



NEWSLETTER ■ SPRING 2021

## ZOOM TALKS PROVE GREAT SUCCESS FOR SOCIETY

Since the first lockdown many of us have learnt a new skill called *How to Zoom*, and the Society has run a series of free and successful Zoom talks by its members on a wide range of subjects since the beginning of this year.

We have covered subjects ranging from the history and nature of Greenwich Park, the Society's involvement in planning, the latest volume of Neil Rhind's *Blackheath Village & Environs*, the making of your *Newsletter*, to how the French Protestant exiles, the Huguenots, form part of our local history and modern local architecture.



The inside story of the Copper & Ink restaurant in the Village was due to be told after this *Newsletter* went to press. The talks have attracted new members to the Society, some of whom may not have taken part in our more traditional events such as our walks and social meetings in local pubs. Your committee has held its monthly meetings on Zoom.

Every Zoom talk lasts about an hour, with participants asking questions, and the great advantage is that the audience can do this with ease, as they just press the chat button at the bottom of the screen and happily type away.

We have found that, if we only have the speaker and their resources showing on screen, the transmission is very clear and the audience is not visible to the speaker, which some members have said they find reassuring.

Initially, we only had a Zoom package permitting an attendance of 100. But the talk on the *Birds of Greenwich Park* by Joe Beale and Dusty Gedge proved to be so popular, with many members and their friends joining, that we reached our limit and some people could not take part.

## CALLING ALL MEMBERS

PLEASE SEND YOUR EMAIL ADDRESSES TO THE OFFICE AT [OFFICE@BLACKHEATH.ORG](mailto:OFFICE@BLACKHEATH.ORG) SO THAT WE CAN LET YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE TALKS AND KEEP YOU IN TOUCH WITH ALL THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES

We have now increased the limit to 500 and the Society is reaching new audiences all the time. We welcome your feedback on these talks and suggestions for future talks and events, as we may retain a mix of Zoom talks and physical events in the future.

As lockdown restrictions are eased and the evenings become longer, we anticipate that members will be keen to socialise and move outdoors again. We have provisionally scheduled the Walk & Talk events, *listed on the right*. As usual, full details are on our website.

If the situation changes, we will adapt the programme and let members know by email, so please make sure that the office has your up-to-date email address.

The events are free and are conducted by volunteers, but donations of £5 to the Society via the website would be appreciated. If you would also like to join the Events Committee, please let the office know.

## NEIL'S NEW BLACKHEATH BOOK SELLS WELL IN LOCKDOWN

The third volume of Blackheath Village & Environs by Society President Neil Rhind is selling well in the lockdown and has been warmly received.

The 610-page book has 263 illustrations and maps and covers Lewisham and Lee parishes. At press time it had sold over 150 copies since it was published in late January via our website [www.blackheath.org](http://www.blackheath.org), or by email to [office@blackheath.org](mailto:office@blackheath.org). Priced at £20, it will be available in the Village from Waterstones and the Bookshop on the Heath when they re-open in mid-April.

These two complimentary posts appeared on Facebook. Mary Mills said: "Gosh - and thanks. I have just received copy of the new book which will be a gold mine of information on industrial Greenwich and beyond. Lots of posh houses with all the factory owners and investors. You can learn so much - about all the soap-works-owning Soameses and their role in Greenwich politics and church building. Then there was the man who invented manganese bronze in his back garden."

Wendy Rigg said: "I thought people might be interested in the story which I loved reading about the Blackheath pedestrian George Wilson. I am finding it really interesting, it's a dip-in sort of book packed with incredible detail about the residents of Blackheath."

Society volunteers will be distributing leaflets in all the roads covered by the book in the coming weeks in an effort to create more sales.

The first volume of the series appeared in 1976 and the second in 1983. Because of the size of the latest issue, Neil had to leave out a substantial chapter on north-west Blackheath, covering Chesterfield Walk, Crooms Hill and Hyde Vale - which are all in the Royal Borough of Greenwich - so Blackheath Greenwich will eventually form Volume IV.

### THURSDAY 6 MAY: WALK & TALK

The Changing Landscape of King's Cross with Paul Wright.

### THURSDAY 20 MAY: WALK & TALK

Tales from the Inns of Court with Jonathan Causer.

### MONDAY 7 JUNE: MEET & EAT

The Crown pub garden for a social meeting of members.

### WEDNESDAY 9 JUNE: WALK & TALK

Visiting Soho Past and Present with Paul Wright.

### WEDNESDAY 23 JUNE: BLACKHEATH SOCIETY AGM

Hopefully to be held at St Mary's Hall.

### THURSDAY 8 JULY: WALK & TALK

Tour of Charlton Football Stadium (to be confirmed).

With admirable honesty, Neil asked us to correct what he calls some "slips and errors". He is grateful to the readers who have pointed them out. Here they are:

**Page 7: Last line** - No 2 Lloyds Place should start on the next page, page 8.

**Page 8: 5th para, last line** - replace "regeneration" with the word pre-registration.

**Page 16: Caption No 48** - delete reference to Granville Park.

**Page 70: Image 48** - View of Nos 1-4 Aberdeen Terrace. Delete reference to Granville Park.

**Page 76, 5th paragraph** - architect for Orchard House stables should read Joseph Bonomi (1739-1808). See image No 42 (correctly captioned).

