



NEWSLETTER ■ SPRING 2019

GLA TELLS LEWISHAM TO REJECT PLANS FOR TESCO SITE

The Greater London Authority has told Lewisham Council to reject Meyer Homes' application to build 365 homes on the former Tesco car park at Conington Road, overruling a narrow Council committee decision to approve the scheme.

The project to build three blocks, including a 34-storey tower (*seen right*) was approved in a 4-3 vote by Lewisham's Strategic Planning Committee at the second time of asking last December, despite offering little benefit for Lewisham residents.

Its obvious drawbacks included a very low affordable housing content, no solid justification for the extreme height, inadequate addressing of Lewisham station access and poor consultation with

neighbours immediately affected.

Now, after a statutory review, the GLA last month instructed Lewisham to reject this because of insufficient affordable housing, despite Meyer's offer to increase it to 25% from 20%. Both Lewisham and the GLA have targets of 50%.

The Blackheath Society has continually objected to this development, partly because of the low level of genuinely affordable housing, and we support the GLA decision, which Meyer can appeal.

In April 2018 the Lewisham committee unanimously rejected a very similar scheme on a range of grounds and Meyer lodged an appeal due to be heard this summer.

It remains to be seen whether the developer will pursue appeals on one or both refusals but it is



thought most unlikely it will give up trying to develop this site.

Meyer increased its affordable housing offer to 25% on a time-limited basis in the hope of having the application approved before a doubling of the London Mayor's Community Infrastructure Levy from the start of April, which would significantly increase its costs.

HIGHLIGHTS

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FULL PROGRAMME OF EIGHT EVENTS PLANNED FOR SOCIETY

The Society is again organising a full programme of events over the next few months:

THURSDAY 25 APRIL - Walk and Talk: Spring in Oxleas Wood and views from Severndroog Castle (*below*). Mary Bright, a Society member and trustee of Severndroog Castle, will lead a stimulating walk through the woods among the bluebells. We have special access to the Castle where walkers will hear about its history, view a display and climb the tower for the amazing views. The café will also be open. Numbers are limited, so please let the office know if you plan to come. Donations of £5 to the Society on joining the walk please.



WEDNESDAY 15 MAY - Walk and Talk: The writers of Hampstead. Robert Maurice Williams will lead members past the beautiful homes of literary residents of Hampstead. We will see the house (*below*), where Samuel Taylor Coleridge retreated to recover from his opium addiction, which was later lived in by J.B. Priestley and now home to Kate Moss. Meet at Hampstead Tube Station at 1030, the walk will be



about 3-1/2 miles and we will stop for coffee and lunch. Donations of £5 to the Society on joining the walk. There is no need to book.

TUESDAY 21 MAY AT 12:30PM Meet and Eat at The Hare and Billet. Join members for a drink or a meal and a chat. All are welcome.

WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE AT 11:30AM Walk and Talk to Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Club and museum. Join us to go behind the scenes at Wimbledon All England Tennis Club. The 90 minute tour will cover part of the grounds and include Centre Court, the broadcasting booths and hospitality suite as they prepare for the summer tournament. Tickets cost £20. Please contact the office, and you will be advised about our travel plans. There is a café on site.



TUESDAY 25 JUNE AT 7 FOR 7.30PM The Society AGM. See page 11.

TUESDAY 25 JUNE - Walk and Talk to St John's Park and tour of the Trinity Laban Dance Centre in Deptford. This is a morning in two parts and you are welcome to do whatever suits you. We meet at 1000 on the footbridge at Elverson Road DLR station and will walk through St John's Park to Deptford Bridge and the Laban Centre. At 1100 we gather at the reception to the Laban Centre for a guided tour.

The building was designed in 1997 by leading architects Herzog & De Meuron, who were responsible for the redevelopment of Tate Modern. It was specifically designed for educating and training contemporary dance students. The tour includes areas not generally open to the public.

You will see how dance students use the building for their training and performances. The tour has limited numbers and costs £10 per person. Please book and pay in advance via the office.

WEDNESDAY 3 JULY - Walk and Talk - an evening walk along the Thames. Enjoy a summer evening with members. We meet at Greenwich Pier to take the 1800 Greenwich Clipper downstream to Woolwich, or at Woolwich (Royal Arsenal) Pier at 1830. We will then walk, construction work permitting, along the river path to Greenwich Peninsula finishing with a drink at The Pilot. Freedom Passes and Oyster cards can be used for the boat trip to obtain discounts and the price is about £4.40.



WEDNESDAY 10 JULY AT 12:30PM Meet and Eat: at The Hare and Billet. Join members for a drink or a meal and a chat. All are welcome.

CALLING ALL MEMBERS

If you would like to get more involved with the Society, please feel free to step forward. Volunteers are always welcome for as much or as little time as possible to take part in the Society's wide range of activities. You can talk about possibilities at any of our events, as Committee members will be present, or you may contact the office directly.

