



NEWSLETTER ■ WINTER 2020

## NEIL RHIND PUBLISHES HIS NEW BOOK ON BLACKHEATH

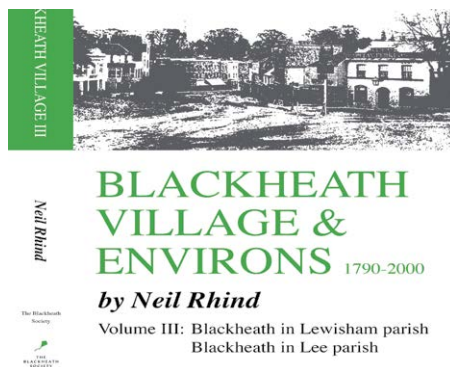
Our President, Neil Rhind, has completed the third volume of his major work, *Blackheath Village & Environs*, and this will be published by the Society before Christmas.

The exact date was still to be finalised as the *Newsletter* went to press and we hope to hold a Zoom launch event for the book, covering Lewisham and Lee parishes, in December. Please watch our website and regular emails to members for confirmation of both events.

His first single volume covering the Village and the Vale appeared in 1976 and, encouraged by the bookseller the late Louis Leff, and others, he published Volume II in 1983. This had 400 pages and over 200 illustrations, maps and indices.

In 1970 Neil, then press officer

for the Society, was commissioned by the Greater London Council to write a modest pamphlet marking the 100th anniversary in 1971 of the taking into care of Blackheath's 275 acres, for the benefit of the people of London in perpetuity.



Other open spaces within the London suburbs, some of them commons, had been exploited by developers and land owners to the detriment of the inhabitants.

Blackheath and Hampstead Heath were designated at risk, and careful lobbying of the freehold owners - in our case the Earls of Dartmouth and Queen Victoria - convinced them that they should give up their rights, but not the freeholds.

This encouraged the introduction of an Act of Parliament which would protect these precious acres for ever. In 1869 that was done and in 1871 the Supplemental Act, protecting the heaths, was passed.

Since then our local residents have been tenacious in guarding the qualities of Blackheath as a topographical entity, not just the green area in the middle, but the fringe suburb we all call Blackheath.

The houses, trees, gardens

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and landmarks needed protection as well and, in due course, groups emerged to do this. In 1937 the Blackheath Society was founded by Douglas Bliss, Jack Bullocke and Alan Roger Martin, among others.

The following year the Blackheath Preservation Trust, which bought and preserved older properties, encouraged this process and it was well-supported by the local population.

From then on forces were marshalled and battle lines prepared, should a fight become necessary. There were many such, but there was no argument over the investigation of the wider history of both the ancient, and the then modern, properties.



BLACKHEATH VILLAGE III

Neil Rhind

Neil Rhind was born in Blackheath and was educated at St Marylebone Grammar School. After working as a librarian he turned to journalism. In 1969 his attention was caught by the history of his home district and he has since become the leading authority on the social and architectural development of Blackheath and a keen advocate for the preservation of its historic and environmental qualities. This volume is one of an ongoing series about his home district. Neil Rhind is President of the Blackheath Society, and was Director and Secretary of the Blackheath Preservation Trust from 1972 to 2001 – two of the oldest organisations of their type in the United Kingdom. Over the years he has been President of the Greenwich & Lewisham Antiquarian Society (now the Greenwich Historical Society). He played a major role in the rescue and restoration of a large number of local historic buildings at risk from neglect and possible demolition, including the Blackheath Concert Hall, Vanbrugh Castle, the Railway Station and the Blackheath Art Club, in Bennett Park. Neil was Chairman of the Blackheath Art & Music Schools Trust. He is an honorary life member of the Westcombe Society, the Royal Blackheath Golf Club, Friends of the Blackheath Halls and past President of the Lewisham Environment Trust. In 1998 he was awarded the MBE for services to local conservation; Neil was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 2002, and in 2010 made an Honorary Fellow of Goldsmith's College (University of London). He was made a Freeman of the Royal London Borough of Greenwich in 2017.

Published by the Blackheath Society

The Blackheath Society aims to preserve and enhance the many attractive features of Blackheath

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More recently Neil took on Martin's mantle and continued his work. Starting in 1969, he dedicated himself to researching the wider history of the suburb and since then he has produced nearly a dozen volumes, both fat and thin.

This remarkable output has now reached the third volume of his hugely detailed survey of our suburb, nearly 40 years after the appearance of Volume II.

The third volume contains around 530 pages and over 263 illustrations and maps. Allan Griffin was the editorial manager for the project and his support and understanding brought it to fruition.

