



NEWSLETTER ■ SPRING 2018

## VILLAGE SHOP CLOSURES RAISE CONCERNS

Concerns have been raised regarding the large number of recent shop closures in the Village, mainly due to higher rents and business rates.

A sharp increase in internet shopping and economic recession have also clearly contributed to widespread shop closures in High Streets across the country.

Lewisham councillor Kevin Bonavia called a meeting with local businesses in March and the Society has been supporting his efforts to improve the situation.

The rent rises, rates and rubbish left in the Village were all discussed in detail at the meeting and the group agreed to meet again after Easter.

The business sites that remain closed range from Costcutter, which has been empty for 15 months, to a long list of closures - Strada's restaurant, estate agents Cluttons and JLL, hairdressers Rockit, Framing on the Heath on Royal Parade, the clothes shop FatFace on Montpelier Vale and the Spa Juice Bar in Cresswell Park. More shops may also be threatened.

The reasons for the closures vary, but Fatface, which had been in Blackheath for many years and had a strong and loyal clientele, blamed its departure on the

doubling of the rent by the landlords. Strada also cited rising rental costs as a main reason for closing.

Businesses at the meeting were concerned about rising rents imposed by freeholders. However, business rates had also increased and it was hoped that special measures could be introduced for small traders.

At the moment they had to compete with large chains which are able to afford the higher costs, and with an increasing number of charity shops which benefit from an 80% reduction in business rates.



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The much-loved specialist hardware store Selectric is under threat but its lease has more than four years to run. Hopefully it will be with us for some time, despite the new freeholder's wish to develop the site.

Commercial pressures have always led to change and, in spite of high rents, some sites which closed have been snapped up: Chapters was replaced by The Ivy Cafe and the Deli by the station by Madeleine's Cafe.

The Cluttons site is being developed by Oliver Bonas and the Blackheath Bookshop, a branch of Waterstones, opened in December replacing the Art Gallery.

We have been working hard on our Village Cleaning and Greening project, which includes gardening projects and better refuse collection. Among the many benefits we hope to achieve, we feel that a more attractive environment may encourage more businesses to stay or to come to Blackheath.

We hope the full support of local residents will help ensure the success of all our retailers and restaurants. *On page 11* we print a selection of letters from some members who are concerned about the shop closures, some of which are shown below.

To illustrate the Society's efforts to improve the Village we also print photographs at the bottom of the page showing our work replanting the main planters and plots in Tranquil Vale. *A story about this is on page 6.*



## PACKED CALENDAR OF SOCIETY WALKS, TALKS AND EVENTS

We have a busy calendar of walks and events planned for members in the coming months to follow our first two successful walks this year.

Please let the office know if you want to join a walk. Donations of £5 on joining are appreciated.

On **Wednesday 2 May** we have a walk entitled *The Suffragettes of Blackheath*, around the sites where campaigners for votes for women and other radicals walked, talked and protested, led by Blue Badge guide and Society member Maureen Corcoran. We meet at 1030 at the Church of the Ascension, Dartmouth Row.

On **Wednesday 16 May** we will have *The Blackheath Pedestrian*, led by Paul Browning who writes the blog, [runner500.wordpress.com](http://runner500.wordpress.com). In 1815 George Wilson (*right*) undertook the great feat of walking 1,000 miles around the Heath in 20 days. We will trace his route for one mile and consider what the Heath was like then. We will also view some of our new storyboards (*story on page 6*).

We meet outside the Hare and Billet pub at 1030 and, weather permitting, will take a coffee break at the Tea Hut.

On **Monday 21 May** Tessa Boase will give a talk on her new book about Margaretta Lemon, a past resident of Blackheath, entitled *Mrs Pankhurst's Purple Feather: Fashion, Fury and Feminism - Women's Fight for Change*.

With Emmeline Pankhurst she began to stir up the Suffragette movement. She felt passionately about women using feathers and stuffed real birds in their hats for decorative purposes and could often be seen and heard on a Sunday addressing the women of Blackheath on their way to All Saints church.

She lived at four different addresses in Blackheath and her campaign led to the formation of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The evening will be held in the Bakehouse, Bennett Park, beginning at 1900 with a glass of wine, followed by the talk at 1930, questions and a book signing.

Tickets are £10 available from [www.Eventbrite.com](http://www.Eventbrite.com), where you search for Fashion, Fury and Feminism, or you can contact the Society office.

Due to popular demand Maureen Corcoran will also be repeating two of her recent walks as follows: *East End Rebel Women* on **Sunday 10 June**, meeting at Bow Road tube station at 1130, and *The Suffragettes of Blackheath* on **Sunday 17 June** at 1100 at the

Blackheath Concert Halls.

