



SOCIETY WISHES BLACKHEATH WELL IN DIFFICULT TIMES

The Coronavirus pandemic means we are living through one of the greatest health challenges for 100 years.

The Society may have to cancel all events for the next few months but, if so, hopes to rearrange many later in the year. This is a fast moving situation and much will have changed by the time you read this. Please visit our website for regular updates and look out for our weekly emails and social media feeds.

We would like to emphasise three core messages for all to follow:

- please keep to social distancing.
- look after your neighbours safely.
- support local businesses.

The office is closed to visitors but we are operating virtually so please keep in touch, preferably by email. This *Newsletter* is being produced

only in PDF form, as we do not want our deliverers to come to the office, but we will print a small number which can be collected later if you need one.

It has been good to see that the local community has come together, and we are aware of various initiatives under way, including groups operating on a street- by-street basis to assist those who may be self-isolating.

One of our committee members has been called upon to collect some shopping for a self-isolating doctor.

As many of our member are retired, they will be spending time at home over the next weeks. If we can help by connecting you to local groups to help with shopping and other tasks, we will be happy to do so.

Caution needs to be taken, of

course, to ensure the bona fides of offers to assist, and local council websites are also a good source of information.

The Society management committee sends good wishes to all members and their families and friends in these challenging times, and hopes that you all stay safe and well.

The changes already affecting the Village shops have dramatically increased with the arrival of the Coronavirus. Here is a review, accurate at the time of publication.

Phase Eight closed its doors early in March, although the shop had been doing well, and its nearest outlet will now be at the O2. Two weeks earlier, Raffles closed after 20 years trading. The owner has put his stock in storage and is looking for alternative premises in the Village.

HIGHLIGHTS

Blackheath Tea Hut

Page 4

Archive expansion

Page 9

Local rail investment

Page 11

All restaurants and pubs were obliged by the government to close from March 20 and three days later a national lockdown was imposed and all non-essential shops were told to close as well.

Some had taken action earlier, including Khan's Indian restaurant and the Ivy Cafe. Mordens Wine Bar has been closed for several months, but the reasons are unclear.

Oxfam has closed until further notice and in March the Clarendon Hotel had only 10 rooms booked out of 170 and weddings were cancelled. But Cook was absolutely booming and had emptying freezers. The Halls, Age Exchange and the Conservatoire were all closed.

But three new shops have opened in recent weeks – perhaps not the best time to launch a business when footfall is markedly reduced.

The Voewood, described as a women's lifestyle boutique selling "a unique mix of stylish womenswear, accessories, gifts and home décor" opened just before Christmas in one half of what had been Fat Face. The company has been operating successfully at The Standard and the Village outlet is currently a pop-up to test the local market.

More recently, the shop next door opened as The Blackheath Pantry, selling a select range of high quality food and drink. We understand that the plan is to extend the offer as the business develops.

The latest eatery in the Village is Avocado Garden, occupying the site vacated by Giraffe. It serves organic food, including dishes for vegetarians and vegans.

Opposite, on the old Selectric site, we now have a branch of the luxury beauty store Space NK which held a launch event in early February. We wish all our new businesses much success in these challenging times.

As our current crisis evolves, there is huge concern about the future of all our Village shops, as a very high proportion involve food, drink and accommodation, and all are subject to closure.

Others, such as doctors and dentists involve close personal contact and need urgent advice about what action to take. Even clothes shops are experiencing problems, with customers concerned about trying on clothes that could have been tried by others.

But in these difficult times, it is very important that where possible we all support our local businesses by using them.

The London Marathon, which starts on the Heath, has been postponed from April 26 to October 4 this year.

The OnBlackheath music festival was cancelled because it would have coincided with the final of Euro 2020 and the fanzone in Greenwich Park. OnBlackheath anticipated festival-goers and performers would want to watch the football, but the tournament has now been postponed until the same time next year.

TWO MEMBERS' CHEERY PHOTOS FOR TROUBLED TIMES

As the Coronavirus has arrived, restricting our movements, we thought that these two recent local photos might cheer you up. The first shows a very dapper Eurasian coot, or *Fulica Atra* for the specialists, wearing his very best galoshes at the Prince of Wales pond, set up and taken by committee member Allan Griffin. The second features a lovely rainbow next to All Saints church during the half-term funfair, snapped by Society member Frank Smith.



SOCIETY EVENTS PLANNED, BUT IN DOUBT DUE TO VIRUS

We have another packed programme of events for you in the coming months and you can register by going to www.eventbrite.com and searching for Blackheath Society.

