



NEWSLETTER ■ WINTER 2017

## SOCIETY LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

The Society has just launched a new website as part of an extensive programme to freshen our image and attract new members.

You can still access us at [www.blackheath.org](http://www.blackheath.org) but the content, look and feel of what you will see is completely different. It features a new layout, carries more photographs and has a cleaner, sharper look.

We list the major issues affecting Blackheath and provide details of upcoming events. For the first time new members will now be able to sign up online. The site explains our aims and values, lists our publications and provides information about your committee.

The new website will act as the portal for our extensive archive of photographs of the Blackheath area.

The launch completes a 15-month project to update and refresh our image, creating a new house style and reviewing and redesigning our logo and corporate identity.

The project also involves a new social media presence on Twitter and Facebook, a redesigned *Newsletter*, annual report, stationery and emails. It was designed by local graphic designer Pippa Stanton, whose work can be seen on her website at [www.meandyoucreate.com](http://www.meandyoucreate.com).



THE  
BLACKHEATH  
SOCIETY

We announced the first changes in plans for our image renewal at the Society's AGM in June.

The new website is the most all-encompassing project in our 80th anniversary plans this year, which have also involved publishing two new books - *Walking the Village* and *Blackheath Preservation Trust 1938-2016*. Our project to erect seven historical storyboards across the Heath will be launched in the New Year.

This is a soft launch of the website which will evolve further. Please let us know what you think.

HOME ABOUT WHAT WE DO EVENTS PUBLICATIONS ARCHIVES CONTACT



### EVENTS

Our Events team organises regular talks and walks around the area to which members and their friends are welcome to join.



Walk: East End Rebel Women  
Join us on a walk around the East End of



Village Day  
Come together to celebrate the start of the



Village Day: Opening Procession  
Village Day 2017 will roar into action with a

## HIGHLIGHTS

New arts brochure  
Page 3

Philip Binns retires  
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Douglas Bliss painting  
Page 10

VILLAGE DAY was opened on Saturday 2 December by a stunning procession of classic cars through the Village. We started a little later this year, so our usual horses were not able to come from Woolwich as they had to be back in their barracks for lunch.

Hundreds of people gathered at the outdoor stage on the Heath, at The Crown and Blackheath Halls to enjoy local choirs, bands and traditional dancing throughout the afternoon. Our photographs were taken by Warren King and Howard Shields.

Father Christmas and his elves from Age Exchange were joined by the choirs from Blackheath Halls and the lantern makers from The Conservatoire in a procession through the Village to the grand lighting-up ceremony on the Heath. Local historian Neil Rhind gave an illustrated talk on the Village in All Saints' Church in the evening.



## NEW ARTS & CULTURE IN BLACKHEATH BROCHURE LAUNCHED

Five charitable organisations in Blackheath have just joined together to produce a new brochure about their activities. This is the story of how the idea was born and developed.

While planning for Village Day in 2016, we recognised this would be an ideal opportunity to tell more people about the important work being carried out by the main Blackheath charities.

We then decided to set up a community stall on the Heath close to the open air stage and food outlets. Simple activities were available for children, and each organisation provided supplies of their main literature.

It soon became apparent that the piles of assorted leaflets, programmes and brochures were not an attractive offer, particularly when people were enjoying a day out, listening to music and enjoying the festive atmosphere.

So it was decided that this year we would produce a single attractive booklet providing brief introductions to the main not-for-profit Village organisations, with details of how to discover more and become involved.

Each organisation has written and designed its own entry, with the cover and central map produced by Pippa Stanton, the designer responsible for

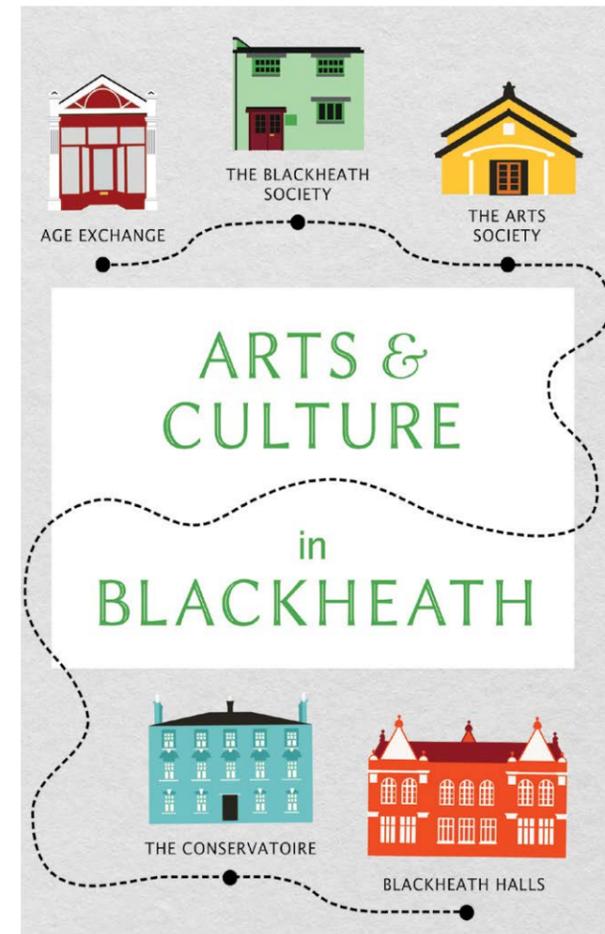
the Society's makeover. The five bodies are the ones which contributed to the Community stall last year - Age Exchange, The Conservatoire, The Arts Society Blackheath, The Blackheath Halls and, of course, The Blackheath Society which was responsible for the coordination and production of the booklet.

