

*The*



# Blackheath Society

Newsletter  
Spring 2017

## Ranger's House seeks local guides

English Heritage plans to make Ranger's House in Greenwich Park more accessible by extending opening hours and allowing visitors to stay longer.

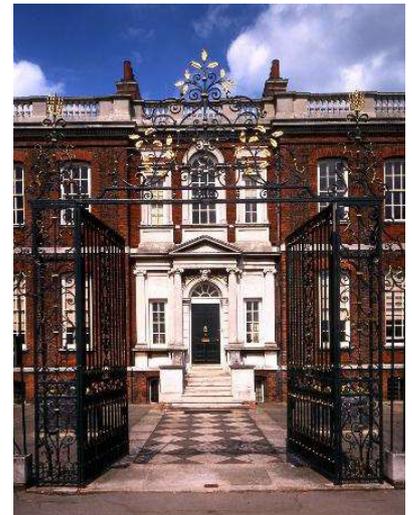
For many years it has been open to the public only by guided tour twice a day on four days a week during the summer season.

The House will now be opening from 1 July on a free flow basis and wants to recruit over 100 volunteers from the local area to act as room stewards and guides.

Chris Small, the Eltham Palace and Ranger's House Property Manager, told the *Newsletter*: "One of the aims of the free flow opening is to be able to tell people more about the history of Ranger's House itself and the people who have lived there over the years, so that we can share more than just the highlights of our Wernher Collection of fine and decorative art."

All guides will be taught the history of the house and collection by curators as part of their induction training. Anyone wanting to become a guide should apply to [Christopher.Small@english-heritage.co.uk](mailto:Christopher.Small@english-heritage.co.uk).

The house opened at the start of April as normal with two guided tours per day from Sunday to Wednesday. The free flow opening times will be from 11am to 4pm from Sunday to Wednesday and this will run from July to the end of September.



*Spring daffodils in bloom in Greenwich Park near English Heritage's Ranger's House*

Small said: "We are looking to work more closely with the Royal Parks and other local organisations to enable us to act as an information point for the things going on locally which might interest our visitors. We hope that in return there will be an increased awareness locally of Ranger's House and the fact that people will be able to visit it more easily in the near future."

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## Explore Deptford Creek and join the Society's Low Tide Walk

Come and explore the river, see nature and unearth some artefacts. Who knows what we will find?

You can do all this if you join us on Monday 19 June at 3pm for a special Society low tide walk led by the Creekside Discovery Centre staff and lasting about two hours. The centre will provide waders and waterproofs but suggests that you bring extra socks and wear comfy clothes.

There is a charge of £10 per person in advance and numbers are limited, so please reserve a space early to avoid disappointment. You can call in to the office, or send a cheque to The Blackheath Society with a stamped addressed envelope, but you need to reserve by 19 May. Full details of where to meet will be provided.

You can also join us for a gentle Walk and Talk around the Heath on Saturday 3 June from 9.30am to

11am, starting at the Prince of Wales pond and led by local naturalist Joe Beale.

We will be looking at all the wild flowers, insects and birds and it would be helpful if you could bring a hand lens.

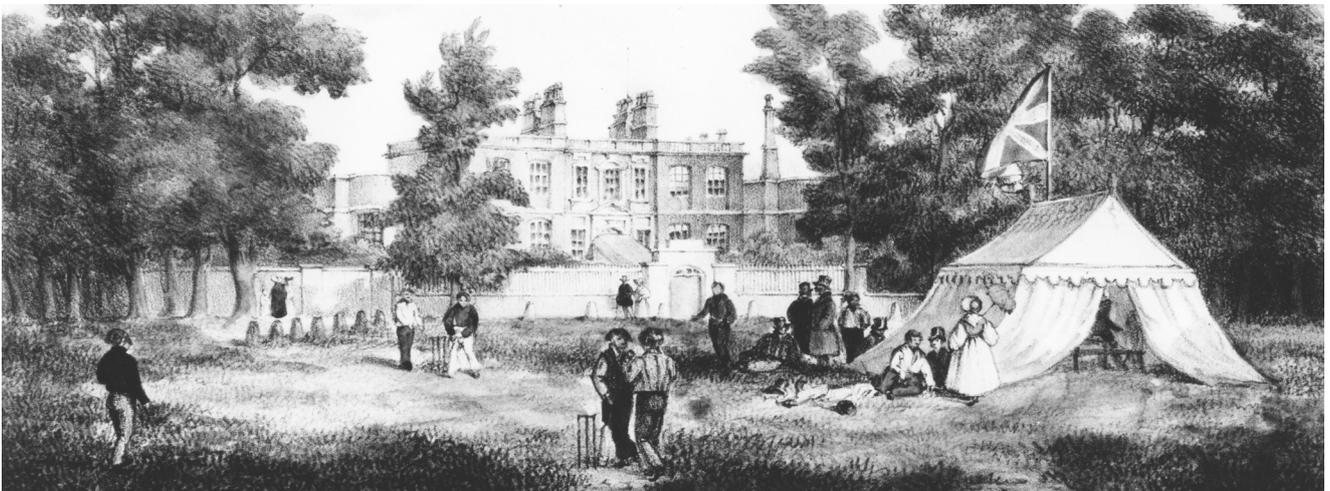


*Deptford Creek provides some fascinating views*

On 17 May we will repeat our Greenwich Peninsula walk, starting at North Greenwich station at 10.30am. We look forward to seeing you on all our walks.