We will, of course, let you know when they have to be cancelled or postponed because of the Coronavirus outbreak, and we will keep our website up to date.

Please cancel your bookings if you are unable to come. The exception is the Postal Museum visit, where you need to book directly with the museum. Please note that the government has now ordered all pubs to close.

TUESDAY APRIL 21: WALK & TALK The changing landscape of Kings Cross. This walking tour will look at the history of a fascinating part of London. From the dust heaps and fever hospitals of Georgian times to the heyday of the Victorian railway and goods yards, ending with a look at the new architecture of what is now one of the most fashionable and sought after parts of the capital. The tour will be led by Society member Paul Wright and includes a short visit to an exhibition on Coal Drops Yard at the Kings Cross Visitor Centre. We will assemble at 1015 by the Henry Moore sculpture in front of the main entrance to the station on Euston Road. Donations of £5 to the Society on joining.



MONDAY APRIL 27: TALK ON FRANCIS DODD, RA, Blackheath painter of the inter-war years, by Tim Keeler at 7 for 7.30pm at The Old Bakehouse, Bennett Park, SE3 with tickets at £10. Dodd lived in Blackheath Park and painted many local scenes and portraits of various residents of this area. Tim will tell us about his life and works and the Blackheath of his day.

MONDAY MAY 4: MEET & EAT at the Crown at 12.30.

WEDNESDAY MAY 13: WALK & TALK on the Bloomsbury Literary community led by Robert Maurice Williams. A



remarkable group of "people who wrote" lived in this area, such as Virginia Woolf, TS Eliot, Lady Ottoline Morrell, Robert Bridges and many more. The walk is about 2-1/2 miles. We meet at Tottenham Court Road tube station in front of the Dominion Theatre at 1030. Donations of £5 to the society on joining the walk.

TUESDAY JUNE 9: WALK & TALK visiting the Post Office Museum and Mail Train at 15-20 Phoenix Place, Mount Pleasant, WC1. Journey back in time through the original tunnels and station platforms of London's 100-year-old underground postal railway and visit the evocative postal museum. We plan to meet in the café of the postal museum at 1030 and will then go for our Mail Train ride together at 1100. *Travel tip:* At London Bridge station change to the Thameslink on platform 4/5 direction Kings Cross, alight at Farringdon station, walk north up Farringdon Road, turn left at The Piano Works and continue up Warner Street until the Postal Museum. Walking time is 15 minutes.



WEDNESDAY JUNE 17: SOCIETY AGM at 7 for 7.30pm in the St Mary's Hall, Creswell Park.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 24: WALK & TALK at the Inns of Court with society member Jonathan Causer. He will lead a very popular and informative tour round the legal heart of London and relate the history and development of the Inns of Court, regaling us with stories of a legal nature. Meet outside Temple tube station on the north side at 1015. Donations of £5 on joining the walk.

THURSDAY JULY 9: WALK & TALK, a connoisseurs guided tour of JMW Turner's House, Sandycombe Lodge at Twickenham. It is an out of town villa built by him and John Soane and recently restored. Turner turned architect here and he often painted the river. We will be taken on a private 1-1/2 hour tour. Meet at 1020 at Sandycombe Lodge, TW1. Tickets are £12. *Travel tip:* Trains go from Waterloo every 15 minutes and take 30 minutes to St. Margaret's, the nearest station.



SOCIETY FAVOURS TEA HUT MOVE ACROSS THE A2

The Society favours a move by the Tea Hut to a new site in the disused former toilet block building across the A2 but we would like to hear members' views on the issue.



The photos show the demolished Tea Hut after the accident (above) and (on the right) the disused toilets

The Tea Hut's general manager, Adam Furze, told a public meeting of the Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP) in February that "it would be a dream" to be able to move across the road. But such a plan would face several hurdles.

The former toilet block, which has not been used for years, is in Greenwich and the Tea Hut stands in Lewisham, so the two councils would have to cooperate. Planning permission also has to be granted.

The block may contain asbestos. Money would have to be found to assess this risk and to draw up a feasibility plan for the move. It is uncertain whether this would come from either council, or from The Crown Estate which owns the freehold of the toilet block. A Greenwich councillor told the meeting he thought this issue was "not a priority" for the Estate.

If the Tea Hut did move, this might also make access to the site more difficult for traffic travelling towards London as the road next to the toilet block along the park wall is one-way and against the traffic flow.

Furze said current plans were to move the hut a little further back on its current site on the south side of the main A2 road to protect it from collisions. Given the complexity of the issues involved, it would be helpful if members could give us their views.