Neil has still not finished. Because of the size of the latest volume, he had to leave out a substantial chapter on what he calls north-west Blackheath, all in Greenwich, covering Chesterfield Walk, Crooms Hill and Hyde Vale. *Blackheath Greenwich* will form Volume IV.

You may think this is not Blackheath, but all this area was once known as the Waste of Blackheath. Greenwich

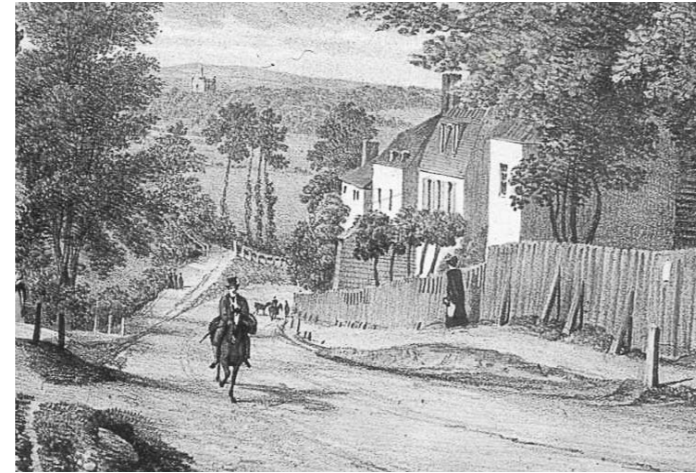
Park was part of the Heath until Duke Humphrey of Gloucester stole it for a hilltop palace in 1433, and it was never given back.

There are some who questioned why it took so long for Neil to write Volume III after the success of Volume II.

But he was not idle during the interval, producing more books such as the *Walking the Heath* and *Walking the Village* with Roger Marshall, a major companion volume about the Paragon and South Row, a short history of the Cator Estate and many walks, talks, house histories and other local commitments, all of which took up time.

The delay between the last two volumes was also caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of the local history libraries at Greenwich and Lewisham.

Volume III, covering the parishes of Lewisham and Lee, can be obtained directly from the Society and from the Bookshop on the Heath and Waterstones in the Village, priced at £20.



The top drawing shows Lewisham Hill by TM Baynes in 1823, with Mortimer's house on the right. These houses were occupied by minor professional people and Charles Mortimer was a clerk in the Postmaster General's personal office. The lower photo is of Blackheath Rise in Lewisham, taken around 1905

## SOCIETY CHAIR LOOKS FORWARD TO BETTER TIMES

*Paul Watts, the Society's chair, reports:* I wrote this time last year of our plans for 2020, which included the return of a Kite Day on the Heath, new publications and an enhanced events programme, including a revamped cricket match with the Greenwich Society.

The world is a different place now and we have all had to learn to live with the restrictions in place to deal with the Coronavirus pandemic, although early news of a vaccine will hopefully mean a slow return to more normal life over the coming months.

The Society has learned to adapt to these changed circumstances and I am pleased to report that many of our normal activities have been carrying on uninterrupted, from the use of Zoom for committee meetings to holding our AGM and reviewing planning applications online.

We are also fortunate to have been donated not one but two Christmas trees for the Village this year, and we have been working with Lewisham Council to install and switch them on with the usual Christmas lights - but without a Village Day event this year, of course.

In the last *Newsletter* we led on the introduction of traffic measures by Lewisham Council, particularly the impact on Blackheath Village and local residents from the, so far temporary, closure of South Row.

This issue is ongoing and both Greenwich and Lewisham Councils have been busy implementing low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) in other areas of the Boroughs. On South Row, we understand there will be consultation with residents and other stakeholders before any further changes are considered.

I would urge all of you thinking about Christmas gifts for family and friends to consider gifting a Society

membership, as we continue to look to increase our base, and full details about this are on the back page.

I must also give my thanks to our volunteers across all areas of our activities - planning, archives, social media, events, *Newsletter* delivery, the management committee and, particularly as always, to our secretary Sacha who has managed to keep the office running remotely during lockdown periods.

This year I would also add my particular thanks to Allan Griffin for his unstinting work with our President, Neil Rhind, on completing Volume III of his *Blackheath Village & Environs* series, detailed on the front page.

We very much hope that the events originally planned for 2020 will now take place in 2021 (*see story page 4*) and we look forward to the opportunity to meet with our members face to face again.

We have other projects in mind, including looking at the benefits of moving from our current unincorporated charity status to become a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) to keep up to date with charity commission best practice.

Please do consider getting further involved with the Society and encouraging others to join. Best wishes for a very happy Christmas and a successful and healthy New Year.



## TWO CHRISTMAS TREES PLANNED IN 2020

The Christmas tree at the top of Tranquil Vale was installed in early December and the lights were switched on, but without any formal event due to the need to maintain social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was supplied by Georgina Brian of Blooms by G, and the Society thanks her for her generosity.