Please contact her directly to join these two Sunday walks at [mo@londonsights.org.uk](mailto:mo@londonsights.org.uk).

On **Monday 11 June** we have organized a *Literary Walk around Chelsea*. The area is known as the home of many 18th and 19th century authors and poets, including Oscar Wilde, whose red-brick Chelsea home is pictured *below*.

Our member Robert Maurice-Williams will show us where they lived. We meet at 1030 at the entrance to Sloane Square tube station. Booking is not necessary but we plan to have lunch at the Chelsea Hospital garden at 1230. Please let the office know if you want to join.

Dates of more events for your diary, with the details to follow later: **26 June** Society's AGM. On the weekend of **22 and 23 September** the *Open*

*House Weekend* takes place. Our member Jonathan Causer will lead a walk called *Lovely Lewisham* on **3 October**.

**Recent walks:** The sun shone when John Bartram, a former journalist and editor of this *Newsletter*, led a walk around Fleet Street on 17 January.

He showed us many interesting features of the Street, particularly the only statue of Elizabeth I carved in her lifetime which stands close to Temple Bar, appropriately near to where the first Tudor printing press was set up.

Some journalists took part and they added to tales of when the Street was full of newspaper offices. Several recalled the thundering sound of the presses and the fleets of lorries waiting for the early morning dispatch of the papers.



We saw from a plaque at the former Daily Express offices that it was the first paper to include women's features, gossip and a crossword puzzle.

We visited St Bride's church, where many journalists killed on assignment are remembered, and some newspapers had their own named pews. There was a small wooden sculpture commemorating the marriage of the parents of Virginia Dare, the first British child born in the New World in 1587.

The morning closed at the Cheshire Cheese Chop Room where we had an excellent lunch.

Maureen Corcoran led a very popular walk in Blackheath as part of the Breaking Barriers event at the Halls on 4 February. She spoke about the Suffragist and Suffragette movements, with illustrations of what Blackheath Village was like at the time.



We located where the local shop would have been for residents to buy their badges and tri-coloured sashes. Maureen recounted with verve the achievements of Florence Gadesden, Millicent Fawcett, Rosa May Billinghurst and Emily Wilding Davis, all prominent members who lived in Blackheath.

We gathered around the infamous letter box (*pictured below*) into

which Rose poured ink, destroying the mail. The walk then ended dramatically on Whitfield Mount, where the Suffragettes gathered in their hundreds for the Pilgrimage of July 1913.

A group of 25 members and friends braved bracing weather for Liz Wright's walk around the Village on 7 February. Taking her cue from Neil Rhind and Roger Marshall's new book *Walking the Village*, Liz took us on a highly enjoyable 1-1/2 hour circuit.

She explained how the Village had evolved from the junction of two drovers' tracks into a Victorian entertainment and shopping hub, and highlighted the impact of World War II bomb damage on land use in the Village. All Saints' vicar, Father Nicholas Cranfield, gave an impromptu talk on the history of the church.

On 13 March Elizabeth Wiggins, the archivist at Morden College, led more than 40 members on a highly enjoyable tour of the College showing the chapel, library and the recent new additions. We were also able to examine documents from the College archives.

## HALLS SEEK FUNDS TO TRANSFORM THE BUILDING

Blackheath Halls are launching a £3.5 million programme to transform the building to make it worthy of the talents it hosts and create a more flexible performing arts centre.

The works, which mean the Halls will be closed from April to October this year, include refurbishing the Great Hall, redesigning the foyer and bar area and upgrading the backstage facilities.

The Hearn Foundation has donated £1.5 million, the Arts Council England £500,000 and Viridor Credits and Trinity Laban have already each given £235,000. The Friends of the Halls are donating £50,000 and the Halls are now launching a campaign to raise the remaining £1 million to complete the programme.

The stage will be levelled and lowered and retractable raked seating installed at the back of the room. The acoustics will be improved. New curtains, screens, stage equipment and lighting will be installed.

Seating will be provided in the foyer, with a new colour design and music-themed tiles, while the bar will be redesigned, creating more space and an informal performance area. The backstage will be revamped to provide a large dressing room, a room for the

conductor or principal artist and a "green room" for performers to relax after performances.

During the works the annual Blackheath Halls community opera productions will be hosted at other venues around the area, including the summer community opera *Dido and Aeneas* at the Albany in Deptford.



View from the Halls' new raked seating

To donate please contact the Development Manager Isobel

Turner on [i.turner@trinitylaban.ac.uk](mailto:i.turner@trinitylaban.ac.uk) or 020 8305 3894. Depending on the level of donations, you could have your name on the supporters' board or on a seat in the Great Hall.