Our early February excursion was a great success, and was led by Society member and retired criminal barrister Jonathan Causer. He took 22 members through the delights of the Inner and Middle Temples, providing a fascinating commentary on the legal life and regaling us with anecdotes about the characters he had encountered during his long experience at The Bar.

## Photographs from the Society's Archive



*Two old prints from the Society's archive: Cricket at Ranger's House c1840 and Whitfield Mount c1814*

*From the Archives... Our archives are concerned not only with photographs. They also contain many details of other interesting events in Blackheath which may appeal to readers and which have been culled from various sources by Allan Griffin, who curates them. We will be publishing interesting snippets about Blackheath on a regular basis. Here is the first:*

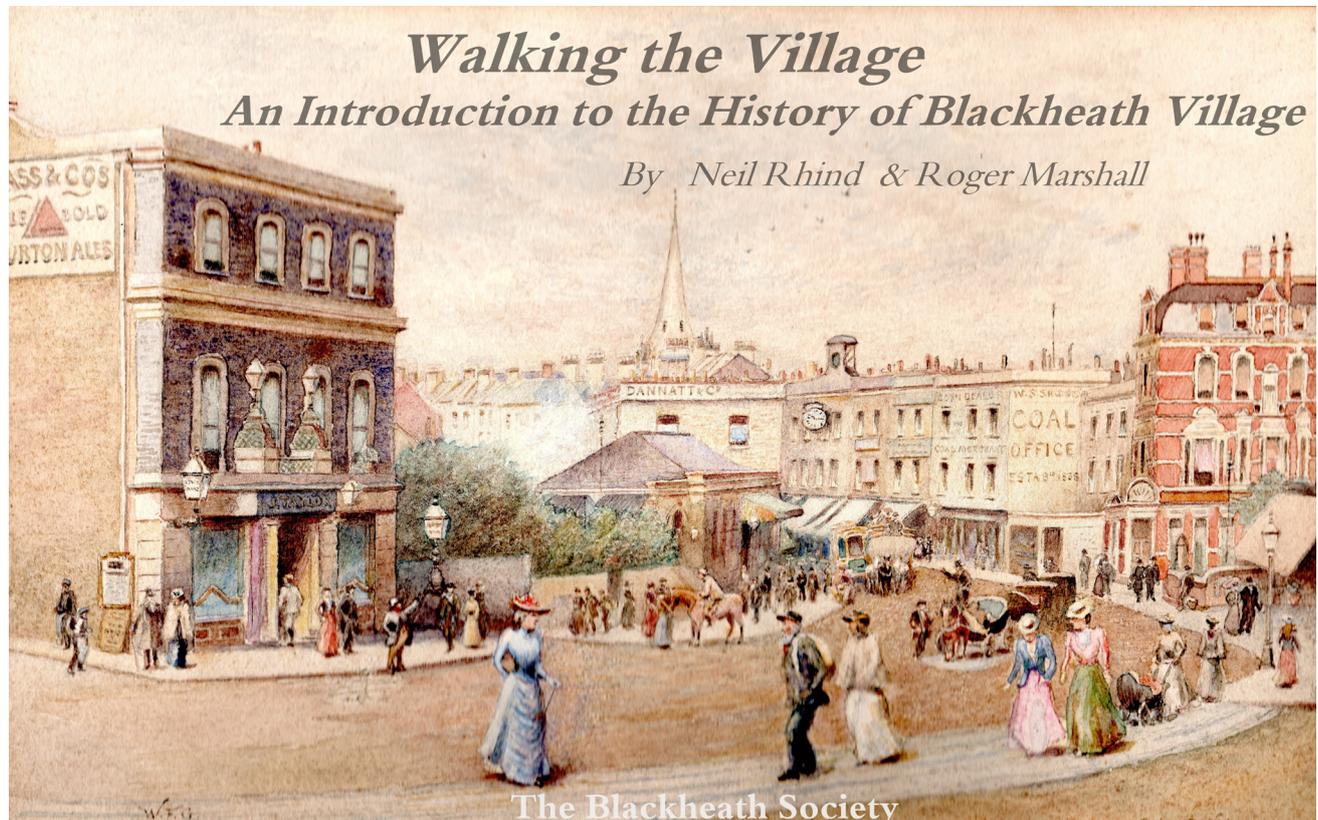
**Derby Mercury** - Friday 4 October 1751: Man killed by Chaise in Blackheath. Last Monday Evening about Six o'Clock, a Gentleman and Lady in a Chaise, coming down the Hill from Blackheath Fair, ran against a Gentleman on Horseback with such Violence, that both Man and Horse were kill'd. AG

## Two new Society books coming this summer

The Society is delighted to announce that it will be publishing two new books this summer in time for our Annual General Meeting on 27 June.