We are considering holding a *Bike and Kite Festival* in September 2020 which will need many helpers before, during and after the event.

The Village *Christmas Lights and Christmas Tree Day* on Saturday 7 December needs supporters and organisers. You do not need to be an electrician, climb up ladders or suspend yourself across the Village.

We hear members would like events at the weekends and evenings, so if you want to take part or help make arrangements, please step forward.

PLANNING GROUP AGAIN TACKLES MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

The previous *Newsletter* highlighted some major developments in and around Blackheath. As it turned out, the Planning Group was faced with a "perfect storm" of major developments requiring significant attention over the Christmas period. We can be proud of the Group's ability to rise fully to this challenge and give these issues proper scrutiny.

TESCO CAR PARK

One of them, the battle over the Tesco Car Park site, is covered on the front page. Planning sources have told the *Newsletter* that the current aging Lewisham Tesco store itself may close to allow development of its site which lies between the refused Conington Road car park scheme and Lewisham Road.

In Lewisham town centre, discussion continued on approving details of the huge Gateway scheme (*below in an architect's plan*), with its further five blocks including two very tall ones and two massive conjoined blocks on the site of the old traffic roundabout. This has general approval after discussions over many years.



We continue to object to some of these details. In our view the community element of the development is inadequate and a missed opportunity, as it could have included a library, while the proposals for the detailed look of the scheme seem to be very garish and will not stand the test of time. It was gratifying that, although it was approved, this was subject to further discussion of these details, to which we hope to contribute.

There are now strong rumours about redevelopment of the Lewisham Centre to take advantage of the new approach through Lewisham Gateway, the arrival of the Bakerloo Line extension and the precedent, now set, for much taller buildings and denser development.

This area is part of the Lewisham, Catford and New Cross Opportunity Area, designated in the 2016 London Plan, and identified for development in the

2014 Plan, and both these plans are due for review. It could be that we will see the onward march of very tall buildings right into the centre of Lewisham over the next few years, perhaps bringing better and more modern facilities, but also greater pressure on the local infrastructure, services and environment.

KIDBROOKE STATION SQUARE

In Greenwich we have been examining two major schemes of great complexity - the detailed plans for its *Kidbrooke Station Square* and for a new *Greenwich International School* in Eltham Road. We have submitted extensive comments on both and await the next stage of the process.

The Station Square involves six towers, with heights up to 24 storeys and great density, 650 units and over 1,000 residents in a small rather isolated plot. Unlike the plans for Lewisham, these do offer significant affordable housing, which means the development will carry significant political weight.

However, we believe the plans need further examination and improvement. Apart from the overall concern about heights, massing and density, we do not believe they deal adequately with: concerns about pollution on the site, the need for firm plans for infrastructure, especially transport connections, and crucially the issue of proper access. This is essential if it is to become a truly integral part of the overall Kidbrooke scheme, as envisaged.

Greenwich International School plans over 800 pupils on the Bowring Sports Club site off Eltham Road, which is Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and a flood plain.

We are not competent to judge the need for schooling of this type. Our input was to query the adequacy of the case for significant additional development on MOL, to highlight continuing concerns about dealing with issues around the flood plain and to challenge the analysis of the severe traffic issues which could result from this scheme, with its poor transport rating and access, less than 200 yards from a major junction.

29-35 TRANQUIL VALE

A smaller scale but significant application is the plan to put three town houses behind this site in the Village. We do not object in principle to the idea of development or to its modern character, but the scale of what is planned raises a number of issues, and the practicality of major construction work in a site with severely restricted access needs much more discussion.

8 THE GLEBE

We have covered extensively the history of *8 The Glebe*. Following the outcome of the Public Inquiry last year, which rejected plans for town houses on the site,

attention is now focused on getting the owner to meet his obligations to maintain this 1840s villa in decent condition. Lewisham Council served a notice to this effect in 2017 and to date it has not been respected.



FESTIVAL HOUSE IN TRANQUIL PASSAGE

A smaller issue which may have caught members' eyes - *Festival House in Tranquil Passage* in the heart of the Village - has new access stairs and lift (*above*) which do not seem in keeping with the area. Unfortunately the application for this item escaped scrutiny in our group and we are following up to see if anything can be done.

PLANNING POLICY - BASEMENTS

The Planning Group spends significant effort engaging with councils on policy to keep up to date and offer maximum clarity to owners and developers. In recent years we have felt it increasingly inappropriate that Greenwich did not have specific planning policies or guidance on the construction of *basements*, for which applications have increased greatly in recent years.

We are grateful to Councillor Geoffrey Brighty, whose initiatives led the Council to agree to a review of the basement chapter of its 2016 publication last year. We were glad to accept an invitation to participate in that review which took account of recent case law.