A driver destroyed the hut when her car careered off Shooters Hill Road and crashed into the building on January 7. A member of its staff was seriously injured and a number of customers were also hurt.

The Society had been associated in the past with opposition to the Tea Hut. But it now welcomes any proposals that will ensure its safe and appropriate future replacement. It believes the Tea Hut has an iconic status in Blackheath.

The BJWP includes councillors from Lewisham and Greenwich with representatives of the three local amenity societies, and it advises Lewisham and Greenwich councils on the running of the Heath.

EXCITING NEW FORMAT FOR ANNUAL CRICKET MATCH

The annual Blackheath and Greenwich Society cricket match is planned for Saturday June 20 in Greenwich Park, with a new format involving schoolchildren for the first time.

The matches will be held in the afternoon and we will let you know the exact times later. We are hoping, of course, that we will be able to go ahead, but do not yet know when the Coronavirus outbreak will have passed.

There will be six junior 8-over games before the main adults' event. They will be between the Greenwich Giants and Blackheath Honeybadgers, with two held at the same time on opposite sides of the outfield just inside the park gates. Each will take about half an hour.

Platform Cricket, which organises the children's events, was set up to encourage primary schoolchildren to take up the game. It operates in five London boroughs.

Its manager Chris Willetts told the *Newsletter*: "We are seeking more funding and welcome support from local people and businesses." There is a crowdfunding page to raise money for equipment for their Blackheath and Lewisham Central Hub at: www.crowdfunder.co.uk/blackheath-honeybadgers-cricket.

This should be an excellent family event for cricketers and spectators. If you can play please contact Olly Taylor (olly_taylor28@hotmail.co.uk) for the Blackheath team and Tim Barnes (tim@ttbarnes.com) for Greenwich.

PLANNING GROUP EXPANDS CHECKS, CREATES DATABASE

The Society planning effort is carried out by a small group of volunteers. While some have relevant professional experience, most are amateurs who have learnt on the job, and 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.

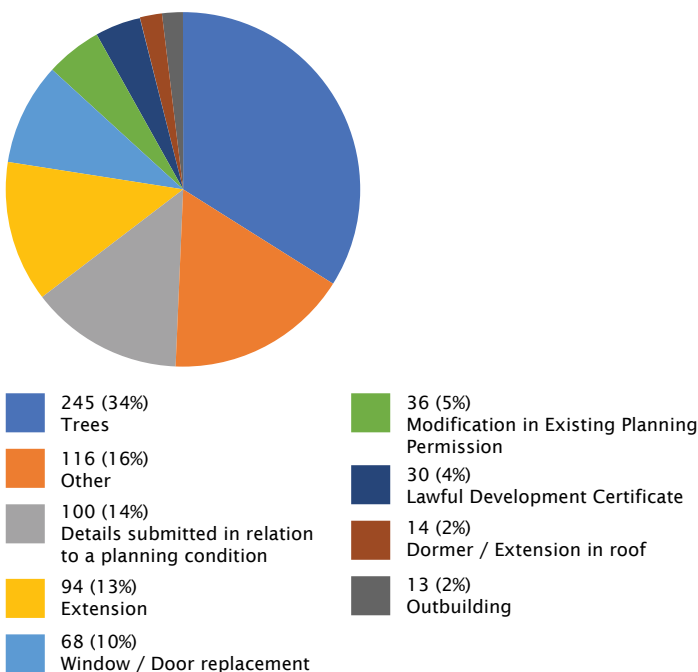
Thanks particularly to the skills and efforts of recent volunteer Andrew Johnson, the Planning Group has been able in the last year to improve substantially our screening of applications and to create a library of documents on policy and on important precedent cases to aid work in the future. Combined with the arrival of two dedicated volunteers on trees, we have significantly expanded our role and professionalism.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Members may be interested in the overview of the nature of planning applications in the area we monitor, and the extent of the Society's efforts in reviewing these.

In the last year, the Planning Group screened some 835 applications, 559 in Greenwich and 276 in Lewisham, including over 300 applications for tree works.

As will be seen from the chart below, applications for works to trees (mandatory in a Conservation Area) is the biggest category, followed by details submitted in relation to a planning condition (mainly on larger schemes), then extensions and window/door replacements.



These together account for 73% of applications in our area over the past year. Many of the tree applications

are for minor maintenance and are uncontroversial, but we take a strong interest in applications for tree felling, and try to minimize these or suggest that applicants trim their trees instead.