**Page 147: Image 82** - date in caption should read 1866.

**Page 168** - I am grateful to Mr John Coulter for correcting my schedule of residents of the Manor House, Lewisham Hill, which was demolished in 1851. He suggests: Manor House - occupants were Mr Cole 1746; Capt. Jolley (possibly John) 1753-1780 or later; Mrs Jolley 1790 or earlier-1806; J.B. Bennett 1807-37 or later. John Dickens, father of Charles, was there in 1843, either as a tenant of Whittenbury or a lodger. The house was demolished by 1851.

**Page 169** - The builders of Dartmouth Terrace were Charles Penney and his son William Charles Penney.

**Pages 228 & 229: Images No 128 & 130** - For clarification the original Green Man public house and hotel was demolished in 1869, and the replacement pulled down in 1969-70.

**Page 289** - Resident at No 30 Dartmouth Row from 1947 to 1963 was Dr Geoffrey Battersby Barker (1919-2006) MD DPM FRCP.

**Page 301** - The Hollies, No 3 Lee Terrace is Image No 151.

**Page 311** - Paragraph regarding No 30 Dartmouth Row in 1921 should read Nos 36 and No 36a.

**Page 378** - Reverse captions for images Nos 185 & 186.

**Page 384: Image No 203** - Illustration in text is on page 332, not 266.

**Page 462: Image 241** - Date should read 1986-1987.

**Page 465: Image 249** - Should read No 4 Belmont Hill.

**Page 467: Image 256** - Caption should read High Road, Lee.

**Page 468: Image No 257** - Caption should read No 4 Marischal Road.

## ARCHIVE WORK CONTINUES APACE - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

A year of Covid 19 has passed already, but we are glad that work on the archive has not been badly affected, and there have been many improvements.

At the start of the pandemic in spring last year, we announced a major expansion to include images of Eliot Place, Eliot Vale, Vanbrugh Park, St Germans Place, West Grove, Belmont Hill, Granville Park, Dartmouth Row, Lewisham Hill and Blackheath Hill.

That autumn we reported a new archive dimension, with the addition of "Blackheath Memories", matching still images from the archive with the audio recordings of Blackheath residents made by Pam Schweitzer in 2001/2002. This added 21 films, and films of new Blackheath reminiscences are still being produced.

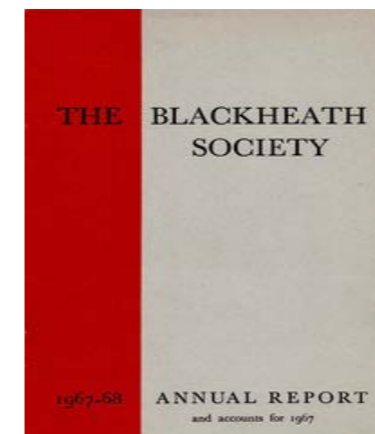
Readers of last winter's *Newsletter* will know of two major events which led to much more material being added - the publication of Neil Rhind's "Blackheath Village & Environs Volume III, 1790-2000" in January this year, and the welcome news that Neil has entrusted the Society with the care and maintenance of his archival legacy.

In consequence, many more images of the Lee and Lewisham sides of Blackheath have been added to complement Neil's publication and we have also added promotional films for the book.

Work has continued cataloguing and digitising the archive with the aim of making it available to anyone who has an interest in Blackheath and its history. This is a staged process.

We have to store, catalogue and record the contents, then digitally scan them and make them available on the website. We are happy to say that systems are now being developed to make all this fascinating historical material available on the archive website.

From Neil's archive, we have added our *Newsletters* since 2013. We will continue to add more, as well as nearly all the Annual Reports, since the Society's inaugural meeting in 1937, *like this 1967-68 edition*.



These may sound like resoundingly dull additions, but in fact they provide an historical perspective on the role of the Society and its activities over the past 84 years, and these Annual Reports identify issues that continue to be pertinent.

Even if the Society may sometimes have had a somewhat negative reputation outside its membership for objecting to architectural and developmental change, these annual reports show conclusively that Blackheath would be an infinitely poorer place if timely objections had not been raised.

Our greatest pleasure at this time of lockdown has been to add a substantial number of editions of "The Blackheath Local Guide & District Advertiser" to the website. First published in 1889, the earliest edition online is 1902.

These are full copies of the original newspapers, often running to 64 pages and they represent a unique record of life in Blackheath since the 1890s. We are extremely fortunate to have them. We have added a good number and will continue to do so. *A 1923 copy is shown below.*



Tagging archive material, or key-wording, is time consuming and important, as tags and keywords are the means by which users can find the material.

We would like your help in this process. It requires very little effort, and no technical expertise as it can be done online, by just completing a form about what you have read on screen.

If you are interested in helping us, please go to the Society archive website and click on the green words "Add entry" which sit at the foot of most website pages to express your interest. I will reply by email with more details and examples of what would be helpful to us. The choice of what you look at is completely yours.

Finally, the rapid expansion of our website at [www.blackheatharchive.org](http://www.blackheatharchive.org) over the past year means that many people are not fully aware of the depth and wealth of material now held by the Society. A Zoom online event is being planned shortly introducing the site to those less familiar with it.