When the *Newsletter* went to press, a second Village Christmas tree was planned on the Montpelier Triangle, supplied by Jimmy Botton of Botton's Family Funfair. The fair will not be operating this year and he kindly offered to supply and light a tree close to his usual location for the funfair in order to contribute to this year's socially distanced festivities.

The lighting of the trees in Montpelier Vale, and of the other trees in Tranquil Vale, was due to be switched on at the same time as the Tranquil Vale Christmas tree.



## VARIED NEW YEAR EVENTS PLANNED DESPITE COVID 19

Government guidelines regarding the spread of Covid 19 make social events and gatherings difficult to plan and, at press time, we do not know what kind of events will be allowed in the New Year. However, your Events Committee thinks it important to continue to plan activities for our members. If anything changes to the list below, we will let you know through the weekly e-mail bulletins from the Society Office.



Two New Year Walks and Talks planned : Soho Square and its trees (left) and Sutcliffe Park (right)

Please book your place on the Walks & Talks through Eventbrite so that we can contact you individually if we have to make changes, and booking for these will be available from December 20. The walks are free but a £5 donation to the Society will be requested at the beginning of each walk.

### TUESDAY 5 JANUARY: Walk & Talk

Exploring the Landscape of King's Cross with Paul Wright. This walking tour will look at the history of a fascinating part of London. From the dust heaps and fever hospitals of Georgian London through the heyday of the Victorian railway and goods yards, ending with a look at the new architecture of what has become one of the most fashionable and sought after parts of the capital. The tour will include a short visit to an exhibition on Coal Drops Yard at the Kings Cross Visitor Centre. Meet outside the main entrance to the station on Euston Road at 10.15. Travel tip: from London Bridge there is now a frequent train service to Kings Cross from platform 4 or 5.

### WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY: Walk & Talk

Following The Upper Kidbrooke. Meet at the junction of Pond Road and South Row near the Prince of Wales pond at 1000. Society member Jonathan Causer will lead an interesting walk following the course of the Upper Kidbrooke. We will stop for coffee on the way and end at the Deptford Bridge DLR station.

### WEDNESDAY 20 JANUARY: Meet & Eat

Join us for a chat with other members and we meet at the Crown pub in Blackheath at 1230. If restrictions persist we will hold the meeting on Zoom.

### FRIDAY 22 FEBRUARY: Walk & Talk

Soho - Paul Wright will lead this walk to look at the rich history of this part of London. You will learn about its 17th century origins as a hunting ground, and its evolution into a home for courtesans, artists and political refugees. We will also discuss a pioneering



investigation into an 1850s cholera outbreak, the Windmill theatre, the notorious Colony Club, world-famous historic jazz and coffee clubs and the origins of television. We meet at the Charles II statue in the park of Soho Square at 1030.

### TUESDAY 26 JANUARY: Walk & Talk

Join Helma Zebregs for a walk through Kidbrooke Village and Sutcliffe Park. Since the old Ferrier Estate was knocked down, this area has been completely transformed into a green and vibrant space, well worth exploring. Sutcliffe Park, with the river Quaggy flowing through it, is a dog walkers' paradise, so dogs are very welcome to join us. Meet at 1100 outside Aldi on Kidbrooke Park Road.

### WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY: Walk & Talk

The North side of the Thames. This will be a brisk walk led by Liz Wright, providing an opportunity to chat to other members. We will walk through Island Gardens, along the river to the dry dock to Brunel's great iron steam and sail ship the SS Great Eastern and back. Meet at the entrance to the Greenwich Foot Tunnel at 1000.

### TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY: Walk & Talk

Soho. As above on 22 February.

### TUESDAY 4 MARCH: Meet & Eat

The Crown pub at 1230.

## BUSY PLANNING WORK CONTINUES DURING COVID 19

The level of planning and development activity, in terms of the number of applications and in the construction work, has picked up markedly since the summer and has continued during the latest lockdown.

This is visible with the main effort now beginning on the massive Gateway project in the Lewisham Centre, while we understand that work on the nearby Tesco Car park site will commence in early 2021.

We are pleased with the outcome of our efforts in scrutinizing proposals affecting conservation areas, with many of our objections sustained by the councils and our suggested amendments taken up.

We have also seen cases, such as recently for Lee Terrace, where the council took a tougher line on protecting the conservation area than we advocated - a welcome sign. Applications for tree work continue to be a concern, and the sheer volume of applications continues to test councils' ability to deal with them.

But proposals affecting Blackheath Village often involve much wider issues than the design aspect. A case in point is the application for the conversion of the Parés shoe shop in Tranquil Vale (*below*) into a retail mini supermarket, where Sainsbury's name is mentioned.