Several hundred copies were given away on Village Day this year. Each organisation has more to distribute over the coming months and supplies will be offered to local estate agents for people moving into the Blackheath area.

We hope this addition to our local literature will be kept in homes for future reference, providing information about the many opportunities which exist in the Village for concerts, literary events, walks, talks and visits to places of interest, as well as to the training and educational opportunities available for people of all ages.

This information is supplemented by the Society's regular emails to members.

Each organisation welcomes new members or friends and the new brochure will demonstrate how neat it is to join.



## GOOD AND BAD NEWS ON BLACKHEATH TRAIN SERVICES

The Department for Transport has finally published the results of the Southeastern rail franchise consultation and the good news is that the Bexleyheath Line will retain services to both Charing Cross and Cannon Street. The bad news is the direct Victoria service will operate on the Hayes and Sidcup lines, requiring Bexleyheath line users to change at Lewisham, but the Victoria service will be increased from two to four services an hour all day.

The changes are proposed to start from December 2022, subject to a successful future public consultation on the detailed timetable proposals. More good news is a proposal to increase the frequency to Charing Cross and the capacity to Cannon Street by running more 10 and 12 car trains. More bad news is the North Kent Line service via Blackheath to Charing Cross will be redirected to Cannon Street, but this line will gain some Thameslink services.

In the public consultation this summer, 89% of 10,500 respondents opposed reducing the choice of London termini, most of them along the Bexleyheath Line. We will try and investigate improvements in signalling at Lewisham that can increase capacity without reducing the choice of London destinations. You can read further details about the choices for London termini on pages 35 and 36 of this document: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-south-eastern-rail-services](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-south-eastern-rail-services).

## SOCIETY LEADS CHILDREN'S BLACKHEATH PHOTO TOUR

This autumn Year 4 pupils from three primary schools in Blackheath Village - All Saints C of E, Blackheath High and John Ball Primary - took part in a photography project called 'Through My Mind's Eye'.

The Society led a walk around the Village on 18 October for the children to look at interesting buildings, their historic features, learn about the history of the Village and take photos.

They gathered at Blackheath High, where committee member Liz Wright showed them pictures from the Society's archive and talked about how much the Village has changed during the last 150 years.

Liz has a photographic connection to Blackheath as Elizabeth Hunt, her great grandmother, came here by train from Hertfordshire as a young woman in the 1900s just to have her photograph taken, *seen right*.

Teachers explained how to use the cameras and take interesting photographs. The children were enthusiastic photographers and took plenty of pictures of historic features, shop windows and dogs.

At the end of the morning they



uploaded the pictures on computers and were creative with their arrangements, which were printed to be displayed at the schools.

We enjoyed working with the schools and sharing the Society's knowledge of the Village.

In January there will be an exhibition of the pupils' work. If you would like to attend please contact the office.



LOOK OUT FOR EXCITING ADDITIONS TO THE ARCHIVE - WE PLAN TO MAKE 1000 NEW IMAGES AVAILABLE OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS

## NO VILLAGE SMART BENCHES

Thank you to everyone who responded to the summer consultation on the smart benches. Few issues have provoked such lively views.

Roughly 30 people replied, some at considerable length, with 18 quite strongly opposed, eight in favour and four willing to trial one.

Everyone agreed this ultra-modern design should not be in a prominent place in the centre of the Village, and there were difficulties in

finding a suitable location. We published the consultation in the autumn *Newsletter* together with a selection of the opinions expressed. A copy was sent to Martin O'Brien of the Borough of Lewisham with the final results of the consultation. The outcome is that there are now no plans to proceed with the proposal.

We are grateful to Lewisham for consulting us as there was no formal requirement to do so. Apologies to the people very keen to have a bench in the Village.