In recent the Halls installed a lift to the first floor recital room and added a new roof to the Grade II listed building, which dates from 1895.

***Riding on the Heath - Neil Rhind writes:***

People often ask why the Heath is not used for the recreation of riding. There are three answers: no local riding schools exist to provide horses; we know of no residents who keep a horse; and riding here, except by the police and army, has been forbidden since 1872.

The ground outside the Blackheath gate to Greenwich Park was once a great centre for pony and donkey riding.



There are a number of engravings from the early 19th century showing pony riders and the cruel treatment meted out to the unfortunate mounts by their keepers.

The riding tradition carried on, but with many improvements, until the recent donkey rides, but even that attraction has faded away.

When the Heath management was taken over in 1871 by the Metropolitan Board of Works (the precursor to the LCC followed by GLC), it abolished horse riding almost immediately as the horses' hooves did too much damage to the turf, especially to the golfers' greens.

The donkey stand stayed but, to replace the use of the Heath for recreational riding, the Board laid out a riding ring, or Rotten Row. The Hyde Park version remains today. It employed mounted Heath constables to ensure that cruelty could be reduced. But it did not always work – see Frank Dad's engraving in *The Graphic* in 1905 *above on the left*.

Our hunt for historic pictures for the Society's archive recently unearthed a good postcard (*above right*). It shows the Prince of Wales boating pond close to the Princess of Wales pub and Colonnade House.

This card depicts a chunk of the Heath on the west side and, for the first time, a slice of the riding field. It was laid down in 1872 between Prince Charles Road and Prince of Wales Road (not the same person).

The ring consisted of a large piece of fenced-off ground, the surface was oiled sand and another fence inside the circle kept horses off the central grass.

It was very popular until the outbreak of war in 1914. Military men took over most of the Heath and when peace broke out the equestrian enthusiasm had gone.

In the mid 1920s the London County Council, in its role as Heath manager, decided some improvements should be made. One was the abolition of the riding

field, which was no longer wanted. So in 1926, during levelling works, they took away the oiled sand and the fencing. The other improvement was the construction of the A2 roundabout at Camomile Bottom between 1927 and 1930.

In recent years consultants suggested the roundabout should be replaced with traffic lights, but fortunately that idea was dismissed quite quickly.



So was the very recent application to add illuminated advertising hoardings to the roundabout as, following objections from the Society and others,

Lewisham and Greenwich Councils rejected the idea.

After the 1939-1945 war there was a small demand to reinstate the Blackheath Rotten Row - there were two riding schools in the neighbourhood then - but the cry was very faint and the authorities took no notice as they had too many other priorities.

All we have now is a fragment of a postcard and some lines on an old Ordnance Survey map.

**FROM THE ARCHIVE**

Highwaymen On Blackheath  
2 Sep 1748 - Derby Mercury

On Monday last Mr. William Smith and Mr. Philip Robinson, of Romney in Kent, were set upon, as they were coming to London, by two Highwaymen, on Back-heath, who demanded their Money, &c. but Mr. Smith refusing to deliver, one of the Rogues fired at him, and lodged a Slug in his Side, and then robbed them of upwards of £75, a Silver Watch, and a Portmanteau; after which one of them changed Horses with Mr. Smith and made off. Before Mr. Smith and Mr. Robinson got off at Blackheath they met Mr. Wm. Jeffrys, a Surgeon, who went with them to a neighbouring Inn, and in about an Hour extracted the Ball out of his Side, and it is hoped he will do well, notwithstanding he lost a vast Quantity of Blood.

## HEATH STORYBOARDS: LAUNCH IN APRIL

Following more than three years' planning and preparation, the long-anticipated storyboard project has been completed. The series of seven boards will be installed around the Heath and they will be unveiled on Sunday 29 April.

The celebration, to which you are all invited, will take place on the Heath between All Saints Church and Royal Parade from 1200 to 1400.

Kiosks will be offering light refreshments and there will be a small exhibition outlining the location of the boards and the wealth of information they contain. Musical entertainment will also be provided.

The boards, costing about £30,000, will tell the stories of major events which have occurred on or around the Heath, important characters who have helped to shape our history and our community and they will also highlight the flowers, grasses, bugs and birds which share the Heath with us.



The detail taken from one of the storyboards (*below*) shows two Six-Spot Burnet moths on the Heath.

All our sponsors will be present, including the London Borough of Lewisham, which has contributed generously from the OnBlackheath festival community fund, Blackheath and Westcombe councillors from the Royal Borough of Greenwich, the Agincourt 600 Fund trustees and, of course, the Blackheath Society.

