



NEWSLETTER ■ AUTUMN 2020

COVID-19 TRAFFIC SCHEMES HIT SOUTH ROW AND VILLAGE

The Government grant of £250 million to English councils last May for traffic management schemes had an immediate impact on residents of Blackheath, when a scheme to close South Row between Pond Road and the Paragon appeared without warning.

About £45 million was allocated to London, or around £1.5m per council, and the guidance was that they “must do whatever is necessary to ensure transport networks support recovery from the Covid-19 emergency and provide a lasting legacy of greener, safer transport”.

Such schemes, aimed at promoting walking and cycling, can be implemented without the usual consultation period, though they

are to be monitored and reviewed.

The Society first became aware of the plans in early June. We alerted members quickly and Lewisham Council then published plans on their Commonplace website and invited comments.

There was considerable chaos when the scheme was implemented, with displaced traffic, poor signage, and general confusion. We received many comments for and against the closure.

The Society joined forces with other local groups to arrange a leaflet drop in the area to ensure residents without internet access and non-users of social media were kept informed.

After about two weeks, and following representations from

Morden College, a bollard between Pond Road and the Paragon was removed - although we understand only on a temporary basis - while discussions continued between Lewisham and Greenwich Councils, Network Rail (regarding a three tonne weight limit on Kidbrooke Gardens), Morden College and other stakeholders.

There have been 1,181 comments on this project on the Commonplace website to date, far more than any other projects in the Borough, with strong views on both sides.

There are lessons to be learned here: Lewisham has admitted the whole process was not handled well and that engagement with relevant stakeholders should have taken place much earlier.

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However, this issue has not gone away and we will keep a close eye as it develops.

The Society was keen to focus attention on the wider issues of what could be done about Covid-19 traffic projects in Blackheath Village and, after writing to the Mayor, we met local Lewisham Councillors in early July and again in early August.

The proposals we discussed included possible widening of pavements in Montpelier Vale, removal of railings, restrictions on HGV traffic displaced from other areas and one-way systems.

But we were told that there were no practical solutions, given the narrow road system in the centre of the Village and funding priorities elsewhere. A pedestrian one-way system was introduced between the station and Ryman's but with poor signage, and this has proved to be unworkable.

It was promoted on the Commonplace website but has only had about 100 comments, with some in favour and some against. For the moment the plan is to retain the one-way pedestrian system, acknowledging that it cannot easily be enforced.

Even if only a minority follow it this might, however, ease congestion slightly. We will continue to push for further improvements for pedestrians and cyclists and to reduce traffic through the Village.

More recently, we have seen Lewisham introduce modal filters elsewhere, as in the South Row example, where roads are closed to through traffic, allowing pedestrians and cyclists free access. From end-August these are in the Lee Green/Hither Green area and on Lewisham High Street towards Catford.



South Row seen in the summer when two box filters and the bollard, since removed, were all in place

Greenwich has also implemented a "hills and vales" scheme for side roads in west Greenwich, including the closure of Crooms Hill, Hyde Vale and Point Hill as through roads. Further details of these can be found on https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200266/roadworks_and_traffic/2075/greenwich_liveable_neighbourhood.

We will monitor the impact of these schemes. While they may benefit some residents, there is also a concern about wider issues and the transfer of traffic to other areas, especially as children return to school.

KITES DAY AND MARATHON BOTH FALL TO COVID-19

The kite-flying family fun day, scheduled for Sunday 11 October on the Heath, has been postponed until next year, as the current Covid-19 rules and uncertainty about how the virus might progress this autumn have made it impossible to go ahead.

Organised by the Blackheath Society, it was to have been the first for 10 years and had been eagerly anticipated as a celebration of the Heath's long association with flying kites. Kent Kite Flyers, an enthusiasts' club, has been generous with their advice and support and have kindly agreed to come back and help us next year.

The plans included demonstrations of expert kite-flying, workshops for children to make kites, help for novices flying their own kites, music, food, and opportunities for businesses in Blackheath and other local organisations to promote their own activities.

The event had already been moved from a week earlier to accommodate the postponed London Marathon, which begins on the Heath. The marathon was originally to be held in April, but was postponed until October in the hope that it would be safe by then to hold the event.

The mass run, which had over 40,000 participants in 2019, has now been cancelled for this year and will be replaced by elite-only races under Covid-secure conditions in St James's Park, with no access for spectators. The full marathon has been rescheduled for 3 October 2021, to give it the best chance of returning, and our kite day will follow one week later, if all goes according to plan.