Since the start of this year, revised and expanded planning guidance about basements has been in force. Greenwich now requires a basement impact assessment (BIA) in support of any application for residential development that includes a new or enlarged basement and converting a cellar into habitable accommodation.

The new guidance makes clear that basement developments on sites that are sloping, on clay strata, close to a water course or above an aquifer are likely to be complex. In these cases the BIA will need to address each issue and how it will be overcome.

It should demonstrate that the structural stability of the building and of neighbouring properties will be maintained.

Greenwich Council now requires that these site-specific BIAs are prepared by a structural engineer and contain a non-technical summary.

TREE VOLUNTEERS

We are pleased that our call for volunteers to help give adequate attention to developments involving trees has resulted in two people coming forward, and we hope this will mean a big boost to our efforts in this area. The legislative environment for trees is very different from that for buildings and council resources have been severely depleted, with Tree Officers under great pressure. We hope to update you more on this issue in our next *Newsletter*.

SOCIETY DISAPPOINTED BY TWO LICENSING DECISIONS

On two licensing applications so far in 2019, for Morden's Wine Bar in Montpellier Vale and the former CAU restaurant in Royal Parade, the Society has made comments but the results have been disappointing in both cases.

Morden's had previously been closed down by the police on the grounds of serious crime. A few local residents objected to the licence being reinstated because of nuisance - one person now spends the weekends at her parents' in Kent due to noise - but Lewisham's new Licensing Committee seemed not to take much account of this, nor the fact that Morden's is in our Cumulative Impact Zone (CIZ).

The police had a number of conditions applied to the licence, but the Committee granted Morden's permission to open for an extra hour on the upper floors. Since then police said they were called to Morden's near midnight on March 16 after a fight involving 20 women and two, aged 37 and 38, were arrested for being drunk and disorderly. One was seen by paramedics but did not need hospital treatment.

CAU shut in July 2018 when the owners went into administration. Although it closed by 11pm, it had a licence up to 1.30am. A new application was made to keep the licence at these times for a new restaurant. The Society objected, having in mind trouble caused by the Cactus Pit which used to occupy the premises. The Committee nonetheless granted permission for the proposed restaurant to serve drinks until 1.30am.

The CIZ, which the Society and others fought hard to obtain after problems in the early 2000s, reverses the burden of proof, so that an applicant has to show why the licensing criteria would not be contravened by the application. Although this is set out clearly in Lewisham's licensing policy, we believe that the Committee has not properly applied it.

The CIZ is due for renewal in the next year, we are concerned we could lose it and will discuss this with Lewisham. The best argument is for anyone affected to keep a diary of events and notify the authorities of incidents, so that a body of evidence can be built up.

BJWP SETS HEATH EVENTS PROGRAMME FOR 2019

The Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP) has approved a familiar programme of events this year on the Heath, but added a circus and agreed to a change in the date of the OnBlackheath festival.

We will again welcome the funfairs, the London Marathon and various charity activities. An all-human Billy Smart's Circus will be held on Circus Field in October and dates of the OnBlackheath music festival will change from September to the July 13/14 weekend.

This was a controversial decision, but the organisers believed it was necessary to make the event more viable. Lewisham has made it clear that, if the current festival were ever to withdraw, the vacancy would be actively marketed to other potential providers.

OnBlackheath has proved popular, particularly with local families, and it makes an active contribution to community projects, both through the Community Fund and donations to local charities.

The BJWP is responsible for deciding how the Community Fund is spent on the various activities it supports, including the care of the ponds and the provision of plants for the Village, as reported in previous *Newsletters*.

This year, in response to concerns by Blackheath Society members, an attractive variety of new trees will be planted on the Heath to replace those which had to be removed following the last tree review in 2017.

We continue to seek a resolution to the problem of the disused toilet block to the west of the pond on the north side of the A2. This building has now been boarded up for more than 20 years and we would like to see it either brought back into use, possibly as a shop or a café, or removed.

The stumbling block is that surveys would need to be carried out, costing about £6,000, before any proposal will be considered by The Crown Estate, which owns

the land, and Greenwich council does not have the money to pay for them. We would be pleased to hear your ideas. The BJWP is the body which was established to help coordinate the management of the Heath when this responsibility was divided between the Boroughs of Lewisham and Greenwich. Representatives of the two councils and the Blackheath, Greenwich and Westcombe Societies have full voting membership and a number of other interested parties regularly attend.

An annual public meeting in March allows all those interested in the Heath to hear the latest news and to raise issues of interest or concern. This year it featured a very well received talk on the history of the Heath by our President, Neil Rhind.