### FROM THE ARCHIVE

18 November 1736  
The Caledonian Mercury

Last Wednesday Night betwixt 6 and 7 a- clock, Mr. Rofe of Charlton in Kent, was attacked on Blackheath by two Highwaymen, who robbed him of a Bank Note of £20. a Silver Watch, and 26s. in Silver after which they tied his Legs under the Horse's Belly, took off his Bridle, and then made off.

## FASCINATING TALK ON GPO FILM UNIT IN BLACKHEATH

Steven Foxon, archivist for The British Film Institute, gave an interesting and lively talk for the Society in October on the production of early documentary films during the 1930s in the Arts Building in Bennett Park.

The large audience of members and friends were intrigued to hear Blackheath had been chosen for this pioneering work because of its quiet suburban setting.

John Grierson, Head of Production at the General Post Office, had been inspired by the silent movies of Soviet Russia. A difficult man, he pioneered the inclusion of members of the general public in films about working people, to which he added sound. He often provided the voiceover himself, recorded in Blackheath.

Sir Steven Tallents brought his experience in advertising to this team of pioneers. We also saw how innovators, such as Len Lye, included colour and early animation in his films.

It was amusing to learn that the dominance of fishing films in the early output of the GPO



The blue plaque in Bennett Park and a Night Mail poster

unit was due to the popularity of the sport with the management.

In the early 1940s the Blackheath GPO Unit went its own way and Grierson moved to Canada, where he led the way in documentary production. The excellent work done here by the GPO was transferred to the Crown Unit and then to Pinewood studios.

They built on the work done at Bennett Park and produced many more documentary films which played a large part in the war effort.

Steven illustrated how *The Night Mail*, produced in Blackheath, was in fact a film in two halves, and he explained the large part he played in its recent restoration.

The evening closed with the screening of the potent wartime propaganda film *London Can Take It*, which was another Blackheath product.

## VOLUNTEERS KEEP THE SOCIETY RUNNING – CAN YOU HELP?

Most of the work of the Society depends on the active involvement of its volunteers.

Their many and varied tasks include sitting on the management committee, delivering *Newsletters* and other mailings, reviewing planning applications, removing graffiti from the Village and litter from the Heath, and many more hugely valuable activities.

More than 80 people are currently involved as volunteers but we still need many more. Work needs to be done in the Society's office, such as helping with filing and archiving documents, putting together packs of Christmas cards and organising the *Newsletter* distribution.

Following the retirement of Philip Binns (*see our story on page 6*), we have an urgent need for more people to review local planning applications, particularly in the Blackheath area of the Royal Borough of Greenwich. More details of the work involved in planning can be found on page seven.

If you would like to join us and you have a little time to spare, we would love to hear from you.

### FROM THE ARCHIVE

Friday 13 December 1765  
The Derby Mercury

Saturday his Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, and several of the Nobility and Gentry, hunted a Stag, brought from Richmond Park for their Diversion. They roused him upon Black-Heath, at Half an Hour after Seven, and chased him into Surry; he turned back into Kent, and was killed near Shooter's Hill about Four o'Clock in the Afternoon.

After their Sport, his Royal Highness dined at an Inn upon the Road. Mr. Steel, his Royal Highness's Master of the Horse, fell, and narrowly escaped being killed.

## NEW PLAQUE UNVEILED AT THE POINT

At the start of October, after more than two years development at The Point, a new plaque was unveiled to mark this important site in the northwest corner of Blackheath.

This is the highest part of the Heath and is famed for offering possibly the best panorama across London, spanning most of the well-known landmarks.

The area had become overgrown, with trees and shrubs blocking much of the view and the seating had come to the end of its useful life. With so much development, the interpretation panel identifying important buildings was well out-of-date.

A project was conceived by the Greenwich Society, led by ex-chair Tim Barnes, to open up the view by cutting back excessive growth, replace the seating and broken railings and install an up-to-date map of the main points of interest.



Grants were secured from The Peter Harris Trust, Tesco and the Royal Borough of Greenwich, along with a financial contribution from the Greenwich and Blackheath Societies.

The Point had previously been identified by the Blackheath Society as a suitable spot to commemorate the historic meeting of Henry V with the Mayor and aldermen of London after Henry's important victory at the battle of Agincourt in October 1415.

We were already in touch with the Agincourt 600 Fund, which is paying for a memorial that we plan to erect nearby, close to the A2. The Fund approached us to offer two commemorative benches and we were happy to suggest the most suitable place would be at The Point, looking out towards the City of London.

More than 200 people attended the unveiling carried out by Greenwich MP Matthew Pennycook, *pictured with the new plaque*. The view is truly magnificent and is well worth a visit.

## THE INDEFATIGABLE PHILIP BINNS RETIRES

The Society threw a party in November for long-serving committee member Philip Binns, who retired after 20 years' tireless service monitoring planning applications in Greenwich.

