



NEWSLETTER ■ AUTUMN 2021

BLACKHEATH'S KITE DAY SET FOR OCTOBER

The first large-scale Society event celebrating Blackheath since Covid struck is set for Sunday October 10 and, after two postponements because of the pandemic, the Blackheath Society's Kite Day, originally planned for 2019, will finally fly.

It will also be the first kite-flying event on Blackheath in 12 years. Long associated with kite flying, windy Blackheath used to be famous for its kite festivals and the last one, in June 2009, was publicly funded and attracted international enthusiasts as well as locals.



This year's Kite Day will be on a more family-focused scale, organised by the Blackheath Society and its volunteers and supporters. Running alongside it, but for the whole of that weekend, Botton's Family Funfair

will be setting up on its usual site near All Saints' Church on the Heath.

The Kite Day will begin at about midday with a demonstration of spectacular kites by the Kent Kite Flyers, an enthusiasts' club based on the Kent coast. The club has been generous with its support and encouragement to the Blackheath Society for the event.

It is expected that about a dozen of the club's members will be here on the day. As well as flying their demonstration kites in a roped-off area on the Heath near Talbot Place, the Kent Flyers will be on hand to help people fly their own kites.

The Society is delighted to announce that, thanks to help from teachers and parents, some year 5 children from Grinling Gibbons Primary School in Deptford will be providing the music with their steel pans band, and the children are expected to play at about 2pm.

CALLING ALL MEMBERS - PLEASE
SEND YOUR EMAIL ADDRESSES TO
THE OFFICE SO THAT WE CAN LET
YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE TALKS
AND KEEP YOU IN TOUCH WITH
ALL THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES

We would like to thank our member Dusty Gedge for his photo of the Heath used at the top of the front page.

Continuing the Caribbean theme, Joy's Caribbean Fusion food, familiar to many from the Sunday Blackheath Farmers' Market, will be selling their street food. Joy's will also be at the Farmers' Market that Sunday, but have kindly agreed to provide an additional stall to support the Kite Day.

Several local primary schools are being encouraged to make kites in their Design and Technology sessions. The plan is for children to come into the area at about 3pm to show off, and hopefully fly, their handiwork.

The kite day is just one of a packed autumn programme of events for which full details follow. Please book your place for the Walk and Talks through Eventbrite.com unless otherwise stated. If there are changes to the schedule we will let you know. The walks are free to members but a donation of £5 to the Society on joining would be appreciated. For the Zoom events, all members will be emailed with an invitation to join and there is no need to book in advance.

TWO OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND WALKS - SOLD OUT

Modern Architecture in Blackheath Walk Saturdays 4 and 11 September from 10 to 12am. Society member and local architect Ana Sutherland will lead a guided tour of the Cator Estate, covering Eric Lyons' Span estates, built from 1954 to 1984, and the unique modernist homes designed by architects Patrick Gwynne, Peter Moro and Walter Greaves.

In 1966 Ian Nairn described the impact of the addition of Span and other modern houses to Blackheath Park as: "The original leafy layout has received another dimension, absent from almost everywhere else in London: the exhilaration of new and old together when both are good." We meet at the corner of Blackheath Park with Lee Road.

Blackheath Society Historical Walk 2.30pm on Sundays 5 and 12 September. A guided walk over the east quarter of Blackheath. Architectural interest covers the late 18th to early 19th century and it lasts about 75 minutes. No small children, please, and no comfort stops. Led by Society President Neil Rhind MBE FSA. We meet on the Heath opposite 1 Shooters Hill Road on its corner with Vanbrugh Terrace and the walk ends at the Princess of Wales public house.

Both the above Open House walks had sold out by the time the *Newsletter* went to press.

MEET & EAT: 9 September

At the Princess of Wales on Thursday 9 September at 12.30. Join us for a social occasion. Drink, eat and chat with other members.

WALK & TALK: 23 September

Robert Maurice-Williams reveals Literary Kensington on Thursday 23 September from 10.30am to 12.45pm. He will lead another of his interesting and enjoyable walks round north Kensington, focusing on the homes of literary giants. Authors' homes included will be those of J M Barrie, Henry James, T S Eliot, Robert Browning, James Joyce and GK Chesterton. We will also visit Kensington Gardens and have a coffee break. The walk finishes at Notting Hill Gate tube where there is a range of options for lunch. Meet at 10.30am outside on the pavement of Lancaster Gate tube station.