Allan Griffin

## MAJOR BUILDING SCHEMES RISE HIGHER IN LEWISHAM

Activity has continued apace on major schemes during the lockdown, with height and density used to deliver increasingly tough council targets for new homes, including affordable ones.

Lewisham's Carpetright site two towers, at 35 and 20 storeys, have recently topped out; two of the five blocks for phase 2 of Lewisham Gateway at 29 and 19 storeys are rising fast; preparatory work has already started on the Lewisham Tesco Car Park site, with three blocks of 8, 14 and 34 storeys. The Leegate project, dormant for some years, looks like being resurrected under new Galliard Homes management, with towers rising to possibly 15 storeys.

Two development decisions were taken recently. We were satisfied with the outcome for the Kidbrooke Park Road site, where the Council proposes a development exclusively of social housing at a reasonable density. A condition for significant improvement of the cycle/pedestrian crossing was agreed.

A very disappointing outcome emerged, however, for the Blackheath Business Estate application on Blackheath Hill. This is for a very dense mix of a 7/9-storey housing block and a 4-storey commercial block extremely close to the Brain Injury Unit and disadvantaged neighbours in the Parkside estate.

In a nail-biting finish to the council planning committee meeting, despite spirited opposition from local residents, councillors and the Society, the Chair used

his casting vote for new housing, overriding council guidelines, the loss of 30 mature trees and great concerns about neighbours' amenity, especially loss of light. The application is now with the GLA.

We were pleased Greenwich rejected an application for a very large modern house in Morden Road, backing on to Grade I listed Morden College. We do not object to modernity, but felt it was totally out of scale for the important site at the Heath entrance to the Cator Estate

In the Village, Lewisham officers rejected an application to develop the Parés site into a supermarket, saying that a large rear extension was out of proportion for this Grade II listed building in its Village setting.

By contrast, an example of a constructive outcome to planning was in Southvale Road. An application for a significant modification to the rear of the property was approved after changes addressing our concerns about the suitability of the plans.

The current application by Blackheath Halls for improvement of the front of the building is covered in an interview on page 9. We support its objectives and offered our suggestions on details.

The planning group is currently engaged in the mammoth task of scrutinizing and responding to the new Draft Lewisham Local Plan 2020-2040. It runs to 872 pages - compared to 542 in the new London Plan 2021 for the whole of the capital that was approved in March. Consultation on this closes on April 11 and can be accessed on [lewishamlocalplan.commonplace.is](http://lewishamlocalplan.commonplace.is).

## GREENWICH CARBON NEUTRAL PLAN SETS HUGE AIMS

In 2019 Greenwich announced a climate emergency, declaring its aim to be carbon neutral by 2030, in contrast to the national and Mayor of London targets to achieve this goal by 2050.

It has now consulted on a £1.6 billion Carbon Neutral Plan, setting out how it aimed to achieve the goal. This can be found on <https://carbonneutralgreenwich.commonplace.is>.

The task for the borough is huge. For example, 60% of its emissions come from buildings, which would all need retrofitting to achieve the aim. Car use (transport accounts for a quarter of emissions) would have to reduce by 45% and waste by 35%.

It is easy to be very sceptical about the chances of success. Although much can be achieved by the council - for example by converting its own substantial building estate to zero carbon - achieving the overall objective would depend heavily on the actions of others, especially the central and London governments.

Converting the building stock to solutions like ground and air source heating will need a complete overhaul of building standards, as well as huge funding needs.

In our response we welcomed its proactive approach and the scale of the ambition, and we offered our support in promoting an initiative for which education and communication with local residents will be key. The recent controversy over traffic reduction schemes shows the importance of effective consultation.

We would particularly welcome Greenwich initiatives with which organisations like ours, and schools, can identify.

We therefore suggested a Natural Environment Action Plan that could involve the community. This could involve developing a clear base line inventory of our natural assets including tree cover, initiatives to protect what we have and promote new planting, and focus on a wider biodiversity agenda.

Such an agenda would dovetail well with our efforts to protect local greenery, especially through the planning system, and promote awareness of our natural assets.

Hopefully, with a major climate conference in Glasgow later this year, the appropriate central government response will appear soon to provide the essential legislative and financial support to achieve the ambition in the Greenwich Plan.

## QUAGGY PLAYING FIELDS GROUP SEEKS HELP

The Friends of Quaggy Playing Fields need volunteers to protect the local playing fields surrounding the river. The group's Catherine Ashcroft writes:

Sandwiched between Manor Way, several thousand new homes at Kidbrooke and the new housing development planned in Lee Green lie various playing fields which are an important flood plain for the Quaggy River which runs between them.

The playing fields are Weigall Road, Willow, Crofton Albion, Blackheath Wanderers Sports Ground, Bowring, John Roan Sports Club, David Lloyd Sports and the Manor Way fields.

They also act as a green lung for the area, which has some of the most polluted roads in London. The land is all designated as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and Green Chain. But there is no guarantee that it will stay that way.

There is an aspiration to protect and secure its future use as playing fields, but nothing has been done by the council to help save the field.

