



NEWSLETTER ■ AUTUMN 2019

## TREES POLICY AIMS TO CONSERVE AND PROTECT

London became the world's first National Park City in July, with celebrations to mark the event launched by the Mayor of London, who highlighted his commitment to tree planting *one of our tree volunteers, Bill Eldridge, reports.*

The Society believes its members are very supportive of the benefits of trees. We are very fortunate to live in a green area of London.

Few people would argue against the benefits that trees bring - at the aesthetic level, through improving air quality by trapping particulates, taking in CO2 and releasing oxygen, and by providing diverse habitats across the food chain.

But our tree heritage is under threat from development and the increasing risks of diseases - a significant new issue highlighted

at our AGM by Greenwich Park Manager Graham Dear (*see page 3*). We may not be able to prevent tree disease and this increases the need to be vigilant. How can the Society and its members respond?

### THE SOCIETY'S RESPONSE

At the end of last year we appealed for volunteers to help review planning applications covering trees across the conservation area. There was a good response and we are now better placed than ever to consider tree applications.

Our main objective is to support the councils' Tree and Enforcement Officers in ensuring that any applications to fell or maintain trees are reasonable and proportionate.

We are able to undertake regular reviews of applications, visit locations, make suggestions for alternative approaches or raise



objections, as appears appropriate. We also aim to challenge poor quality tree applications where this makes sense. We have already had some success, including encouraging tree officers to make on-site visits for preserved trees.

House extensions and erecting substantial buildings in gardens frequently require the destruction of trees, the protection of those that are to remain and/or replanting of

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new trees to compensate for the loss. Applications do not always include adequate obligatory documentation and there is also the issue of enforcement.

Conditioned protection measures may not be put in place before work starts, and trees shown in the plans as “to remain” are occasionally destroyed. The tree officers cannot regularly attend building sites so we and our members can help with vigilance in this area. Most applications are, however, for work short of felling where sometimes we can suggest an alternative, less drastic approach.

Overall there is a lack of robust data. Our sense is that a gradual diminution of tree cover in the conservation area is occurring as mature trees are removed.

While developers may be responsible for the most eye-catching impact on trees, individual homeowners are also considerable contributors to the reduction of tree cover in the conservation area.

### LEWISHAM & GREENWICH COUNCILS - RESOURCING POWERS

One factor contributing to the pressure on trees is the much-reduced scale of council resources focussed on tree applications. For both councils there is only one full or part-time tree officer to cover the whole borough. The resources used to be more substantial; we can play a significant role in encouraging and supporting their work.

Another factor is the smaller set of powers available to the council - compared to those for the built environment - to protect trees. They also only have narrow powers available to require replanting or to enforce it where the applicant volunteers to replant.

One important power they do have is to apply Tree Preservation Orders to important trees; we aim to

highlight where this can be used.

Most of our focus is on tree applications under the normal planning process and this does not usually include street trees, which vary throughout the conservation area. Some streets have none while others are well-endowed. This patchy coverage makes the situation in gardens even more important in Blackheath.

### WHAT CAN SOCIETY MEMBERS DO?

We would urge members to promote the message of the need to think carefully before having tree works carried out. We should all ask ourselves, will my actions add to the quality and volume of tree cover or not? Members are invited to contact the Society if they have concerns about risks to any trees in the conservation area, including risks from development actions, or ideas for more tree planting.

Members can make a difference: please spread the message to your neighbours to consider carefully before applying to fell trees, unless they are dangerous or definitely causing damage to buildings. One way to achieve the green environment we all want is to stop chopping down trees.



The photos show a sick sycamore tree (front page), a diseased conker tree leaf and a dead chestnut tree by the Concert Halls, a fine Blackheath landmark

### GAIL'S REARRANGES PAVEMENT CHAIRS AT SOCIETY REQUEST

Gail's Bakery in the centre of Blackheath Village has rearranged the tables and chairs on the pavement outside its shop following a Society request, after members raised the issue at our annual meeting in June.

Manager Maria Kasidopoulou said Gail's wanted to support the community. It therefore made the change to leave space for people with mobility difficulties or with children in buggies. There are now two rows of three tables instead of three rows of two. She said its license allows it to have 24 chairs and six tables up to five metres from the shop.

Concerns had been raised that people waiting to cross the road at the traffic lights opposite the station were causing an obstruction, particularly affecting people with mobility problems. *The photos opposite show the layout before the change (above) and afterwards.*



### GREENWICH PARK HORSE CHESTNUT AVENUE UNDER THREAT

The majestic avenue of horse chestnut trees leading from the Blackheath Gate of Greenwich Park to the famous vista across London is under threat, the Society's packed Annual General Meeting heard in June.

