Daffodil Tea are by invitation however anyone who doesn't receive an invitation and who would like to come to either event, please let us know.**
Helpers' Party: ring Joanne on 07709 571777
Daffodil Tea: ring Caroline on 020 8853 0948.

COMMUNITY

WESTCOMBE WOODLANDS
www.westcombewoodlands.org
 The next volunteer days are Sunday 7th Feb. and Sat. 5th March.

WESTCOMBE WRITERS GROUP 1st Thursday monthly- 2.30pm -4.30pm Mycenae House
 Contact: Rosemary Gill 0208 858 5088

BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon. & Thurs. 7.15 pm & on Wed. at 1.15 Tel. Ron on 0208-319-1312

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

GLOBAL FUSION MUSIC & ARTS.
Free workshops Fortnightly Tuesday & Friday evenings 7.30 - 8.30 at Mascalls Meeting Rooms off Victoria Way Charlton SE7 7TT: Tai Chi. Singing, Drumming, Writers' Group, African Dance Info: 020 8858 9497

GREENWICH MORRISMEN
 Meet every Thursday at 8.00 pm in Mycenae House. Newcomers welcome.

SPOKEN WORD

BLACKHEATH FLOWER ARRANGING SOCIETY 3rd Friday of each month Mycenae House
 19th February 2.00 pm: **Christine Saunders - It's Child's Play** siancaroline@googlemail.com

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Tues 16th Feb David Ramzam Sports History in Greenwich Meeting at The Old Bakehouse, Bennett Park, SE3. Please use the station car park. Non members £1. Greenwichindustrialhistory.blogspot.co.uk

BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY
FRIDAY LECTURES AT 7.45pm Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road, SE3 7SE Visitors are welcome at all meetings, and are requested to donate £3 to the Society. Next meeting: **Feb 19th Energy Storage** - talk by **Prof Maria-Magdalena Titirici, Queen Mary College**

BLACKHEATH HALLS
23, Lee Rd, Blackheath SE3 9RQ
Wed 24th Feb 20: 00 Richard Grierson Annual Architecture Distinguished architect **Alison Brooks** talks on **The Cultures of City Building**
£12/£10 Concessions. £6 Students

Fair-Trade Fortnight Event



Sat. 27th Feb. 7.30 - 10.30 pm
Mycenae House
 Global Fusion Music & Arts marks the beginning of Fair-Trade Fortnight with an event in Mycenae House. Stalls include: Clothing, food, instruments, gifts, and arts. You can even get a massage. There will short talk about Fair-Trade Fortnight - and the ethos of Fairtrade products.

But it's not just stalls and talks, there will also be dance, music and poetry. Topping the bill will be the amazing Kora player Mosi Conde from Guinea and if you fancy trying your hand at drumming or Tai Chi, there will be some fun taster sessions.

GFMA project Manager Louisa Le Marchand said their previous Fair-Trade Fortnight Events have been a great success. "People really got into the spirit of things so come along and join us!"

Admission £7 Info: 8858 9497 | 07976 941435
Email: info@globalfusionarts.co.uk

THEATRE

THE GREENWICH THEATRE Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8ES 020 8858 7755
Thu 25 & Fri 26 Feb 7.30pm
Boys with Be Boys Inspired by the Everyday Sexism Project An exploration of what it means to be a teenage girl in 2016, 'Quick witted & insightful' £11.00 Concs £6.00

Wed 17th Feb. The Gambler: the 10 greatest bets in history

March 1st - 5th. Three Generations of Women
THE SPACE 269 Westferry Road E14 3RS Tel: 020 7515 7799 Feb. 4th 7.00 pm **Spring Season Launch Party:** your chance to preview upcoming events over a glass of fizz! £10.00

THE ONE FESTIVAL
10th - 20th February 7.30pm (2.00 pm matinees)
 New acting, writing and directing talent, showcasing monologues from many theatre professionals.