The Friends of Westcombe Woodlands have produced a new membership leaflet and are looking for more volunteers to join those seen above. The 3.6 acre site, next to Maze Hill station, has an orchard, oak grove, bird and bat boxes, a vibrant pond and beehives. It also shelters woodpeckers, owls, sparrowhawks, herons and bats. See www.westcombewoodlands.uk for details.

SOCIETY PLANS TO RESTART EVENTS

Due to current uncertainties and changing guidelines, we will need to confirm whether these can take place and, if so, whether as live or as online Zoom events, via the Society's weekly email bulletin and website. Because of the restrictions on numbers you will need to reserve a space on the Walk and Talks via www.Eventbrite.co, and search "Blackheath Society".

After reserving a space, if you need to cancel please do so as soon as possible. On joining the walks a request for a donation of £5 for the Society will be made. If any are oversubscribed they will be repeated.

WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

Meet & Eat at 12.30 at the Crown, Blackheath Village. Come and join us on Zoom for a chat and a drink.

SATURDAY 19 & SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER

Open House weekend. The Blackheath Society will participate with a self-guided Welcome to Blackheath Village Walk, which can be downloaded from our website (*see story on back page*).

WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER: WALK & TALK

Wednesday in the Park. Society member Jonathan Causer will lead members round Greenwich Park, with reference to its history, development and events. We meet at the main Greenwich Park gates on the Heath at 1000. Please register for a place on Eventbrite.



TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER: WALK & TALK

Modern Architecture in the Cator Estate (since 1950) with local architect Ana Sutherland. Ana is working on a research project on Modern Buildings in Blackheath and Greenwich (1950-2020) and is planning a publication on the theme for late 2021.

We will focus on the Cator Estate, visiting key Span estates and unique modernist homes designed by architects like Patrick Gwynne, Peter Moro and Walter Greaves. Most of the buildings we will be looking at faced major opposition when first built, but today, as modern architecture is celebrated and more widely

recognised, they form a unique group of architectural treasures that contributes to the rich historic fabric of the area. We will stop at St Michael's for a coffee break. Meet at 1000 at Blackheath Quaker Meeting House, 2 Lawn Terrace. Please register for a place on Eventbrite.

TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER: MEET & EAT

Meet & Eat at 12.30 at The Crown, Blackheath Village. Do join us live or on Zoom. *To be advised*.

WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER: TALK

Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's rebellious daughter (*seen below*). Eminent biographer and broadcaster Lucinda Hawksley will relate a number of stories from Princess Louise's unusual and mysterious life. She was the patron for Blackheath High School, which this year celebrates its 140th anniversary. Lucinda will detail her other connections with local schools in an entertaining evening at Blackheath High School, Weymss Road (*to be confirmed*). At 7 for 7.30pm. Eventbrite tickets at £10.



THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER: WALK & TALK

Exploring the changing landscape of Kings Cross with Society member Paul Wright. This walking tour looks at the history of a fascinating part of London, from the dust heaps and fever hospitals of Georgian London through the heyday of the Victorian railway and goods yards, ending with the new architecture of what is now one of the most sought after parts of the capital.

The tour will include a short visit to an exhibition on Coal Drops Yard at the Kings Cross Visitor Centre.

We assemble outside the main entrance to the station on Euston Road at 1015. Please register for a place on Eventbrite. Travel tip: from London Bridge station there is a frequent service to St Pancras from platform 5. Numbers will be limited.

SATURDAY 5 DECEMBER: VILLAGE DAY

We celebrate the annual switching on of the Christmas lights in the Village.

SURVEY REVEALS LOCAL RARE BUTTERFLY POPULATION

With more time to spend in the open air in recent months, many of us have been enjoying the local wildlife and wishing to know more about it. In early May the Society was approached by our local wildlife professional Joe Beale with a very interesting proposal.

Joe had been commissioned by the management of Greenwich Park to carry out a survey of the butterflies visiting and living in the Park as part of their major National Heritage project.

One aim was to compare the prevalence of local wildlife before and after the transformation of the park which is planned over the next two years.

comparisons, should there be any habitat or management changes, as well as to provide evidence should any threats arise and, of course, to show people what butterflies are living locally.

The data would supplement other casual observations and reports on the area.

Joe says: "I would be monitoring butterflies as representative of the health of the local environment, but would also record other interesting wildlife I come across. This might be interesting for Society members in addition to helping to contribute scientific data to the local records centre, which is Greenspace Information for Greater London."



Joe Beale's photos, taken in Hyde Vale, show a Small Tortoiseshell (left) and a very rare White-letter Hairstreak

He is carrying out a similar survey for the Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park. His proposal to us was to extend the survey to two neighbouring sites on the Heath, Vanbrugh Pits and the top of Hyde Vale.