We are objecting to this application as it stands, believing that proposals for a greatly extended two-storey rear extension are out of scale with, and unsympathetic to, this Grade II listed building and its neighbours. It has not dealt with significant issues of delivery access, tree protection and consultation with neighbouring residents and traders.



It is essential that such applications deal thoroughly with options for delivery access, much more frequent for a store of this type than the present operation, and with their impact on traffic and pedestrian safety.

Any such project needs to avoid worsening the already serious traffic issue in the Village and spoiling the amenity of Village residents. The scale proposed also

raises issues of fair and sustainable competition and choice in the Village, since it would give this site a potentially dominant retail position.

Outside our core area, other major proposals coming up for review shortly concern Kidbrooke and Blackheath Hill. In Kidbrooke, phases 3 and 5 of the main development have now been approved. We succeeded in securing a small reduction in the scale and height, but not in our plea to avoid a segregation of the affordable housing element of the plan.

The scheme to build on the site next to Thomas Tallis School on Kidbrooke Park Road, including a 10-storey block, has also been approved. We welcome the focus exclusively on social housing in this project.

We remain concerned about a lack of clarity on what will happen on the remaining site next door, in terms of building heights and site access. However, our plea for a much improved pedestrian and cycle crossing (on the very awkward corner opposite the Aldi store) has been addressed, with funds now included for this.

Further afield, development continues apace. Meetings in Greenwich and Lewisham on November 17 saw approval for a 38-storey tower above North Greenwich station and 30 and 20 stories along Deptford Creek. On Blackheath Hill we are faced with a proposal, much too ambitious in our view, to build a mix of residential blocks and a significant commercial building on a very cramped site, currently Blackheath Business Park.

This is hemmed in between two sets of very sensitive neighbours, the NHS Brain Injury Unit and the residents of the Parkside development, already disadvantaged by a lack of daylight and sunlight. Their amenity would be severely compromised and a very vigorous objection campaign by local residents is underway.

We mentioned in the last *Newsletter* the ideas from the government about the future of planning, with a consultation on the White Paper 'Planning for the Future,' which closed at the end of October. In our view these are flawed in many respects. They propose, without any trialing, an extension of powers for central government to intervene at the expense of local democratic oversight and of communities, whether our local community or the London Authority.

They also ignore the reality and complexity of the London situation. The analysis of affordable housing, particularly with London's high land values, is flawed and poses a major challenge to the capability and future role of local authorities. We have submitted a formal input outlining our concerns to the government consultation. Together with the outcome, awaited imminently, of judicial reviews of the new process of Permitted Development, these efforts could have a dramatic effect on town planning for the long term.

## SOUTH ROW'S FAMOUS 19TH CENTURY RESIDENT

Editor's note: we are running this story by our President Neil Rhind to bring a little light relief to all cricket lovers among our members who have been deprived this year of watching live matches. It is also linked to an ongoing local issue, which is detailed by our Chair on page 3.

Many Society members were enraged earlier this year by a plan by Lewisham Council's traffic engineers to convert South Row into a closed road, despite half of it belonging to Greenwich, over which Lewisham had no jurisdiction.

Members living nearby and needing to use South Row for good reasons rose up in arms, and a multi-named petition was started. The Society quickly raised the issue with the council, as did Morden College and the Cator Estate, and consultations are continuing.

Fortunately, Lewisham saw its mistake, saying South Row would be blessed with a chicane, so this nuisance has now receded.

This little road has another history to tell, as it was once the home and school of one of England's mightiest cricketers: Nicholas Wanoostrocht (1804-1876), who played as Felix. He was of Belgian descent and his father conducted a school in Camberwell. In his teens, and already a first class cricketer, young Felix decided to open his own establishment and teach boys Latin, Greek and Euclidian geometry, but also cricket.

He had played at Lords in the Gentlemen v Players matches from 1831 to 1852 and became a mainstay of the great Kent team of the mid-19th century, alongside Alfred Mynn, Fuller Pilch and William Hillyer, and he was a member of William Clarke's great All-England Eleven, pictured above with Felix 7th from the left.

There can be little doubt that he was one of England's most distinguished players, scoring 4,556 runs in 149 first-class matches in his 22-year career, but he was also one of nature's hopeless businessmen.

He moved the school to Blackheath in 1836 because he needed a residential qualification to allow him to play for Kent.

Because Felix was away so often, running the school was usually left to his long-suffering wife, Elizabeth (1806-1863) and her assistants. He took a lease on 4 South Row, and by 1836 about a dozen boys were enrolled. It was not a success because Felix was more concerned with prowess on the cricket field, and the boys' education suffered as he was likely to cancel lessons and take them off to a nearby cricket ground.