Author JM Barrie with his best-known creation, Peter Pan

ZOOM TALK: 28 September

Bees & Wasps of Blackheath with Dusty Gedge on Tuesday 28 September at 6pm. Blackheath is home to a wide range of solitary bees and wasps. Dusty is not an expert in the field but he has been watching and photographing various species over the last 12 years and learning how to identify them. In 2014 he photographed one bee (*seen below*) that was later found to be the first-ever record of a new species for the UK, the *Osmia cornuta* Orchard Mason bee, found on the western side of the Heath, and probably elsewhere. This talk is aimed at the amateur to raise awareness and encourage members to look for solitary bees and wasps in their own gardens and on the Heath. The main bee and wasp season will be over but the talk occurs when another relatively new UK species is out and about - the Ivy mining bee, which is also very active in Blackheath. There will be a Q&A session at the end.



WALK & TALK: 13 October

A look at Soho past and present on Wednesday 13 October at 10.30am. Society member Paul Wright will lead us, looking at the rich history of this part of London. Hear about its 17th century origins as a hunting ground and its evolution into a home for courtesans, artists and political refugees. He will also discuss a pioneering investigation into a 1850s cholera outbreak, the Windmill theatre, the notorious Colony Club, world-famous historic jazz and coffee clubs and the origins of television. Meet at the Charles II statue in the centre of Soho Square at 10.30am.

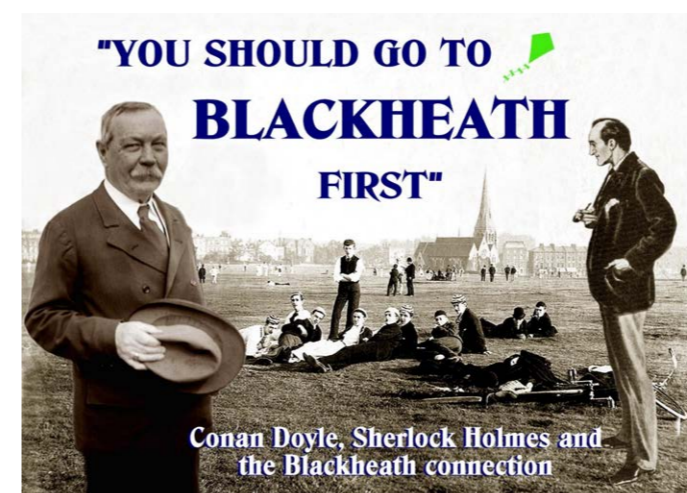
ZOOM TALK: 26 October

By John Causer on Legal London Without Lawyers on Tuesday 26 October at 6pm. An illustrated Zoom walk starting at Blackfriars, proceeding via Fleet Street, the LSE and Holborn, and ending at Newgate. Some of the areas covered are shown below.



LIVE TALK: 10 September

"You should go to Blackheath First" on Wednesday 10 November at 7pm for 7.30 at St Mary's Hall, Cresswell Park, SE3 (*see illustration below*). That's what Sherlock Holmes tells Dr Watson and Detective Inspector Lestrade in "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Roger Johnson - Honorary Editor of The Sherlock Holmes Journal, co-author of The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany and noted Sherlockian



scholar - will share many interesting insights about Conan Doyle and his famous detective's connections with Blackheath, some of which were considered scandalous. Join us for a glass of wine from 7 pm. Tickets are available from <http://conandoylecture.eventbrite.com> at £10 per person.

WALK & TALK: 11 November

Paul Wright on the Charing Cross Road on Thursday 11 November 10.15 am. For most members of the Blackheath Society Charing Cross station is our gateway to central London. But how many of us are familiar with the fascinating history of the area? Society member Paul Wright will conduct a walk which will provide a number of insights into this. Starting with Hungerford Market, previously on the site of the station and the location of Charles Dickens' famous spell in the blacking factory, the walk will continue down St Martin's Lane to Seven Dials (*seen below*) and then return to Charing Cross Road, with a brief detour into Leicester Square. Hear about property disputes with kings, the birth of the British film industry, one of the worst rookeries in London, key moments in the history of London theatre and the 84 Charing Cross Road story, not to mention the site of the first murder to be solved using identikit. Meet at 10.15am by the flower stall outside Embankment Underground station.



MEET & EAT: 23 November

At the Princess of Wales on Tuesday 23 November at 12.30.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS: 4 December

In the Village on Saturday 4 December at 4.30pm.