Our committee supported the idea and, following an application to the Blackheath Joint Working Party community fund, we were able to secure the necessary funds. The survey is taking place over the five summer months from May to September.

The method he is using is Butterfly Conservation "standard transect monitoring", also known as Pollard walks. This involves defining a route through the selected area and recording all butterflies seen within a set distance of the route, together with weather and habitat details.

The same walk is repeated each month and a report prepared summarising the findings. The aim is to provide confirmed data to allow subsequent

He reports that the May to August surveys have produced a respectable 18 species of butterfly across the Hyde Vale and Vanbrugh Pits sites. The highlight was a White-letter Hairstreak visiting bramble flowers at the Hyde Vale site in June.

"This is an uncommon and elusive little butterfly that requires elms and, although it is presumed to be a scarce resident species, there have only been two confirmed sightings at Hyde Vale before," Joe said.

More typical records included Marbled Whites at both sites in midsummer and double figure counts of Gatekeepers in August at Vanbrugh Pits especially on ragwort, which is one of the few flowers to cope well with drought conditions.

There was also a scattering of colourful Small Coppers, Common Blues and Brown Argus across both sites. The detailed findings of the survey will be published on the Society website in due course.

SOCIETY'S PLANNING EFFORTS RELY ON OUR VOLUNTEERS

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 an enthusiasm for preserving and enhancing Blackheath and we are always pleased to hear from any member interested in joining this important work.

All our volunteers are greatly valued. But on this occasion we particularly wish to thank David Kerr, who is standing down. David joined the Society planning group in 2006. Since then he has worked tirelessly and with great professionalism for our goal of preserving and enhancing Blackheath, with a particular focus on the Kidbrooke area. Latterly, with the retirement of Philip Binns, he advised the planning group on issues affecting the whole of Greenwich. David will be greatly missed, and we wish him well.

Recent months have seen a dramatic change in planning activities, as all participants adapt to the constraints of Covid and develop new ways of working. The councils' efforts, including planning meetings held online, have continued quite effectively, but inevitably there is now a serious backlog, and some important activities, including enforcements requiring site visits, continue to be seriously hampered.



However, construction activities resumed soon after lockdown, as evidenced by Lewisham town centre, where work is well underway on the major Gateway project, while the Carpentright tower has already over 20 storeys, on its way to 32 (see picture above).

Our efforts have continued unabated, facilitated by Zoom. We have been vigilant in ensuring that new procedures for the current circumstances, such as for site notices, are followed, and we have been active in the new online committee mode.

We continue to be pleased with a number of successful outcomes for our efforts, often achieved by working closely with other organizations and neighbours. We were pleased to see a refusal for construction of town

houses behind Tranquil Vale in the Village and for the latest proposal for Kidbrooke Village, involving significant additional density and inappropriate treatment of affordable housing. We are also pressing for enforcement of unauthorised work, especially on trees, during lockdown.

Government rules applying to planning are also changing. Blackheath, by virtue of its Conservation Area status, has generally remained fairly well insulated from changes, but the new guidelines could affect peripheral areas, and impact issues such as the Infrastructure Levy, which have been a big feature of development lately. We will update members on these issues in future.

Current major applications under consideration include plans for a 10-storey social housing development in Kidbrooke Park Road, as Greenwich aims to roll out its "Greenwich Builds" initiative for new affordable homes across the borough. Another is a for a new mixed housing and commercial development on a small site on Blackheath Hill.

Trees continue to be a major focus. Although Covid has interrupted discussion in Lewisham and Greenwich on moving ahead with their ambitious "green agendas", we very much hope to persuade the two councils to put greater emphasis on trees.

The fact that pollution seems to be back to pre-Covid levels makes this very relevant, and our tree agenda is very broad. On the next page you can read of a successful initiative on planting street trees. On a day to day basis we are supporting the councils' very overstretched tree officers who are scrutinizing large numbers of applications for work on trees. Our main priority is to challenge the need to fell mature trees and to seek high standards of tree maintenance, and we press for enforcement when rules have been abused.

A particular issue of continuing concern that our tree experts wish to highlight is the increase in tree disease, on which members can be vigilant. Oak Processionary Moths and acute oak decline are major threats. Bleeding canker of horse chestnuts is now found in over 50% of London trees, including some on the Heath. Mild winters and wet springs favour the spread of pathogens, causing lesions which ooze a dark fluid on the stems and branches.

Large infected branches are a safety hazard and should be removed. Common Ash trees, on the other hand, are being attacked by Chalara - a disease caused by a fungus growing on the stalks of infected leaf litter. To help protect Blackheath's ash population all leaves should be frequently cleared and composted to break the fungus's lifecycle and pruning avoided (unless an immediate danger exists), including dead-wooding as it will only open up more entry points for the pathogen.