The Bowring site, to the south-west of the river, was subject to a speculative planning application in 2019 which RBG refused, due to the lack of local need for secondary school places, not because it was MOL or a sports field. It is now leased for 25 years to an active thriving club, Lewisham FC.

The new apartment blocks at Kidbrooke and Lee Centre are higher than originally planned, leading to greater density of population. They are built on brownfield sites, helping councils reach their housing targets.

There is enough brownfield land in UK to build 1.3 million homes but since 2013 there has been a 475% rise in planning applications on green belt land, as green belt is more profitable for the developers. There is no need to dig up and pave over the green in our cities. We should be fighting to protect these areas.



The Manor Way fields looking towards the east and the Quaggy River



Several fields have been closed, fenced off, left overgrown and locked up. Clubhouses have burnt down or become derelict and the owners have declined to talk to sports clubs and have allowed fields to deteriorate.

In 20 years since the Huntsman site at the end of Manor Way was turned from a thriving sports field into a disused, derelict one, the Royal Borough of Greenwich has removed its MOL status. The High Court removed its protective covenant, meaning it can now be built on. Once building is allowed on such land, the developer can go back to the courts to change the initial covenant, so the land can be more densely developed.

The Highland site, sitting between Manor Way and the river, appears to be following the same trajectory, despite being described in RBG's Sport Fields Strategy as "at risk of permanent loss of playing field land".

With careful planning and local input, we can protect our natural environment, support local clubs, and benefit the local community.

These vital green spaces need a vision and someone to fight for them to ensure the sites are not fenced off. Our group wants people to be able to walk, play, learn and socialise in a ribbon of quality green open spaces along the River Quaggy.

The Friends fully support an existing related project to open a walking trail along the river which allows the communities of Kidbrooke and Lee Green to connect, promotes the river and avoids some polluted roads.

Anyone willing to help with administration, work on our website at [www.Friendsofquaggyplayingfields.com](http://www.Friendsofquaggyplayingfields.com), with data research and talking to sports clubs, or who has environmental knowhow, can email us at: [friendsquaggyplayingfields@gmail.com](mailto:friendsquaggyplayingfields@gmail.com).

## BOOK ON BLACKHEATH MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE PLANNED

Local architect Ana Sutherland is planning to publish a book later this year exploring the Modern Buildings in Blackheath and Greenwich, 1950-2000.

The book and accompanying map will form an historic survey of around 50 selected buildings and estates, capturing the extraordinary work and network of relationships amongst architects, including Patrick Gwynne, Walter Greaves, Peter Moro, Trevor Dannatt and Eric Lyons.



It follows a guided walk on subject which she led in October last year and a Society Zoom talk in March.

The post-war years saw an intense period of change, with many notable modernist architects drawn to the Blackheath area to develop projects of national importance. Through interviews with a number of the original architects, clients and current homeowners, the guide will explore how, despite often facing much opposition, they were able to break the mould and created these architectural treasures. One of these, The Priory, is seen below.

The book will contain an introduction to modern architecture and cover the men and women architects of the period, showing how different planning policies and public taste have evolved and shaped the rich fabric of the area.

Ana is a local architect who has run her own practice since 2015. Previously she worked at Allies and Morrison Architects, after moving from her native Lisbon to London in 2003.

She first discovered Blackheath from the RIBA exhibition on Span and Eric Lyons in 2006. She and her family have been Blackheath and Span dwellers ever since.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

It seems like a dream now, but once we used to have an annual pop festival on the Heath. Loved or loathed, it funded a huge part of the cost of running Lewisham's parks.

It lasted a weekend. Add three days for setting up and taking down, and that's an area of the Heath unavailable to the rest of us for 120 hours.

The Blackheath Joint Working Party has given permission to a commercial organisation to run a Forest School in Eliot Pits. A lovely site for a lovely concept. But the base of Eliot Pits is permanently wet, even in a drought, and the sides are very steep, with not much usable space.

There are two-hour sessions in term time (152 hours) plus holiday sessions. The hourly cost is more than that of a day pass to the Festival. The BJWP also agreed in 2017 to it setting up a private nursery school on the site. This hasn't actually started but the BJWP renews it every year. Lewisham gets no money from them, there has been no public consultation and no public benefit.

About eight years ago, there was a plan to build a playground in Eliot Pits. A crowded Blackheath Society AGM discussed this and decided overwhelmingly that we wanted the pits, the only woodland area in the Lewisham part of the Heath, to remain wild.

The Royal Parks policy for licensing fitness trainers (protecting grown-ups, not small children) is online. Their regulations are strict and precise. Above all, no licensee is allowed to monopolise a site.

Those of us living on the eastern side of the Heath are fortunate. The Westcombe Society and the three local Councillors care very much about beautiful Vanbrugh Pits. It's hard to conceive that they would ever agree to its being used commercially. *Juliet Cairns*

### THE EDITOR RESPONDS:

**The BJWP advises on a wide range of issues, and the Society is one of the nine voting members, but final decisions are taken by the councils.**

**In this case the BJWP asked many questions and then agreed not to object to a trial period, subject to relevant departments in Lewisham making checks and reporting back on the success or otherwise of the trial.**

**Forries Education operates in Eliot Pits, Manor House Park and Hilly Fields and it pays a combined fee for all three. Other local schools also use the Heath as a playground.**

## LOCKDOWN LEADS TO NEW HISTORY ARCHIVE OF BLACKHEATH CRICKET CLUB



“Together joined in cricket’s manly toil.”—Byron.