BOOK SALES TOP £30,000

Monthly book sales organised by the Friends of Age Exchange have now raised over £30,000, just after celebrating their 5th anniversary. Run by volunteers, they are held in the Bakehouse behind Age Exchange on the second Saturday of each month, apart from August and December. Organiser Gillian Gadsby said: "We have a constantly changing selection of second-hand titles and lots of excellent bargains supporting our community library." To donate books contact her on 020 88524032 or gadsby71@talktalk.net

KENTISH CHRONICLE

SATURDAY 3 DECEMBER 1864

"Baby Farming" murders in Blackheath?

On Saturday afternoon Mr. Carttar held an inquest at the Three Tuns Tavern, Blackheath, on a male child which had been found dead in the street. The medical evidence proved that the child was a healthy one, and had been strangled. The coroner said he had held four inquests that day at Blackheath on children found murdered. He believed there was a baby farming house in the neighbourhood, from which place the poor innocent infants were brought. A verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown was returned.

RAIL ISSUES AND THE EAST-WEST CYCLING ROUTE

The South East and Kent rail franchise should have been awarded in August last year, but has been delayed repeatedly, and it has now been suggested the bidding might be abandoned.

If this does occur, it is likely to cost the public purse around £30 million in refunded bid fees. More details can be found on www.fromthemurkydepths.co.uk.

All three bids are reportedly non-compliant and there is serious criticism of the Department for Transport's new housing projections contained in the initial bid documents, which significantly underestimated the expected new housing in south-east London.

Regular commuters have noticed the new signalling box on the London bound platform at Blackheath station. Signalling work in the area has been going on for a while and will continue, contributing to frequent temporary disruption and delays to services.

The signalling system for trains out of Charing Cross and Cannon Street is being updated and is complete as far as Maze Hill, New Cross, New Cross Gate, Denmark Hill, Crofton Park and Beckenham, but it is continuing through St Johns to Lewisham and down the Hayes line.

This involves transferring all signalling control from London Bridge to Three Bridges, near Gatwick, and it will inevitably continue to cause short-term unreliability and disruption to services.

Rail Minister Andrew Jones said in parliament in March: "More than £130 million of upgrade work will take place between now and Easter 2020. This Easter £55

million will be invested in the Lewisham, Woolwich and Charlton area. In 2020, £81 million will be invested in the Hither Green area. All of that will upgrade the signalling to provide a more robust service."

Transport for London and the Greenwich and Lewisham Boroughs plan to improve the cycle route between Blackheath Gate at Greenwich Park and South Row. The main components are:

- Converting the short section of Duke Humphrey Road immediately south of Blackheath Gate to a cycle way, returning the road to heath but with a three-metre cycle way in place of coach parking.
- Reconstructing the road crossings at Prince Charles Road, Prince of Wales Road and South Row.
- Widening the path between Prince Charles Road and South Row to three from two metres.

We welcome warmly the conversion of the section of Duke Humphrey Road immediately south of the park to a cycle way and returning the surplus area to heath, but we consider the rest of the work unnecessary, and the widening of the path between Prince Charles Road and South Row is also detrimental to the Heath.

Cycle volumes are low, even during peak hours, and the morning westbound/evening eastbound flows are overwhelmingly one-way, so the pathway does not need to accommodate opposing flows of cyclists. Existing informal road crossings work well, even at rush hours, and the proposed works will be more visually intrusive than existing crossings for no obvious benefit to users.

TWO LOCAL POP-UP CINEMAS THRIVING



Two local pop-up cinemas are thriving and planning their next shows.

The Village Cinema, a not for profit charity set up by four local friends, will screen *Lady Bird* on April 25 at the Blackheath Halls. *Crazy Rich Asians*, which came joint first in an audience vote, will start the second season in May.

Organiser Lucy Chaple said: "The aspiration remains to bring a community cinema experience to the heart of Blackheath. Feedback has been positive and we have had lively engagement from people taking part in our vote."

The second season runs until the end of July and full details are

available on its Web page at: <http://www.facebook.com/thevillagecinema>.

Collective Cinema continues at St Margaret's Church into the spring and summer with a selection featuring musicals. Tickets from £7 are on sale from April on its website at www.collectivecinema.co.uk.

It plans to show on 25 May *The Artist*, featuring an Oscar winning musical score by Ludovic Bource, on 15 June Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* performed at Sadler's Wells, on 13 July *La La Land*, the multiple Oscar winner of 2016, and on 17 August *Phantom of the Opera*, the 1925 silent classic with an epic musical score.