Park Manager Graham Dear, in a presentation following the formal AGM business, outlined the challenges the park is facing from disease damaging the trees, the huge increase in visitor numbers and climate pressures.



Eventually the avenue will be replanted with sweet chestnuts and the oriental plane tree Minaret.

However, the sweet chestnuts have also had their problems. A soil fungal infection affecting their roots, bark damage by squirrels and, most recently, a sharp increase in chestnut gall wasps have all taken their toll. The grub of the gall wasp causes abnormal growths, called galls, which can seriously weaken trees.

“It feels like an onslaught at the moment, it's quite depressing,” said Graham, seen below pointing to the tree problems during an interview he gave to the *Newsletter* after the AGM.

Sustainability is a key theme of the plans for Greenwich Park. As well as restoring some of the historic vistas and the 17th century landscape as originally planned, Graham said. The park needs to plan for the increasing population pressures in south and east London and the future projections of large increases in visitor numbers.

For example, rubbish removal has already had to be radically rethought. Since the recent *Blue Planet* TV programme, awareness of the disposal of plastics has hit the headlines, but it might not be generally appreciated that the sheer volume of packaging is also causing huge problems.

Not long ago, picnickers in the park would have taken their lunchboxes away, but now they buy sandwiches and need somewhere to discard the wrappings.

The small Greenwich Park bins can't cope, they overflow and are labour-intensive to empty. So about 140 small bins have been replaced by some 80 wheelie bins. As a result capacity has been more than doubled, less litter escapes and there are now fewer vehicles driving around the park collecting rubbish.

Plastic water bottles and coffee cups are the other main litter culprits. The Park's own catering outlets are trialling recyclable coffee cups but they have so far found nothing acceptable. Renovations are planned for two Victorian drinking fountains, and borehole water will be used for the toilets and to fill the boating lake, which currently uses tap water.

Visitors to the park might also see more long grass in future. The mowing regime is being revised and less of the park will be having a weekly or twice-weekly cut in summer.

There will be more meadows, cut just once a year, encouraging invertebrates and a greater diversity of bird species.

All the resolutions were passed at the Annual General Meeting and there were no changes to the committee this year.

Diane Summers

He said the Royal Parks Trustees have approved plans to match fund the £5m being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund. If this is successful, which should be known by the end of the year, then the park, with some additional fundraising, will have over £10m to invest in its “Greenwich Park Revealed” new conservation project.

The horse chestnut avenue, replanted around 1948, would normally be expected to have a lifespan of 120 to 140 years, but the trees are progressively dying after half that time. Out of about 300 trees, more than half are now infected with the fatal “bleeding canker” disease, and when 40% of the avenue has gone all the trees will have to be removed.

The disease is widespread in the UK and continental Europe and the trees are no longer being propagated commercially or planted, the AGM heard. Within 30 years there could be no more horse chestnuts in the UK, and collecting conkers could be a thing of the past.



## PACKED PROGRAMME FEATURES 10 SOCIETY AUTUMN EVENTS

**WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 4 - *Blackheath Can Take It - exploring wartime Blackheath.***

Eminent local historian Neil Rhind reflects on how Blackheath residents responded to the Second World War, which broke out 80 years ago on September 3. The illustrated talk is followed by a screening of the remarkable documentary *Listen to Britain* by Humphrey Jennings. This is a joint event with the Friends of the Halls and starts at 7 for 7.30pm. Tickets at £10 including a glass of wine from the Halls Box Office on 020 8463 0100. If this is oversubscribed Neil says that he might run it again.

**THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 5 - *Meet & Eat from 12.30 at the Hare and Billet.*** Join us for this informal gathering of members for a chat and a laugh over a drink or lunch. We never know who is coming.

**SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 22 - *Open House Walk & Talk with Neil Rhind around Grottes Place, Blackheath.*** Details are on [www.openhouselondon.org.uk](http://www.openhouselondon.org.uk).

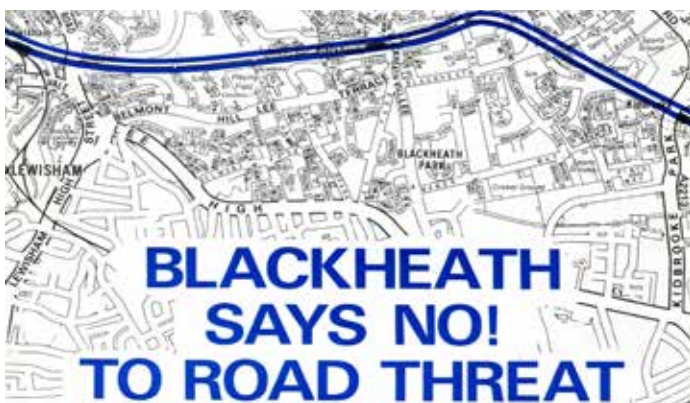
**TUESDAY OCTOBER 8 - *Walk & Talk - South Side Story.***

Society member John Causer will lead a walk discussing the four storyboards, and more, on the south side of the Heath. Meet outside the Princess of Wales at 1000. Donations of £5 on joining the walk.