The first will be a companion volume to *Walking the Heath*, one of our success stories of recent years,

year after the Society was founded, in order to buy historic buildings under threat of demolition to preserve and enhance them. The BPT saved many local properties over eight decades, restored them and then eventually sold them to new owners.



and it is again written by our president Neil Rhind and former committee member Roger Marshall.

In her foreword to *Walking the Village*, our Chair Helen Reeves, writes: "Although the Village is only about 250 years old, there is much of deep historical and architectural interest which you will find documented in the pages of this book."

"The origins of all the key institutions are explained, including the Alexandra Hall (now Lloyds Bank), The Conservatoire, the Art School, the Concert Halls, the Railway Station and the Post Office, along with the banks, pubs, churches and shops."

"Did you know, for example, that the Village once boasted the first ever branch of the Express Dairy and Cullen's, early branches of Boots "the Cash Chemist" and Sainsbury's and, in the 1960s, the trendy fashion store Clobber?"

The second publication, edited by committee member John Bartram, completes the story of the Blackheath Preservation Trust, set up in 1938, one

The Society's purpose has always been to preserve and enhance the architecture of Blackheath and its vicinity, to protect the open spaces, in particular the Heath, and to encourage high standards of planning and architecture - but not to buy property.

The BPT worked harmoniously with the Society, often involving the same people in its projects, and the two organisations complemented each other.

By the start of this century it became clear that, while the purposes for which the BPT was originally founded were still important, public concern for buildings of historic or architectural interest in Blackheath, and improved planning and conservation-area legislation, had all reduced the need for its original role.

So the Society bought the entire BPT shareholding in 2010 and, once its remaining buildings had been successfully sold, the BPT was wound up at the end of last year. *Full details of how to obtain the two books will be published before the AGM.*

## Society presses Greenwich to review basements policy

Following the adoption of its policy on residential extensions in July last year, which included detailed guidance on basement developments for existing and new housing, we have been pressing Greenwich Council to take advantage of the decision to allow a review after 12 months.

There is a need to resolve discrepancies about basements in order to make the policy less open to misinterpretation, and to ensure that guidance in an earlier document on local information requirements is in line with more recent policy document.

This is linked to a December High Court decision in which a Camden resident sought a judicial review of his council's decision that a basement construction by his neighbour did not require planning permission as it was permitted development.

Mr Justice Cranston ruled that a basement extension may be a permitted development and not need planning consent, but any excavation, spoil removal, shoring up, underpinning or temporary works to aid an extension constitute separate operations which would require planning permission.

We await Greenwich Council's views on how this might affect its own planning policy and believe the Cranston ruling should inform its review process.

*Kidbrooke*- Transport for London has announced that it has agreed a joint venture partnership with Triangle London Developments to bring forward its plans for the mainly residential-led development of its land to the north of Kidbrooke station, on which we reported in our *Winter Newsletter*.

TLD is owned by developer U + I and a social housing provider, Notting Hill Trust. The photograph below gives an early indication of the



high density scheme, which will offer up to 400 homes on the relatively small site in a series of blocks rising to a maximum height of 20 storeys.

We have asked Greenwich to ensure the developers engage with the community at the earliest opportunity in an attempt to provide local knowledge to inform the scheme's development.

We have also impressed on the Council that any approval of the forthcoming planning application must be conditional on providing lifts at Kidbrooke station to facilitate cross-platform access, an issue which regrettably failed to materialise as part of the immediately adjacent Kidbrooke Village Centre development by Berkeley Homes.

*14 Shooters Hill Road* – A recent meeting of the Greenwich Area Planning Committee decided to refuse planning permission - contrary to officers' advice - for a two-storey side and rear extension at this Grade II listed property.

This was on the grounds that the excessive scale, bulk and massing, and its projection in relation to the rear building line, would constitute a dominant and unsympathetic addition.

*1 Dale Close* - We objected to a proposal to add a two-storey side extension to this end-of-terrace Span house on the Cator Estate, as its design would damage the character and appearance of the property and its immediate neighbours.

The application was refused by officers using their delegated powers. That decision has now been appealed by the applicant and we will be supporting the Council in the appeal.

*IKEA* - The Council has started consultation on a planning application submitted by IKEA covering the appearance, landscaping and scale of its new store on the Greenwich peninsula, as required when outline planning permission was granted in 2014.

We, with fellow amenity societies, have benefitted from pre-submission meetings with IKEA.

While many of our initial suggestions have been taken on board issues such as a refinement of the design, in order to make the scheme a site-specific solution for the area, still leave much to be desired.

A decision on this will have to be taken by the Planning Board. IKEA wants the store to open by the end of 2018.

## Lewisham postpones Gateway decision

In the previous *Newsletter* we highlighted the issues around the proposed *Lewisham Gateway*, where in late 2016 the developers MUSE submitted a revised master plan, including a significant increase in scale and a 35% increase in the height of the main tower.