23rd - 27th Feb. ASH by Brie a Brac. Don't try to give up smoking - laugh it off!
ALEXANDRA PLAYERS Bramshot Avenue
Wed 17th to Sat 20th Feb. 8.00 pm **Cat's Cradle:** The Alexandra Players present this exciting murder-mystery by Leslie Sands. The play features D.I. Jack Frost. £9 (£8 cones). Tickets: 07867 627 987 or alexandrayers@gmail.org.uk

MUSIC

BLACKHEATH HALLS 23 Lee Road, SE3 9RQ; box office +44 (0)20 8463 0100
Thu 4th Feb. 7.30 pm TRINITY LABAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Great Hall perform dramatic Austro-German works. £12.00 | £7.00
Wed 10th Feb 7.30pm
Jette Parker Young Artists Recitals
 Rising stars of the Royal Opera House sing repertory followed by operatic arias and duets £7.00 | £5.00

BLACKHEATH SUNDAYS
Sun 14th Feb. Programme includes Rachmaninov's sonata for cello & piano
Sun 28th Feb 11.00 Return of Young-Choon Park South Korean pianist £14 |£12 Concs
Sun 28 Feb. 6.30 pm **BLACKHEATH HALLS ORCHESTRA** Conductor Leigh O'Hara perform Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No.1 in B flat minor, Op.23 (Piano Yevgeny Samoyloff) and: Rachmaninov Symph. No.2 £10 |£8 £5 under 12s

STEINBERG MUSIC STUDIO,
 137, Vanbrugh Hill, London SE10 9HP
Sun 28th Feb. 6.00pm Steinberg Duo play Bohemian Quartet: Czech works for Violin & Piano £10.00

MYCENAE HOUSE LIVE EVENTS: FEBRUARY - MARCH

Sat 6th Feb. 3.00 pm The Boy Who Bit Picasso. An interactive theatre show for everyone aged four and up with storytelling, music and DIY art. £7.00

Thurs 11th Feb. 4.00pm Bach To Baby. Classical Concert for Baby and You.

Fri 12th Feb. 8.00pm JazzNights. Candlelit Live Jazz hosted by Dave Silk £10

Fri 19th Feb. 8.00pm Mycenae Comedy Club. Stand-up comedy from rising stars £10.00

Fri 26th Feb. 8.00pm - Phil Beer A top flight fiddler, Phil plays in the all-star line up Feast of Fiddles and one half of Show of Hnads. £18.00.

Sat 27th Feb. 7.00pm - Fairtrade Fortnight Event. Hosted by Global Fusion Music & Arts with visiting artist from Kenya, Apelles Ogaga. £7.00

Fri 4th March 8.00pm - Miranda Sykes & Rex Preston. This rare fusion of double bass & mandolin makes for one of the most exciting new pairings on the acoustic roots scene. "Something special" - FOLKING.COM £12.00

For further information about all Mycenae House events and to buy tickets visit www.mycenaehouse.co.uk

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FEATURES

When does a “safe space” become “unsafe”?

In this article, NEVILLE GRANT regrets that free speech in our universities is under threat

IN March last year, the *WN* reported that Comedian Kate Smurthwaite had been disinvented to a gig in Goldsmiths because she had an opinion differing from that of the Students' Union. The Students Union had a policy of defending workers' rights: it was held that Kate Smurthwaite's views on prostitution were “unacceptable.”

Her views? She thought that prostitutes should not be prosecuted: and instead, their clients should feel the heavy hand of the law. According to the union this breached sex workers' rights. A sex worker and campaigner known as Molly Coddle came out in support of their stance.

You couldn't make it up.

It is ironic that Kate Smurthwaite had chosen “free speech” as the theme of her gig. Many observers take the view that Smurthwaite's proposition was an entirely valid one for a public debate – and where better, outside Parliament, than a university campus?

Well, no: university campuses are becoming “safe spaces” when (in theory) any views that might upset anyone are not allowed to be expressed.

Cards on the table at this point: I am a white middle class man very happy to be living in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society, where almost all of the time, we all rub along very happily together, enjoying our differences, and celebrating our similarities. Does this mean that people of my gender and race can find a safe space on the campus of Goldsmiths University?