Over 50 invited guests heard warm tributes paid to his dedication, expertise and professionalism in dealing with thousands of cases and helping many people solve their housing problems.

Society Chair Helen Reeves said: "I really don't know what we are going to do without you." Her predecessor Howard Shields told Philip: "You are truly and literally irreplaceable."

Attendees included current and past Society committee members, representatives from the other local amenity societies and conservation groups, Greenwich Mayor Peter Brooks and a Greenwich conservation officer.

Tributes were paid to Philip's wife Liz for her unstinting support. The Mayor, a former deputy council leader and Planning Committee chair, said Philip was something of a hero in East Greenwich for work he did on achieving change in the development at Ballast Quay. "This is how we should work, with people coming forward and helping us change things for the better."

The party ended with a spontaneous rendition of *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*.



Greenwich Mayor Peter Brooks pays tribute to Philip's work for the Society on planning issues for over 20 years

## PHILIP'S RETIREMENT LEADS TO PLANNING GROUP CHANGES

Our efforts on the planning front in recent months have been overshadowed by preparing for the retirement of Philip Binns after his 20 years of incredible service in dealing with Greenwich planning issues.

Colleagues from the Society, and who worked with Philip in the wider Greenwich context, thanked him during a well-attended event on November 6, covered on the previous page.

The Planning Group has been working hard to ensure Philip's legacy, and a new modus operandi is now in force. We have also taken the opportunity to codify what we do in a note on the Society's Planning Principles. This will appear on our new website, and a copy is available to members on request.

Philip's departure highlights our need for more volunteers to help the Society with its planning effort and the Planning Group would welcome anyone with a passion for Blackheath to join us. We are a mix of members, some with professional expertise, but most are just people with an enthusiasm for preserving and enhancing Blackheath. The workload is very flexible in terms of the time involved and the roles undertaken. We would be pleased to hear from you.

### Current planning issues include:

**Community Infrastructure Levy** - Since April 2010 local authorities have been able to charge a CIL on new developments with an internal floor space over 100 sqm. It can be used to provide or improve infrastructure and to operate or maintain it, and 15% of this is spent on neighbourhood schemes in agreement with local communities. Lewisham has a substantial amount of unspent CIL and we have written to Councillors asking how and when this will be used.

**Raynsford Review of planning** - The Society made a submission to the Raynsford Review of planning, set up to identify how the Government can reform the English planning system to make it fairer, better resourced, and capable of producing quality outcomes and to encourage the production of new homes.

It is chaired by former Greenwich MP and Housing and Planning Minister Nick Raynsford. Evidence has been collected and a report will be presented at party conferences in autumn 2018. Our points were based on our experience and related mainly to improving community involvement in decision-making and

ensuring more effective implementation of planning law. We support the aims of the review and hope it produces useful reforms, including better resourcing of the planning system, effectively run by local authorities

**8 The Glebe** - In our last *Newsletter* we reported on various strands of the long-running saga to halt the deterioration of this characterful 1840s villa and prevent the removal of trees and the building of two houses in the wooded grounds forming its attractive setting, *seen below*.

The issues were to have been considered by an independent inspector in early December, but we learned he decided instead to hold a public inquiry in some months' time. We are trying to establish the implications, but clearly it means more delay and deterioration and perhaps more formality and cost.



**14 The Glebe** - The applicant wishes to construct a small building in the garden of the 1840s villa on the corner of The Glebe and Lee Terrace. The Society accepts the principle of a small and sympathetic building on the site and recognises that the applicant has taken account of comments made by the Society and Lewisham Council on previous proposed schemes.

We nevertheless still have reservations about the proposed design and the planned excavation of a basement. We expressed concerns about the quality of the application, the depth of the proposed basement, its proximity to an adjoining terrace, the unsympathetic nature of some materials and the lack of a plan for appropriate landscaping to maintain the discreet Arcadian setting characteristic of the Glebe.

**34 St Margaret's Passage** - This is an application to knock down one home and put two in its place in a very constricted and inaccessible site between St Margaret's Passage and Eton Grove.

The Society made clear it had no objection in principle, but did object to the excessive scale, clumsy design, significant loss of amenity, potential risk through basement excavation and parking issues. Following discussions between the planning officer and the applicant, and in light of objections by Council officers, the application was withdrawn.

**The Railway pub** at Blackheath station has applied to renew its signage and external illumination. We are pleased to report that the Society found this planning proposal to be imaginative and well-conceived.

**A2 roundabout** - The same could not be said of proposals from TfL to put two 1 x 1.2m non-illuminated digital advertisement signs on each side of the A2 roundabout, right in the middle of the Heath. This is part of a new initiative to generate income for local authorities (including TfL) by capitalising on such prime advertising sites.