Out of all these screenings we studied 85 applications in detail, we objected to 68 and 27 of these were subsequently refused or withdrawn by applicants. These statistics significantly understate the impact of our work: many applications are approved only after reflecting constructive comments we made at an earlier stage to improve them and reduce any adverse impact.

And the statistics do not reflect the fact that we focus mainly on more complex and contentious applications and bigger, denser high-rise schemes on the edge of our area, including recently in Lewisham Town Centre and Kidbrooke.

These take a lot of time and effort. Possibly the biggest impact of our work lies in creating a constant sense of challenge to the workings of the planning process in both boroughs and this can be seen in the summary of recent applications below.

We would like to acknowledge the volunteer team that did all this work over the last year: Philip Binns, Alan Brignall, Ian Chalk, Rosemary Clements, Bill Eldridge, Peter Fotheringham, Terry Heard, Andrew Johnson, David Kerr, Nick Patton and John Schofield.

RECENT APPLICATIONS AND DECISIONS

The Meyer Homes application for a development with a 34-storey tower on the site of the former *Tesco car park* in Lewisham has been in process since 2017.

After many stages, in which the scheme was first rejected, then approved by Lewisham and rejected by the GLA, the scheme went to a public inquiry and the inspector's report arrived with the Secretary of State.

He recently gave his approval. Earlier concerns and objections to the scheme included the main tower's exceptional height at 125 metres, the impact on local heritage and on neighbours, the lack of clear plans for upgrading infrastructure and station access and, primarily, the low 20% element of affordable housing.

The Secretary focused on the latter, ruling there was no case to reject because of the low level of affordable housing on grounds of financial viability. This was despite a Lewisham and GLA target of 50%.

He gave short shrift to the other concerns. Attention will now turn to plans for the remaining part of the Tesco site, where the store and petrol station are expected to close and be redeveloped.

Earlier master plans showed a pleasingly low rise and green development, but recent precedents for tall and dense buildings in the area and questions of financial viability may encourage more ambitious plans.

Meanwhile, construction is proceeding in the town centre with the 35-storey *Carpetright* scheme, while construction is expected to commence imminently on the second phase of the major *Gateway* scheme with five blocks, including one tower of 30 storeys.

It is pleasing to see that the token “park” green space in that area has now opened (*see photo below*) and we can claim credit for achieving improvements to the blocks (with a 9-screen cinema) and facades facing east to the adjacent St Stephen’s Conservation Area.

Construction works for the *fanzone in Greenwich Park* for the Euro 2020 football competition (which has since been cancelled) were covered in the last *Newsletter*. We supported the concerns expressed by the Greenwich Society and others about attendance numbers, access and transport arrangements. The plans were approved by Greenwich, with a substantial number of conditions dealing with these issues.



8 THE GLEBE. Readers will be familiar with the longstanding battle to save this late 1840s villa in its sylvan setting from neglect and inappropriate development. Pending the owner’s appeal against a second section 215 order requiring him to maintain the threatened building, a new application was submitted to build a large low-rise house in the grounds.

Although they acknowledged that it was interesting and sensitive in some respects, residents, and the Society, objected to its scale, the extensive ground works required and the lack of any reference to the fate of the deteriorating host building. It was very pleasing to see Lewisham promptly reject this new application. We will report the outcome of the appeal, at which the Society will be represented, in due course.

13 DARTMOUTH ROW. After a long period of controversy and strong objections from residents, the application for an infill development in Dartmouth Row finally reached Lewisham’s Strategic Planning Committee in February.

We joined the objectors. While recognising the architectural quality of the proposal, we were concerned in particular that it would set an unfortunate precedent in ignoring council policies about infill development in the Conservation Area. The proposal was narrowly approved after extensive debate and two tied votes, in what seemed an unsatisfactory committee process.

GREENWICH PARK REVEALED

On a sunny Friday morning at the end of January around 100 staff, friends and supporters gathered for breakfast in the Pavilion café in Greenwich Park to celebrate the launch of a £10.5 million programme to enhance the park and its facilities.

The Blackheath Society had written to the National Lottery Heritage Fund supporting the project and we were delighted to learn that just over £4.5 million had been awarded. A huge fundraising programme raised a further £1 million and it is hoped this can be doubled. The Royal Parks, which is now an independent charity, has underwritten matching funding to enable the ambitious project to get under way.

The first achievement is the planting of a new border of plane saplings along the road below Flamstead House leading towards Greenwich (*see photo below*). Many more trees are planned, including replacements for the historic avenues which have sadly been damaged by pests and disease. Some self-seeded trees and shrubs will be removed to restore the magnificent views.