**THURSDAY OCTOBER 10 - *Road Rage - 50 years of plans to build motorways through Blackheath.***



Society member Paul Wright gives an illustrated account of the repeated plans to ruin Blackheath by driving major roads through it. This is a tale of low cunning by planners and successful resistance by local people. At 7 for 7.30pm at St Mary's Halls, Cresswell Park. Tickets £10 from [www.eventbrite](http://www.eventbrite) including a glass of wine.

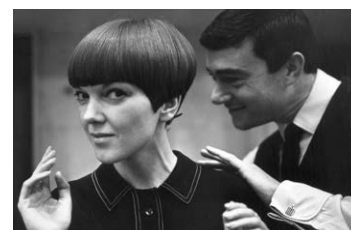


**WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 6 - *Prince Philip Maritime Collection.*** A behind the scenes tour of the Maritime Museum's pictures and conservation studios. This is a great opportunity to see this unusual collection and discuss the skills and expertise of the conservation staff. Meet at Kidbrooke station ticket office at 1015. Details are on [www.rmg.co.uk](http://www.rmg.co.uk). Please inform the Society office if you plan to join this two-hour complimentary tour, as details are needed for security by the museum. We will ask for £5 donation on joining the walk and this will be shared with the museum.

**WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 13 - *Meet & Eat at the Hare and Billet.*** Come and join other members for a drink and lunch as we informally meet and talk. All welcome.

**THURSDAY NOVEMBER 21 - *Walk & Talk - Hidden treasures of Lewisham.*** St Stephen's and St Mary's Churches have the most interesting histories and art treasures to share. Sir Gilbert Scott, John Flaxman and Abraham Colfe will be among the names discussed. We will meet at 0945 at the West End of St Stephen's and then walk along the Ravensbourne through the delightful therapeutic gardens to St Mary's Ladywell. Julian Watson, local historian and archivist, will be there to guide us. The donation of £5 on joining the walk will be shared with the respective churches.

**THURSDAY NOVEMBER 28 - *Mary Quant Revolutionary Fashion Designer.*** Mary Quant is an alumna of Blackheath High School. To mark the connection, Jenny Lister and Stephanie Wood, curators of an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum celebrating her work, will give an illustrated talk, and pupils from Blackheath High Junior School will mount a display connected with their visits to the exhibition. Society members are invited to bring any Mary Quant items they may have to share with us - we already know one member who has a complete outfit. At 7 for 7.30pm at Blackheath High School Juniors, Wemyss Road, SE3.



Mary Quant with Vidal Sassoon, photograph by Ronald Dumont, 1964©Ronald Dumont Stringer Getty Images

Tickets at £10 including a glass of wine from [www.eventbrite](http://www.eventbrite); search "Mary Quant Blackheath". There is no charge for Blackheath High parents and girls. Please tell the Blackheath Society office if you plan to come.

**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 30 - *Blackheath Village Day*** Festive activities continue throughout the day before the Village Christmas lights are turned on. Further details will be announced. Volunteers are welcome.

## KIDBROOKE SQUARE & LEE SCHOOL PLANS REJECTED

The Society's planning effort is carried out by a small group of volunteers and, while some have professional experience, most are amateurs. Our common attribute is enthusiasm for preserving and enhancing Blackheath.

We are always pleased to hear from any member who would be interested in joining this important effort. We are delighted to have two keen tree volunteers, enabling us to do justice to that important issue, reported on the front page.

Our previous *Newsletters* have covered some major developments on our doorstep and in the Conservation Area. We can be very satisfied that our efforts on all these topics have made a difference, and it is pleasing to see councils by and large accepting our arguments.

There was a particularly good outcome to the Greenwich Planning Board meeting in July to discuss Kidbrooke Station Square. This scheme has the merit of good affordable housing content, but we objected to its extreme density and height and lack of proper access. We also queried the developer's contentions regarding transport capacity and air quality.

Planning Board members shared these concerns vociferously, and the scheme was rejected. It remains to be seen what the next steps, including possible intervention by the London Mayor, will be.

We covered earlier plans for a new International School off Eltham Road in Lee, where the issues to be addressed included neighbour amenity and access from the very busy main road. The Planning Board also rejected this scheme in a well-attended meeting.