We are delighted that the designer, Madeleine Adams, and our eminent local historian and Society President, Neil Rhind, will be with us to introduce the boards and answer any questions.

We hope to see as many members as possible at the launch.

Do bring your friends and families and, weather permitting, enjoy a post-launch walk on the Heath to visit the new attractions.

## CLEANING AND GREENING THE VILLAGE

The major project to smarten up the Village has been making some progress, much more slowly than we would like, but progress none the less.

We had received many complaints about the state of the Village pavements, particularly in areas where rubbish is left out for collection. Some areas had become both slippery and smelly, particularly after rain, and we were told that people had even fallen over.

With the help of Lewisham Councillor Kevin Bonavia, money was found for the pavements to be jet-washed in February.

Unfortunately, some streaks of grime were still left where walls or street furniture had inhibited the water jets and we also became aware of a quantity of white chewing gum which had previously been hidden. But it was a good start.

We have contacted different authorities about their responsibilities. The car park company agreed to send a surveyor to look at the broken wall in Blackheath Grove but, more than a month later, nothing had happened.

British Telecom has arranged at long last for the three red phone boxes outside the post office to be cleaned. They had been in a filthy and unhygienic state.

Unfortunately, BT did not feel the boxes were bad enough to merit repainting.

We have not yet managed to achieve the removal of the unused grey phone box on Lee Road.

Members may have noticed one good development - we have started digging over and replanting the main planters and plots in Tranquil Vale and Montpelier Vale.

The planters, and the horse troughs on The Heath, belong to Lewisham Council which has agreed to our taking over the maintenance and has given us the money to buy new plants.

The work has progressed with the support of a small team of very enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers, including one professional landscape gardener.

We are talking to the management of Blackheath station in the hope that we shall obtain agreement to establish a managed wildlife garden beside platform 1.

If this is agreed, we shall need more volunteers and we would like to hear from anyone interested in joining us. No experience is needed, just enthusiasm.

We also hope there will soon be some flower troughs and seats to brighten up the station ticket office and make it more welcoming.

## POOR COORDINATION ON LEWISHAM TOWN CENTRE PLANS

The coming weeks will be important for the future of Lewisham town centre. We believe this whole development has been characterised by poor coordination and consultation and an alarming lack of public participation.

As readers will know from previous *Newsletters*, we have had some success in getting developments deferred and major issues addressed properly: these include excessive height and massing of buildings, poor public space and inadequate affordable housing and infrastructure.

### Tesco Car Park, Conington Road

This scheme, including a 34-storey (125-metre) tower, was discussed by the Council in December. We had objected to the height, lack of affordable housing and the inadequate infrastructure provision - particularly the lack of clarity or certainty on the future capacity of Lewisham station and its access from the site.

After a very good discussion, councillors agreed to defer the scheme pending satisfaction on the issues identified: height, public realm, affordable housing and infrastructure, including transport. A welcome outcome.

The scheme comes back for Council review on 3 April, evidently with little change from the developer apart from the addition of a viewing platform from the tower, to be opened to the public at least 10 days a year. This would be over 50% taller than anything currently built in Lewisham town centre and in the top 20 tallest residential buildings in London.

The Society responded in February saying we did not find the developer's response adequate. We emphasised our continuing concern about station overcrowding and access, especially the lack of firm, agreed plans to deal with access from Platform 4, immediately adjacent to the proposed development.

### Carpetright

This scheme (*seen above right*) involves the demolition of the warehouse in Loampit Vale, opposite the Renaissance development, and its replacement with two towers of 16 and 30 storeys (105 metres), comprising retail space, a small square at ground level and 242 residential units above it for an estimated 464 residents. The ground floor will be constructed to accommodate an entrance to the Bakerloo Line Extension station below, if this comes to Lewisham from 2029.

The Society commented on the scheme last July, welcoming redevelopment of the site, but opposing the height of the taller block and expressing concern about the impact of the scheme on local amenities and infrastructure, especially the station, and the lack of affordable housing, just 3.7% of the development.

The developer came back with revised plans involving more affordable housing (20.2%), a bigger ground floor entrance to the commercial unit that would become the tube entrance and a new palette of building materials.

There was a farcical public consultation in December attended by just one member of the public (from the Society), due principally to notices of the meeting failing to reach objectors.



The application went before the Strategic Planning Committee on 8 February. There was a good debate about the issues by councillors, and the Society's speakers again lobbied hard for a deferral while the key issues were addressed.