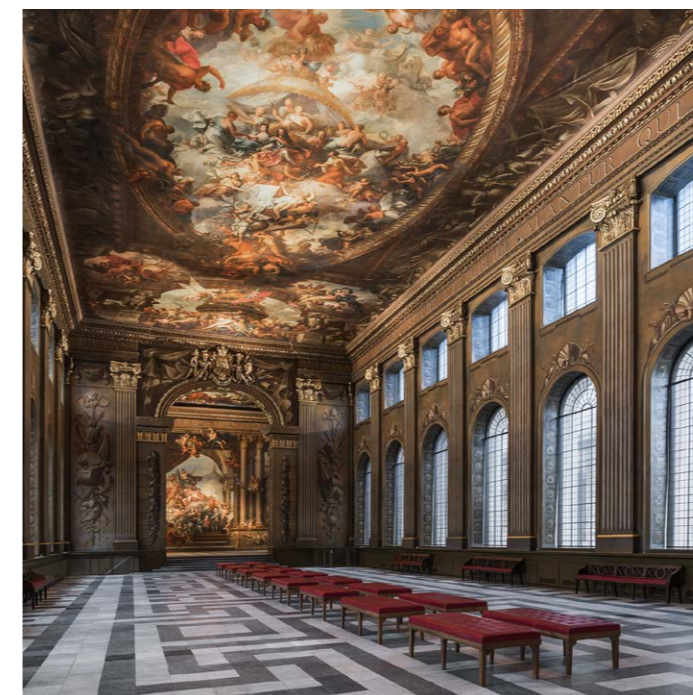


PAINTED HALL REOPENS AFTER LONG RESTORATION

After two years of meticulous cleaning and restoration the Painted Hall, the jewel of The Old Royal Naval College, was reopened to the public on 23 March. The project, shortlisted for a Museums Heritage Award as Conservation Project of the Year, has cost £8.5 million.

As well as the Baroque masterpiece of the Hall, the extensive and magnificent undercroft is now open, featuring the only remaining fragment of the Tudor Placentia Palace, on which the foundations are built.

The Hall was designed by Sir Christopher Wren as a ceremonial dining room for what was then the new Royal Hospital for Seamen. Work on its vast decorative scheme, painted by Sir James Thornhill, took 19 years and was completed in 1726. It has been described as the Sistine Chapel of the UK. Nelson's body lay in state there after it was shipped back in a barrel of brandy after the battle of Trafalgar in 1805.



With so much to celebrate, it was unfortunate that the weeks leading up to the grand reopening were marred by a dispute about the name of this important group of buildings in Royal Greenwich.

The Greenwich Foundation for the Old Royal Naval College (ORNC), the charitable company responsible for the heritage site, decided the name was not attractive to potential visitors and were considering renaming it the "Greenwich Palace and Royal Hospital".

The news took local organisations by surprise as there had been very little consultation, particularly with the Greenwich, Westcombe and Blackheath Societies.

The Chairs of the three organisations decided to object to the proposed change on the grounds that there has



been no palace on the site for more than 300 years and that the new name "ignores the naval and maritime history of the buildings where Nelson lay in state and where thousands of sailors spent their last days".

Representations were made to the ORNC and a joint letter was published by *The Times*, which also carried an editorial in November. At a meeting convened by Greenwich Council on February 5, the ORNC announced it had postponed the proposed renaming to allow for a period of consultation with the local community.

The issues remaining include a decline in visitor numbers to Greenwich generally and an urgent need to raise more funds. The ORNC site, which comprises the Visitor Centre, Old Brewery, Painted Hall, Chapel and gardens, costs £2 million a year to maintain.

The ORNC has been receiving £1.5 million a year from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, but this is reducing and there is no guarantee it will continue. From now on adults will pay £12 to enter the Painted Hall, with each ticket valid for a year. Young people aged 16 and under will have free entry.

On the need to attract more visitors, the Foundation's market research has suggested the words "royal" and "palace" are good, but "old" is not. Whether "naval" or "maritime" would be more attractive is open to debate.

There are plans to recruit local focus groups to discuss any future proposals, and we have been assured that members of the three Societies will be involved in future consultations. Views will be sought on the name and branding of the site as well as other potential uses to which the area can be put as a community resource.

One thing about which there is no disagreement is that all the buildings of Royal Maritime Greenwich are a much-loved local and national asset. We congratulate the Foundation of the ORNC on the achievement of a brilliant conservation project.

The photographs show an overall view of the lower hall with its famous ceiling on the left, and above a detail in the upper hall with Queen Anne and Prince George.

CRICKET PROJECT COMES TO BLACKHEATH

Organisers of a new “Platform Cricket” project to increase the number of primary school children taking up the game, particularly from disadvantaged and BAME backgrounds, have applied for funds to Lewisham Council.

They plan to hold an inter-school festival on the Heath on June 14. Manager Chris Willetts told the *Newsletter* the project was founded by Kent & England Lions opening batsman, Daniel Bell-Drummond. It spans Lewisham and Greenwich, includes after-school and winter coaching. A pilot festival was held in Deptford and New Cross last summer.

“We will be working with eight primary schools in and around the Heath and the Village and would like to have the Society’s blessing,” he said. Your committee supports the venture and has allowed its name to be linked to the funding application.