However, they had still not dealt with the aspects which caused earlier objections, such as the lack of quality public space and pressure on infrastructure. The progress of the development has suffered from poor quality consultation, including a very unsatisfactory public meeting in November.

Recognising this, Lewisham convened another public meeting in January. Although the developers did provide a better presentation, they made no effort to confront the many issues raised - in fact only forensic questioning by Society member Ian Chalk elicited that the new scheme is in fact 20% bigger in mass than shown in illustrations presented in 2009, with consequent impacts on overshadowing of public space. We therefore continued to object.

The plans were presented to Lewisham's Strategic Planning Committee for approval on March 21. In a marathon four-hour meeting, it was good to see councillors challenging the many aspects to which we and others have objected, and Lewisham officers were instructed to work on evaluating and mitigating these before resubmission. Our great thanks are due to Society member Nick Patton who has worked tirelessly and constructively to understand and offer improvements to this scheme.

At least two other major Lewisham town centre schemes are in the pipeline. One is for *Conington Road*, the site behind Tesco, which will include a 34-storey tower. Consultation has begun and fortunately, in contrast to Gateway, the developers Meyer Homes are more proactive and forthcoming.



The photograph below shows how the skyline from the Heath would change, with the Conington tower on the right and Gateway tower outlined on the left.

Another scheme which has progressed recently is the major development for *Leegate* which, after many years of debate, received the go-ahead from the Mayor of London.

As highlighted on the previous page, the issue of policy regarding the construction of basements has been very topical. From informal contacts with Lewisham officers it seems clear the Camden judgement will mean that basement applications will now be scrutinised more systematically, and that more attention will be paid to aspects like the loss of amenity for neighbours. The Society's policy has been to insist, at the very least, on a proper Basement Impact Assessment and Construction Management Plan for any proposals of significance.

Last year saw a particularly contentious basement application for *Sergison Cottage*, with extensive works planned in close proximity to All Saints School, where the council accepted this approach, and it will hopefully be easier to achieve this in future. In deciding our stance on individual plans we will be strongly guided by the views of neighbours and affected residents.

We have highlighted the future of *8 The Glebe*, where we objected to proposals to construct housing in a sensitive garden setting, and to the deliberate neglect of the existing house and garden. We are currently objecting, with neighbours, to a proposal to fell a tree there which is subject to a preservation order. The Society and local residents secured the services of a tree expert, who rejected the reasons given by the owner for felling the tree.

The Society has a tricky task evaluating proposals for a change of use application for *49 Montpelier Vale (Raffles)*. We want to be sensitive to economic realities for Village traders, all the more so given the new pressures on business rates, but we have a longstanding objective to preserve the diversity of Village commercial life and to resist a trend to ever more licensed premises.

We objected last year to proposals for a change of use for Raffles from A1 (retail) to A4 (drinking establishment) on the grounds that there was inadequate justification and protection for the amenity of neighbours. The application was rejected by councillors.

## Greenwich Theatre recovers from financial struggles

After years of financial concerns, Greenwich Theatre has a secure, well-funded future in prospect, says the Artistic and Executive Director, James Haddrell.

The theatre has an astonishing and well publicised history, from its music hall origins in the 1850s. The story of recent years is less known, but nevertheless important in the continuing evolution of one of London's most outstanding venues.

More than once on the brink of closure, the theatre is now on the verge of a bold future, thanks to the offer of a long lease from the local authority and a string of high profile shows.



*Summer Strallen stars in Hysteria at Greenwich Theatre in April, and Paul McGann appears in Gabriel in May*

When the current management took over in 2007 the company was struggling with huge debts and, despite significant grant funding from a range of sources, it was losing money. With a turnover of around £1 million per year, 60% of which was grant income, the core operation was unable to close the gap and the business was clearly failing.

There was no specific reason, and theatre is a speculative business at the best of times. The most eagerly anticipated West End show with the highest credentials and marketing spend can still fail, and the least likely hit from the smallest company or venue can become an industry sensation.

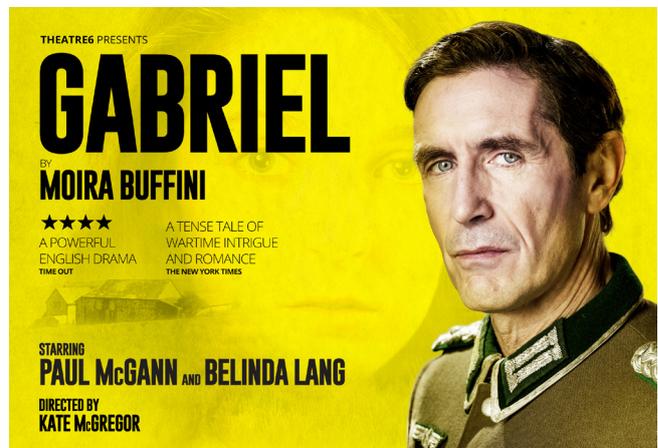
However, the theatre had lost money on a series of large productions and was not recouping that, so was faced with a mountain to climb. Our target was clearly to balance the books and reinstate the theatre's reputation as a home for high quality, popular, professional theatre.