Blackheath Cricket Club was established at The Rectory Field in April 1886 and its origins extend much further back in Victorian times. But a definitive account of its long history does not seem to exist and many records have been lost or reside in unknown places.

Fortunately the club does have access to documents covering much of the history. Motivated by the need to find a lockdown project, club and Society member Chris Swadkin - a continuous player since 1968 - has pulled these together, augmented by his own experiences of the last 50 years, to provide a commentary on nearly 200 years of cricket in Blackheath.

The result is Blackheath CC: History Archive which enables club members and those interested in a local institution to gain an understanding of the club's history. The full document is available on its website at: [www.pitchero.com/clubs/blackheathcricketclub/news/club-history-online-2599359.html](http://www.pitchero.com/clubs/blackheathcricketclub/news/club-history-online-2599359.html)

The historical material that has survived includes names and families well known in Blackheath circles in their time: for example, F.W. (Fred) Prior, a stockbroker living in Blackheath Park, was the dominant figure

of Blackheath Morden CC from 1863 and compiled a history in 1881.

Scrapbooks covering 1892-1907 assisted his nephew, William Auld, to produce a hand-written memoir to celebrate the centenary of the club, tracing its history back to 1863 and his uncle's role in its formation.

The Christopherson family are renowned in Blackheath and Kent cricket history, and Malcolm, the secretary for many years in the late 19th century, published an article in the Blackheath Arts Club review of 1893 covering the Victorian years.

The club only had to look to the Street family for their groundsman for the first 70 years at the Rectory Field, and Bert Street retained a stock of photographs, documents and scorebooks from the early years.

Peter Piper of Manor Way, a doyen of Blackheath rugby and cricket, kept a minute book covering 1912-1958, as well as AGM notices from the 1930s to the 1960s.

All this material is summarised in the archive and is now held either at the club, or by former club chairman Jon Taylor. The information the Society has garnered from many of Neil Rhind's talks and publications should also not be forgotten.

### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Susie Arber  
Helene Mallauran  
MelanieAspey  
Vladimir Martis  
Diane Bell-Duane  
Gillian Page  
Nancy Bradley  
Isabel Keim

Catherine Polli  
David Buhagiar  
Julie Punter  
Hannah Clark  
Wendy Rigg  
Neil Garratt  
Carol Roper  
Chrissy Shipley

Susan-Anne  
Hepplewhite  
Cindy Sheehan  
Barbara & Spencer  
Hodges  
Yenny Tovar  
Alice Vacani  
Eleanor Levett-Millett

## NEW CONSERVATOIRE DIRECTOR PLANS FRESH START

The new Executive Director of the Conservatoire, Kay Sandford-Beal, arrived in early December 2020 and is now planning a fresh start for the institution as conditions return to normal.

She had just two weeks to meet the core staff in person and has been tied to Zoom meetings since then as she learns her new job. She told the *Newsletter* one of the ideas she wants to develop will involve using art, music and drama to improve people's mental health and personal well-being, particularly relevant in these difficult times.

Since lockdown in January, she has been spending more time on Zoom, introducing herself to the group of over 100 tutors who work there.

The Conservatoire has been running courses online in the lockdown, but plans to restart Covid-secure face to face group classes for under-18s, and to provide all of its individual tuition after Easter. Adult group courses will resume in person towards the beginning of June.

Kay saw the job advertised in *The Guardian* and was particularly attracted by the Conservatoire's reputation as an organisation embedded in the local community. "The Conservatoire is well respected, it has an educational focus on my three passions of art, music and drama and I want to help it come back to life."

"I am particularly grateful for the support we have received over the last year from the local community, including many individual donors. They have helped to sustain the Conservatoire during a very challenging period for arts," she said.



She has been a keen amateur singer and actress since she was eight years old and continues to perform regularly at the Barn Theatre in Oxted, where she lives.

Kay has over 20 years' experience working in the not-for-profit sector, specialising in heritage, arts and education at the British Museum, Tate Gallery and Royal College of Art.

Her most recent work includes directing the operations of the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design at the Royal College of Art and running Bore Place, home to the Commonwork Trust. She is a Governor of the Hereford College of Arts and a Fellow of the Royal College of Art.

## HALLS PLAN NEW LOOK FOR FRONT OF THEIR BUILDING

Blackheath Halls are planning a new design for the area in front of the building to make it more accessible to the local community and create a more open and engaging forecourt.

The proposed £250,000 scheme will include new digital signage, removing part of the low Lee Road wall to create direct pedestrian access to the front door, new stainless steel retractable metal bollards to prevent unauthorised vehicle use and new benches and planting in the garden area.