QUENTIN ROAD RESIDENTS LOOKING AFTER STREET TREES

For many years it seemed impossible to persuade the local authority to plant or replace local trees, but in 2018 a determined resident of Quentin Road engaged the organisation now known as Street Trees for Living and persuaded a small group of like-minded neighbours to club together to buy replacements.

STfL, partnered with Lewisham Council, recommended a range of suitable species selected to fit the rather narrow pavements. Locations were agreed with the residents and four trees were planted by a professional firm in the autumn of that year.

Each tree is fostered by one of the contributors and these tree guardians take responsibility for watering during the first two years, while they become



The photos show one of the new trees (left) planted in Quentin Road and an existing tree struggling to survive

established, pouring regular gallons down a projecting watering tube.

The cost is £400 per tree, of which the council will currently provide £100, and 26 households have contributed. This system enables tree planting in any street of the borough and gives residents control over what is happening on their doorstep.

Coordinator Sharon Kemp said: "Street Trees For Living made it so easy. They bought the trees and planted them, and all I had to do was raise enough money to fund them. I had such a fantastic response from my neighbours and everyone is delighted with the results".

Greenwich runs a slightly different tree sponsorship scheme, and information can be found on the respective council websites. Lewisham, working with STfL, now has one of the most supportive schemes in the UK. The new trees are maturing well and making a small contribution to our legacy for the future.

The older residents of Quentin Road recall mature trees joining across the road to form a continuous arch of greenery that added to the charm of the road as well as reducing pollution and, by many accounts, increasing the value of properties.

But street trees have a finite life and very little of the original Victorian planting survived into the 21st century. Disease, pollution, neglect, financial cutbacks, utility repairs and even the Great Storm of 1987 had all taken their toll.

Many surviving trees had become deformed and stunted. Gaps began to appear where dead trees had been taken out and not replaced and parts of the road began to lose a key part of its historic character.

The conservation area was visibly diminished, but the road has now taken on new life. *Barry Shaw*

TEA HUT MOVE TO GREENWICH SITE GETS BJWP SUPPORT

The Blackheath Joint Working Party, at a virtual meeting in June, gave unanimous support to a plan to move the Tea Hut across the road from its current Lewisham site to the small boarded-up building next to the pond near the Greenwich Park main gate.

Following the accident to the Tea Hut in January the owner, Adam Furze, said the options included a new design close to the original

site and the possibility of moving the business into Greenwich. The BJWP advises on management of the Heath and includes Greenwich and Lewisham councillors and local amenity societies. Adam is keen to re-start the business as soon as possible as his staff has been unable to work for the past six months. Discussions are continuing with officers and councillors from both councils about long-term plans for the Tea Hut.

Lewisham has agreed a temporary licence for a trailer van close to

the old site. A suitable vehicle is currently being refurbished and it should be able to start supplying refreshments soon. Adam and his team have now had access to the building on the Greenwich side and discussions are underway as to whether or not this might prove to be a viable option. The staff member injured in the accident is making good progress at home and the driver responsible is being prosecuted for dangerous driving and will appear at Bexley Magistrates Court in October.

LEWISHAM STATION UPGRADE PROCEEDS DESPITE COVID-19

We reported in the last *Newsletter* that the go-ahead had been given for further scoping work for upgrading Lewisham station, which has long suffered from ever-increasing overcrowding.

There was a fear that Covid would halt this work, just as it was given the green light in March. But, thankfully, it seems that the project team's work has continued during the pandemic. It has made good progress and still has support from the major stakeholders.

Work has also gone ahead this summer to upgrade the 1970s signalling in the Hither Green area, advancing a project to upgrade signalling throughout south-east London after the rebuilding of London Bridge station.