To our surprise, and in contrast to the outcome of the Tesco meeting, the application was approved by 4 votes to 3. This was a particular blow as it involved the approval of a tower, more than 30% above the current height of existing towers in the town centre, potentially a precedent for other schemes in the planning pipeline. The decision also missed the chance to address the transport issue decisively.

### Lewisham Gateway

Readers may remember the application for a "minor material amendment" to change and significantly enlarge Phase 2 of this very large mixed scheme was deferred, and then rejected, last summer. In December the developer, Muse, held public consultations and in January it submitted a new application, which came before the Strategic Planning Committee in late March after this *Newsletter* went to press.

The revised application addresses some of the concerns that led to rejection of its 2016 predecessor. The buildings are generally slightly lower, with the tallest now 29 storeys (95 metres). There is now some affordable housing, but still just 12% of the 850 flats as there were no affordable units in Phase 1.

The latest scheme includes an option for co-living units (a new concept), instead of the planned hotel, and a cinema (for which we understand an agreement has been signed), a gym and affordable business space.

It claims to have addressed the issue of poor levels of sunlight and daylight in the central Confluence Place.

We have asked for more data to assess the scheme. It is clearly better in many respects than its predecessor, but is still significantly taller and bulkier than the 2009 scheme for which outline planning permission was granted and which should be the benchmark.

As such, it still would mean a dramatic impact on adjacent conservation areas and on the views from the Heath. It is also now significantly less mixed than originally marketed, and therefore less regenerative. There is no civic use, such as a library, and the revised scheme apparently offers little on the major issue of infrastructure pressures.

### **The Transport Issue**

It has now become generally accepted, as the above schemes have progressed, that Lewisham station is not currently fit for purpose, in terms of both capacity and access. Developments around the Southeast Trains franchise last year, covered separately in our *Newsletters*, only exacerbate this. This is even before the new town centre developments appear.

Welcome support from our MPs and councillors has recently led to the creation of the Lewisham Station Users Group to address the issue. The overall objective is to reach concrete commitments on action between various stakeholders - crucially Network Rail - to improve Lewisham station. The council seems so far to have been content with mere aspirations in this area.

We are lobbying bidders for the new franchise to include offers to contribute towards the minimum £5m investment Lewisham Station needs to widen and raise its platforms. But we also strongly believe the town centre developments should not be approved until greater clarity is forthcoming. Potentially, developers and the council should also be contributing towards a firm, funded improvement plan.

We are actually hoping for £10-30 million to be spent in the next two to three years to make the station fit for purpose for the 10 years, until the end of the next franchise and the arrival of the tube line. This is needed to further work on gates, stairs and subways.

A much bigger scheme, costed at £180 to £240 million, will ultimately be required to redevelop the whole station to make it one of London's four new "super-hubs" to deal with much increased passenger numbers.

### **Blackheath Planning**

Our Planning Group has scrutinized a large number of applications within the Blackheath Conservation Area.

Our main concern is that new development is of a high standard which adds to, rather than detracts from, the existing built environment, and that local authority guidelines are adhered to.

Our threshold for objection is quite high so that in most cases, we decide no action is warranted, or that issues can be dealt with by appropriate conditions. We do, however, continue to take a close interest in a number of cases which we see as problematic.

In Lewisham, the owners of *8 The Glebe* have formally appealed Lewisham's decision not to give planning permission for the construction of two houses on the site of a historic villa which has been subject to wilful neglect. The hearing is expected to take place in June. The Society has made extensive representations supporting Lewisham's decision and will take a close interest in the appeal process.

Just round the corner at *14 The Glebe*, permission has been given for the construction of a two storey, part-basement annex to the main house in a particularly sensitive part of the Conservation Area. We had misgivings about the design and will continue to press Lewisham for assurances that any risks associated with the construction of the basement are being addressed.

We have also objected to a proposal to squeeze two houses onto a site *between St Margaret's Passage and Eton Grove* which we believe has space for only one.

In *Greenwich* we continue to object to a proposed two storey side extension at *12 Brooklands Park* which we believe to be poorly designed and insufficiently deferential to the main building. We joined local residents in objecting to a significant extension to *5 Holm Walk*. This proposal would completely change the character of this distinctive Span development.

We were pleased that both Lewisham and Greenwich Councils accepted our objection, supported by the Blackheath Joint Working Group, to the proposal to put advertising signs on the roundabout on the A2.

### **New Draft London Plan**

A new Draft London Plan has been out for consultation and the Society has submitted extensive comments. The final version of the plan will be very important in guiding local authorities on many key planning issues.

While we found much to welcome, particularly in the ecology and green policies, we expressed concern on a number of fronts.