While this is an understandable policy in straitened times, it could have a significant impact on our streetscapes and sensitivity is needed in the siting of such signs. We understand the Blackheath Joint Working Party will also be strongly objecting.

**Tesco Conington Road** - A public meeting was held in November in response to a large number of objections to the Meyer Homes plan to develop the Tesco car park, next to Lewisham station, with three blocks of flats, one of 34 storeys, *seen below*.



Meyer responded to some of the objections and to the Council's priorities and proposed some changes:

- A contribution of £500,000 to designing, funding and delivering improvements to Lewisham Station, including a new northern entrance, platform widening and raising and repositioning the platform 1 gate to address overcrowding, safety and accessibility issues.
- An offer to pay half the cost of around £1.5m to complete Ravensbourne River Corridor Improvement Works when Tesco, or successors, redevelop the site.
- A proposed increase in affordable housing from 12.5% to 18.1% and a change in the tenure mix.
- Changed designs of buildings B2 and B3 to improve access to play areas and add a new bicycle store, resulting in two fewer units, now 365 in total.

Attendees asked many questions and expressed concerns about a wide range of issues, including pressure on infrastructure, wind and light problems and excessive height and density.

The application, made in May, is long overdue to appear before the Strategic Planning Committee and it will be interesting to see, in the light of the rejection last summer of the Lewisham Gateway S73 application, which sought greater height/volume and offered no affordable housing, whether Meyer has done enough to convince Councillors the scheme should go ahead.

The 34-storey tower would be more than 50% taller than any yet approved or built in the town centre and it would set a precedent for other schemes in the pipeline, such as Gateway Phase 2 and Carpetright, covered in the autumn *Newsletter*, which we assume will come before the Committee soon.

**Lewisham Gateway** - Since the S73 application to enlarge and change Phase 2 was rejected, mainly because of a lack of affordable housing, there has been no official word. But we do understand the developer has applied to the GLA (with LBL support) for funding for affordable housing. Assuming this is forthcoming, it is likely to come back to the Committee soon. We must be vigilant to ensure our other concerns - pressure on infrastructure, insufficient daylight and sunlight, wind at street level, excessive height and massing, insufficient retail/commercial space - are addressed.

**Lewisham Retail Park** - The 2016 application for a mixed development, including 536 residential units in buildings ranging from four to 24 storeys, went to the committee in October. Members approved planning permission subject to the application being referred to the Mayor of London and to his raising no objection on a number of matters, including affordable housing of around 20%, transport issues and financial contributions by developers.

**In his final report on Greenwich, Philip writes:** Since the summer *Newsletter* the Society has been involved in responding to a large number of appeals in Greenwich. These arise where applicants are dissatisfied with decisions taken by the Local Planning Authority.

Appeals are handled by the Planning Inspectorate at Bristol and the process differs from case to case depending on the status of the original application. The most prevalent form - usually relating to extensions to existing buildings and loft conversions - is a Householder Development application.

Appeals in this situation are decided using the Householder Appeals Service, where objectors are allowed no further say in the matter, as the decision is based solely on written representations submitted by the appellant and the Authority.

The Society is awaiting the outcome of an appeal on damaging extension proposals for a semi-detached property at **13 Brookway**. We have also been made aware of an appeal against the Council's refusal of an inappropriate replacement 3-storey rear extension affecting **39 Vanbrugh Park**, a locally listed building.

The next grade of application - usually involving new build developments and works to existing buildings where the host property is part of a building on the statutory list - is a full planning application where listed building consent is also required.

These are normally decided by an exchange of written representations between the appellant and the Authority or through a local informal hearing process chaired by an Inspector. In both cases, objectors are allowed to submit comments.

The Society has participated in one such appeal on a proposal to add damaging side and rear additions to a Grade II listed detached property at **14 Shooters Hill Road**, *as pictured below*. Our representations, and those of the immediately affected neighbours, were submitted to the Inspectorate.



The refusal on the original application was taken by the Area Planning Committee, contrary to Officers' views that planning permission and listed building consent should be granted. The Council's position was clearly weakened and a robust defence of its decision seemed required to prevent the appeal being allowed.

However, the Inspector did unfortunately decide the proposals would preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the site and he allowed the appeals.

The highest grade of application involves strategic development proposals where public interest on a decision taken by the LPA means that a decision warrants a public inquiry. This procedure is relatively rare, with the last case in Greenwich being for the residential development of the **Huntsman** site on the



Cator Estate dating back to late 2013. However, see the story about **8 The Glebe** on page seven.

Another appeal in which the Society and local residents have been involved relates to a new development on land to the rear of **76 Vanbrugh Park** (*seen below left from Heathway*), which was approved by the Planning Committee subject to satisfying a range of conditions.