Discussion has continued on the Lewisham Gateway scheme regarding the details for six more blocks (one of 30 storeys) by Lewisham Station, including a nine-screen cinema. At this stage, after earlier interventions aimed mainly at limiting excessive height, our aim was to improve what we considered very garish plans for the cladding of the blocks, especially facing St Stephen's Conservation Area.

To developer Muse's credit, we were able to have a productive discussion with them, resulting in some improvement, and it seems the scheme's next phase

will begin construction shortly. *The photos below show the rejected scheme (left) and the approved one (right).*



We await the outcome of an inspector's inquiry (held in mid-May) on the plans for development, including a 34-storey block, on the nearby Tesco car park site. The final outcome will be decided by the new Secretary of State on or before 31 October.

Meanwhile, Lewisham has approved the conjoined 35 and 20-storey towers on the Carpetright site, whose main selling point appears to be that they will sit above, and provide an entrance for, the proposed Bakerloo Line Extension station at Lewisham.

The 35-storey (110 metre) tower will now house 670 student flats, instead of the 177 residential flats in a 30 storey tower proposed in the original scheme approved in February 2018. The affordable housing element has increased from 20.2% to 28.9% of units.

Nearer to Blackheath Village centre, Lewisham officers agreed that plans submitted for development of the site behind 29-35 Tranquil Vale were excessive, and rejected the application. In all such cases there seems to be an increasing tendency to go to appeal, but it is also pleasing to see a significant number of appeals against council decisions being rejected.

But there has been one disappointment: efforts by residents to get Lewisham to enforce action to deal with the severely dilapidated state of 8 The Glebe have yet to deliver a result, although there was some sign of action as we went to press.

We are at pains to show that our interventions are not always objections (*see the trees article on the front page*). A case in point is our support for the appeal held on August 20 on the Blackheath Bowling Club. Greenwich earlier rejected its plan for a move to a new site at the end of Blackheath Park. This would be

### THE CALEDONIAN MERCURY THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER 1736

Wednesday Night betwixt 6 and 7 a-clock, Mr. Rofe of Charlton in Kent, was attacked on Blackheath by two Highwaymen who robbed him of a Bank Note of £20, a Silver Watch and 26s. in Silver after which they tied his Legs under the Horse's Belly, took off his Bridle and then made off.



facilitated by leaving its current site in Brooklands Park, which would be developed into five townhouses.

We believe the overall objective, whereby the club would relocate to a secure future on a derelict site, with a resulting good quality scheme on the current site, is important. Greenwich cited the development on Community Open Space for refusing, but we think there is adequate justification for this being a special case. The Inspector's decision is expected by end-September.

We have earlier covered the important policy and practical issue of how councils discharge their obligation to offer some of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds received from developers for community projects - over £9m in Lewisham in the three years to March 2018. This is called Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL).

Greenwich's comparable Growth Fund, with just over £4m in the same period, has been operating since early 2018, but Lewisham's has taken an age to develop.

## GREENWICH BEAT BLACKHEATH IN IMPRESSIVE CRICKET WIN

The Blackheath Society played with a lot of enjoyment and some flashes of brilliance, but we found ourselves up against a younger, fitter and impressively skilled side practised in the arts of batting and bowling.

In other words we were simply outclassed, but fought bravely and batted our 20 overs into the early July evening gloom, as the black clouds swirled above. The game was a tad one-sided and Greenwich, whose team comprised regular cricketers, won by 56 runs, the final scores being 136 to 80.



The scorers hard at work during the match and the scoreboard showing the difference between the two teams

It should be said that we have had better days. For instance last year our top four batsmen clocked up 100 runs between them (on the 25 and out rule) and we only lost by four runs, but this year our top four only managed 50, which did not compare well with the opposition's 91.

However, the indications now are that Lewisham will have its scheme in operation in 2020. A higher proportion (25%) of CIL funds will be treated as NCIL than the 15% in Greenwich, and local assemblies will have a significant role in allocating the monies.

This will be a very important reason to support the Blackheath Assembly as initial NCIL funds totalling £1.7m will be allocated across the 18 wards, with the highest amount (£574,000) going to Evelyn ward and the lowest (£16,000) going to Lee.

Blackheath ward will be allocated £54,000 and a further £600,000 is to be given to an all ward pot, or Borough Fund, for projects that will benefit two or more wards, or the entire Borough.

NCIL is intended for local investment in infrastructure and to address the demands that development places on an area, so the eligibility criteria will be somewhat different from the existing Ward Assembly funds, which are being scaled back.

Their bowling was also clearly more accurate and experienced. This produced wickets, restricted our run rate and led to far fewer extras, with only nine from Greenwich compared to our 26.

Our social side, including three father and son combinations, enjoyed a day out in the splendours of Greenwich Park, with some great support from members of the Society, including our chair, Paul Watts.