The plan makes specific mention of Lewisham town centre as an example of an Opportunity Area. We pointed out that, despite the principles set out in Lewisham's planning policies, development of the town centre has appeared increasingly piecemeal and developer-led.

We have consistently called for a more coherent master plan for the town centre and other similar schemes, based on clear planning permissions which are not subject to arbitrary, and nearly always unwelcome, amendments, and for firm commitments (as opposed to aspirations) regarding the capacity of transport and social infrastructure.

We also commented on an unwelcome weakening of the language affording protection to heritage assets and small sites, compared to earlier plans, and a tendency to refer to the optimisation of land use when the clear intention is to maximise it through increasing density. A copy of our full input is available on request.

## HOW TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS AT LICENSED PREMISES

The recent application to extend the licensing hours of O'Neill's pub in the Village brought to light some important points. Lewisham Licensing received a significant number of objections but neither it, nor the police, had any record of complaints about crime or nuisance in or around the premises.

There seems to have been a mismatch between what residents were experiencing and what the authorities had on record. So we have set out below how to register incidents with Lewisham and the police, and we will also be putting a new page on our Website with this information.

O'Neill's application was withdrawn at its Head Office after the degree of opposition from locals became clear. One old condition was removed: a ban on admissions after 11pm, which the Society did not oppose after discussions with the police.

*Cumulative Impact Zone (CIZ):* between 10 and 15 years ago there were a large number of applications for late opening in Blackheath. The Society worked with residents, councillors and Lewisham to get a zone instituted, as it sets a higher bar for licensing. The CIZ has maintained a successful balance for the last decade and more. However, it is not permanent and is reviewed from time to time, so it is important that any problems are recorded.

It is important to log incidents to support the CIZ and for future new licence applications or changes to existing ones, since the licensing authority and the police need good information.

*Reporting Incidents:* aside from urgent matters requiring immediate police attention, you should report to Lewisham Council incidents which contravene the four licensing objectives which are - preventing crime and disorder, public nuisance, protecting children from harm and public safety.

You can email Crime Enforcement and Regulation on [cer@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:cer@lewisham.gov.uk) with details. Please copy this to [licensing@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@lewisham.gov.uk) and to us on [office@blackheath.org](mailto:office@blackheath.org). You can call CER on 020 8314 7237, which is manned during work hours, so leave a voicemail with your name, contact number and a brief description of any incident.

You can contact the police, who keep their own log of incidents to help them plan their presence: call 999 in an emergency or 101 if not. This number is a police call centre in Lambeth and information will be passed to our local police.

You can contact the Safer Neighbourhoods Team. They welcome information, but they are only for non-emergencies and there may be delays in responding:

Phone: 07768 178292

E-mail: [Blackheath@met.police.uk](mailto:Blackheath@met.police.uk)

Twitter: @MPSBlackhthLee.

If you are often affected by incidents related to licensed premises you should also keep a diary with the date, time, details of the incident and the licensed premises.



The Beast from the East hit BlackHeath on March 2

## STATION POP-UP LIBRARY

Two local residents have been given the green light to set up a small pop-up library in the Blackheath station waiting room which they hope to start at Easter.

Gina Raggett and Prue Corp want to promote the Village as "Bookheath" and they see the provision of free books at all hours of the day as an addition to our two local bookshops and charity outlets selling secondhand titles.

She said similar schemes have been running at other stations for two years and have proved popular. They hope most books will be returned, but will forgive anyone who loves a book too much to give it back.

Permission has been granted by stationmaster, shelves acquired and they are investigating the possibility of storage space at the station. If anyone would like to help, please contact Gina on [ginaraggett@hotmail.com](mailto:ginaraggett@hotmail.com), 020 8852 9772 or 07790 181729 and Prue on [pruecorp@gmail.com](mailto:pruecorp@gmail.com), 020 8858 9311/07710 275 331.

## IAN MILLS BECOMES FREEMAN OF LEWISHAM

Sir Ian Mills, former Chair of Age Exchange, became an Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Lewisham at a ceremony in the Town Hall.

Sir Ian was knighted for his services to the NHS in 2001 and played a leading role in creating Lewisham's pioneering social enterprise *Youth First*, which develops life skills for the Borough's young people aged between 8 and 19, and for which he established a £2 million trust fund in memory of his late wife Elizabeth.

He directed the restoration of St Margaret's Church and in 2015 set up *Talk About Art*, which organizes art exhibitions involving school children. He is seen here (*on the left*) with Sir Steve Bullock, Mayor



of Lewisham, who told the March 9 ceremony: "Ian's personal contribution to Youth First and a number of other Lewisham initiatives has been extraordinary. He continues to support the local community with an enthusiasm and a commitment that epitomises a lifetime of service, and demonstrates why he is an appropriate recipient of our highest award."