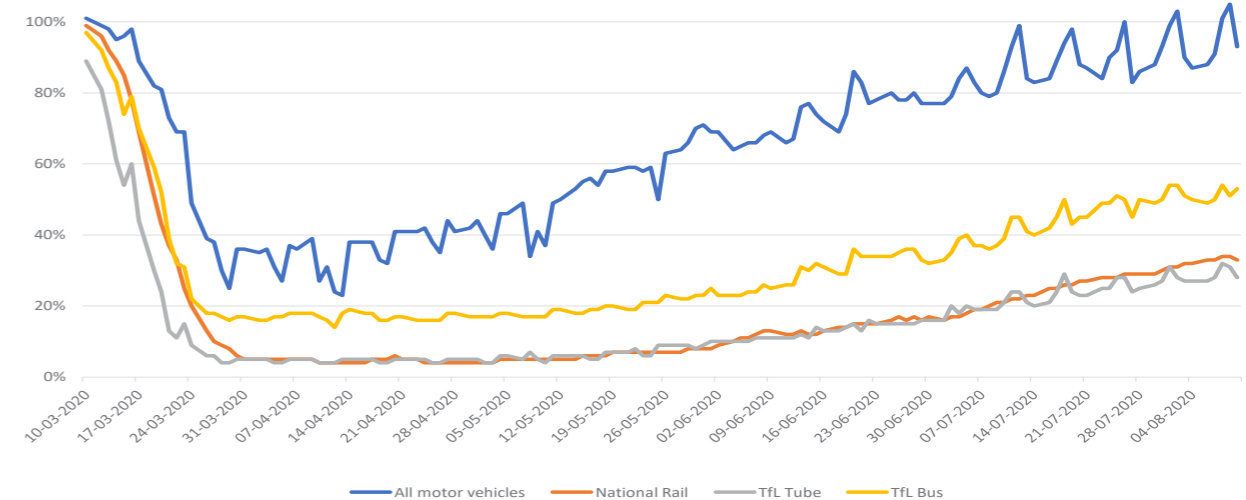
The London Bridge Area Signalling Centre has also finally ceased operation, with control now fully transferred to the Three Bridges Rail Operating Centre, near Gatwick in Sussex.

TfL relies very heavily on fares, especially from the tube, where passenger numbers have similarly plummeted. The injunction to work from home, and the recommendation that people who return to work or resume non-essential shopping should take extra care when using public transport, have deterred a return to buses, trains and tubes.

Visitors to London's West End shopping and entertainment district are down 73% year-on-year since lockdown restrictions were eased on June 15, an even bigger drop than across the country, where footfall levels in UK high streets as a whole are down 57.2% compared with June last year.

The chart below shows the impact of Covid on different modes of transport in Great Britain since March 8.

Rail companies have stepped up their anti-Covid measures, including increased cleaning and limiting



However, the same positive message cannot be reported for the plan to extend the Bakerloo Line to Lewisham by 2030. In Transport for London's proposal for its revised budget, released at the end of July, the operator listed this among four major infrastructure projects which it warned it may "be unable to progress" unless a new funding model is agreed.

A number of Conservative councillors have written to transport secretary Grant Shapps, urging him to guarantee the future of the project. The Mayor of Lewisham, Damien Egan, and the Leader of Southwark Council, Peter John, have added their voices, calling on the government to work constructively with TfL to ensure that momentum is maintained and that the project - important for the recovery and growth of south-east London - is not put at risk.

The government effectively nationalised the railways shortly after the start of the Covid crisis, due to a dramatic fall in passenger numbers, and it has since had to bail out Transport for London by £1.6 billion.

numbers on many reservation-only intercity services. However, the preference for private cars is not hard to understand.

New research suggests rail passengers travelling for an hour should sit more than a metre apart to slow the spread of coronavirus. Scientists from the University of Southampton found the safe distance between passengers needs to be wider than the recommended 1.5 metres on journeys of more than two hours.

If someone nearby is infected with the virus, they recommend sitting at least 2.5 metres apart. The study, carried out between December 19 and March 6, was based on passengers using China's high-speed rail network, in collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, it found an average of 0.32% of passengers seated within three seats across, and five seats in front or behind an infected person, still caught the virus.

MEMBERS RECALL LOCKDOWN ACTIVITIES

HELMA ZEBREGS LEARNS GREEK

For the last 15 years I have been reading Ancient Greek texts with a retired classics teacher. When lockdown started we began the lessons by telephone, with me reading Herodotus on Mondays and Homer on Thursdays and then translating. I spend a lot of time preparing the lessons.

My teacher makes up a topical sentence every lesson to translate from English into Greek and between us we have made up Greek words for lockdown, face masks and government advisors. The lessons have been the highlight of my lockdown week.

When lockdown started, I dug out an old Sherlock Holmes book of all his short stories and I have enjoyed reading one story every day, mostly sitting in the garden. He only wrote 56 short stories, so sadly not enough for the whole of lockdown. These two activities gave some structure to my week, as did the daily walks with my dog, my lockdown companion.



MEG DINKELDEIN SAYS

Here is a photo of me painting out a large graffiti tag near the Standard. Apart from removing graffiti in and around Blackheath, my husband Richard and I have been litter picking most Sundays and have collected over 50 large black bags full since the end of March. We have had the dubious pleasure of picking up discarded masks, gloves, empty nitrous oxide canisters, bottles, cans and cigarette packets.