Grateful thanks are extended to the team and our captain Olly Taylor, our diligent scorer Tony Othen and the impressive and impartial umpire, John Bartram.



Looking back, in this series of matches starting in 2004, Blackheath has won 10 of the 15 games played. After all these years it is timely to reflect on the past and to ensure that the fixture has a great future, whilst being enjoyable for all, played with friendly rivalry and relevant to both societies.

Richard Dinkeldein

## DIANA CELIA RIMEL (1937 - 2019)

Your Society was very sad to learn in June of the death of Diana Rimel, aged 82, one time Secretary to the Blackheath Society and an eager voluntary assistant to many local amenity and history groups over the years.

Diana, who lived for many years at Ashburnham Place (and was a chronicler of the history of the Ashburnham triangle) became well-known to a number of us when she worked in the Registry of Goldsmiths College.

This led her, in 1978, into adult education in the College where she organised local history courses. These moved to other venues, and Diana set up the first local history series in the restored Blackheath Concert Hall.

She also managed the Art Gallery in the newly-rescued Greenwich Theatre on Crooms Hill, a project undertaken by the actor Ewan Hooper.

These local connections led to stints with the Greenwich Society and other groups. From 1989 to 1995 Diana was the part-time secretary of the Blackheath Society, working out of Chapman House during the chairmanship of the late Kenneth Bound.

During this time her history groups moved to Mycenae House in Westcombe Park. The courses she started ran for many years and continue today.

Diana's output in books, articles, town trails and talks covered a huge range and she built a reputation for

arranging popular series of talks on local topics. Her monograph on the distinguished Greenwich architect Thomas Dinwiddy (1845-1928) stands out. She was skilled at recruiting expert speakers where she was not closely involved in a topic herself.

Her family was able to identify at least a dozen organisations with which Diana had been active in over 40 years, holding various posts of responsibility. The Society extends its sympathy to her children - David and Delia - and will always be grateful for her indelible role in our history.

Neil Rhind



## ALICE'S SUNFLOWER BLOSSOMS IN VILLAGE GARDEN



One of the great pleasures of being a Blackheath Society Village gardening volunteer is the chance to chat to passers-by. Volunteers often see old friends while they're working, meet new ones and enjoy positive feedback about their efforts.

Mike Newman, one of the gardening gang, had a special encounter with a junior fan during the summer.

A small girl called Alice and her mother were on the way back from school and they passed Mike while he was weeding the triangular garden on Montpelier Vale, next to JoJo Maman Bébé.

"Alice was clutching a plastic cup of compost containing a sunflower seedling about four inches tall," recalls Mike. "She had been growing it at school but has no garden where she lives. Her mum asked if I could plant it in the triangle garden, which I did."

Some of Mike's gardening colleagues were a bit dubious that it would survive but thanks to Heath



Estates, the estate agents backing onto the garden, Alice's sunflower has survived and thrived.

The staff watered the sunflower daily, nurturing it through spells of drought. The Zero Degrees manager, Adel, has also helped with keeping the garden going during dry spells in the summer, employing the microbrewery's powerful hose.

Mike, *seen working on the right*, has not come across Alice and her mum since the sunflower was planted. "I do wonder if she has been back to see it," he said.

The triangle garden, which is really beginning to fill out now, was formerly a neglected patch of scrub and a magnet for rubbish. The gardening group, which has also planted and maintains the raised beds on Tranquil Vale, has further plans for greening the Village.

If you know Alice and can answer Mike's question, do get in touch. Even if you don't, and would like to join the gardening group, please contact the Society office.



## ALL CHANGE ON THE RAILWAYS - EXCEPT FOR THE OPERATOR

After three years of Chris Grayling, we have a new Secretary of State for Transport and our fourth Minister of State for Rail in 18 months, but unfortunately still the same train operating company for the last 14 years, and mainly the same rolling stock during the last 25 years.

Govia, owned 65% by Go-Ahead and 35% by Keolis, has held the South Eastern franchise since 2006, initially to 2014 after a competitive tender but since then under repeated non-competitive direct awards.

This first went to 2018 but was then extended for a few months each time, with little requirement for service or train improvements. The last extension from June to November 2019 has been extended to April next year, taking Southeastern's tenure to 14 years.

The competitive bid process launched in 2017 for a new franchise from April 2019 to 2027 has been terminated. The result was to have been announced a year ago, but has been repeatedly delayed, with just two of the four original interested parties, including the incumbent, still in the race (Govia and Abellio). Trenitalia withdrew and Stagecoach was disqualified.

The Department for Transport says it had "significant concerns that continuing with the process would lead to additional costs incurred to the taxpayer, with no certainty that this would deliver envisaged benefits for passengers in a timely fashion."