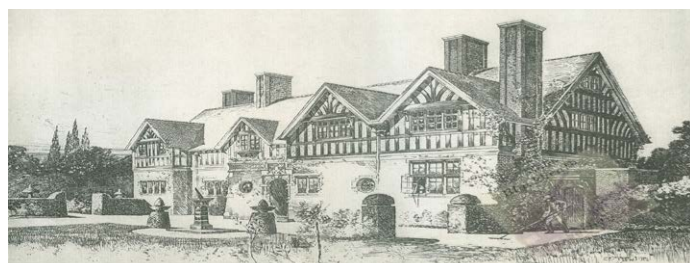
Members may remember **Blake Morrison's successful talk at the Halls on Blackheath and Greenwich in Literature** on 1 July. Committee member Allan Griffin has sourced the images to illustrate it, several from the Blackheath Society archive. These and the 50-minute talk, are now available for you to enjoy on our website at www.blackheath.org or on <https://vimeo.com/584357440>. Just type this into your browser and you can enjoy Blake's revealing history of the diverse links between the area and literature over the centuries.

PLANNING GROUP PRESERVES AND ENHANCES BLACKHEATH

The Society 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 and we are always pleased to hear from any member who would be interested in joining this important work.

We can be pleased with the results of the Planning Group's work in recent months. We have a good system for screening where intervention is appropriate; we are now trying to ensure neighbours potentially affected are advised of important applications; we believe our interventions are very constructive and, in many cases, we highlight which aspects of applications need improvement.

An example is the recent application for developing The Gables at the entrance to Blackheath Park. There was much to welcome, but the scale of modification proposed at the rear was quite out of keeping and also very harmful to the tree population of the site. It was withdrawn and a new application is now in process.



The Gables in an 1896 architect's drawing

We have highlighted previously the threat of excessive development to the character of the Village. A new application for the rear of 29-35 Tranquil Vale behind SpaceNK is a case in point.

While the development of a rather neglected area is not objectionable in principle, it raises important issues of the amenity of neighbours, and major questions about how construction could be achieved without major disruption. This issue is becoming more significant as small sites are being sought for development, promoted by Government policy. It needs attention with proper oversight at the planning stage rather than, as previously, being left as a detail.

We are also involved, with colleagues in Lee, in evaluating latest proposals for the Leegate complex at the corner of Lee Road and Burnt Ash Road, a contentious issue for the last decade. Developers Galliard Homes have acquired the site and are suggesting a much more intensive scheme, including a 15, instead of 10, storey tower.

We have tabled our many concerns, which include the excessively tall and bulky design and the very inadequate public realm and parking provision, a key issue for the health of local business.



The proposed Leegate public square in an image provided by Rolfe Judd Architecture for Galliard Homes

NEW LEWISHAM LOCAL PLAN AND PROSPECT FOR BLACKHEATH

As mentioned in the last *Newsletter*, Lewisham has begun consultation on a new Local Plan, a basis for planning for the years and decades to come. This plan needs to deal with major issues of new Government policy (especially the demand for many new homes) and climate change, as well as offering prescriptions for Lewisham neighbourhoods, including Blackheath.

We have submitted a very comprehensive list of comments, and have shared and discussed these with our local councillors. Many deal with the plan for Lewisham. Our prime concern, however, is the future of Blackheath, looked at for the benefit of its residents and also as a contributor to the character and vibrancy of Lewisham as a whole.

We would like the plan to contain clear outlines of what is envisaged for the different parts of Lewisham. For our area, we have drafted a "Prospect for Blackheath", shown below, which outlines our aspirations and could provide some legal protection if incorporated into the new Local Plan.

A PROSPECT FOR BLACKHEATH - A VISION FOR NEXT 5-10 YEARS

Blackheath enjoys many attractive characteristics. The vision aims to conserve and improve Blackheath's historic liveability and charm by protecting and enhancing the distinctive character of its buildings, its natural environment, and the Heath. The main aim is to support Blackheath's future as a lively and contemporary neighbourhood with exceptional heritage and unique open spaces, and a strong local economy and community spirit.

Aims for the Village include:

- Maintain mixed economy of retail, food/drink, professional, personal, and financial/legal services;

promote community/cultural facilities, and varied historic residential areas and house types.

- Reduce road traffic; increase walking and cycling in a safe and healthy environment.
- Improve the quality of, and possibly extend, the public realm including pavements, squares, and greens.
- Maintain the scale and character of the Village.
- Continue to support greater, wider, and more varied use with more protection from degradation and erosion
- Protect existing local and distant views.
- Plant more trees around the fringe to protect the skyline and reduce pollution. Increase biodiversity and restore the historic heathland character.

For the residential surroundings:

- Reduce rat running.
- Plant more street trees.
- Protect the historic fabric.

Subject to members' comments on the overall objectives, we have considered priorities for following up these issues. They would be: active promotion of measures to improve the character of the Village, including monitoring carefully proposals for development and change of use; promotion of measures to reduce through traffic in the Village and improve the lot of pedestrians.