Their three-year plans involve nearly 80 schools in Bellingham, Blackheath, Brockley, Deptford, Grove



Park, Hither Green and Sydenham and are costed at £740,498. The project is seeking £100,000 from Lewisham in grants. It will also apply to Greenwich and hopes to attract funds from schools’ sports funds, the ECB, Kent Cricket and trust funds.

Support for the plans has come from the Friends of Mountsfield Park, Mayow Park, Chinbrook Meadows, Forster Memorial Park, Hilly Fields and Deptford Park. These venues will be used for festivals and weekly community activities. Cricket clubs offering support include Kent, Greenwich Cricket Limited, Catford Cyphers Cricket Club, Catford Wanderers Cricket Club and Blackheath Cricket Club.

Platform Cricket was developed by Tower Hamlets Youth Sport Foundation, which designs and delivers projects engaging hard-to-reach groups of young Londoners in sport and physical activity. The pilot scheme has involved 16 schools and 672 children, 55% from disadvantaged and 89% from BAME backgrounds.



Photos show Daniel (left) with students from Turnham Primary School, who won the inaugural festival last June, and (right) Year 4 students refining their catching skills at St Stephen’s Primary School, New Cross

VICTORIAN SWIMMING CUP DONATED TO SOCIETY

A silver-plated swimming cup won by 15-year-old local resident Herbert Cumming in 1895 has been donated to the Society by his grandson, Nicholas Finch.

Herbert won the 60-yard, two-length race at All Saints’ Swimming Club’s 5th annual competition in October that year and this was reported in the Blackheath Local Guide four days later.

Nicholas (pictured right at our office with the cup) lives in Bristol. He told the *Newsletter*: “Herbert lived from 1880 to 1953 and was my mother’s stepfather as her

natural father was killed in WWI. He was the only grandfather I really knew as a child and he was married at All Saints’ in 1899.” Herbert was an electrical engineer’s accountant and also lived in Catford with his wife Georgina for 10 years from 1901. His father William also lived in Blackheath at 17 South Vale Road from 1881 to 1909.



SOCIETY PLANS NEW WESTCOMBE WALKING GUIDE

The Blackheath Society hopes to publish a new guide titled *Walking Westcombe & the Angerstein Encroachment* this year to match its two earlier booklets, *Walking the Heath and Walking the Village*.

It will be the same size and format, copiously illustrated and by the same authors, Neil Rhind and Roger Marshall. The project also has the support of the Westcombe Society.



SOCIETY 1939 WAR TALK

Local historian Neil Rhind will tell the local story of the 80th anniversary of the start of World War II in a talk in early September at the Blackheath Halls, sponsored by the Blackheath Society, the Halls and its Friends.

On September 3, 1939, Britain went to war against Nazi Germany. Blackheath residents were caught up in the conflict over the next five years and its populace suffered from the bombing and V2 rocket attacks.

Schools were evacuated, churches were destroyed or closed permanently. Large houses were requisitioned by the Army and Air Force and the fire brigade and ambulance units commandeered useful property. Ack-ack batteries, searchlight stations and barrage balloon depots took over the Heath and the Kidbrooke farms.

Neil has scoured the archives and will report on how Blackheath managed to cope. Two extraordinary institutions were established here: Mass Observation in Grotes Buildings chronicled public attitudes towards the War and its austerities and the GPO Film Unit had its headquarters in Bennett Park.

After the illustrated talk there will be a screening of the remarkable documentary *Listen to Britain*, a 20-minute masterpiece made by Humphrey Jennings at the Crown Film Unit at Blackheath. Full details are available later.

Your society holds a very considerable images collection, but we are still seeking pre-World War II photographs and earlier photos of the Westcombe Park estate and the Angerstein Encroachment, Vanbrugh Park south side, St John’s Park, Old Dover Road and the north side of Shooters Hill Road. We would particularly like photographs of buildings long gone.

Anything that local residents can provide, such as old postcards and family snapshots, will be gratefully received and fully acknowledged. Please contact Neil Rhind in the first instance on nander@talktalk.net or phone the Society office.

On the left is a rare postcard of the new branch of the London & Provincial Bank, which became Barclays Bank in 1918 and was erected at Westcombe Park in 1906 on the south-west corner of Westcombe Hill.

The card was posted on 14 July 1906 to Arthur Skeffington, a timber merchant and inventor of invalid lifting appliances of 49 Ulundi Road. The first branch was still operating from a private house next door at 41 Vanbrugh Park and the manager lived upstairs.

Regular email member updates

Many of you appreciate our regular ‘News for members’ email which keeps you informed about urgent local issues and events.

This fills the gap between the *Newsletters* and is an effective way for us to stay in touch with you quickly at no extra cost. If you want to be included please make sure we have your up to date email address at office@blackheath.org. We will never pass this on to other organisations and you can unsubscribe at any time.