Visitor numbers have increased dramatically in recent years and this trend is expected to continue. Additional café, seating and toilet facilities are therefore an important part of the plan. Part of the parking area behind General Wolfe’s statue will be furnished with tables and chairs to form an outdoor café served by an enhanced kiosk. The famous viewing area in front of the statue will also be increased.

One of the most exciting developments will be the creation of a new community hub in an area currently out of bounds to the public. Vanbrugh Lodge, an attractive small house just inside Vanbrugh Gate, will be transformed into a café and a new learning centre will be built alongside in an area now used to store gardening equipment. There will be decorative gardens and a closer viewing area behind the deer enclosure.

One of the overall aims is to increase opportunities for community involvement. Programmes for schools and adults are planned in the learning centre and there will be more openings for volunteering and apprenticeships. The project has already started and is estimated to take four years to complete.

LEWISHAM BOROUGH OF CULTURE YEAR POSTPONED

Lewisham's year as London Borough of Culture has been postponed for one year until 2022 due to the Coronavirus emergency.

The mayor, Damien Egan, said: "It's important that we are completely focused on keeping services for vulnerable residents going as best we can during the unprecedented challenge that Coronavirus presents." When it won the 2021 award in February he promised to use it to deliver lasting social change.



Students from the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance celebrate the award. Photo by Juno Snowdon

Lewisham will get £1.35 million to stage a programme of cultural events including a tag climate carnival, with the borough's 18 neighbourhoods using culture to highlight social issues and stimulate community action.

Also planned are a mass dance party exploring the impact of migration on London's dance scene, an outdoor music festival inspired by Lewisham's Rock Against Racism gigs, help for year 7 pupils to address the lack of diversity in the creative industries and a national careers conference to address inequality.

Lewisham beat competition from five other London boroughs. It will work with Goldsmiths University of London, the Horniman Museum, Trinity Laban and the Albany to deliver the celebrations and will invite regional and national organisations, such as Tate Modern and the Migration Museum, to add expertise.

LEWISHAM PLANS TO ABOLISH LICENSING RESTRICTION

Lewisham Council is reviewing its licensed premises policy, proposing to abolish its Cumulative Impact Zone for the Village which obliged applicants to prove requests would not have an extra negative impact.

The CIZ has been in place since 2007. The new draft policy says the licensing authority has evidence to end it in Blackheath Village and New Cross. There are some

'ROAD RAGE' TALK ON PLANS FOR VILLAGE MOTORWAY

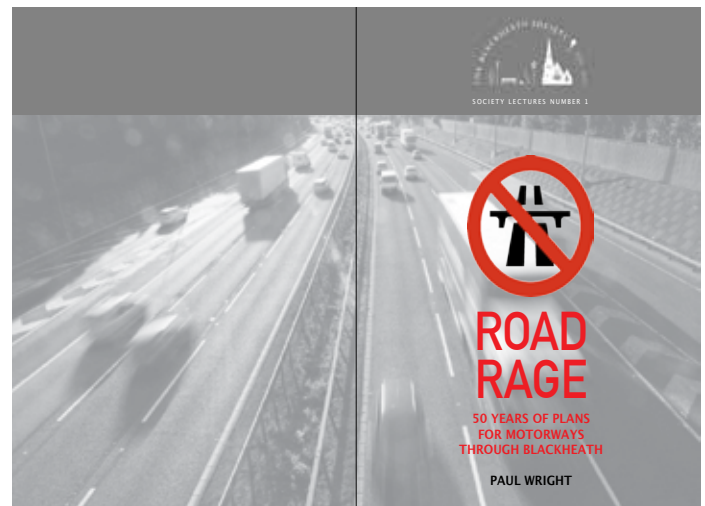
In recent years we have enjoyed a number of very successful evenings of talks. The one on 'Road Rage' last October by Paul Wright was particularly interesting and well appreciated.

He covered various plans to build major roads through Blackheath in the 20th century, including the amazing story of the threat of an eight-lane motorway which would have passed right through the Village. This was averted by a successful campaign which was a seminal moment in the history of the Society.

We would like to make sure this story is well preserved as an important historical record and offered as widely as possible to residents and further afield. In doing so, we hope to create a template for capturing and sharing other Society talks, both past and future.

With the professional help of Society member Peter Cope, a publication based on the talk is now available. We are offering it initially to members free of charge in a PDF electronic form. Please ask the office if you would like a copy. The front page is shown below.