Improvements to capacity, performance, customer service, connectivity, ticketing, stations, co-working (especially with Network Rail) - all promised for the new franchise - remain largely unfulfilled.

Passengers continue to suffer overcrowding and summer overheating in cramped, outdated Networker trains with no air-conditioning. The £6.5m station improvement fund required by the new franchise also remains undelivered, but sorely needed.

So what will happen next? The DfT says conclusions of the Williams Rail Review, set up in August, will be used to inform what happens at Southeastern. It intends to implement the lessons learned from the review, due to make recommendations before the end of the year, and to "develop a solution that delivers the capacity and performance benefits passengers are expecting."

Lewisham Station's peak hours' overcrowding problems, exacerbated by new residential housing developments close by and further down the line, such as at Kidbrooke, will get worse as more schemes in the pipeline are completed.

Lewisham Council is chairing an Interchange Group involving Network Rail, TfL and Southeastern to co-ordinate improvements to the rail/DLR/bus interchange, but plans remain aspirational, progress slow and public information non-existent.

The Council's real priority seems to be to bring the Bakerloo Line Extension to Lewisham, a project that remains uncertain and at least 10 years away and - without major station changes - more likely to aggravate interchange problems than solve them.

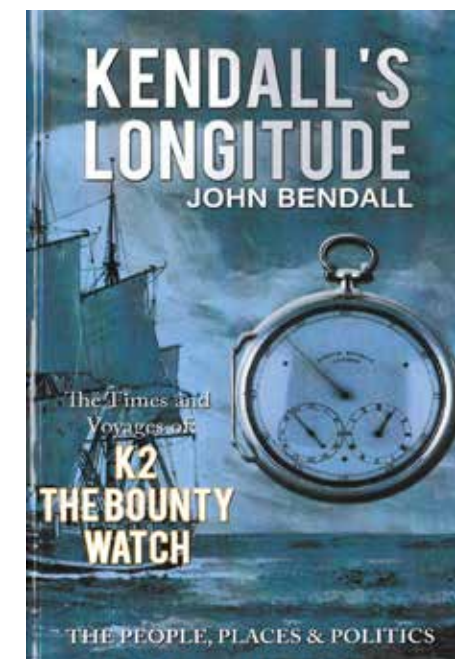
So regrettably there is little cheer and more of the same for long-suffering rail users to and through Lewisham for some time to come.

Nick Patton

## NAVIGATION POCKET WATCH THAT CHANGED HISTORY

Blackheath resident and Society member John Bendall's first book recounts the story of a timekeeper that travelled the oceans in the 18th and 19th centuries. As Dava Sobel says in her bestseller *Longitude*: 'The sea life of K2 encompasses some of the most famous voyages in the annals of the oceans.'

*Kendall's Longitude: The Times and Voyages of K2 the Bounty Watch* celebrates the place in history of the second of the three maritime timekeepers produced by Larcum Kendall between 1770 and 1773 for the Board of Longitude.



A reliable timekeeper was vital for British Navy ships to pinpoint their exact position as they sailed the oceans to secure the Empire and support the trade that made the nation rich.

Maritime navigational tools could find latitude - the position north or south of the equator - but establishing longitude, or how far east or west you needed to sail, remained elusive. The answer was to take on board an accurate timepiece, set to Greenwich Time.

But a pendulum clock would not work on a rolling ship so a smaller, accurate watch was needed.

John Harrison had developed four sea clocks and his H4 watch was the breakthrough. Based on these, Kendall made a series of smaller nautical timekeepers to take on board, accurate enough to establish longitude. K2's first voyage, accompanied by the young Horatio Nelson, was nearly its last because of the crushing Arctic ice. On its next two expeditions it survived kidnappings, nautical intrigue and the gunpowder plots of the American revolutionary wars. Its next voyage was to the slave coasts of Africa.



Captain William Bligh took K2 on the *Bounty*, but he lost it in a fight with the mutineers who sent him off in a small boat in 1789. Led by Fletcher Christian, they carried it to Pitcairn Island (*photo courtesy the Pitcairn Islands Philatelic Bureau*) from where it was recovered 18 years later by a Nantucket Quaker, only to be stolen by the Spanish. It was carried on mules along the Andes before sailing into the Opium Wars in China and finally being donated to the Royal Observatory in 1963.

So the pocket watch had many dramatic adventures, all admirably portrayed in this book, which also contains two chapters of technical explanation and an appendix by Mike Dryland detailing the nautical issues and Kendall's work and explaining watch technology.

The book, copiously illustrated with colour and black and white photos, is published by Austin Macauley and is available through Waterstones and Foyle's at £21.99 for the hardback and £9.99 for the paperback edition.