The reason why this question arises is because last year, one faction of Goldsmiths Students' Union hosted a screening of the film *Dear White People* and advertised it as being only ‘for BME students’. BME stands for ‘black and minority ethnic’ – and the poster specified that the screening was for students of ‘African, Caribbean, Arab, Asian and South American ethnic origin’.

The announcement came from the union's Welfare and Diversity officer, Ms Bahar Mustafa, and education officer Sarah El-Alfy.

This seems to have become par for the course at Goldsmiths: earlier in the year, Ms Mustafa had convened a conference on “diversifying the curriculum”, which also

excluded white people. And, again, white people were asked not to take part in a demonstration against inequality.

On the event page she wrote: “If you've been invited and you're a man and/or white PLEASE DON'T COME.”

The dam broke when the popular press revealed that she had tweeted under the hashtag #KillAllWhiteMen. As she told *Vice**, that hashtag “is something that a lot of people in the feminist community use to express frustration.” She has often expressed her abhorrence of racism, misogyny and homophobia, and her use of the hashtag seems to have been an ironic reference to a #killallmuslims hashtag that was appearing on social media at the time.

Ms Mustafa said it was really only a joke, though she conceded that her use of the term “white trash” in one of her tweets was “unprofessional.” Apparently, the police did not get the joke, and Ms Mustafa was summonsed to appear in court. The case was later dropped.

Bullied and harassed

Last November, The President of Goldsmiths Student Union Adrihani Rashid resigned because she was allegedly bullied and harassed by Alex Etches, Campaigns and Activities Officer, and to a lesser extent by Bahar Mustafa. Both Alex Etches and Bahar Mustafa then stepped down amid allegations that they created a “hostile working environment.”

As one of the generation who fought and campaigned against apartheid all this was unbelievable.

Goldsmiths Students' Union claims to subscribe to the notion that a university should be a ‘safe space’. I looked up “safe space” on the internet, and almost every site I visited defined (possibly oxymoronic) it as “A place where anyone can relax and be fully self-expressed, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable.”

So the question arises, who would feel “safe” in a “racially-segregated space?” And what prejudices would one have to have to assume that a space could only be



Bahar Mustafa

was giving a talk on campus on “Apostasy, blasphemy and free expression in the age of ISIS [Isil]” following an invitation from the Atheist, Secularist and Humanist Society (ASH).

Ms Namazie was heckled and almost shouted down by members of Goldsmiths Islamic Society (GIS): her powerpoint projector was sabotaged, and she received death threats. Security officers had to come in to guard her. (One can view the whole episode on YouTube). So much for safe spaces . . .

The GIS wrote to ASH attacking her “bigoted views,” and issued a statement: “As an Islamic society, we feel extremely uncomfortable by the fact that you [ASH] have invited Maryam Namazie. As you very well probably know, she is renowned for being Islamophobic, and very controversial . . . we feel such an individual will violate our safe space.”

The President of Goldsmiths' ASH society had sent an email invitation to the Islamic society's president “because I wanted them to be included in Maryam's talk and the ensuing discussion,” but, he said, “the group “had responded to my email with a thinly veiled threat asking me to call off the event on the grounds that it violated the safe space policy.”

He accused some in the Goldsmiths Islamic Society (GIS) of making non-Isoc members who wished to have a “safe space” to discuss dissenting ideas about religion feel “unsafe”.

Ms Namazie was very familiar with the notion of bigotry, having fled from Iran's repressive government. As a fierce campaigner against Islamic extremism, she bravely went ahead with the talk.

A university “cannot be a safe place”

Later, she said: “Safe places can be a good thing for women who face violence but a university cannot be a safe place. It needs

to be an unsafe place where people learn to question ideas they have taken for granted. If we cannot have free and open debates at universities, where else can we have them?”