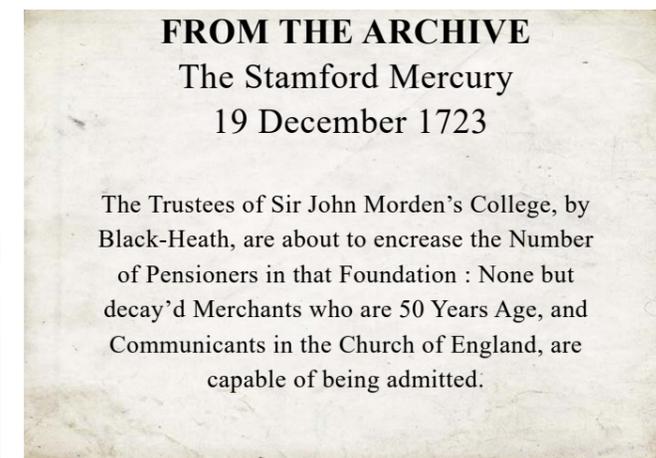
The applicant decided to challenge some of the conditions directly through the Inspectorate and after further objections the Society, Heathway Residents Association and local people await a decision.

Finally, we recently heard an appeal brought by the operator of the **Blackheath Service Station at 37a Shooters Hill Road** has been successful. This means that, rather than operating only between 7am and 11pm, a 24-hour operation is now permissible.



On planning approvals, the Society welcomes the fact that, after a long drawn out process, the sensitively designed scheme by Mae Architects for **Morden College** in its south-west corner has been granted planning consent.

Pre-submission consultation with interested parties started as far back as June 2016. The image, *seen above*, shows a modern interpretation of the cloister treatment used by Wren in the original building.



## DOUGLAS PERCY BLISS 1900-1984 PAINTED BY PHYLLIS DODD

**Editor's note:** As the year of the Society's 80th anniversary comes to a close, this article is a reflection on how it all started by Prudence Bliss, the daughter of our co-founder Douglas Percy Bliss. It provides the background to this painting of him by her mother, Phyllis Dodd, courtesy of Liss Llewellyn Fine Art.

This painting was shown in Eastbourne this summer in an exhibition called "Ravilious & Co: the pattern of friendship" which has now moved on to an art gallery in Sheffield.

It includes work by students at the Royal College of Art, circa 1921-1923, who were all friends and who gained subsequent fame in different branches of art. Of these Eric Ravilious is the most acclaimed today. My father shared a flat with Ravilious in Kensington before they found wives.

My mother, Phyllis Dodd, got to know my father through painting this portrait. She excelled in likenesses and was always looking for a friend to have the patience to sit for her. My father, having an ulterior motive, actually offered and was willing even to stand.

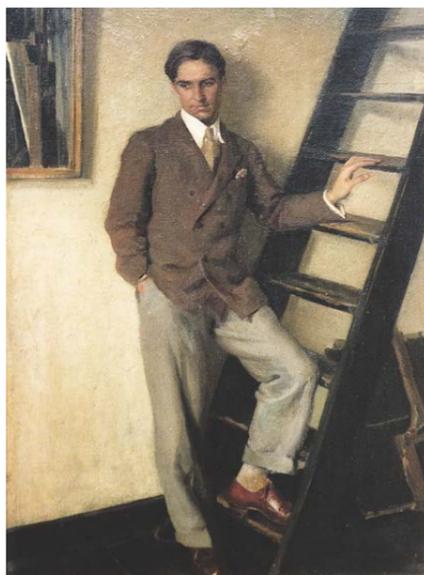
Painted in 1926 or 1927, it was accepted by the Royal Academy and they were married in 1928. Their first flat was in Lambeth, over a sausage factory, and my mother warned me later never to choose a flat at the weekend, as the sausages were not evident until Monday.

My father got work teaching book illustration at Blackheath School of Art and fell in love with the area.

When I was imminent in 1932, they looked for fresher air and made the move to a flat at 38 Lee Park.

In the autumn of 1936 the old Blackheath Proprietary School across the road at the top of Lee Park was pulled down, the grassy bank dug away, levelled and Selwyn Court was built, all without public notice, which would not happen today.

My father was determined never to let such change, without warning and possibly endangering the amenity of the area, happen again. A house at the junction of Lee Park and Lee Road soon became empty, and thus the danger was imminent.



He first sent a letter of protest to neighbours he judged public-spirited, with little result, so he put one in the Blackheath Local Guide and District Advertiser, announcing that he was calling a public meeting. Thus, as has been told in *Guardians of the Heath*, the Society was launched.

Only three years later came the war. We went north in 1940 to stay with family in Derbyshire. My father, who still worked in Blackheath, saw the steeple of our church there sail over the vicarage next door and land by our pear tree.