That led to a sustained period of cautious programming, reducing the risk on shows by committing to lower costs and, for a period,

running the theatre with a skeleton staff. Year by year the deficit reduced and the artistic reputation among audiences, media and industry improved. In 2014 we faced our next challenge.

The theatre was included in the local authority's review of its cultural buildings, and a proposal drafted to sell it and relocate to the Borough Halls to share the space with the current tenants, Greenwich Dance. After a long period of work with all the stakeholders, we decided to turn down the potential sale of our current home.

In 2015, unrelated to the asset review, our local



authority funding came up for renewal. For a number of years the cultural grants in Greenwich had been awarded on a year-by-year basis, based on applications. This time we were invited to apply for a four-year contract, a huge step forward, but were ultimately awarded 62% less than in preceding years - a change from £259,000 to £100,000 per year.

Taken alongside other funding reductions, we were faced with running the company and the building with less than 10% of our £1.3 million turnover coming from grants, a far cry from the 60% achieved in 2007.

Last year, having demonstrated the ability to work with the new funding level, we carried out some crucial building repairs, notably to the roof, and extensive wiring, and raised some private funds to support the creation of a new studio theatre.

Finally, we have now been offered a 25-year lease by our landlords, the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Having not held a lease at any time in recent memory, this fantastic offer gives us more security in our current home than ever before. So we have

maintained an annual turnover of over £1 million, have reduced our reliance on grant funding from 60% to under 10%, and we currently programme more shows and welcome more people than at any point in the last few decades.

We are now one of the country's most respected supporters of emerging theatre companies, giving them a chance to try out new ideas, using our new studio space for that work.

Barely a day goes by without a show being presented on a stage somewhere in this country or overseas that began life at Greenwich. And we have grown our family programming to a nationally recognised level, with the annual Greenwich Children's Theatre Festival out-growing its two-week Easter slot.

With this level of achievement, recognised on a larger stage when we won the Wharf Newspaper Best Small Business Award, we are now in a stronger position to attract larger productions, to take some carefully considered financial risks on programming and to reinstate Greenwich Theatre's reputation as a national powerhouse of high quality drama.

Amongst a packed season of diverse shows, in April audiences can look forward to Summer Strallen, star of the West End production of *The Sound Of Music*, in a revival of Terry Johnson's farce *Hysteria*. In May television stars Paul McGann and Belinda Lang will make their Greenwich debuts in *Gabriel*, a play set in Nazi-occupied Guernsey, written by National Theatre regular Moira Buffini.

In June, it is the turn of the Creative Cow Theatre Company with Clive Francis' stage adaptation of Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*. In the studio we have a new show called *Melancholy* about an inventor striving to bring back his dead wife, and in September the new studio play *Howerd's End* about comedy icon Frankie Howerd.

## Village bus stop

Lewisham Council has confirmed that it will be replacing the bus shelter and countdown screen outside the Blackheath Dry Cleaners in the Village that was demolished in an accident last year.

The Society has been pressing for an answer on this and JC Decaux (the provider of the shelter) told the *Newsletter*: "We will be replacing the shelter. We had expected delivery from our manufacturers in France, but there has been a delay, and we will inform you as soon as we receive some definitive installation dates."

**From the Archives:** Friday 24 August 1753: Yesterday one Myles Newell, a Blind Man, aged upwards of fifty, walked for a Wager of Twenty Guineas, laid by a Gentleman, from Kent-street End to the Green Man at Blackheath, which is five measured Miles and a half, in one Hour and thirty Minutes, without a Guide, which he performed in four Minutes less than the Time, to the great astonishment of all. **Derby Mercury.** AG

## Christmas Lights

Since the second week in January the Society and local councillors have repeatedly requested Skanska (Lewisham's street lighting contractor) to turn off the Village Christmas lighting, but without success.

We understand the problem is that, since Blackheath is not a part of Lewisham Town Centre's Christmas lights budget, Skanska is not obliged to do the work and that at present there is therefore no way of covering the costs. We have offered to set up a proper, formal arrangement with Skanska to overcome this unsatisfactory situation. We are awaiting a reply but the lights were still on when the *Newsletter* went to press at the end of March.

**Note to members:** In view of increased costs and additional commitments, the committee has decided that the annual membership fee will need to be increased to £20 from £15 per household. This will take effect from April for new members and from the next annual renewal for existing members.

## Letters - Traffic issues

### Close St Austell Road and extend the Heath

The *Newsletter* asked for suggestions for any improvements to the Heath. I feel as a place of natural beauty it needs little improvement and most proposals for any kind of development would have a detrimental effect on the beautiful landscape.

But as a local walker, I have noticed that there is very little purpose or use to the triangular system of roads that incorporates St Austell Road. It would be wonderful if the Heath could be extended to its natural boundary by removing that road, or turning it into a bike lane or pathway.