The possibility of providing toilet facilities and a play space in the site occupied by the derelict changing rooms on Talbot Place (above) was researched by a group of residents and consulted on extensively by Lewisham before the process was halted by COVID.

A presentation to the Mayor and senior officials in February 2019 received a positive response and discussions with Blackheath councillors have continued since, highlighting the need for better use of and facilities on the Heath.

As we emerge from the constraints of the virus it seems to be one of the obvious candidates for attention. At the time of going to press, discussion with local councillors indicated the Council would be minded to offer its formal support, which will be a key enabler of any progress.

Members can access some of the earlier ideas on this via the link: "HOME Talbot Place" on <https://www.talbotplace.com>, and your views are as always, welcome on any of these issues.

WEIGHT SIGN STOLEN

An early 20th century weight sign featured on one of our postcards some years ago has been stolen from the front wall of Blackheath Station, and the Society is considering commissioning a replica and starting a fund-raising campaign for its replacement.



The 1903 sign, seen above, was part of a Grade II Listed Building. It was taken down during a botched repaint of the station frontage by British Rail in about 1978-79. Fortunately, a Society member saw it in a skip in the station yard and took it to keep in his shed until a possible full renovation.

That time came in 1985-1986 when the Blackheath Preservation Trust restored both the main station building, later known as Chapman House, and its frontage the following year.

The sign was then produced and we had it re-fixed it to its original position using some special irreversible screws to keep it in place, which would prove exceedingly difficult to undo. It has lasted 35 years and was much admired and photographed.

Greg Thompson, Network Rail Southern Region's Senior Community Engagement Manager, told the *Newsletter*: "I'm sorry to hear about this and appreciate the concern for you and local residents, given the history behind the sign. I've contacted our maintenance lead for this area and they are not aware of work to remove the sign."

"Southeastern have also investigated the matter but are not aware of any plans that were in place to remove the sign. I'm afraid it seems the sign may have been unlawfully removed outside of agreement with our organisations and I'm sorry that there is not more we can do on this matter."

BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH CRICKET MATCH ENDS IN A TIE



Greenwich Park Tuesday 20 July 2021 - What an amazing day! The sun shone (well, some of the time) the crowds gathered along the boundary, friends chatted with glasses of wine and nibbles and excited children joined in the fun - even with a game of their own. It was good to see the current and past chairs enjoying the day and supporting the team.



As to the contest itself, something unique happened in this 16th cricket match between the Blackheath and Greenwich Societies: it ended with 95 runs to Greenwich, who batted first, and 95 to Blackheath, so the result was a tie.

Imagine the tension in that last over of the match when all we needed was one run to win on the last ball of the innings. But, alas, our batsman was given out LBW and the match was tied. It was deemed a fair result between two evenly matched sides and a fitting end to a most enjoyable social and family day's cricket.

Actually, it was not quite the end of the cricket as the children rushed out on to the square for a short game (see right), supervised by Tim Barnes, splendid in an umpire's white coat, and Stephen Challacombe, accompanied by three of his grandchildren.

Thanks also to John Bartram as umpire and to Tony Othen who was our scorer for the day, a task made even more difficult as he was not accompanied by a second scorer with whom he could share details of the game, as it progressed ball by ball.

It is sad to note that Olly Taylor, our captain for many years and Will Jones, also a regular in the side, were both prevented from playing by the rotten Covid 19. During the match we did catch sight of Olly by Zoom - so he was there in spirit. However, we are indebted to Sam Gardiner who stepped into the breach and did a first-class job as Blackheath captain on the day with a side ranging in age from the teens to seventies, and including one father and son combination.

A great day out, with cricket played in friendly rivalry and good spirit. The Golden Elephant trophy will spend six months in Greenwich and then move up the hill to Blackheath. *Richard Dinkeldein*



SOCIETY VIRTUAL AGM

The Society's 76th Annual General Meeting and second virtual AGM was held on Zoom on 23 June with 59 members joining in online.

Following the formal business there was a discussion on our plans to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) from next January and we will provide further information in the winter *Newsletter*.

A lively debate followed and the subjects covered included:

TEA HUT - a new site has been proposed on the other site of the A2. (*Editor's note: a temporary hut reopened near the same site on the Heath in August*).

LEEGATE DEVELOPMENT - Lewisham Councillor Kevin Bonavia encouraged individuals and Societies to engage with the developer's consultation.

LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS - Members' views varied but all wanted less pollution. LTNs and road closures cause heavy traffic and HGVs would be displaced. Members were very concerned.