Howard Shields and Nick Patton photographed views of Blackheath and Greenwich in the warm weather, with the clear light, empty streets and a lack of tree cover. Here are: General Wolfe looking across alone to Canary Wharf, a desolate-looking Blackheath Village, a quiet Collins Street and a wonderful view of the City from Greenwich Park

BLACKHEATH MEMORIES CREATE NEW ARCHIVE DIMENSION

Pam Schweitzer was a pioneer in appreciating the value of reminiscence amongst older people, and in 1997 she set up the Age Reminiscence Centre (now Age Exchange) in Blackheath Village.

With Claire Summerskill, she recorded interviews in the early 2000s with local residents about their life experiences in Blackheath. These recordings were rather neglected, but recently the Society, drawing on its large picture archive, has worked with Pam to create a series of films reflecting life in Blackheath over the past 100 or so years.

Many of the people recorded have now died, as they were in their 80s when interviewed. But the films, put together by Allan Griffin from the Blackheath Society, remain as historical testaments to Blackheath lives.

So far 21 films have been made and they range from the memories of 14 year-old Paulette Woods working in the centre of Blackheath when it was hit by a V2 rocket in 1945, to those of Barbara McKenzie, who was born in Blackheath and owned a number of shops in the Village for more than 50 years.

Olive Amos, who died aged 98 last year, ran a fruit and vegetable shop in the Village which many still remember. Vic Welch says he never made anything of

himself, and was still sleeping in 2001 in the same bedroom in which he had been born 79 years earlier.

He never married and lived with his sister, but describes himself as “a very lucky boy”. He talks with great affection of his working life in Charlton and of his sisters and aunts who trained as nurses in the 1900s.

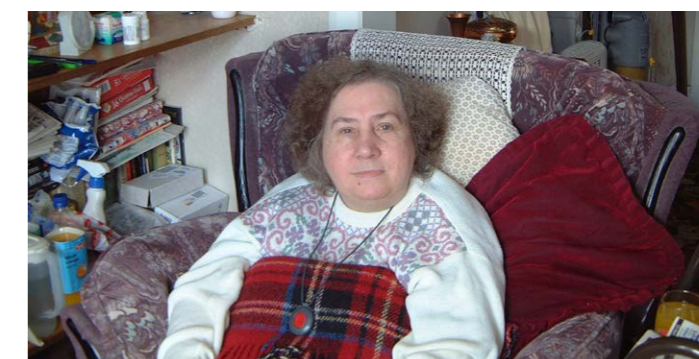
Pat Hanmore describes attending St Ursula’s Convent school in 1932. There are around another 30 films to be made from Pam’s collection and they present a kaleidoscope of Blackheath life experiences.

The Society contributed some of these films to the Severndroog Castle festival in early September.

The Society’s archive contains over 25,000 photos, including 5,800 online, and we are always grateful for more, so we would be happy to take off your hands any family photos or diaries lying in old trunks or suitcases which might be incorporated into this ongoing project.

If members have any historical items linked to Blackheath and surrounding areas, all the better. The films can be seen on www.blackheatharchive.org/blackheath_memories.

We have added 1,255 images to the archive website and updated existing galleries, putting more pictures in the Blackheath and Greenwich, Cator Estate, Kidbrooke, Lee and Angerstein Encroachment galleries.



These archive photographs show the Reminiscence Centre in the 1980s and Paulette Woods at home in 2002. On the bottom row are Olive Amos in 1930, aged 10, and Vic Welch preparing to go on holiday in 1947

IGNATIUS SANCHO - A BLACKHEATH LIFE THAT MATTERED

Mayor Sadiq Khan’s commission to review public statues and memorials in London, along with the Black Lives Matter campaign, provide the context for a local opportunity to establish a better tribute to Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780).

Sancho was an extraordinary and talented man who was born in the middle passage, the stage of the triangular trade in which millions of Africans were forcibly transported to the New World as part of the Atlantic slave trade.

He was taken to New Granada where his parents, enslaved Africans, both died and he was then brought back across the Atlantic as a toddler to Greenwich. Unfree, he served three unmarried sisters, who may have been children of the Duke of Dartmouth, and grew up around Dartmouth Row.

His ability and charm were spotted by the second Duke of Montagu, George Brudenell, who gave him books to read, and he ran away across the Heath to Montagu House by Greenwich Park.

Freed, he was a butler for the Duke’s widow, and subsequently became a composer and writer, corresponding with Laurence Sterne and friendly with Charles James Fox and the first abolitionists. He ran a shop in Westminster, voted in two elections and was a celebrity painted by Thomas Gainsborough.