In June 1841 there were 20 boys, aged between nine and 15, three teachers and four servants there, but the parents were not best pleased to see their fees being spent on cricket practice. Despite his undoubted efforts, he was forced to close the school in 1843, and he moved to Heath Cottage at the top of Blackheath Hill, where he was adjudged bankrupt in October 1844.

He tried portrait painting from a studio at Mayfield House, Maze Hill, (close to Vanbrugh Castle), combining this with running another school, but both activities failed. He published his memoirs and a manual on cricket "*Felix on the Bat*" and the book sold well enough but did not make his fortune.

A move to Brighton followed, where he remarried after his first wife died in 1863. Felix applied himself to further cricketing matters inventing tubular batting gloves and the catapulta (a wicker basket designed for fielding practice). He was still in demand as a cricketer.

He moved to Dorset for a peaceful retirement. He died there in 1876 and was buried in a local church graveyard, close to where another of Blackheath's most famous cricketers - the MCC member Montague John Druitt - was to be laid to rest in 1889. Druitt served as



a school teacher at 9 Eliot Place and was called to the Bar, but drowned himself in the Thames in late 1888. We have to note Felix as one of ours, and one of South Row's most distinguished residents. Alas, his house was blitzed in 1940 and demolished in 1941.

## NEIL RHIND DONATES HIS LIFE'S WORK TO THE SOCIETY

Most members will be aware of the Society's photographic archive which Neil Rhind has created. This is being digitised and we are pleased to announce that Neil and the Society are also now formalising arrangements to conserve the whole of his archival legacy.

From the late 1960s, Neil has researched the local area using many sources and has collected a huge record of local references. We are delighted that he is willing to entrust the Society with the care and maintenance of his legacy, and we aim to digitise all this and make it available publically with the photographic archive.

As with the photographs, it will be a slow and painstaking process. We have so far catalogued 1,400 items, which represent roughly a third of those we have stored, and these include:

- 50 further additions to the photographic archive.
- Almost 100 talks covering a wide range of topics. Examples are presentations about local architects and builders, the Cator Estate, Blackheath footballers and golfers who went to war, and the writings of PC Wren, the author of *Beau Geste*, (see the poster below) and Jack the Ripper. Organisations to which Neil has made presentations include the Greenwich Industrial History Society, the Institute of Historical Research and the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society.



- Details of walks round Blackheath over the years.
- More than 500 original copies between 1899 and 1957 of the *Blackheath Guide and District Advertiser*, (seen above in an 1889 edition), 130 copies of



its successor magazine, the *Blackheath Reporter* from 1959 to 1966, and copies of the more recent publication *The Guide*.

- A Blackheath house deed on vellum, dated 1698.
- A huge range of writings for magazine and newspapers on a variety of subjects.
- Individual house histories, including Wemyss Cottage, the Pagoda and properties in Glenton Road and St German's Place.



- A huge collection of research material on the Granville Park development, housing in Greenwich and Westcombe Park, the alumni of Blackheath Proprietary School, the London Development Plan 1951, aborted 1971 plans to redevelop the centre of Blackheath, the work of the Blackheath Preservation Trust and the fight to prevent the demolition of Blackheath Halls (above).

Neil's involvement with the Blackheath Society extends more than 50 years, as he was the Chair for many years and is now the Society's President.

The news that Neil is entrusting us with his life's work will ensure this is preserved for future generations and that we will benefit from Neil's lifetime experience of Blackheath for many years to come. *Allan Griffin*

## MORDEN COLLEGE RESPONDS TO COVID-19

*Juliet Turk, the Volunteering Manager at Morden College, writes:*

On Friday 20 March we went into lockdown and, considering rising infection rates in the area and the risk to our community of older people, we planned and prepared for what was to come.

It was a shock for us all, but we tackled it together as a team. In a few weeks, staff were redeployed and we introduced new systems which allowed us to protect and sustain the 298 residents.

By introducing new hand sanitising stations, installing new additional temperature check points and securing an abundance of PPE, we were vigilant and determined to keep the virus out of our community.

In the first few weeks, our operations team set up a distribution centre to deliver weekly bags of food and toiletries to residents in their own homes.

Setting everything up from scratch, the team packed bags of shopping every week for three months and it is still offering the same service for those who need it. At the height of lockdown, nearly 6,000 items were delivered to our residents.

The main quadrangle at Morden College is seen below.



Communication continues to be key, as we pass general guidance on to residents and quickly alert them should isolation be required. During the first wave, we set up a telephone buddy system to coordinate requests for support and pass on messages of encouragement to residents.

About 20 staff and volunteers called their designated buddies twice a week and, during our busiest times, this totalled 687 calls a week.