VILLAGE TOILET FACILITIES - Kevin said the cuts were due to lack of funds and businesses were being encouraged to open their facilities to the community. Temporary toilets are at Talbot Place

SOUTH ROW - need to enforce 20mph speed limit. Electric Scooters - members worried by scooters riding on pavements. Lewisham was not taking part in hire schemes and electric scooters may be illegal unless hired from an official scheme.

NEW MEMBERS - We would like to welcome the record number of 40 new members who have joined the Society since the Spring *Newsletter* and are listed below

ALEX SCHWEITZER

It was with deep sadness that the Society learned of the death of former committee member Alex Schweitzer in July.

As members may recall, Alex stood down from the committee in June 2020 after 21 years of dedicated service, and our last Autumn *Newsletter* included full details about his Society work and his life in Blackheath.

Alex was born in Berlin in 1939, just three weeks after the outbreak of war. He lived through the war in Germany with his mother and 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.

He contributed greatly to our work on scrutinizing local planning activities, particularly in leading the effort on developments in Lewisham.

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

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

He and his wife Pam moved to Blackheath in 1971 and they lived in the Village in Camden Row, with Alex commuting to Islington by motor bike across London for 20 years until he retired.

The Society was well represented by members at Alex's funeral on July 29 and our thoughts are with Pam and the family at this difficult time.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Jacqueline Bogue | Paul Harpin | Asha Ngai |
| Amy Boyington | Anne Hill | Adam Oliver |
| Klementyna | Paul Hughes | Julie Pinborough |
| Chrzanowska-Dodds | Robert Inglis | Claire Pollock |
| Nicky Collins | Deborah Jessup | John Robson |
| Helen Conlan | Ailsa Joy | Ganga Shreedhar |
| Miss Connell | Mat Kemp | Karthika Sivananthan |
| Jenny Doussan | Will Kirkpatrick | Cecilia Thordardottir |
| Patricia Eskriett-Gillard | Rachel Latham | Penny Warren |
| Richard Frewer | Stephanie Lester | Amanda Waygood |
| Yulia Fungard | Irene Machariah | Dimitrios |
| Simon Goodwin | Hani Marcus | Weedon-Topalopoulos |
| Egon Walesch & Richard | Tracey & Allan Nadian | Elizabeth Williamson |
| Goodwin | | Valerie Williamson |

ROYAL MAIL MOVES SORTING OFFICE FROM BLACKHEATH

After several years of rumour and speculation, the Society was informed at the end of June that Royal Mail would be moving its sorting office and customer service point from their long-standing locations next to the Post Office in Blackheath village. The Post Office will remain.

The whole operation is due to re-locate to the larger site in Horn Lane Greenwich, across the road from IKEA, early in 2022. The significant increase in the volume of parcel deliveries was given as the main reason, and we are told the need for re-deliveries in SE3 rose from 13% in 2019-20 to 69% in 2020-21. People were at home and, if they were out on first delivery, did not go to the office to collect the parcel but asked for a re-delivery.

Under the new system, parcels which cannot be delivered will be left with a neighbour where possible, or taken back to Greenwich for collection. Customers who do not wish to make that journey can either telephone or go on-line to request a free re-delivery on a different day or to arrange for the parcel to be left either at a different address or at one of five Post Offices in Blackheath Grove, Rochester Way, Shooters Hill Road, Stratheden Parade or Lee Road.

Although we had been aware of the likely move of the sorting office, until June we had understood that the



small delivery office would remain in the Village. It has been serving a wide catchment area and is convenient for many owing to its proximity to public transport, shopping and other facilities.

We appealed to Royal Mail for a period of consultation but the decision had already been made. We will let members know when the changes take place and we welcome feedback as to how the new system is working. There is no news so far about the future use of the site that will be vacated behind the Post Office.

Post Office building In Blackheath Grove – A Skating Party Luton Times and Advertiser

12 February 1876

One of the finest skating rinks either In London or the suburbs was opened in September last, on a suitable site immediately opposite the Blackheath Station of the North Kent Railway. Like the Crystal Palace, the Blackheath Rink is equal to all vicissitudes of weather, having two divisions, one with length 250 feet for fine weather, and another wholly walled and covered in with length of 125 feet, the breadth of both averaging upwards of 50 feet, in which the rain may be defied. The rink has been much patronised since its opening ; and has been the scene of a brilliant skating party which had been got up by a committee of gentlemen, and was open only to their invited friends. It was the first of its kind in England if we except the one which was recently organised with so much success by the officers of the Scots Fusilier Guards Brighton, but if we are to form any augury from its entire success, it will hardly be the last. By the aid of Messrs. Smith, of Blackheath, the enclosed division of the rink had been transformed into a handsome ballroom, brilliantly lighted up, and festooned with banners and greenery both in the roof and along the walls. The band of the Horse Artillery played improvised orchestra, and

refreshments were provided in an adjacent pavilion. Banks of exotics, supplied by Messrs. Mallard, of Lee, were tastefully placed along the walls, and every arrangement testified to the taste and the industry of the committee.