But we appreciate that some members and others may prefer a printed version. If so, please advise us so that we can gauge demand before proceeding with printing. The cost of a printed version would be £5.



references to the night-time economy, which suggest a trade-off between licensing objectives and other council priorities. It adds: "the Licensing Authority will aim to strike a balance between promoting the licensing objectives and encouraging a thriving evening and night-time economy".

You can find the document at www.consultation.lewisham.gov.uk/public-protection-and-safety/statement-of-licensing-policy. The Society has objected and proposed other amendments.

TALBOT PLACE CHANGING ROOMS PLANS MOVE AHEAD

Plans to redevelop the derelict changing rooms in Talbot Place on the Heath moved ahead when three activists met Lewisham Mayor Damien Egan in March and secured his support to carry out building surveys to cost the options and start seeking funding partners.

They hope to receive support and finance from national sporting organisations and charities that use the Heath to promote their activities, such as football, fun runs and the Marathon. Contact them via their website at <https://www.talbotplace.com> if you want to be involved

In February a group of local residents presented the ideas for Talbot Place to the annual public meeting of the Blackheath Joint Working Party, which advises Lewisham and Greenwich on protecting the Heath.

The low-rise 1970s changing rooms (*seen with the car park below*) have been closed for many years.



The building, which is the responsibility of Lewisham Council and contains asbestos and is derelict inside. It is only used by Glendale, who manage the Heath, as a store for football posts, machinery and equipment.

The car park, about a third of the site area, is used during the week for over 20 vehicles, probably belonging to Glendale employees and teachers at the nearby All Saints School.

Since 2016 local parent and architect Ian Chalk has been working with Blackheath councillors Amanda de Ryk and Kevin Bonavia to bring the site back into use as changing rooms and public toilets. Removing the road that runs in front of it would make it safe and reunite it with the Heath. Options have been produced to give the site a greater local community role.

There have been three rounds of consultation. The first two helped identify the most popular options and gauge local views. The last was Lewisham's Commonplace survey in autumn 2019 to canvass ideas for using the funds paid by developers to improve local community facilities across Lewisham. The Talbot Place plans have received support and comments, such as:

“The changing rooms definitely need to be replaced to provide changing facilities and toilets for the many people who use the Heath for recreation” and “I know of no other residential area in London so bereft of outdoor play facilities for its children.”

The ideas are now gaining some impetus and the local young mothers' group Blackheath Bumps is supporting the plans for a natural play space.

The nearest children's playgrounds to Blackheath are in Manor House Gardens and at the bottom of Greenwich Park, both a 15-to-20 minute walk away, and there is a dearth of nearby public toilets and children's changing facilities.

NEIL RHIND'S VOLUME III PUBLICATION DUE IN MAY

Publication of Neil Rhind's long awaited volume III in his series *Blackheath Village & Environs 1790-2000* has been delayed, but he hopes to publish it in May.

The first two books appeared in 1976 and 1983 and the Society is publishing the new volume which has over 480 pages. With around 280 illustrations and maps, it should prove a good, if lengthy, read. Neil told the *Newsletter* he was particularly grateful to Lee expert Pat Chappelle and our own images curator, Allan Griffin, for their hugely expert input.

The book covers the Blackheath suburb in the parish of Lewisham (from Lloyds Place to Dartmouth Row and

area) and Blackheath in the parish of Lee - which will cover Lee Terrace, Belmont Hill, Lee Road, Lee Park, the Dacre estate, Brandram Road, St Margaret's church, Marischal Road and Glenton Road.

Meanwhile, Neil is continuing work on his next walking guide: *Walking Westcombe & the Angerstein Encroachment*, with Jo Swadkin's help. He is also considering volume IV of his series which will cover the area incorporating West Grove, Crooms Hill, the Blackheath Waste (Park Wall), Hyde Vale and Blackheath Hill (north east end). This is mostly ready but was left out of volume III because, as he says, it “grew out of all proportion and was likely to be too large and too expensive to produce.”

MAJOR EXPANSION OF SOCIETY'S BLACKHEATH ARCHIVE



A 1938 archive photograph of the view over London from 6 West Grove, Blackheath

The Society's Blackheath archive site at archive.www.blackheatharchive.org currently comprises images of the more central areas of Blackheath.

So far, we have published images of the Village and its immediate surroundings (31 galleries), the cultural centres set up in the late 19th century such as Blackheath Halls (20), and two for the Conservatoire and School of Art. We have another 20 galleries of images of the Heath and activities.