Not everyone agrees on what a “safe space” might be. Goldsmiths Islamic Society has previously hosted a number of radical speakers. Namazie also told *London Student*: “This very group which absurdly speaks of “safe spaces” has in the past invited Hamza Tzortzis of IERA [Islamic Education and Research Academy] which says the beheading of apostates is painless and Moazem Begg of Cage Prisoners that advocates “defensive jihad”. Tzortzis has also claimed that “We as Muslims reject the idea of freedom of speech.” (IERA is currently under investigation by the Charities Commission.)

Namazie said despite the “many attempts at disruption the meeting ended successfully and raised critical issues, including that criticism of Islam and Islamism are not bigotry against Muslims – often the first victims of Islamism.”

Incidents such as those briefly described here make the concept of “safe spaces” almost Kafka-esque, very sad in view of Goldsmiths' long tradition of encouraging free expression and open debate. As a spokesperson for the university said:

“[The university] supports freedom of speech. The university follows a set of regulations to help ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the university and for visiting speakers.”

To be fair, this problem is not just Goldsmiths' problem: Oxford University cancelled a debate on abortion; Germaine Greer was banned from some campuses because of some of her views; UCL banned the Nietzsche Club because it put up posters saying “equality is a false God”, and Dundee refused to allow the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children to attend their freshers' fair.

It seems to me that when choosing a university one should look not merely at its entrance requirements, and the quality of courses on offer: one should also be looking at whether it is indeed a safe place where one can freely explore ideas without being bullied, harassed or threatened.



Half Term Events

Wednesday 17th February
Sparrow Detectives
 1pm-3pm £2.50 per child

Where have all the sparrows gone? The number of house sparrows in London has decreased but why? Become a detective for the afternoon and go on our farmyard trail to discover what has happened and how we can help the sparrows.

No need to book just drop in between 1pm-3pm to collect your detective pack.
 For more information call 020 8319 8900



Thursday 18th February
Farmer Duck Day
 10am-12pm and 1pm-3pm £4 per child

Join us for a day to hear the story of 'Farmer Duck'. We will find out about all the jobs he has to do on the farm before we explore the farmyard to find all the animals from the story. Then make your own farm animal to take home with you. Booking essential, to book call 020 8319 8900



Friday 19th February
Get Wild in the Woods
 11am-1pm and 2pm-4pm £4 per child (Age 7+)

Come and join us in the woods as we learn how to survive in the wild. Have a go at shelter-building, wild cooking over a fire and learn what animals need to survive.

Booking essential, to book call 020 8319 8900



For more information on these events or to book please contact the Farm on 020 8319 8900 or email education@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org
 Parking is limited so please use public transport where possible.
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* *Vice* is a free magazine that deals with issues often ignored by the mainstream media (but not the *WN*). Its website is vice.com

THE CASE FOR RADICAL CHANGE IN EDUCATION

This report was prepared by the PER Group to send to the political parties in May. It has forewords by Sir Anthony Seldon, Richard Harries and Frank Furedi

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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

“Hope is the thing with feathers . . .” said Emily Dickinson

Residents of Siebert Road and Westcombe Hill whose homes back onto the busy A102 Blackwall Tunnel southern approach road are to have noise reduction fencing fitted at the end of their gardens. This news follows after the Royal Borough’s campaign to have them installed.

When the road was built, properties that back onto it weren't provided with fences to protect them from traffic noise, due to different standards in force at the time. Residents have long complained about the exceptional traffic noise levels.

The residents and the Council have been pressing Transport for London (TfL), which now manages the road, for noise barriers for a number of years. Recently the Council redoubled its pressure on TfL, with talks held between the Council leadership and senior TfL management, which resulted in TfL conducting feasibility studies to look at installing some kind of

sound-proofing system.

Late last year TfL announced that although there was no requirement to provide noise barriers, they will provide them as part of the Silvertown Tunnel project, if and when the project gets its approval - at a cost of nearly £1million.

This new development is good news for the residents, although it will still be dependent on approval of TfL’s Silvertown tunnel plans.

Cllr Danny Thorpe, Cabinet member for Regeneration and Transport, said: “I am very pleased that Transport for London has responded to Council pressure after all this time. A million pounds is a large and welcome investment but the residents have been suffering from noise from one of London’s busiest roads for too long. We now need to convince TfL to separate the issue from decisions on the Silvertown Tunnel and install the barrier as the earliest opportunity.”