The dancers - or rather the rinkers - began to assemble in force shortly after eight o'clock, and a programme of infinite variety was skated through without single hitch or breakdown whilst we remained in the ballroom. The male rinkers, who were not so fortunate as to obtain partners, rushed up and down the asphalté—which is the smoothest and cleanest that has yet been laid down— in reckless spread eagles, whilst their more lucky friends whirled their partners round in every variety of waltz.

The waltzing was, in short, perfection, and had an exceedingly pretty effect. Other dances more or less complicated and difficult followed, executed with none of those slight cannons or collisions of minor force which are not unfrequent at the best regulated ball-rooms. Dancing was kept up with much spirit until twelve o'clock, when military discipline, inexorable as Cinderella's godmother, recalled the Horse Artillery band to Woolwich.

THREE NEW BUSINESSES WELCOMED IN VILLAGE

Despite many shops shutting down during the Covid pandemic, there are some new businesses that are thriving in Blackheath. Here are three examples we found.

BLACKHEATH YOGA



Chrisi White, who runs Blackheath Yoga studio, said: "A year on from opening our doors in the heart of Blackheath Village, our studio is now finally open again for all services. We currently offer studio group classes, outdoor classes, treatments and therapies, private classes and small group parent and baby classes subject to our strict COVID safe procedures.

"Yoga is for everyone, and we offer classes for all abilities including over 20 people in the studio, chair yoga classes at Age Exchange and baby and parent courses. Aside from our good value class passes and studio memberships, we also run donation-based community classes and offer concessions and discretionary pricing for low-waged or unemployed yogis and anyone who could otherwise not afford to join us on the mat."

SPACENK



SPACENK says Blackheath Village has a little bit of everything it loves, and just what it is looking for as it is new to the neighbourhood. It thinks Blackheath has a range of cafes and restaurants and it only takes a couple of minutes to find food, coffee, or pistachio ice cream on a hot summer's day. The versatility and convenience of the shops have been very handy.

As a beauty shop its customers are excited to have something of this sort in the Village, which they say was needed. It has welcomed and been welcomed by an array of diverse and friendly people, and residents, employees, the postman, and the dogs, have all created a warm environment for the new team.

BLACKHEATH BOOTCAMP



Sally Hammond, director of the Blackheath Bootcamp, has been teaching for 15 years after she left a career in IT to follow 'My Ikigai', which she described as a meeting of passion, vocation and mission.

She told the *Newsletter*: "Making fitness fun and delivering it in a way that people can come to love the process as well as the results is what I am all about. The workouts are always different and creative so that people can switch off and just enjoy challenging themselves to learn new moves in the hour they invest in their well-being."

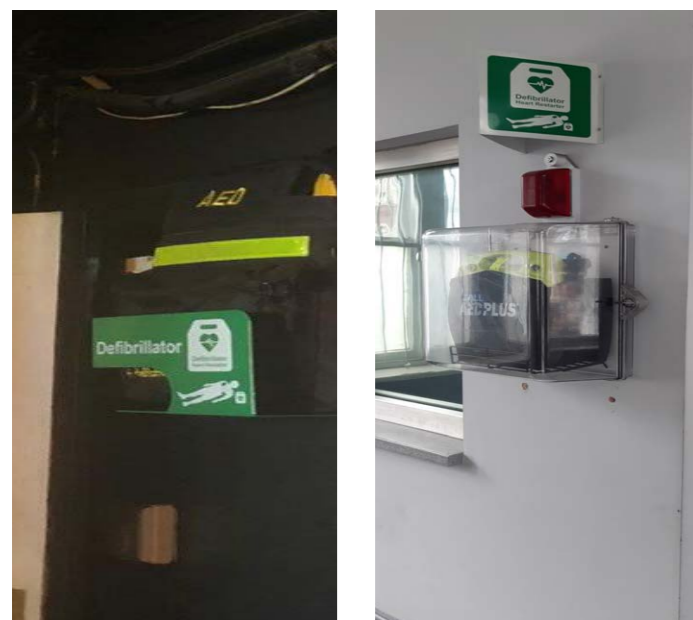
"I am passionate about the impact of community, bringing people together and connecting them, and this is something at the heart of Blackheath Bootcamp. The word is often associated with army training and shouty instructors, but I prefer to gently encourage and motivate clients to push themselves to get their best workout. We love working out on the Heath."