His published Letters (Penguin Classics, 1998) became weapons in the campaign for emancipation. In 2007, at the bicentenary of the Act which ended the slave

trade in the British Empire, a modest plaque was placed by the Friends of Greenwich Park, next to Queen Caroline’s Bath, on the site of Montagu House.

A number of us in the Blackheath and Greenwich Societies are now hoping that the plaque could be accompanied by a more prominent modelled image, based on the Gainsborough portrait (*pictured*), in bronze or stone. The portrait was painted in 1768, when Sancho was employed as a valet by the Duke of Montagu. Rather than servants’ livery, he wears a gold-trimmed waistcoat, reflecting his valued position within this household.



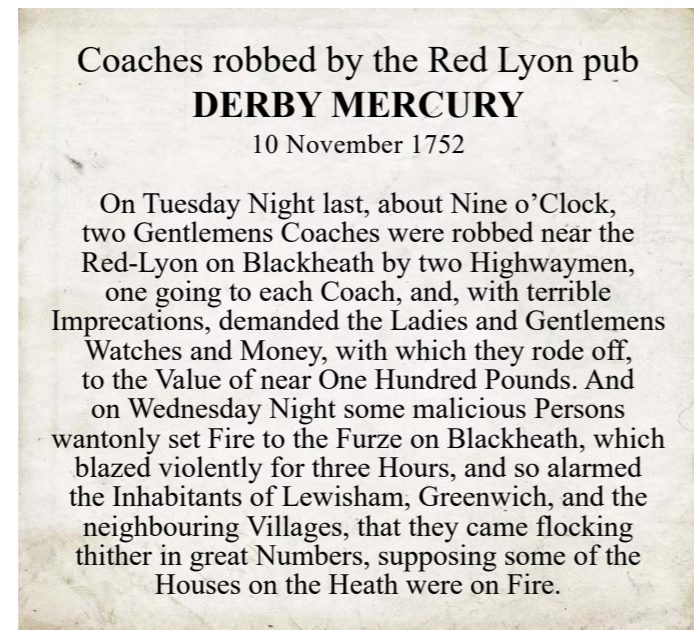
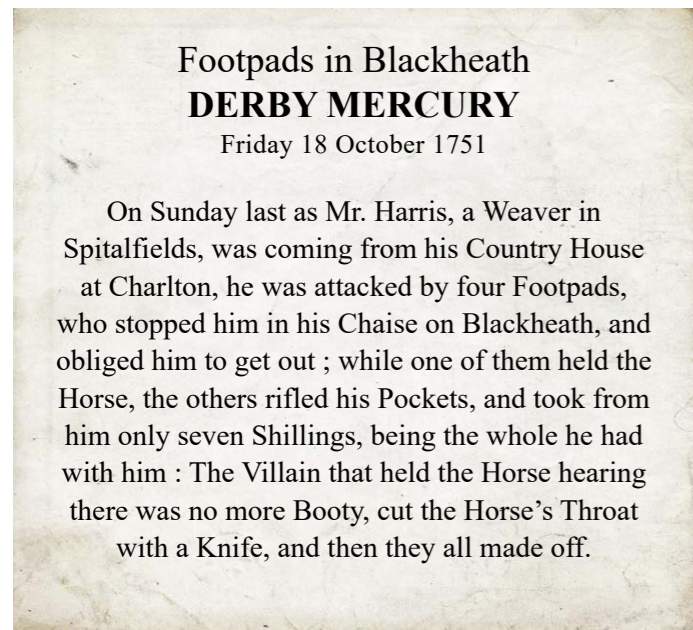
The Greenwich Race Inclusion Project is consulting member bodies. The Rev Lindiwe Maseko, of the Ascension Church in Blackheath, and linked churches in Lewisham and Deptford, have all signalled their support.

Consultations are ongoing, including with the Friends of Greenwich Park, and it is hoped that further recognition can be given to Sancho locally in Black History Month in October, possibly including a repeat online of Patterson Joseph’s one-man performance in New York in 2018 of

“Sancho - Act of Remembrance.”

We expect to talk to officials of the Royal Park before long and prepare a cost estimate.

Richard Bourne, member of the Blackheath and Greenwich societies, rbourne40@yahoo.co.uk



ALEX RETIRES AFTER 21 YEARS

Alex Schweitzer, who has retired from the Society’s management committee after 21 years, was born in Berlin in 1939, just three weeks after the outbreak of war.

He says he enjoyed serving on the committee where he contributed greatly to the work on scrutinising planning activities, particularly in leading the effort on developments in Lewisham.

He was widely respected for his work both for the Society and in the Lewisham Amenity Societies Panel, reflecting his professional experience, his dedication and his wisdom.