We are delighted to announce that over the next few months we will be widening the scope of the archive by spreading out from the Village and Heath to the surrounding areas. This will mean adding 2,000 images

This will feature among others - as the full list is too long - images of Vanbrugh Park and St John's Park; St

German's Place; West Grove and Crooms Hill; Belmont Hill, Lee, Granville Park and Dartmouth Row, Lewisham Hill and Blackheath Hill.

In addition, images in the current galleries are undergoing a major facelift to iron out perceived glitches and imperfections. We hope that you will continue to be tolerant of those that remain and will correct us politely where necessary. We are sure people who explore the locality through the archive will find a lot to interest them.

The archive continues to grow and develop in a number of directions. More information will be made available to members through the Society's weekly email newsletter as and when we get nearer to going public.

ARCHIVE VOLUNTEERS

The Society archive is continually growing beyond the original collection of over 10,000 images assembled by Neil Rhind. This has now largely been digitised and much of it is on our archive site www.blackheatharchive.org

A new archive project is underway to type up some hand-written local history notes. A small group is already working on this from home and we would be delighted to have help from anyone who has a computer and some time to spare. Please contact the Office if you are interested.



These two photographs from the Society's archive show cottages at the east end of Eliot Place in about 1910 and Eliot Place after the cottages were demolished for a factory extension, photographed by the late A A R Martin

RESIDENTS SAVE KINGSWOOD PLACE TELEPHONE KIOSK

A group of local residents are planning to renovate a disused telephone kiosk in Kingswood Place and turn it into a community mini-library for recycling books, hopefully by next September.

Last summer the Society acted on the residents' behalf in negotiations with BT and our backing helped lift BT's long-standing moratorium on the disposal of telephone kiosks in London and persuade the company to sell the kiosk to the community for the nominal sum of £1.

The group's chair Trisha O'Reilly told the *Newsletter*: "The original K2 phone box is such an iconic design. There are so few of them left, they are listed and they deserve to be saved. We hope to bring ours back to its original condition and give it a new life for the neighbourhood."

The photo on the right shows the kiosk before BT made some rudimentary repairs and since then it has been made water tight by replacing the window panes.



THE BLACKHEATH KITE-FLYING FAMILY FUN DAY

has been rescheduled for Sunday October 11 because the London Marathon, which starts on Blackheath, has been moved to our original date of 4 October in response to the Coronavirus outbreak. Organised by the Blackheath Society, the event marks a return of the popular kite event after an absence of over 10 years.

Railway Accident in the Blackheath Tunnel

DORSET COUNTY CHRONICLE

Thursday 2 Feb 1865

The inquest on the bodies of the five unfortunate men who were killed by the collision which occurred in the Blackheath tunnel on the 10th of December was closed yesterday at the Blackheath Tavern, before Mr Carttar the coroner for West Kent, when the jury returned a verdict of 'Manslaughter'" against James Jones, the porter and William Henry Lancaster, the guard. They however said they had very reluctantly found a verdict of guilty against Jones, the porter, and they consider that his error in transmitting the wrong signal arose from his inexperience as a signalman. They call the attention of the company to the following recommendations: "That it is desirable the company should enforce strictly the carrying out of their own rules, and that in all cases special trains not in the time-book should be telegraphed by speaking instruments. That any improvement that could be made in the tunnel for ventilation would be most desirable."

The Coroner said that with the unanimous concurrence of the jury he should admit Jones and Lancaster to bail, themselves for a £100 each, and two sureties each of £50.00 This brought the lengthened proceedings to a close."

MAJOR INVESTMENT PLANNED IN LOCAL RAIL STRUCTURE

Network Rail, in partnership with Transport for London and Lewisham Council, has secured £5.5 million from the Department for Transport to fund the early design and development stage of a potential upgrade for Lewisham station.

This would provide an interchange fit for the future, including the possible arrival of the Bakerloo Line extension in Lewisham from 2029. It will lie below the station and be accessed through the development just starting on the Carpetright site and produce what Network Rail calls a “signature gateway station”.

The plans finally address increasing overcrowding, congestion, safety issues and poor access at the station on which local MPs and the Lewisham Station Users Group have been campaigning for years. Work is at an early stage, wider upgrade proposals are not yet funded and are subject to planning permission, after consultation on a final decision from a range of options

Entries and exits to the National Rail station have risen to 10.3 million from 6.3 million in the 10 years up to 2019, and changes between Southeastern services also rose to stand at 2.6 million by last year.