Today, we are proud of what we have achieved and of being able to keep Covid-19 out of our resident community for the last nine months. We will continue to find new creative ways of connecting and supporting our residents, and look forward to the exciting times ahead with the opening of the John Morden Centre, planned for early 2021.

We are always looking for new faces to join our volunteer team, whether it be as a telephone befriender, in our shop or reception, assisting with activities or offering IT support. Whatever your skills, background or interest, we'd love to hear from you.

You can contact me at [volunteering@mordencollege.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@mordencollege.org.uk), and to keep up-to-date with our changes please visit our website [www.mordencollege.org.uk](http://www.mordencollege.org.uk) or follow us on Facebook @MordenCollege.

## SOCIETY MEMBER WINS SHED OF THE YEAR AWARD

Society member Dan Holloway has won the national 2020 Shed of the Year competition with the Bedouin Shed he built around three ash and evergreen oak trees at the bottom of his garden in Blackheath.

He told the *Newsletter* that a friend had pestered him to enter the competition, sponsored by the paint and outdoor products firm Cuprinol, and he was surprised to win. The shed has featured in national newspapers and on BBC TV since he won the award.

Dan (*seen right*) started building it 10 years ago. Inside it features African artefacts, rugs and masks, vintage etchings and specimens of butterflies, alongside finely carved ancient hardwood Indian columns.

The flooring on three levels is made of oak and willow saplings and it follows the contours of the trees. A wood-burning stove provides for barbecues and comfort during the cold winter months for him, his wife Becca and their teenage children Sam and Lyza, and the shed is often used for parties. Its furniture was sourced from reclamation yards and from "bits and pieces people had thrown out."

"When lockdown arrived, the shed took on a new life, bringing us closer together as a family. Spending time in it has taught us some valuable lessons about appreciating what is precious and has provided solace for us all during those uncertain weeks and months," said Daniel. His prize was £1,000, a plaque and £100 of Cuprinol products.

Becca joined the Society recently with all the family. They moved to Blackheath from Deptford 12 years ago and her parents are also members. "I think it's up to us to engage with the local community and be part of it. Blackheath is a very special place and it's up to us to conserve it," he added.



## HALLS & CONSERVATOIRE WIN GOVERNMENT COVID FUNDS

Blackheath Halls and The Conservatoire have both won grants from the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund to help face the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Halls were awarded £76,043 and the Conservatoire £228,000. Halls director Gemma Okell said the grant, and donations from its audiences, participants and the Friends of the Halls will cover its overheads until the end of March 2021, hopefully ensuring it can return to a full programme of activity next year.

The Halls reopened in late October for some socially distanced live events, and these can be viewed on its website at <https://www.blackheathhalls.com/whats-on>.

"When we shut the doors to our audiences in March, we never imagined they would remain closed for so long and have such a serious impact on our income which relies on our wonderful audiences and participants enjoying everything our performance seasons and community projects have to offer," Okell said.

In a statement the Conservatoire said: "This takes a huge weight off our shoulders in today's troubling and uncertain times. We would like to offer our heartfelt gratitude to the Department for Culture, the Treasury and Arts Council England."

Having to shut our buildings in March was a big blow. Our team of staff and tutors have worked incredibly hard to bring many of our courses online and to adapt and re-open our building and teaching in a Covid-secure manner for the autumn term. This grant recovers losses from our spring closure and puts us back in the position we were before the pandemic, ready to face the challenges ahead."

Meanwhile, Age Exchange chief executive Rebecca Packwood said it had reached the finals of the National Dementia Care Awards in the 'Outstanding Dementia Care Resource' category. "In what is a challenging year we are delighted to bring this good news. I am delighted we have made the finals for the 'Reminiscence Arts Activity boxes' we have delivered to people living with dementia and to their carers during the pandemic," she said.

## CHURCH FLOODLIGHTING BRIGHTENS CATOR ESTATE

New £75,000 floodlighting at St Michael's Church on Blackheath Park was switched on at the start of November, largely funded by donations from Cator Estate residents, church members and the Blackheath Society.

In these Covid times around 50 worshippers and neighbours watched the event from a safe social distance before the evening service on All Saints Day, Sunday November 1.