The Bootcamp also features in the story on the next page about the defibrillator on the Heath.

COMMUNITY CROWDFUNDS NEW DEFIBRILLATOR FOR HEATH

This project started as the Blackheath Bootcamp team was updating its first aid certificates, as part of this process includes cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillator use.

Knowing that speed is essential when someone needs a defibrillator, the team asked where the nearest local one was. They discovered there were none very near the Heath, but there was one at Blackheath station.



The photos show the defibrillator in the PoW pub bar (left) and at the station booking office

The statistics on saving someone suffering a heart attack or cardiac arrest demonstrate that providing a shock within 10 minutes is critical to success, and being able to provide this using a defibrillator before the arrival of emergency medical services increases the chance of survival.

Each minute's delay can reduce the survival rate by 10% and every second counts. Obviously the emergency services should be called first on discovering a person is unresponsive, but having a nearby defibrillator could help save someone's life.

Initially the team spoke to All Saints Church about placing a defibrillator on the outside of the church, but further investigations discovered that the London ambulance service does not support code-holding for locked boxes.

The next port of call was The Princess of Wales Pub, where Bootcamp's Sally Hammond spoke to the manager Pavlina. She was delighted to be asked to host the defibrillator, as it's a busy local pub that often has 500 customers through the doors at the weekend.

The App 'Crowdfunder' was used to set up a project to raise the £1,200 needed and it quickly gained momentum. "It was so exciting and heartwarming to see our community coming together like this and donating towards the project," Sally said.

The target was reached within a few weeks, raising enough money for the defibrillator and for a course to train 12 of the pub's staff.

SOCIETY MEMBERS CLEAN UP THE HEATH AGAIN

This activity has usually been in October but this year, to coincide with the Cleaner Lewisham campaign, a group of about 30 members met on Saturday June 12.

It was very good to see some new Society volunteers and also heartening that we had the support of our Lewisham councillors, and Cllr Geoffrey Brighty vof Greenwich.

Needless to say, face masks figured prominently in this year's rubbish haul, but it was heartening that the Heath did not seem to have suffered too badly from the previous year of lockdowns. The intrepid team is seen on the right.



LIFTING WEIGHT RESTRICTION ON KIDBROOKE PARK ROAD

This may seem an esoteric matter not related to Blackheath, but many members, and particularly residents of Lee Road, have complained about high volumes of heavy vehicles, particularly skips and ready mixed concrete lorries, passing through the Village and along Lee Road.

A glance at the map of the local road network shows that the two south-north routes in our area are the A2/Kidbrooke Park Road (southern section) and Prince of Wales Road/Blackheath Village/Lee Road. With a 7.5 tonne weight limit on the southern section of Kidbrooke Park Road, the south-north heavy traffic uses the only alternative, through the Village and along Lee Road.



The weight limit is there to protect the railway bridge at Kidbrooke station, *seen in the photograph above*. Recent bridge strengthening largely addressed the problem, but a small amount of residual work remains to be completed for Network Rail to be able to declare the bridge fit for all traffic.

We were hoping this work would be completed in early summer, as scheduled by Network Rail, but Transport for London is paying for this and it has deleted this budget as part of its Covid crisis response.

A recent TfL email indicates a further concern: the impact of increased traffic volumes on the capacity of right-turning holding lanes at the Kidbrooke Park Road turn from the A2, creating queues on the southbound running lanes as turning traffic blocks through traffic.

Before agreeing to any lifting of the weight restriction, TfL needs to be satisfied that the additional traffic diverting to the newly un-restricted route does not overload the right turning capacity of the junction.

Whatever the logic of TfL's concerns, the present situation is of south-north HGVs being routed through the local shopping centre of Blackheath Village and along the wholly residential Lee Road.

The wider Kidbrooke Park Road, with its Kidbrooke village residences set well back, cannot be used by these HGVs for want of a very small amount of the bridge work, and possibly also the need for retiming the A2/Kidbrooke Park Road junction traffic lights.

The Society's view is that opening Kidbrooke Park Road to HGVs will have a significantly beneficial effect on HGV volumes on Lee Road, but less in the Village, as some vehicles will be using Lee Terrace to travel west-east and will not divert to Kidbrooke Park Road. We believe this measure is definitely worth pursuing. If readers agree, please do raise this with your local councillors, as we will need as much local pressure as possible to move TfL to act.

W.H. SMITH BLACKHEATH CLOCK DISCOVERED IN SURREY

A Surrey man has contacted the Society about a handsome 1900 wall clock with the inscription W.H. Smith & Son, 47 Quentin Rd, Blackheath, on its face.