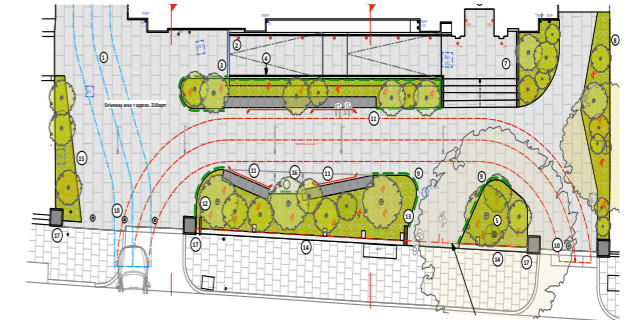
The driveway and existing brickwork on the main building will be repaired and the rounded entrance steps reconfigured. The tree in the front garden will be retained, with new low-level lighting.

Halls director Gemma Okell told the *Newsletter*: "The front does look a bit tired at the moment. We want to open it up and provide a more welcoming area that will encourage more people to come and see the improvements we have made inside as well."



The drawings show the proposed new elevation at the front of the building (above) and the overall plan.

The planning application went to Greenwich Council in mid-February after consultations with local people and amenity societies that led to some changes in the original proposals, and she hopes the work can be completed later this year, as the Halls are gradually allowed to return to normal operations.



Gemma said the Halls have further improvements, such as installing air conditioning, planned for the future, but this would have been much more expensive. A new forecourt was a better idea at this time, with funds given specifically for this purpose.

The Halls are keen to attract new people to the building when permitted to reopen, as their income had been reduced due to the Covid lockdowns.

Gemma said feedback during the consultations had in general been very positive with people welcoming the changes, in particular the plans for new signage. She said a few respondents objected to creating a small gap in the frontage wall, principally on aesthetic grounds.

## LOCAL BLOGS LEAD THE WAY IN UP-TO-DATE NEWS COVERAGE

Easy access to information has become vital during lockdown and two local blogs have been leading the way in providing top class public interest journalism for south-east London.

The first is 853, on <https://853.london>, which mainly covers Greenwich, with some Lewisham content and a wide range of local stories.

It runs detailed reports on Greenwich Council, as seen by a quote on its website from council leader Danny Thorpe: "I've not given up my policy of not commenting on 853 leaks and I'm not going to start tonight."

Editor Darryl Chamberlain, who writes most of the stories, has been a journalist for over 20 years. The site is a member of the Local Democracy Reporting Service, which reports on councils across the UK, and this allows it to pick up big stories in neighbouring boroughs and to use some BBC local news material.

It draws on stories from two reporters on the *News Shopper* - Grainne Cuffe, local democracy reporter

for Lewisham, Southwark and Lambeth, and Lachlan Leeming covering Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley.

The blog is also part of a project by the Centre for Investigative Journalism, called Collaborative Community Journalism, and offers training and paid research in areas of public interest journalism.

853 is part-funded by its readers and can be supported on the websites *Steady*, *PressPatron* and *Patreon*.

The second blog is *From the Murky Depths* on [www.fromthemurkydepths.co.uk](http://www.fromthemurkydepths.co.uk). It runs regular cover of local news, focusing on Greenwich, and occasionally Lewisham and Bexley. Its webpage says it looks into various aspects of life and covers new housing, transport and infrastructure issues, as well as delving into "what local authorities are up to."

Any tips or comments can be sent to [fromthemurkydepths@gmail.com](mailto:fromthemurkydepths@gmail.com). It also relies on donations and can be supported on *Patreon* and *Paypal*.

### NAVY PRESS

Ipswich Journal  
26 March 1726

Last Week as a Labourer was going over Black-Heath to work, he met with four Fellows who press'd the poor Man, but he begging heartily, and telling them his Family must starve, &c. they yielding to his intreaties, provided he would give them some Money, which he complying, they march'd off. In a quarter of an Hour he falls into another Gang, with a Lieutenant, who likewise stopp'd him, upon which he bemoans his Condition, saying, it was very ill Fortune to be pressed twice in a Day, that he had not one Farthing left, having given half a Guinea and three Shillings to the other Press Gang. The Lieutenant hearing the Story, went in Quest of those who had extorted the Money from him, and found them carousing at an Ale-House, and that they were Sham Press-Masters; upon which he order'd the Labourer his Money, set him at Liberty and carried off the other Chaps.

### ECOLOGY

Strange Sight on  
Blackheath  
Thursday 15 August  
1765

Extract of a Letter from Greenwich:  
Twenty Minutes after Ten this Evening there appeared in the Element a large Ball of Fire, about ten Inches Diameter. It had a very luminous Aspect, and was somewhat redder than the Moon at Full. Its Course was South-East and the Time of its Appearance about a Quarter of Minute, when it seemed on a Sudden to fall as it were over Blackheath, but became invisible in an Instant.

## SPARKLY SMILE DENTIST JO EISENBERG 1937 - 2021



Jo Eisenberg first arrived in Blackheath in 1968 and took over a dental practice from a Mr Stab at 34 Blackheath Village, the current site of Blackheath Locksmiths. He had grown up in Salford,

near Manchester, and after graduating from the Dental Hospital, came south and worked in Knightsbridge and then Plumstead.

He soon established a standing-room-only following in Blackheath and realised he needed larger premises, so in 1974 he moved to 19 Montpelier Vale, the current site of his Sparkly Smile practice.

London was a groovy place in the 1970s, inspired by the forward thinkers of the 1960s such as Vidal Sassoon and Terence Conran, and Jo used the darkened glass of the Sassoon hairdressing heritage in his dental surgery. He chose big quarry tiles for the floor and took the idea for the wooden staircase and panelling from the interiors of North Severn.