St Austell Road only takes one-way traffic towards Lewisham and cuts off the wonderful grassland from the glade around the chalk pit. There are no residences or businesses on it. *Nancy Sarre*  
*Note: More Letters to the Editor are on pages 10-11.*

## Two Blackheath churches seek restoration funds

Two churches on different sides of Blackheath are seeking funds for restoration and to improve their links with their local communities.

The Church of the Ascension in Dartmouth Row has major plans under its Ascension 18 project to develop into a flexible community resource on the side of Blackheath that serves large housing estates to the immediate west and south.

The first church on the site was Dartmouth Chapel built in 1697, which was replaced around 1750, and further building work took place in 1838.

The church has run programmes such as English as a second language, but no local premises are available for community activities, so it plans to fill this gap. It has already raised £70,000 of the £200,000 needed to re-order, decorate and transform the interior so that it can be used for worship and as a welcoming, multi-purpose community space. Work is due to start next year once the money has been raised.



also like to redecorate the whole church, for which it would need a further £100,000. The funds have come from parishioners, local donors, grants and through a series of social events, including a ball, disco, a comedy radio hour and a concert.

Externally, the tower and the spire (first known as the Needle of Kent), the stonework, including the finials, porches and the boundary wall, will all be restored and the roof made watertight.

Inside, glass doors will be added to the porches, the heating system, font and the carpet tiles replaced and the pulpit moved. The floor will be levelled to enable wheelchair and disabled access, the galleries will be made safer and new and more flexible lighting will also be installed.

The church will become more versatile and disabled people will have easier access. As well as the regular services, it will be available for use for a Friday night youth café, concerts, lectures, music performances, choir rehearsals and school carol services.



*The Church of the Ascension today and St Michael's around 1830, just after it was built, in a watercolour by TM Baynes*

A new floor will be created with replacement seating, making the church available for use by a more diverse community. For more details contact the deputy churchwarden, Bridget Knapper, on [bridget.knapper@ntlworld.com](mailto:bridget.knapper@ntlworld.com).

St Michael and All Angels on the Cator Estate has a larger scheme, and its building work is due to start this summer. It has raised £830,000 of £900,000 needed under its core plans for extensive and essential internal and external works and it would

St Michael's says it intends to share the heritage of the church and its history with children from several local primary schools after the restoration.

The church was designed by George Smith (1783-1869) and was built between 1828 and 1830 as a proprietary chapel on the site of Wricklemarsh House. A church was considered essential for new development, so the land and £4,000 were donated by the benefactor John Cator. For more information you can email [church@se3.org](mailto:church@se3.org).

## Halls appoint director, Conservatoire & BCER seek managers

*Blackheath Halls* have just appointed a new Director who starts work in April, the Conservatoire is interviewing for a new General Manager and the Cator Estate is looking for a new Estate Manager.

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance, which owns the Halls, said its new director will be Gemma Okell (*seen below*) who spent 10 years at the Salisbury Arts Centre as Assistant Director, and then as Director for the past four years.

She has also worked for the Bath International Music and Literature Festivals, has experience in artistic programming, management and fundraising and has worked with children and young people.

She said: "I am thrilled to be taking up this post at Blackheath Halls, an established home for live music, comedy, children's theatre and community events in south-east London."

Trinity said Gemma will continue to broaden and develop the Halls' diverse programme of concerts and events and build on its thriving community programmes. She will work closely with the music staff and students from Trinity Laban, which uses the Halls for rehearsal and performance activities.

Trinity Principal Anthony Bowne said: "On behalf of everyone at Trinity Laban and Blackheath Halls, I am thrilled to welcome Gemma, who brings not only a wealth of knowledge and experience, but also a deep-rooted passion for what we do.

"Blackheath Halls has an extraordinary and illustrious history, and we are all excited to work with Gemma on its next chapter."

The Halls' management recently said that more building work will take place over the next few years, with major funding provided by The Hearn Foundation and Arts Council England.

Some extra funds are still needed to carry this out and the Halls will be closed for a short period in January 2018 to complete this work.

*The Blackheath Conservatoire* is looking for a new General Manager, with the stated aim of establishing it as a successful and sustainable educational charity delivering high quality education in art, music and drama to the local community.

Michael O'Byrne, chairman of the Board of Trustees, told the *Newsletter*: "Our interim General Manager Clare Cornwell has done a fantastic job in growing classes and controlling costs and, now that the organisation has stabilised, the board feels that we are in a position to recruit a permanent person to help guide us through the next chapter."

The position has been advertised nationally, but the Conservatoire wants to publicise it in Blackheath as well, given the potential interest that local residents may have in the role. Applications closed formally in mid-March and interviews will take place in April.

Established in 1881 by William Webster, the

Conservatoire says it is part of the oldest surviving purpose-built cultural complex in London. It was founded to provide art, music and drama education and its values are those of creativity, quality and community.

*Blackheath Cator Estate Residents Ltd (BCER)* is seeking a part time Estate Manager to replace Mark Pitchford, who has retired after 4-1/2 years.