Blackheath is celebrating the tenth anniversary of the renovation of the Prince of Wales pond with a second phase of environmental improvements.

The aim of the recent project is to soften the rather stark appearance of the pond, increase bio-diversity – and provide additional habitats for the resident and visiting wildfowl. Immigrants are welcome here!

Two new pre-planted islands have been installed, together with aquatic planting (Purple Loosestrife, Yellow Flag Iris, Rush, Sedge and Reed Grass) along the South Row pond edge. This planting was further enhanced in late November with a native hedge of whips along the Prince of Wales Road boundary and a similar island bed to the east of the pond.

Grateful thanks to the Blackheath Joint Working Party, its chair, Cllr Kevin Bonavia, and the Blackheath Society for their huge input; to a local philanthropist for contributing so generously to the cost

Improving the pond



PHOTO: Roger Marshall

of the works; and to the contractor for so patiently dealing with the vagaries of the weather, tree root blockages and multiple punctures!

Residents and visitors should note that the protective netting and supports along South Row and on the new islands will be removed as soon as the planting is sufficiently established to withstand the attentions of the Canadian Geese and swans.

SHIRLEY BROUGHTON

BAD AIR in Greenwich

In the last issue of the WN, we published a report by Ian Blore of the East Greenwich Residents’ Association. EGRA has now produced this draft manifesto.

Why Urgent Action is Needed

Part 1 of EGRA’s air quality report revealed the extent to which our air is polluted. Part 2 – this draft manifesto – offers possible and affordable actions. Most are about traffic; that’s because 80% of air pollution is from motor vehicles.

EGRA has consistently warned against over-burdening our precious infrastructure with over-development. This includes our air. Professionals, developers and the Council have dismissed these warnings. They are now coming true, in packed buses, traffic, sewerage and poorer air quality (AQ). And this is well before the biggest developments come on stream.

The suggestions below are designed to complement London-wide proposals such as those by Clean Air London, and national initiatives following the Supreme Court ruling this year and the VW diesel scandal.

What Greenwich Needs to Do:

Enhance Public Understanding

- better monitoring and publicity of (especially Background) air quality (AQ), and the impact of major developments
- electronic displays of AQ at key points (eg Greenwich Square, Trafalgar Road)
- school-based sample monitoring projects
- traffic-free day(s) for Woolwich/Trafalgar Roads

Improve Public and Active Transport

- cleaner buses, taxis and PHVs
- smarter rescheduling of bus routes to match demand changes (eg the Sainsbury relocation)

- review the future of public transport links

Green Greenwich

- plant (permanently or in planters) more appropriate trees. eg. one tree for every death caused by air pollution since 2010
- protect (the few) remaining green spaces and pocket parks

Update the Clean Air Framework

- stop the use of diesel generators to supply the grid
- ban biomass and waste burning
- ban incinerators
- ensure any power generation or district heating use ultra-low nitrous oxides treatment

- use European Union grants to help install onshore power supply for berthed ships

Civilise Road Traffic

- declare East Greenwich (or the Borough) an Ultra-Low Emissions Zone
- reduce weight limit on Romney Road and extend to Woolwich/Trafalgar Roads
- charge more for diesel vehicle parking
- make all East Greenwich a 20mph zone (City Report)
- launch a rolling replacement of Council diesel vehicles where appropriate
- enlist citizen involvement in policing idling vehicles

This menu is not a magic wand that will clear our air overnight. It is better than doing nothing, which appears to be the current policy.



Monthly Walks 2016

join us for our monthly guided walks

- Sunday 17 January - Mid-Winter Walk
- Sunday 14 February - St. Valentine’s Walk
- Sunday 20 March - Spring Equinox Walk
- Sunday 17 April - Young Shoots & New Lambs Walk
- Sunday 15 May - Hedgerow Blossom Walk
- Sunday 19 June - Midsummer Hay Meadow Walk
- Sunday 17 July - Hay-making Walk

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