This was a group of 1960s award-winning glass houses on the Heath designed by architect Royston Summers, and Jo lived there with his young family. He liked to be different and brought some of that unique style to Blackheath Village, and he was a Society member.

His face was seen daily in the Village and the best part of his working day was taking a long lunch. After that you could find him walking around the Village in his white jeans, talking to everyone.

He needed you to know he was an avid Manchester United supporter and he liked to tell you all his family news. He wanted to be everyone's friend and this is how he gained almost celebrity status in the Village. His office soon became known for its ceiling of butterflies - after all, patients have to have something to look at when lying on their backs and trying not to think of what is happening inside their mouths.

It may have appeared that the dental work got in the way of the gossip, but he would be there for you if you had a dental problem. He carried out more than 50 years of dentistry, the majority in Blackheath Village, and was awarded a Certificate of Merit for Services to the Dental Profession by the British Dental Association.

In the 1980s Jo was a founder member of the Ashkelon Volunteer Dental Clinic for deprived children in Israel, which still runs today helping poor children, and his son Phil keeps the dental practice running in Blackheath in the same style.

At home he was a husband, first to Hilary who still works in Blackheath, and then to Pip who died just a few months ago. He was a much loved father to Phil, Johnny and Hatty and a grandpa five times over.

Jo, seen above in 2017, loved his modernist houses. He lived in South Row and The Lane and was mad about his dogs and his garden. In his later years he was often found wandering along Blackheath Park with a pair of secateurs in his pocket and a radio held to his ear.

He was latterly a resident at Morden College nursing home. They took care of him very well and became very fond of him but he really didn't want to be there, and he tried to escape a few times, only to fall (quite literally) at the last hurdle - the exit gates.

He has managed to escape now, aged 84, and will be sadly missed by the many of us who knew him.

*Hatty and Phil Eisenberg*

## OLD ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE REOPENS IN APRIL

The Old Royal Naval College will welcome visitors again from April 12 with online and outdoor events, self-guided tours and the reopened gift shops and café.

Illustrator Nick Ellwood will provide a physical exhibition, called *Mischief and Misadventure*, when guidelines allow from May. In April online drawing workshops will be held for children and participants will be guided through practical assignments to learn about children's book illustration.

The three self-guided tours, covering building,

architecture and the Greenwich Pensioners, will be limited to five people each, they must be pre-booked and can be downloaded on the Smartify at <https://smartify.org>

Pop-up food stalls will be available on the King William lawn every weekend and the ice cream cart and food van will be open at Easter, and then for takeaway every weekend from April 12. Further details can be found on social media #OldRoyalNavalCollege and #PaintedHall, on Twitter @orncgreenwich, on Facebook and Instagram @oldroyalnavalcollege and on its website [www.ornc.org](http://www.ornc.org).

## ARCHITECT WITH BLACKHEATH CONNECTIONS DIES AGED 101

Architect Trevor Dannatt, a local boy who rose to the top of his profession and was the first Royal Academician to live to 100, died in February aged 101.

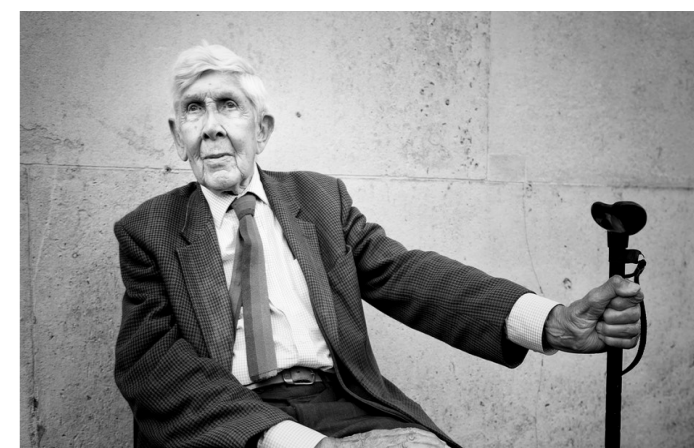
Born in Blackheath, Trevor attended Colfe's school. His grandparents, who lived in Westcombe Park Road for many years, ran a well-known local grocery shop at 3 Tranquil Vale.

His father extended the business. Trevor's best known local building is the 1972 Quaker Meeting House in Independents Road, which received a Civic Trust award and later a Grade II listing by Historic England, and has been described as one of our architectural gems.

Trevor, seen here, was brought up in the nearby Congregational church, a building he remodeled after wartime bombing. In Volume I of *Blackheath Village & Environs* our president Neil Rhind writes: "He used much of the material from the ruined building to create a modern church in harmony with the remaining section of the 1850 structure."

His firm, Dannatt Johnson Architects, oversaw the transformation of the Royal Naval College for the University of Greenwich, converting three of the four main hospital buildings by Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmoor for teaching, completed in 2001.

Trevor was renowned for his work on the Royal Festival Hall, an enduring legacy of the cultural optimism of the 1951 Festival of Britain, where he detailed the



staircases and glazed screens of the foyers, along with some of the external windows and last-minute furnishings.