The new manager will run the estate's day-to-day affairs and will need a knowledge of building works, contracts, budgets and town and country planning, as well as understanding property law and being able to foster good relationships with residents. The advertised salary is £22,000 to £27,000 for three days a week.

Applications, with a CV, should be sent by 7 April (but late entries will also be considered) to Jon Taylor, Chair of BCER Ltd, Blackheath Cator Estate Residents Ltd, The Old Bakehouse, 11 Blackheath Village, London SE3 9LA. You can also email [office@blackheathcatorstate.co.uk](mailto:office@blackheathcatorstate.co.uk) and telephone 020 8297 1210 for a full job description.



### Blackheath Post Office

*We received the following letter from the Post Office in early January, 3-1/2 months after we first protested about the changes made to Blackheath Post Office. It is reproduced in full here to allow members to draw their own conclusions.*

Thank you for your letter of 22 September addressed to Paula Vennells, Chief Executive of the Post Office Limited. Ms Vennells is aware of your concerns and has asked me to reply on her behalf and, in doing so, I apologise for the length of time taken.

As you may be aware, the recent changes made at Blackheath Village Post Office are part of a modernization programme which we are currently rolling out through our network to create a more modern and convenient retail experience for our customers.

On receipt of your letter we addressed the concerns you have raised regarding external woodwork and the covering of the windows with the Postmaster of this branch. He has assured us that there are definitely no plans to recover the windows with advertising signs.

Turning to your point relating to the outside woodwork, we do of course have clear agreements with our franchises on the standards that must be maintained, and these include the external redecoration of the branch, which the Postmaster will look at.

To your last point, unfortunately whilst transforming the branch we found that the oak doors were unsalvageable due to vandalism and rot. We decided to replace the doors with automatic doors which allow greater access to the branch, particularly for wheelchairs and pushchair users.

Without doubt the Post Office has a special position in your community and we hope to continue to play a part in the lives of our customers living and working in the area.

I would like to reassure you that we will continue to support the Postmaster and his team to maximize potential and achieve success, securing a sustainable future for our services. I do hope that I have clarified the current position and would like to thank you again for taking the time to write to Ms Vennells.

*Angela Turner, Office of the Chief Executive*

I feel I must reply to all your negative comments on the new refurbished Post Office. I use the PO quite regularly and I actually find the new layout more efficient as there are more counters serving now (three instead of two) and I have never experienced long queues, even at Christmas.

The billboards outside in your photo (*seen below*) were only up for one or two days, so this showed an untrue image and, as for not needing WH Smith as we have Rymans, that surely is competition, which all shops, pubs and restaurants in the Village have.



My understanding after watching a TV programme on the PO is that it may have been closed were it not for WH Smith, as not so many people use the PO now.

As for the staff, they are always happy and smiling and know exactly what you want. I don't suppose you will print any of my letter, as all your comments seem negative. Am I the only person in the Village that is pleased we still have a Post Office?

*Jean Beaumont*

*Editor's note: I am very happy to print this letter and look forward to more views from members.*

### Rubbish issues in the Village

A few months ago I contacted you about the dreadful rubbish by the bins around the back of Strada (*below*) and the situation has not improved. Obviously the area is such an eyesore for all the people using the offices and for the many people attending St Mary's.



Many people are commenting on this situation as it looks so awful and could well be a health and safety issue.

David Wright of Chandler Wright regularly clears away the rubbish left by others, but, as well as the area used by those with entitlement, it seems that fly-tipping is an additional issue.

Also, why are there piles of bags outside Gail's virtually every day, and a man regularly stops his car outside Handmade Food and deposits up to 20 bags of rubbish by the bin.

I know you are so busy but it would be greatly appreciated if you know of any way this could be dealt with.  
*Eve Newman*

*Editor's note: Our chair has raised this issue at a recent Blackheath Assembly session and a meeting will be held with Council officials to discuss this.*

### Costcutter to become a Kaspas 'dessert bar'?

As you are probably aware, there are rumours circulating that the former Costcutter store in Lee Road is to become another branch of Kaspas, a chain of cafe/restaurants selling hot and cold desserts. A quick look at [kaspas.co.uk](http://kaspas.co.uk) gives the full picture and it says 'Blackheath - Opening Soon'. This can hardly be considered an asset to the commercial balance of the Village.

Furthermore, to operate successfully and legally, I assume it will need a change of use from A1 to A3 type premises. There are already 10 establishments where you can get coffee and cake in the Village, excluding licensed restaurants and pubs which sell coffee, and it does not need another one. What it does need is a small supermarket similar to that just lost.

Do you know if there is any substance to these rumours and has a change of use application been made to Greenwich Council? If so, are you intending to object on the grounds of unsuitability?  
*Name and address supplied*

*Note : So far, no facts have been notified to us and there has been no application for a change of use.*

### Lewisham's disappearing trees

Towards the end of February, walking to the Village from the Hare & Billet, crossing Grotes Place, I was surprised to see one of my favourite trees missing - the pine by the bench and bin at the end of Lloyd's Place - only the trunk was left.