Sir Ian said: "None of my achievements would have been possible without the support of Elizabeth who was my rock, critical friend and constant companion.

This trust fund is public recognition of the shared values which brought us together in 1968 and sustained us through 49 years of happily married life."

## NEW RELEASE OF ARCHIVE PICTURES, CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Society's archive team are delighted to announce that almost 2,000 images are being published on our website by April.

Like the last major release two years ago, this will be phased over a number of weeks and will feature images relating to Blackheath Concert Halls, the Cator Estate, the Lewisham and Greenwich sides of Blackheath, the Angerstein Encroachment on the Heath, Kidbrooke and Westcombe.

We will send emails to members about the exact dates over the next few weeks and we hope you will enjoy them as much as we have enjoyed working on them over the past months.

Many thanks to Jo Swadkin, Hilary Weedon, John Sabido and Mark Chapman for the hours they have put in to make the images available.

Thanks, of course, also go to Neil Rhind who, following the inspirational footsteps of Alan Martin, developed a comprehensive visual record of Blackheath over many years, to Stephen Moreton-Prichard, David Warren, and many other contributors who have produced a unique resource of outstanding local photography.

Additional volunteers are now needed to help with titling and tagging our archive images. This involves writing a suitable caption for an image to provide a brief description. Tags are keywords attached to images so that they can be identified and found by website users.

Examples of tags are the location of the photograph, the date taken, the name of the photographer, if known, and any distinguishing features, such as the

names of people in the image, or perhaps a church.

Most of this work is carried out in the Society's office in the Bakehouse on a dedicated computer, but we are exploring ways in which willing volunteers might, with guidance, be able to do this at home. If you think you might be interested in joining the team in the office, or at home, and thus help to speed up the process, please contact the office.

## HEATH FOREST SCHOOL

James Hazlerigg-Kinlay, a Society member, runs his Forest School, called Forries Education, tucked behind the trees in Eliot Pits Wood at the top of St Austell Road on the south-west corner of the Heath.

The wood lies in an old gravel pit and interesting tree species grow there, but the ground has become depleted due to rampant brambles, which hold back the growth of bluebells, snowdrops and daffodils.



He is crown-lifting the young trees, cutting back the brambles, and has established a log base camp in the woods where the children gather (*as seen above*). You can learn more about the project on his website at: [www.forrieseducation.co.uk](http://www.forrieseducation.co.uk).

## COMMUNITY CINEMA

In your last *Newsletter* I read a letter from a member which got me thinking. It was a comment about how good it would be if the former Costcutter premises could be transformed into a cinema as part of a broader arts complex.

Having thought about it since then, and spoken to various people locally, transforming the former Costcutter premises into a cinema would be prohibitively expensive.

However, the possibility of working in close partnership with Blackheath Halls to provide a venue for an independently-managed, not-for-profit Community Cinema is potentially a viable option.

This could serve our whole community - retired people, young parents with babies, children from the local schools, as well of course showing films in the evening.

If managed well and sympathetically, a Community Cinema could be a tremendous asset for the whole community. If you have any thoughts about this or would like to be actively involved in helping this project, please contact the Society's office. *Lucy Chaple*

## WEBSITE FEEDBACK

Congratulations on the new-look website which is great news for non-Society members like me. Just one small thing: could you possibly date your various entries?

I found myself reading outdated info about the trains' situation without at first realising it. Talking of trains, can I assume you will be putting Caroline Walsh's petition online? *Gina Raggett*

I have just looked at the website and wanted to congratulate you. It looks great, easy to use, wonderful photos and a lot of interesting information. Well done, I can imagine that a lot of effort has gone into it. *Name & address supplied*

Why do you produce a *Newsletter* for electronic distribution which is formatted in columns rather than straight across the page? Who wants to keep scrolling up and down rather than just scanning across the page? *Bill Eldridge*

*Editor's note: Our designer says we upload the Newsletter to the website as a PDF, so the layout does not adjust for use on computers, tablets and mobile phones like the rest of the website. To change the layout of the online Newsletter into one-column we would have to completely redesign the whole thing from scratch. It would also not be beneficial as the line lengths would be very long, running all the way across a computer screen. This is awkward as people find it tiring to read such long lines of text.*

## VILLAGE SHOP CLOSURES

Please add my concerns about what is happening. We are losing the individual businesses and shops that have always given the Village its character and acquiring expensive chain restaurants and retailers which do not offer services to residents. There are several boarded up and empty premises. One expects some change, but we are losing businesses that we need and make the Village a community.