Subscription Renewal 2019

Thank you to all members who have renewed their membership for 2019. We are very grateful for your continued support. There are a great number of people who are still paying standing orders at the pre-2018 rate of £15 per annum, rather than £20. We would appreciate it if you would contact your bank to update the mandate and let us have a top up payment of £5. Please contact us if you have any queries.

NEW POWER TUNNELS UNDER BLACKHEATH AND PARK

The National Grid will start tunneling under south London in July to rewire the capital and replace existing electricity circuits which are coming to the end of their useful life.

Section 2 of this 8-year 32.5km project runs from New Cross to Hurst and involves tunneling under Blackheath and Greenwich Park. Work on this section for the new network cables is planned to start in July. The maps below show the projected blue line for the tunnel passing under Greenwich Park (left) then across the Heath and underneath Morden Road (right).

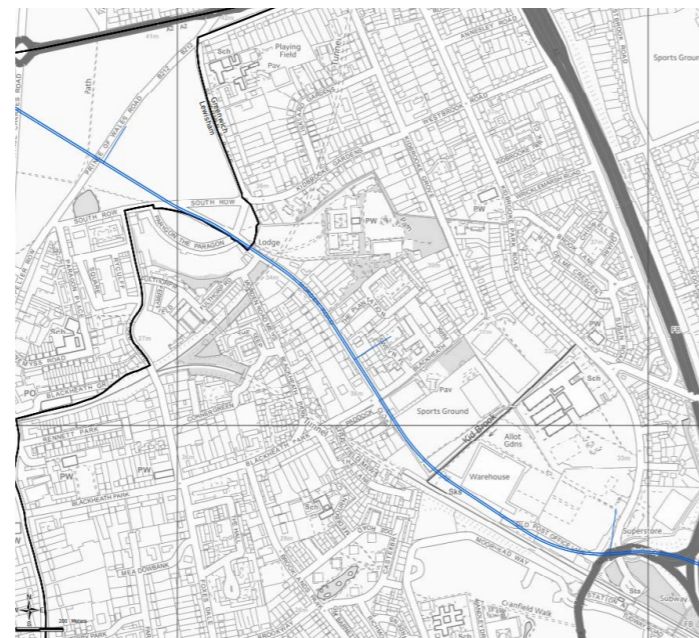
The Grid website at <http://londonpowertunnels.co.uk/> has more details. The new tunnels are part of a £750 million investment to ensure a continued safe and secure supply of electricity to the capital. By placing the cables in deep underground tunnels, National Grid says the work will reduce major disruption to the London area.

Local blogger Dominic Clinton, who has been writing on underground topics for 30 years, says he does not object, but expects engineers to carefully record any cavities, archaeological features or unexpectedly soft ground that the tunnel boring machine passes through.

He told the *Newsletter* "The tunnel would be in chalk between New Cross and Kidbrooke and geological hazards are present under the Heath. There are substantial natural caves 35metres below the surface and some have spawned air pockets."

"The boring machine may emerge into one of these and fall down into the cavity, making recovery both difficult and expensive."

His investigation can be found on his website at <https://subterraneangreenwich.wordpress.com/>. The project follows the Grid's previous seven-year £1 billion scheme to rewire north London.



GRAFFITI & LITTER SUCCESS FOR SOCIETY MEMBERS

For the past 20 years my husband Richard and I have been involved with other volunteers in cleaning graffiti off a variety of surfaces in and around Blackheath. I am happy to say there is very little to remove these days, which is wonderful considering how awful it used to be.

We do try to remove it as soon as possible, and certainly this has paid off in the Sun in the Sands pedestrian subways which used to be covered in tags, but now they are mostly pristine and we can go for months without having to remove anything.

Lewisham and Greenwich Councils have generally been responsive to complaints, but one issue did take some time to resolve. A section of the A102 from Bexley to the Blackwall Tunnel was an absolute disgrace for many months and the verges were covered in litter and debris - shocking for a main route into London.

Litter clearance on the A102 is the responsibility of Greenwich Council but a street cleansing manager

said they had to use Transport for London's preferred contractors. Special permission also had to be given by the Transport Police to cone off sections of the road and for the work to be carried out at night.

This, and health and safety concerns about the 50mph speed limit, meant that work could not be undertaken straight away. But the threat of a Litter Abatement Order, and a meeting with a helpful local councillor, persuaded them to start clearing the litter last October.

This has now been completed, but concerns remain about the cleaning contract which seems totally inappropriate for this type of road which was apparently last cleared of litter in July 2017.

Our councillor is now seeking reassurances that litter will be cleared more frequently, ideally by a specially trained in-house team.

The photos below show graffiti on a wall in the Orchard and after it was cleaned by Richard last summer.