Trevor wrote extensively, producing the first of 10 editions of the Architects' Year Book in 1945, which led to his book *Modern Architecture in Britain*, published in 1959.

When the listing of postwar buildings began in 1987 it was still the only book on the subject. He was persuaded to join English Heritage's steering committee and served until its abolition in 2002.

The Thomas Tallis Society, of which he was a founder and lifelong supporter, held a concert at St Alphege's church to celebrate his 100th birthday. He was also interested in writing, poetry, painting and sculpture.

## BUTTERFLY TRAINING COURSES PLANNED

Greenwich Park and Blackheath form a large area of green space in a built-up environment and, with nearby gardens, these habitats are an important refuge for wildlife, including many butterflies.

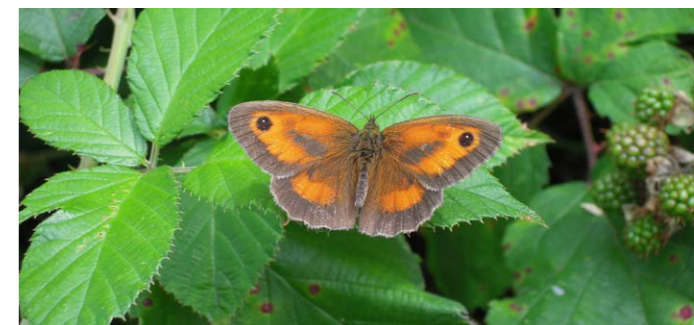
So far 29 species - almost half the UK total - have been recorded here since 2010.

In order to increase local knowledge and appreciation of the Greenwich Park and Blackheath butterflies, and their habitats, the Blackheath Society and Friends of Greenwich Park have joined forces to support a new initiative.

These interactive training courses led by local naturalist Joe Beale, which are called level 1 *Butterfly ID and local habitats* and the level 2 *Butterfly transect survey training*, should engage the community and inspire their interest in nature. Here is a Gatekeeper butterfly pictured below.

The courses will introduce us to the common butterflies occurring locally and give a basic overview

of how to conduct a butterfly survey, as well as examining their life cycles, ecology, habitats and status changes.



The level 1 course will be delivered via ZOOM over two Saturdays lasting about 2.5 hours each. Those who feel confident enough may like to volunteer to take the level 2 training, which will also be delivered via ZOOM with an outdoor guided walk.

The courses will start in April and spaces are limited. Details and how to apply will appear in the Society's weekly briefings.

# GREENWICH PARK IN THE TIME OF COVID

*Helma Zebregs, former Society Committee member and current Chair of the Safer Parks Greenwich Committee, writes:*

During the year of the pandemic, green spaces in our neighbourhoods have become even more important and we are very fortunate to have Greenwich Park on our doorstep.

With various Covid restrictions, the park has become a place to exercise and meet friends for socially distanced walks and, since people were not allowed to socialise indoors, they have flocked to the park, even in poor weather.

This has been a challenging time for its staff and police officers, whose main priority has been to ensure visitors adhere to Covid restrictions. In the first lockdown last year six PCs and two volunteer special constables spent most of their time asking people to keep moving and not to socialise.

When restrictions were eased last summer, the park became a place for large crowds of mainly young people to gather, drink and hold unlicensed music events.

These had to be broken up by the police and caused problems when the park closed, as crowds of 3,000 to 5,000 would sometimes still be there at closing time, and it was quite a job for the police to empty the park and lock the gates for the night.

At times the viewing platform at the General Wolfe statue had to be closed due to overcrowding. As a result of the massive increase in visitors, overflowing litter bins have been a recurring problem.

Due to the increased footfall, some grassed areas have been damaged, as spontaneous paths were formed, some trees were damaged where people used them as gym equipment. There has also been a massive increase in cycling and the police spent a lot of time educating cyclists on the cycling restrictions and on road safety.

A new phenomenon is the e-scooters. It is illegal to use them in any Royal Park, as their speed poses a danger to other park users, and the police are doing their best to stop their use.



Crime levels are low, but there has been an increase in snatch thefts by people on cycles and e-scooters. The significant increase in visitors exercising has led to more injuries, mostly looked after by police officers.

Since the lockdown started last year the main road has been closed to through traffic, so commuter traffic can no longer use the park and it is therefore a much quieter and safer place, with better air quality.

After a consultation and support from the local community, it has been decided that the road will remain closed until at least August 2022.

As you may know, the Park was successful in achieving Heritage Lottery funding for its scheme 'Greenwich Park Revealed'. But, as a result of the pandemic, the budget had to be reduced and the plans adapted.

Throughout the park poster boards are now displaying the proposals for improvements in the park, so do have a look at them.

We are very fortunate to have Greenwich Park so near, and in these difficult times it has provided many with a chance to leave their houses, even if only for a brief spell, and enjoy nature and Greenwich heritage.

We are grateful to the staff and police for looking after the park as a place of safety in these difficult times. With thanks to PC Andrew Abbott and to Maggie Gravelle of the Westcombe Society for providing information for this article.

The Safer Parks Greenwich Committee is a group in which representatives of the four local amenity societies discuss park safety issues with the park's police, staff and Greenwich Council. The Society would like to thank Helma for her six years' work for us.

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