He joined the RAF and after the War was appointed Director of the Glasgow School of Art. Here he

started another successful campaign to save the work, not then considered modern enough, of the Glasgow architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh. He had learnt the effectiveness of letters to the press. He died of a stroke 20 years after his retirement to Derbyshire.

## HEATH CLEAN UP REMOVES RUBBISH



Continuing in the fine tradition pioneered by members Meg and Roo Dinkeldein, and in pleasant conditions this time, an army of 25 to 30 Society volunteers met on Saturday 14 October to support colleagues from Lewisham Council, and its contractors Glendale, in a deep clean of the Heath.

As evident in this photo, 25 sacks full of rubbish, ranging from paper and bottles, often well concealed in grass verges, to a car wheel cap, were all the result of a productive afternoon.

It was mildly encouraging that the amount collected seemed to be less than in previous years and our thanks go to all our volunteers for their hard work.

## LET'S CLEAN UP OUR VILLAGE

I refer to the article in the autumn *Newsletter* and the state of our Village is a subject close to my heart. The Christmas lights draped round the shops really do need to be removed, although some have gone.

After the festive season, lights strung across the street need to be taken down but last year they were on 24/7 over four months. They do contribute to Blackheath's increasingly shabby, second-rate seaside town look.

If it is costly to take them down they should be removed and something simpler put in place for the festive period. However, the lights in the trees were very effective and could be left as they are unobtrusive.

Of course, there have been improvements in the 30 or more years I have lived here. A lift has been installed at the station and there has been the addition of the 386 Blackheath/Greenwich bus route.

The enhanced Concert Halls and extended and improved Age Exchange enrich the community in different ways.

The pond by the Princess of Wales pub has been improved, with new islands for wildlife and planting along the road boundary, and it has become a little wildlife haven with swans, moorhens and geese.

Rubbish piled up on the pavement is an eyesore, as are the stained pavements where it has overflowed. Bins on the Heath are often overflowing, particularly by the pond and towards Morden College. Fly-tipping is on the increase but how do we prevent it?

It would be wonderful if the former Costcutter store could become part of the arts complex as a small cinema. The alley next to the closed Bumble hair dressers on Royal Parade is not a pretty sight, nor are the steps between Wemyss Road and the car park.

I'd like to see one or two of the pubs becoming interesting music venues. Homogeneity is the curse of our high streets. There is a real danger of Blackheath becoming boring as one-off shops and cafes disappear.

Where are the planters and hanging baskets in summer? Greenwich itself has a wonderful display of summer bedding so why not Blackheath? As a keen retired gardener, I would love to get involved in greening up our Village.

I feel privileged to live in such a leafy suburb, but it seems the Village has lost some of its Villageness. We cannot turn back time, but we must treasure and build on qualities that made Blackheath a desirable place for residents and visitors.

I walk London regularly and I'm afraid Lewisham and Greenwich trail behind. I'd love to help spruce up our area.

*Helga Greenbank*

## BLACKHEATH FIREWORKS

The day after the fireworks many buses were on diversion away from Blackheath, probably affecting the elderly and needy people the most. There must have been a lot of money spent on police services and toilets.

The official fireworks started at 8.05 pm and finished at 8.15/8.20 pm. The noise, along with all the other displays over the past few days has been alarming, to say the least. This morning as we walked to the station there was so much rubbish around, including broken bottles. We picked up five bottles along Lee Park and binned them.

When we were walking in London today there were so many homeless people. Surely it's not right to burn money this way? We probably feel more impatient because, returning home after evening Mass at St Mary's, it was honestly like being in a war zone, with the loud bangs and crashes.

Sorry to grumble to you as it's not your decision, but we feel the fireworks were a complete waste of money this year, a very poor 'return on investment'.

In these hard times we're sure the money could be put to better use, as there seemed to be so many private fireworks parties.

*Mike & Eve Newman*

## NEWSLETTER FEEDBACK

Congratulations to you and the committee for the Autumn *Newsletter* which was a really interesting read covering a very diverse range of topics. The new branding and format work well. Thank you too for the time and effort you all put into supporting the Village.