James Whittaker told the *Newsletter* he first assumed W.H. Smith & Son was the eponymous stationers and booksellers, and was located in Quentin Road.

But research in our President Neil Rhind's *Blackheath Village & Environs* showed that a William Smith lived at that address from 1895 to 1913 and for many years was employed as a watch and clockmaker by Bennett's at 28 Tranquil Vale.

The Bennett family ended its connection with the shop in 1870, and William Smith was then effectively running the business, but the family's name stayed over the door from 1840 to 1963.

The Bennetts were directly related to John Bennett, the

Cheapside watch and clock maker who bought the lease of seven acres of ground in Blackheath, fronting Lee Road.

By putting his address on the clock it suggests that William Smith made clocks at his own home and was advertising, and possibly selling them, through Bennett's and elsewhere.

James said he bought the clock in May this year for £800 from West Sussex Clocks, a few miles south of Horsham, which specialises in the sale, repair and restoration of antique clocks.



SOCIETY REPRINTS *WALKING THE HEATH & VILLAGE* BOOKLETS

We are pleased to report that the Society is reprinting its popular booklet *Walking the Heath*. Having sold over 1,500 copies since its first publication in September 2013, this useful little handbook, compiled by Society members Roger Marshall and Neil Rhind, proved such a success that a matching volume *Walking the Village* was commissioned.

This has also sold well and is about to be reprinted. Next to appear will be *Walking Westcombe & the Angerstein Encroachment*, shortly to hit the bookshops but delayed by the Covid pandemic.

The heath book draws no attention to a heath landmark, yet this is one which is much noticed and puzzled over by those walking by.

To the west side of the Prince of Wales Road, close to the Prince of Wales Pond, is a thicket of growth which survives being mowed to the ground year after year. This can be seen below, covered by yellow common ragwort, mixed with grasses and thistles.

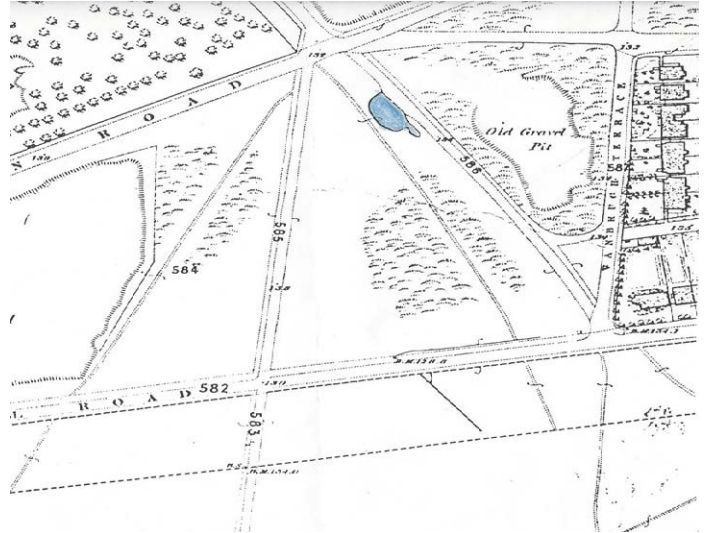


Fortunately, the greener approach to mowing the heath these days leaves some of the fields uncut and sporting marvelous arrays of wildflowers.

The mound about which we write seems to survive. What is its purpose and why here?

Legend has it that it is on the line of an underground stream which flows from a land spring in the southeast

corner of Greenwich Park. Once it filled a modest pond on the northeast corner of the Heath close to the Gibb Memorial shelter. By the west side bus-stop would place it well enough. Alas, the "lost" pond on the north east corner of the heath proper is no longer visible but it is marked in blue on this 1866 map.



The flow then crossed the heath and emptied into the basin we call the Prince of Wales Pond, once a drovers' pond of considerable size and a useful reservoir for Wicklemarsh House to the south. It was over-managed by the Metropolitan Board of Works in the 1870s and shortly afterward lined with concrete to accommodate the model boating fraternity. More recently Lewisham Town Hall decided this should be a duck pond and duck islands were introduced, not to every model boating enthusiast's liking.

It is hard to comprehend this story and why it was not discovered when the main A2 Shooters Hill Road was laid down, and the Camomile Bottom roundabout was completed in August 1930? The roundabout mound, with its trees and shrubs, may also have been, and perhaps still is, fed by the stream and perhaps that was partly why it was chosen for the purpose?

If any members can provide hard evidence for that, we will be delighted to hear from them. Meanwhile, no mowing of the mound please or removal of its long grass and wildflowers. We like it as it is.

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