## REGULAR EMAIL MEMBER UPDATES

Many of you appreciate our regular 'News for members' email which keeps you informed about urgent local issues and events. This fills the gap between the *Newsletters* and is an effective way for us to stay in touch with you quickly at no extra cost. If you want to be included please make sure we have your up to date email address at [office@blackheath.org](mailto:office@blackheath.org). We will never pass this on to other organisations and you can unsubscribe at any time.



## EURO FOOTBALL FAN ZONE

Greenwich Park is to host a fan zone in front of the Queen's House next summer for up to 30,000 fans during the UEFA 2020 football tournament, with four large screens showing eight matches live.

The Greater London Authority and Mayor Sadiq Khan want to set up the zone on Queen's Field on part of the site used for the Olympic equestrian games in 2012. England's matches, the semi-finals and the final will be screened during the month-long competition between June 11 and July 12 and a ballot will be held for tickets.

Enabling works and the set up period are due to take 17 days before the competition and the break-down and park clearance will last for 12 days after the final.

As during the Olympics, Blackheath will be one of the arrival and departure stations used by visitors, but no footbridge will be set up over the A2 this time.

When no matches are being shown, the site will be used for community events for up to 5,000 people. The organisers will recruit volunteers to act as guides and hosts and are planning a 21-day consultation on the zone in September. Full details can be found on <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/sports/euro-2020-greenwich-park-fan-zone-faqs>.



A computer image of the fan zone in Greenwich Park

## ONBLACKHEATH FESTIVAL

A move to mid-July from mid-September may have meant warmer weather and lighter evenings, but there was also a change of event management for the sixth OnBlackheath music festival this year.

This led to some logistical issues, particularly on Saturday, and long queues were seen at bars and food stalls with supplies running out early in the evening. The site layout changed, with a funfair taking a large area and fewer smaller stages for local or newer bands, although that may have helped contain the noise.



However, on the Sunday the event was better organized, with shorter queues, although some people may have eaten elsewhere and the no-readmission policy was not popular with local families.

The event appeared busy on both days, although the experience was more like going to a concert than a family festival. Many food stalls were present from the Lewisham Model Market.

One good initiative was the use of beer cans and not plastic glasses. The

cans had a 10p deposit and at the end of the evening enterprising children were seen clearing the Heath of empty cans to earn extra cash.

Headline acts such as Jamiroquai, Rag'n'Bone Man, Grace Jones - in her second appearance at the OnBlackheath festival (*seen above*) - Morcheeba and UB40 all went down well with the crowds.

Paul Watts

## LEWISHAM NEW BUILDS BLIGHTING THE LANDSCAPE

Congratulations to all those volunteers whose comments were key in persuading Greenwich Planning Board to reject proposed plans for Kidbrooke Station Square, [Hilary Ball writes](#).

Sadly, the shift towards higher density and excessive height of new builds is blighting the landscape in Lewisham and affecting the health, well-being and safety of residents, particularly those of us living on the southwest corner of Blackheath and Blackheath Hill.

As a long standing member of the Society, I feel moved to express my views, which are shared and supported by many of my neighbours, on the regeneration plan in Lewisham and its effect on our community.

Although we understand the need for more affordable housing and commend efforts by Lewisham Council to address this issue, we are utterly dismayed by the lack of sensitivity regarding aesthetic and environmental elements in its architectural plans, which are apparently being passed with little or no consideration of their impact on local infrastructure.

Lewisham did initially invite the public to view plans for their regeneration programme, with limited access to planners and developers to ask questions and to forward written comments and suggestions, on site or online. The exhibition was well attended, as residents made it clear they wanted to be involved in the process. However, there seems to be very little evidence that the public view was seriously taken into account.

The result has been more noise, dust, pollution and increased health issues, rather than a cleaner, environmentally friendly place to live and work. I was not surprised to hear the regeneration around Lewisham Station had been awarded second place in the 2018 Architectural Carbuncle of the Year.

Station staff have expressed concern over platform crowding during peak travel times and have received numerous complaints from residents in new tower blocks around the station about noise levels and the frequency of platform announcements causing disturbance, discouraging them from opening windows.

The new traffic system through Lewisham around the new station complex and regenerated area is particularly chaotic, with continuing snarl-ups and no box junctions to compensate for the poor timing of traffic lights and pelican crossings.

On Blackheath Hill we are now almost closed in by high-rise new builds and, with completion of the last building phase on the old Lethbridge estate, the circle will be complete. The proposed increase in height for the new builds on this site and the old Carpetright store and Tesco car park will add to our misery with another layer to blight the landscape.