Having lived here for almost 50 years the changes are much faster and more dramatic than they have been at any time in the last half century. Can nothing be done to prevent the rent rises?

I had always used the picture framer and Chapters and we still have nothing to replace the grocery store at the concert halls end of the village. I was aware from talking to staff in FatFace that they left purely because the exorbitant rent rise did not make business sense. *Rosemary Guest*

Really pleased to hear that the Society is getting involved with the terribly sad situation of the Village. Let's hope we can save it as at the moment I think around the 10% of the village shops are empty. *John Sakkas*

You don't think that Brexit, for which so many of your members must have voted, is at all responsible? *Roger Potter*

I too am very concerned at the greed of owners and the council that seem to be oblivious to their destruction of our village. We are not a cash cow to be constantly grabbed, regardless of the effect on us as a community. All the world is not money, so please challenge in every area that you can and I am willing to help as a retired teacher. Please persist on our behalf and challenge this oppression on our community. Blackheath is a wonderful place to live in and we need good local shopping. *Margaret Holland*

What is happening to our beloved Village? We do have some excellent shops, the butcher's, greengrocer's and Selectric. There is no shortage of good eateries - we have a pancake shop replacing the deli near the station.

We also have the lovely new bookshop, but so many businesses have closed in recent weeks and the Costcutter site has been empty for a long time, as has the former hairdresser's on the Parade. But now Strada and FatFace have recently closed, not to mention the Spanish delicatessen and the picture framer.

What can we do not just to protect, but to enhance, our Village and its environs? Which council has responsibility for the Village - Lewisham or Greenwich or both - and do they consult and cooperate enough? Who decides on the nature of new businesses and how can we attract a greater variety of businesses, but not pound shops or nail bars? *Helga Greenbank*

## MEMBERS FAVOUR DIRECT VICTORIA RAIL SERVICES

In mid-December we polled members about keeping direct train services from Blackheath to Victoria. We sent 620 emails and received 110 replies of which 73, or two thirds, were in favour of retaining the present two direct services per hour to Victoria.

The other 37 wanted to accept the Department for Transport's proposal to double the Victoria services, but route these on the Sidcup and Hayes lines, which would require Bexleyheath line passengers changing at Lewisham. North Kent line passengers already do this but they stay on the same platform out and back.

In the narrative responses, the key problem in changing trains at Lewisham was the inconvenience of the changes from platforms 3 to 1 towards Victoria and from 2 to 4 on the return, and the severe problem and worry for people needing to use the lifts that one or more may be out of order, even if this is fairly rare.

The Society is pressing for improvements to Lewisham station to accommodate the expected increase in passengers from the new developments in the town centre (*see our planning story on page 8*), and the increased interchanging generated by the DfT's service simplification plan for Lewisham's rail crossing.

This affects the Hayes and Sidcup lines, but also the Bexleyheath and North Kent lines through the proposal for Victoria services. We will also continue to press for the retention of two direct Victoria services per hour on the Bexleyheath line.

## DIARY OF EVENTS

### Sunday 29 April

*Storyboards launch on the Heath.* From 1200 to 1400 near All Saints Church

### Wednesday 2 May

*The Suffragettes of Blackheath walk.* Meet at 1030 at the Ascension Church, Dartmouth Row

### Wednesday 16 May

*The Blackheath Pedestrian walk.* Meet outside the Hare and Billet pub at 1030

### Monday 21 May

Talk on new book about Margaretta Lemon, *Mrs Pankhurst's Purple Feather, Fashion, Fury and Feminism* at the Bakehouse, Bennett Park 7pm

### Sunday 10 June

*East End Rebel Women walk.* Meet at Bow Road tube station at 1130

### Monday 11 June

*Literary Walk around Chelsea.* Meet 1030 at the entrance to Sloane Square tube station

**Sunday 17 June - Suffragettes walk** starting at 1100 at the Blackheath Concert Halls

**Tuesday 26 June - Society's AGM,** St Mary's Church Hall, 7pm for 7.30

**22 and 23 September - Open House weekend**

### Wednesday 3 October

*Lovely Lewisham walk* led by Jonathan Causer

FULL DETAILS OF EVENTS ON PAGES 3 & 6

## WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Rose Dailey  
George Dodd  
Gwen Evans  
Charles Fotheringham  
Sara & Andrew George

Tim Keeler  
Miles Lockwood  
Mariam Lolavar  
Seonaidh McIntyre-Stephen  
Marion & David Nevins

Michael & Emily Norton  
Malcolm Reid  
Christina White  
Valerie Wigfall  
Brian Wilson

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