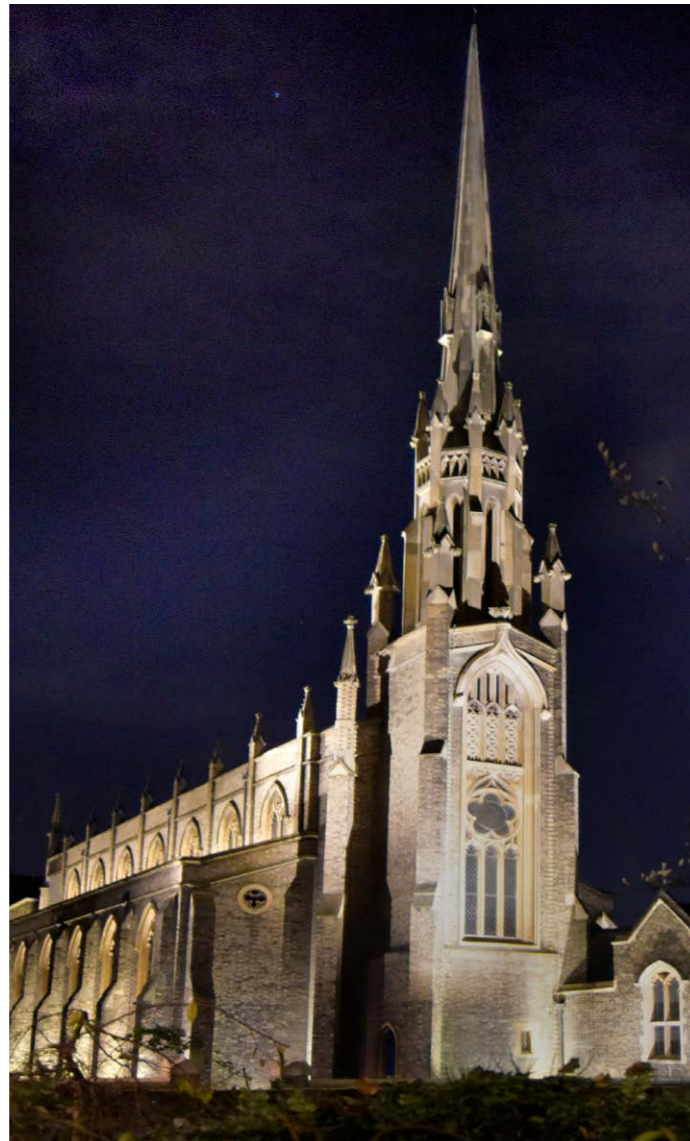
The vicar Sandy Christie told the *Newsletter*: "With all the Covid restrictions it seemed all the more important to celebrate the positives in society. The new lighting will show the church, which is Grade II\* listed, to its best advantage and enhance its profile as an important feature in this historic area. It will be lit from dusk to 11pm daily."

This project follows the completion of St Michael's PRISM restoration and improvement project in July 2018.

Encouraged by local people, the church then began to explore the idea of subtly lighting the Georgian building, which is the oldest church in Blackheath and was completed in 1830.

Two demonstrations of the potential lighting scheme were held in 2018 and 2019, giving residents the chance to make comments and to answer questions about the resultant carbon footprint, which the church says is extremely low, and its effects on wildlife.

The project still had a funding gap of £6,735 when the *Newsletter* went to press. If you wish to make a donation, you should email the church treasurer on [treasurer@se3.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@se3.org.uk).



### NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING London Daily News • Thursday 6 Jan 1859

On Tuesday night police-constable Kendall, 318R, was crossing Blackheath, and when near the Hare and Billet public-house heard the sound of what he considered to be a dog swimming in a pond opposite the above house.

He had not proceeded many steps when he became convinced that the sounds were occasioned by some one struggling in the water, but the weather being very thick no object was discernible. On stooping, however, at the edge of the pond, the first thing that attracted his attention was the bonnet of a female floating on the surface of the water, and without stopping to divest himself of his heavy clothing he immediately succeeded in getting to the spot where the bonnet was and laid hold of a female as she was about sinking. With some difficulty he conveyed her into the Hare and Billet public house, and on recovering her consciousness it was ascertained that she was the wife of a journeyman baker, named Reay, living in the neighbourhood, and that owing to the darkness of the night and the unprotected state of the pond, she had mistaken her way, and which would have cost her her life but for the timely assistance rendered her by the constable.