Those of us living on Blackheath and Dartmouth Hills

mourn the loss of views which extended beyond Crystal Palace. Greenery and architectural diversity are being replaced by ugly concrete tower blocks with oppressively bright exterior security lighting that has a debilitating effect on residents' health and well-being.

The most disturbing spin-off is the increase in noise pollution and dust. We previously enjoyed relative peace and quiet in our rear gardens. With completion of each new Lethbridge block, sound pollution from the A2 appears to have doubled as traffic and aircraft noise bounces off these tall buildings and destroys enjoyment of our gardens and balconies. It seems as if the A2 is running through our gardens.

When we tried to point this out to Lewisham Council, our views were rebuffed or ignored. I would like to say that, according to Huygens Principle, any building above 3 to 4 storeys high has an acoustic impact on the area. The noise bounces back and forth between surfaces creating echoes ad infinitum. Either planning officers have not done their physics homework or they have chosen to sacrifice environmentally sound architectural design for attaining targets on building quotas.

Living on the border between Lewisham and Greenwich, we often feel like the forgotten ones, being bounced between both boroughs and TfL on issues directly affecting the community. Any input from the Blackheath Society would be greatly appreciated, especially on these issues, particularly current Lewisham planning appeals affecting this area.

**Society committee member Nick Patton responds:** We are delighted our concerns about Kidbrooke Station Square were heeded by Greenwich councillors, despite the high 50% level of affordable housing on offer.

Disappointingly, very similar concerns repeatedly expressed by the Society about Lewisham town centre developments - height, density, transport and infrastructure overload and environmental impact - have not been heeded by Lewisham councillors, though we have won some significant improvements for our efforts.

The factors driving approvals - even where affordable housing offers have been low at 12 to 29% - include: great pressure on Lewisham from the London Mayor and central government to approve new homes; its wish to regenerate the town centre with amenities like a new road layout, cinema, shops, cafes, restaurants, parks, squares, an underground station and a bigger student population.

Other factors are: its zoning of the area around the station for tall buildings; the planning law's presumption in favour of sustainable development; great persistence and resources from developers wanting to recoup their investment in land and their project costs and levy payments to the Council for infrastructure improvements.

## THE IPSWICH JOURNAL

31st DECEMBER 1748

On Thursday last Capt. Smith of the Spencer, a Baltick Trader, was attack'd by a single Highwayman, on Blackheath, who robb'd him of nine Guineas. The Fellow was soon afterwards taken by two Persons coming with a Dung-Cart, who knock'd him off his Horse, notwithstanding he fired a Pistol at them. He proved to be one Hawes, a Smuggler, and has for some Time past infested those Roads, He Was carried before a Justice at Charlton, who committed him, under a strong Guard, to Rochester Gaol.

# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR BIODIVERSITY HABITAT

Tucked away behind the Cator Estate in Blackheath lies a plot of land owned and managed by the Environment Agency as flood defence. The area - edged by the river Quaggy, gardens, fields and sports pitches - lies just behind Quaggy Walk and is kept functional with the grass frequently mowed.

With UK flora and fauna under huge stress, it seemed obvious to use this in a way that would enhance the local environment without impacting its functionality.

So, in early 2019, I presented a proposal to the Agency to develop the area into a biodiversity habitat to encourage native UK native species to flourish in peace.

This summer, as an experiment, they did not cut the grass for several months and it was encouraging to see what self-seeded. I am negotiating with the Agency and hope to start planting in the last week in September.

Bird and bat boxes are being made by the charity Men in Sheds and the Woodland Trust has offered 30 free hedgerow saplings. All that is needed is funding for seeds, for the Agency to finalise its health and safety issues, and then I will need volunteers to help plant. If you are interested in volunteering or funding seed, please contact me on [ashcroft.c@gmail.com](mailto:ashcroft.c@gmail.com).

If successful, it is hoped that a template will be developed which can be rolled out at other similar sites, as a way to encourage more small community environment initiatives. *Catherine Ashcroft*



*The photos show the layout of the land in a general view of the site in winter and flowers that have self-seeded after the grass was left to grow this summer*

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Catherine & Neil Ashcroft

Paul Collet

Linda Fletcher

Flora MacFadyen

Mette Pedersen

Daniel Ratchford

Gail Russell

Susan West

## EVENTS DIARY - DETAILS ON PAGE 4

WEDNESDAY 4 SEPT  
World War II talk

SUNDAY 22 SEPTEMBER  
Open House Walk

TUESDAY 8 OCTOBER  
Walk on Heath south side

THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER  
'Road Rage' talk

WEDNESDAY 6 NOV  
Maritime collection visit

THURSDAY 21 NOV  
'Treasures of Lewisham'

THURSDAY 28 NOV  
Talk about Mary Quant

SATURDAY 30 NOV  
Blackheath Village Day

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