Over 10 million people use the DLR station, some via Southeastern services, but many arrive and leave on foot and by bus. These figures make Lewisham one of the busiest interchanges in London, but there has been no significant investment for years.

The official figures are subject to fluctuation due to different factors, not always easy to discern: Lewisham, Blackheath and Kidbrooke all showed small falls in entries and exits in 2018-19, possibly due in part to the closure of the Bexleyheath line for a week in February 2019 because of a landslip. The closure in February 2020 to fix this cost £6.6 million and will likely also depress the figures this year.

However, Lewisham still saw a small increase in overall users (as did Blackheath) with a big rise in interchanges, perhaps to avoid changing at Lewisham or London Bridge.

By contrast, Greenwich station saw a massive 43% increase in entries and exits in 2018-19 with the introduction of new Thameslink services and timetables. For those who like statistics, the figures for the whole country and interactive graphs can be found at <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage/>.

In March the rail authorities announced a record investment of £1.25 billion for upgrading the overall railway infrastructure in southeast London and Kent.

The plan includes £250 million for upgrades in the Lewisham area. Some of these projects and money sound like things that have been announced before

or already started, but they also undoubtedly involve substantial new money and projects, and include:

Over £50 million towards renewal of switches and crossings at Lewisham, St John’s, New Cross, Parks Bridge, Courthill and Grove Park. Faults at these junctions north and south of Lewisham can lead to significant delays to services.

A £55 million upgrade to the signalling system on the Greenwich and Blackheath lines will see old kit replaced with new, more dependable, technology. A new £81 million signalling system on the lines from Hither Green to Elmstead Woods, New Eltham and Bromley North, and improvements to track and stations, will help address signalling delays in the Lewisham area.



A further £20 million will be spent replacing track circuits and key electrical components that cause delays; remote monitoring systems will be installed on key assets to detect faults before they delay trains.

There is also an £800,000 project for new shelters, improved ticket gates and new information screens at Lewisham to reduce the delays caused by overcrowding and give users along the length of platforms more protection and better information about delays and cancellations. A further £2 million will address the gaps between trains and platforms 1 and 2 at Lewisham.

As the *Newsletter* went to press, negotiations between the DfT and Govia to extend Southeastern’s franchise from April by a direct award were overtaken by the government’s decision to temporarily suspend all rail franchises for six months, to avoid train companies collapsing due to Coronavirus.

Train operators have been offered the chance to transfer all revenue and cost risk to the government, as passenger numbers plummet, and to be paid a small management fee to continue running essential services. This effective nationalisation is temporary, but it probably represents the end of the existing franchising system, which is likely to be abolished when the long overdue Williams Rail Review is eventually published.



In these difficult times we all need something to cheer us up. So here, as spring arrives at last, is a photograph of the garden the Society established in Montpelier Vale, freshly weeded and cleared of litter by our volunteers, and another of a sunset by the Railway Tavern in the Village taken by Society member Allan Griffin in early March.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

John Bambridge	Robert Marlton
Elize Braye	Hugh Moir
Joyce Crawford	Rhys Owen
Daniella Gardner	Lorenzo Pitotti
Alan Hemmings	David & Catherine Punt
Rebecca Holloway	Barbara Rose
Andrew Jacobs	Moira Royce
Peter Jolley	Neil Weatherall
Una Kaya	Selectric

AGM PLANNED FOR JUNE 17

The Society has set Wednesday June 17 as the date for our Annual General Meeting. At this stage we obviously do not know whether we will be able to go ahead because of the Coronavirus, but please put the date in your diary anyway. It will be at 7 for 7.30pm in the St Mary's Hall in Cresswell Park.

We would, of course, discuss the impact of the virus in Blackheath. We are also considering inviting speakers from Lewisham and Greenwich councils to hear more about what amenity societies such as ourselves, and local authorities, are doing to respond to climate change and air pollution and ensure we are developing a more sustainable environment in which people can live and work.

© March 2020. The Blackheath Society.

Registered charity no: 259843. Registered with Civic Voice. Member of the London Forum of Amenity Societies.

PRESIDENT: Neil Rhind CHAIR: Paul Watts VICE CHAIR: Helen Reeves TREASURER: Andrew Westbrook
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, Alex Schweitzer, Howard Shields, Diane Summers, David Walker, Paul Watts, Andrew Westbrook, Liz Wright, Helma Zebregs

The Old Bakehouse
11 Blackheath Village
London, SE3 9LA

THE
BLACKHEATH
SOCIETY

020 8297 1937
office@blackheath.org
www.blackheath.org