*Mike Newman*

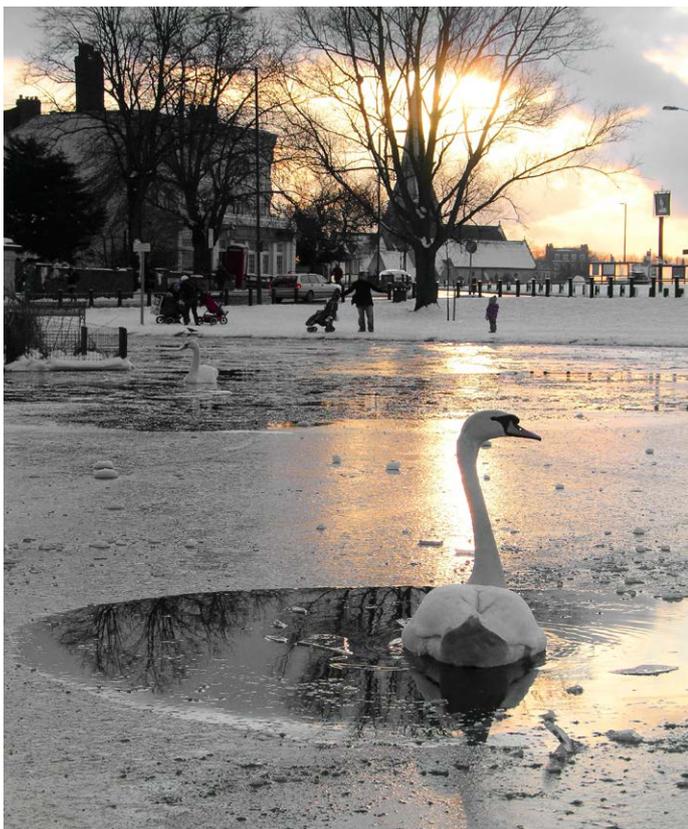
**Editor's note:** Other comments, gratefully received from members on the new look, included:

Very impressed with the latest *Newsletter*, both interesting and readable; It looks great, congratulations; I think the new look is first class and as ever the content fascinating; An impressive *Newsletter* that promises to be a good read for all the family; What a brilliant job you've done with the *Newsletter*, I'm really impressed.

### MEMBERSHIP FEES

A gentle reminder to all members that, after being frozen for many years, the Society's annual membership fee will rise to £20 per household from the start of January due to increased costs and our additional commitments. Please amend any existing standing orders or online banking payments

## SOCIETY CHRISTMAS CARDS



Our Christmas card this year features a swan on the Prince of Wales Pond. The photograph was taken by former Society chair Frank Smith. It is available at £3.50 for a pack of five, either from the Blackheath Society office, or at Cards for Good Causes in Age Exchange.

### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Leo Fletcher  
Anne Johnson  
Gemma Okell  
Diane Summers

## COME TO WALK AND TALK

You can get to know the committee and other Society members by joining one of our Walk and Talk events. There is no need to book for most walks, just come along, but donations of £5 towards our funds are welcome.

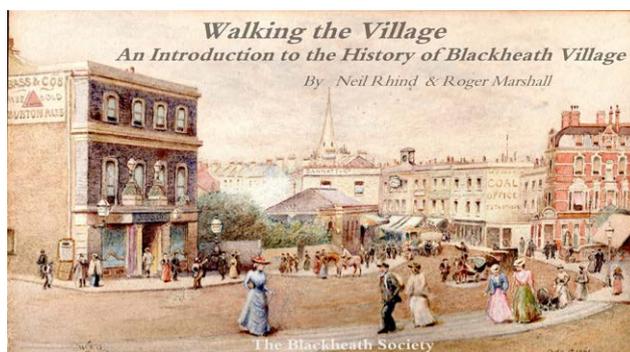
*Wednesday 17 January - Fleet Street*

John Bartram, a committee member and retired journalist, will lead a walk around Fleet Street called 'Hacks, Boozers and Buildings'. Meet at 1030 in front of St Clement Danes, the RAF Church at the end of The Strand. No booking is required, but it would be helpful if you could let the office know if you plan to come as we will have lunch afterwards, for those who wish to join us, in the Cheshire Cheese Chop Room.

***Why not buy our new book *Walking the Village*, which makes an excellent Christmas present and is available from the office now?***

*Wednesday 7 February - The Village*

Committee member Liz Wright leads a walk and talk discussing where the Village started, how it grew and which buildings are significant, based on the book. We will meet at The Crown at 1030.



*Tuesday 13 March - Morden College*

Members and friends are invited on a tour of Morden College. Elizabeth Wiggans, the archivist, will show us the chapel and library and we will be able to see documents from the archives and new additions to the College. Again it would be helpful for the tea service if you can let the office know if you intend to come. We will meet at 2pm at the main College gate.

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

PRESIDENT: Neil Rhind CHAIR: Helen Reeves VICE CHAIRMEN: Howard Shields & David Walker  
TREASURER: Paul Watts SECRETARY: Sacha Bright EDITOR: John Bartram DESIGNER: Pippa Stanton

COMMITTEE: John Bartram, Philip Binns, Allan Griffin, Nick Patton, Nicola Peers, Helen Reeves, Fiona Sanderson, Alex Schweitzer, Howard Shields, David Walker, Paul Watts, Liz Wright, Helma Zebregs

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