I noticed a second tree stump nearby between the footpath and Tranquil Vale and wondered if Storm Doris in February had caused the damage.

Because it was tidy, with no fallen branches, I assumed that professionals had done the work. I asked several local residents and friends and was told Lewisham's head tree surgeon had said the conifer by the bench was broken and dangerous and that they had left the trunk for insect life.

He said the other one was a diseased chestnut that needed felling. I then noticed two other sawn trees in the green triangle between Hare and Billet Road, Eliot Place and Orchard Road.

I understand that a protocol exists regarding consultation, approval and notification of such work and wonder if it was followed in these cases? Because we locals in Orchard Drive value the presence of trees around the Heath so much, I am surprised we were not advised.

I should also refer to the attempt made by Lewisham to restore silver birches on Whitefield Mount beside Goffers Road after the gorse fire a few summers ago.

The planting of saplings was a public occasion but there is no sign of them now, probably due to insufficient water during their first year. Worthy of following-up?  
*John Mitchell*

*In response to our queries Lewisham Council's Tree Services Officer Peter Moss told us:*

"All trees on Blackheath were recently surveyed by me and a few felled due to fungal and structural decay or instability. One was completely dead. This was high priority work that I deemed urgent, especially as the Heath is frequently used by dog walkers and others.

I represent the planning authority and am not required to make application to the planning department. No other works are planned for the near future and we aim to survey the trees every four years.

We are not in a position to replace trees yet, as the planting season from November to March is now just about over and we have extremely limited resources.

You can find information on Lewisham Council's website regarding part funding of replanting schemes for the next planting season by residents and their organisations."

## Diary events

30 April Open Day, 2 to 5pm

Westcombe Woodlands

3 June Nature Walk - page 2

19 June 1030am Low tide

walk along Deptford Creek

27 June 7.30pm. Society

AGM, St Mary's Church Hall,  
Cresswell Park

## Welcome to our new members

Christopher Fuller  
Mr&MrsN Neemuchwala  
Anne & Ludo Pinxt  
Steven Sensier  
Jill Stevenson

## Your Committee

Two members of the Society's management committee will be leaving this year and we also have room for more members, so we are looking for volunteers to put their names forward.

We currently have a particular need for people with experience in architecture, finance or legal matters, but we shall be very pleased to hear from anyone with enthusiasm and a willing nature. If you are interested, please contact Sacha Bright in the office.

**From the Archives:** Monday 2 October 1752 : 66 stones at time of death. Died At his house on Blackheath, aged 80, Mr. Mackenzie, Esq; There were found in his kidneys 42 stones, 14 in his gall and 10 in his bladder, one of which weighed eight ounces and a half. **Reported in The Scots Magazine.** AG

## TAA shows jewellery, glamour, celebrities

*Talk about Art*, the organisation that promotes art to local schoolchildren, is launching a spring show featuring gems and art that links the glories of Asian empires with London as a centre of the jewellery trade and the origins of our celebrity culture.

In partnership with the Deptford primary school Tidemill Academy, the free exhibition called *Talk about Art...Art Connecting Cultures* runs from April 27 to May 19 at the Deptford Lounge Library in Giffin Street.

A series of eight colourful stands depict jewellery used in ceremonies in China and India's Mughal Empire, as well as paintings of jewellery worn by the many modern celebrities who flaunt it.

Nine fun workshops will be held for local schools where students can make their own fantasy junk jewellery, model their creations and have their photograph taken to become part of the 'Diamonds of Deptford' community artwork.



*Tidemill teachers preparing a workshop*

The schools' workshops can be booked on 020 8314 7299, or by emailing [thedeptfordlounge@thealbany.org.uk](mailto:thedeptfordlounge@thealbany.org.uk). On three Saturdays - May 5, 12 and 19 - local jewellers will be demonstrating their art and selling their wares.

The exhibition explains how precious and semi-precious stones and precious metals are fashioned into jewellery with sections on Chinese jade, diamond cutting and polishing and the use of platinum, gold and silver. For news about TAA go to Twitter and Facebook at @talkaboutart1 and its website on [www.talkaboutart.co.uk/](http://www.talkaboutart.co.uk/).

## Blackheath station stars in rail magazine

Railway buffs might like to know that *The London Railway Record* featured Blackheath station in a 15-page article in its January issue. The story, by editor and publisher Peter Kay, covers its history from opening in July 1849 to the 1990s, with detailed drawings and photographs.

It shows the old sidings next to the London platform and those on the modern car park. After 1878 the station became the terminus for many passenger trains, as most of the North Kent trains ran via Greenwich.

However, as the outer suburbs developed, no trains from London were finishing here by 1920. For more information on the quarterly magazine, go to [www.londonrailwayrecord.co.uk](http://www.londonrailwayrecord.co.uk), or you can contact Peter on [peterkay.essex@btinternet.com](mailto:peterkay.essex@btinternet.com), or 01206 824951.

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