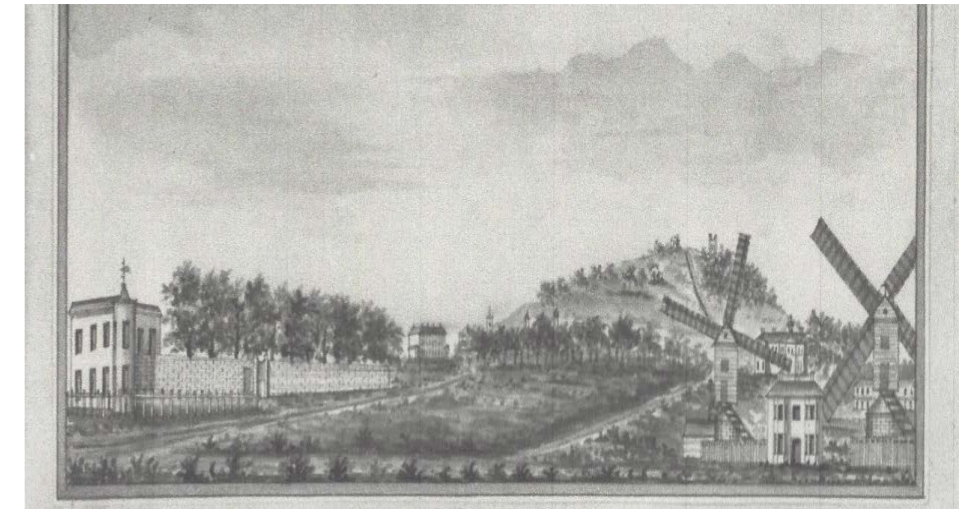
## ROYAL GREENWICH - A HISTORY IN KINGS AND QUEENS

Here is a good Christmas gift which will fit in all but the least capacious of stockings. It is an extraordinary 176-page compendium about the Kings and Queens (and their children) who regarded Greenwich as home for some of their long or short lives, over 1,000 years.

The man who tells us about this is that knowledgeable man about Greenwich Pieter van der Merve (*seen below*), who from 1984 to 2017 was the General Editor for publications issued by the National Maritime Museum, now the Royal Museums, Greenwich.

He remains an eager and active patriot for Greenwich, contributes frequently to the Greenwich Society newsletters and is the Representative Deputy Lieutenant for the Royal Borough of Greenwich, so you will see him almost everywhere.

The book is *Royal Greenwich: A History in Kings and Queens* published by the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, at £20.



king Edgar the Peaceful (943-975) granted the manors of Lewisham and East Greenwich to the Abbey of St Peter of Ghent.

It is particularly full of accurate detail about the comings, goings and activities of the royal families from Edgar to our best-loved Queen Elizabeth II and the author manages to incorporate in tight prose all the facts we need, without recourse to padding.

In fact, this book could be called the vade mecum of Greenwich royal history, with so much packed in its covers. Some of the illustrations are rare to this reviewer.

The eccentric John Charnock's drawing of part of the Heath from 1790 (*below*) is a great novelty and it shows the corner tower of Montagu House, Greenwich Park wall and Vanbrugh House on Vanbrugh Fields.

You can just see the tower of Vanbrugh Castle, somewhat misplaced on the wrong side of Vanbrugh

House, as well as the two windmills on the Heath and a somewhat enlarged West Mill House.

Morden College and Sevendroog Castle on Shooter's Hill are in the background.

But, even before then, we are reminded that the Saxon

*Neil Rhind*

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Payments are due on 1 January each year and can be paid by a direct bank transfer, cheque or cash. The amount is £20 per household and this supports the Society's work to preserve and enhance the local environment for the benefit of all. An online payment or a standing order can be made using the following details: **The Blackheath Society: Sort code: 30-90-89 Account no: 00905733**. Please give your surname and post code as a reference. And do remember to give us your email address so that we can keep you up to date with our news. Thank you.

# SKATING ON THE HARE AND BILLET POND



The Society's Christmas card this year is *Skaters on Hare and Billet Pond, Blackheath*, by the local artist and Society member Alison Jay. It was created with a quick drying oil paint on paper with varnish. She has worked in advertising, editorial and design, and has also illustrated many children's books. Her paintings, prints and cards are available from Alison Jay Gallery on the online marketplace Etsy and at [childrensillustrators.com](http://childrensillustrators.com). We have printed 5,000 cards in packs of 10 at £5 each. They are on sale at Selectric in the Village but, if you are unable to purchase them there, we have volunteers who are willing to deliver locally, so please email [office@blackheath.org](mailto:office@blackheath.org).

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Caroline Attfield  
John Birch  
Julie Bodmer  
Robert Craig  
Peter & Suzi Freeman  
Steven Hackney  
Ucheora Obi  
Sally Pickles  
The Zerodegrees  
Microbrewery

## THE ULTIMATE GIFT THIS CHRISTMAS

Why not give a friend or relative the gift of membership of the Blackheath Society this Christmas?

An annual gift subscription is just £20 and includes a free copy of *Guardians of the Heath*, covering the history of the Society, and of *Blackheath Preservation Trust 1938 - 2016*, which describes the organisation that saved many buildings in Blackheath.

We will also include a card to write a personal message. Please email [office@blackheath.org](mailto:office@blackheath.org) with your request or phone Sacha at the office on 020 8297 1937.

The Society aims to preserve and enhance, for the benefit of the public, features of Blackheath of particular beauty or historical and architectural interest; to protect its open spaces from disfigurement or encroachment, particularly the Heath; and to encourage high standards of planning and architecture in new buildings.

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