He lived through World War II in Germany with his mother, brother and sister. In 1946 he came to England to join his father and two more siblings who had fled the Nazi regime and, with his family reunited, Alex settled into life in London.

After a grammar school education, he studied classics at Oxford University and architecture in Brighton and at the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College.

Most of his working life was in the London Borough of Islington, where he worked on housing and other major projects as an architect in the planning department.

He and his wife Pam moved to Blackheath in 1971 and have lived in the Village in Camden Row ever since. Alex (*pictured*) commuted to Islington by motor bike across London for 20 years until he retired.



When Pam began to develop the Age Exchange Reminiscence Centre and its attached Bakehouse building, Alex threw his weight behind the scheme. A very practical architect, he was happiest when working at the coal face and seeing the vision of a project slowly come to life. This was carried forward to realise the complex where the Society now has its office.

Now 80 years old, Alex says he is happy to hand on to the next generation and he and Pam are enjoying living in “this wonderful Village”. With their children and grandchildren nearby, they plan never to move away.

ARTHUR ROLFE DIES AGED 77

The Society was very sorry to learn of the death in July of its long-serving Vice-President, Arthur Rolfe. For the last 20 years he lived in Sark, in the Channel Islands, where he was President of its parliament, the Chief Pleas of Sark.

Arthur, who was born in December 1942, was a supportive Vice-President and attended our AGMs and social events when in London. For many Greenwich residents he was well-known as the leading Conservative on the Greenwich Borough Council.



In 1985 the Society suddenly found itself short of vice presidents and, following the death of Lord Vaizey in July 1984, we lacked a president as well. Bobby Furber, then Chairman, had the enlightened idea that we should invite the distinguished political journalist John Grigg, an active member of the Social Democratic Party, to take over as President.

At the same time there were two retiring local councillors - Ron Pepper, a Labour member on Lewisham Council and long-time resident of Blackheath Village, and Arthur Rolfe, who lived on Shooters Hill Road and was also stepping down from active politics locally. Both agreed to be our vice-presidents.

With the appointment of these three, the Society could quite easily maintain its long-standing stance of being independent from party-politics. All three were sociable and helpful in the Society’s activities and did not let party-political persuasion sway them from supporting the Society in things that mattered.

Arthur, an oil engineer by profession, was famous for his enthusiastic political activity, and none who were around then will forget the extraordinary general election of 1983 when he almost took the safe Labour seat of Greenwich, missing out to the late Guy Barnett by only 1,211 votes. He was later the GLC member for Croydon East.

He once told your President that if he had called in at one or two more pubs during the election campaign he might have won. He was a good and cheerful man, always eager to help, and excellent social company.

Neil Rhind

WILDFOWL SNAPS EASE THE LOCKDOWN BLUES



The Egyptian goose on the left was spotted holidaying on the Heath in August and Egon Walesch captured this unusual photo of Greylag geese, one of three main breeds on the Heath, safely crossing the Prince of Wales Road in the spring. A pair of white domestic geese have also been spotted on the Prince of Wales Pond and may have escaped from a city farm or a private pond. Does anyone know where they came from?

PRESIDENT'S OPEN HOUSE WALKS

Over many years, in the context of Open House and separately, members and the public have benefited from the opportunity to follow our President, Neil Rhind, on a range of walks around Blackheath, highlighting the history and architecture of our area.

As a result, there is a wonderful collection of the walks, created in Neil's inimitable style. We are aiming to make them accessible to members, and one example was shared with you during lockdown. We will be looking at selectively making more available, and putting together a publication of the series.

This year's Open House weekend, self-guided, walk entitled 'Welcome to Blackheath Village' is mentioned on page 3 and it takes place on September 19 and 20. It is, of course, based on Neil's work and can be downloaded from our website from September 14.

VIRTUAL AGM

Our annual general meeting, held online via Zoom on June 17 due to the Corona virus, attracted over 40 members. It dealt only with the basic legal requirements of an AGM and lasted just 20 minutes.

Alex Schweitzer has retired after 21 years' service to the committee (see story page 11), leaving one vacancy.

We hope to hold another meeting for members to cover other current topics of interest as soon as circumstances permit.

The front page photograph is by Tim Keeler

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SECRETARY: Sacha Bright EDITOR: John Bartram DESIGNER: Pippa Stanton

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: John Bartram, Allan Griffin, Sarah Mansfield, Nick Patton, Nicola Peers, Helen Reeves, John Schofield, Howard Shields, Diane Summers, David Walker, Paul Watts, Andrew Westbrook, Liz Wright, Helma Zebregs

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