Meg Dinkeldein



CONSERVATOIRE RUNS OUTREACH PROGRAMME

The Conservatoire is running a two-year outreach programme with five projects that will involve over 6,000 children in the arts, helped by 120 staff from 25 nurseries in some of the most deprived areas of London.

Principal John Keeley told the *Newsletter* the projects will engage vulnerable individuals who have limited opportunity to take part in the arts. Participants will include nurseries across London as well as local schools, intergenerational arts groups, elderly care homes and refugee groups in Greenwich and Lewisham.

The project is supported by a £40,000 donation from the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation and some of the art produced is being shown at the Tate Modern.

In May the Conservatoire will present a series of workshops for newly-arrived refugees, providing creative learning activities concerning identity and

integration. It also runs a bursary programme, working closely with local schools, charities and children's centres throughout the year.

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held this year on Tuesday 25 June at St Mary's Hall in Creswell Park, with drinks served at 7pm and a 7.30pm start. Please save the date in your diaries. Full details will be provided with our annual report in May.

WEST KENT GUARDIAN

Saturday 31 December 1853

Sudden Death between Charlton and Blackheath

An inquest was held yesterday at the Railway Tavern, Blackheath, before C. J. Carttar, Esq., on the body of Richard Neal, a farrier, who was found dead in a railway carriage, at the Blackheath station, on Saturday evening last. It appeared that the deceased was observed to be unwell by some of his fellow-passengers, at the time the train was at the Charlton station: and they called to the station-master, but without effect, as the train immediately moved forwards. On arriving at Blackheath it was found he was dead, and they immediately had him removed to the Railway Tavern, when a surgeon was sent for.

Bleeding was resorted to, but without success.

ASCENSION CHURCH PLANS TO REFURBISH BY END 2020

The Church of the Ascension in Dartmouth Row will begin serious fundraising this year and hopes to complete its refurbishment by the end of 2020, after many delays in getting the necessary permissions.

The Reverend Anne Bennett told the *Newsletter* open events will be held this year to share the plans with the community. She said the project has three aims:

- Essential repairs, without which the building will become unsafe, including stitching major cracks. The roof has already been overhauled at considerable expense and the building is now watertight.
- Redecoration and refurbishment: the church is dilapidated and well overdue for redecorating and the heating and sound systems need replacing. Toilets will be refurbished and disabled access provided.
- The pews, which are not original, will be replaced with cathedral-style wooden chairs. The floor will be levelled, making the building more accessible for people with disabilities, and will be made of high-quality wood so the building can be used for concerts, dance and drama activities by the community seven days a week.

The Church (*seen below*) has a Grade II* listing and was built as a Chapel of Ease for weekday use, as people were expected to attend the parish church, St Mary's Lewisham, on Sundays. The original church, built in 1697, was demolished in 1834 and a new one built, retaining the original apse and chancel. It was consecrated as a parish church in 1887. After severe wartime damage it was restored in the 1950s.

The vicar said: "It now looks very different to its Georgian incarnation. Gone are stained glass, painted decorations and galleries all around and the interior is a little stark, apart from the gorgeous domed chancel ceiling."

Questions can be sent to her by email on btavicar@gmail.com or by phoning 0208 691 7364.



WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Stirling Bartlett
Ben Blackmore
Rosamund Cox
Marika Douglas
Daniel Fisher
Ms D Graham
Katherine Kerswell
Steve Morgan
Fabienne Morris
Roger Ridley
Thea Sakkas
Geoff Torry
Peter & Hazel Wilkinson
Chris Willetts

EVENTS DIARY - DETAILS ON PAGE 2

THURSDAY 25 APRIL

Oxleas Wood walk

WEDNESDAY 15 MAY

Hampstead literary walk

WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE

Visit Wimbledon Club

TUESDAY 25 JUNE

St John's Park walk and

tour the Trinity Laban

Dance Centre in Deptford

TUESDAY 25 JUNE Society

AGM at 7pm (see page 11)

WEDNESDAY 3 JULY

Evening walk along the

Thames from Woolwich to

Greenwich Peninsula

TUESDAY 9 JULY 5.30pm

Society cricket match

against Greenwich in the

Park - players needed!

21 MAY & 10 JULY

Meet & Eat at the Hare &

Billet pub at 1230 with

other Society members

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

PRESIDENT: Neil Rhind CHAIR: Paul Watts VICE CHAIR: Helen Reeves TREASURER: Andrew Westbrook

SECRETARY: Sacha Bright EDITOR: John Bartram DESIGNER: Pippa Stanton

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: John Bartram, Allan Griffin, Sarah Mansfield, Nick Patton, Nicola Peers, Helen Reeves, John Schofield, Alex Schweitzer, Howard Shields, Diane Summers, David Walker, Paul Watts, Andrew Westbrook, Liz Wright, Helma Zebregs

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