



NEWSLETTER ■ SPRING 2023

## ALL OFF-PEAK CHARING CROSS TRAINS MUST BE RESTORED

The Society is continuing to demand the restoration of all Southeastern's off-peak Charing Cross trains to and from Blackheath, despite the company's promise to restore an hourly service in its new May timetable.

MPs, local amenity societies and our members have all called for the direct Bexleyheath line services to be fully reinstated, saying the offer of a once-an-hour service was not a reasonable response and that we should return to four services an hour for seven days a week.

Eltham MP Clive Efford said: "The fight will continue to ensure that Southeastern and the Government listen to passenger feedback and provide a train service that meets our needs, rather than those of the train companies." And a Society member added: "We can't let matters stand with this minor concession."

The availability of a second route to Charing Cross was due to be confirmed at a Greenwich Council Transport Scrutiny Panel meeting on March 21, attended by Southeastern and Network Rail representatives, but the *Newsletter* went to press the previous day.

The new Monday to Saturday off-peak once-an-hour direct Bexleyheath Line service will start with the May 23 timetable.

The Society had been told that a second route was available each hour to Charing Cross and that funding was the only obstacle. We have continued to push hard with Southeastern and local MPs to provide an additional direct service, with selection of the route beyond Blackheath to be determined following a full and transparent consultation.



A Society survey of our members showed that 84% of respondents felt the current timetable discouraged them from travelling and 95% said the journey time to Charing Cross was too long for the distance.

Society members told the *Newsletter* it was beyond doubt that the original justifications Southeastern gave for ending the direct off-peak service - protecting peak services, avoiding delays at the Lewisham crossover (seen on page 1) and responding to demand - were spurious. They believed the decision was mainly to save money, perhaps as much as £10 million.

The new timetable has forced passengers to change trains, created excessive journey times and led to difficulties for people with limited mobility, heavy

luggage or prams. Frequent lift and escalator breakdowns at Lewisham and London Bridge have exacerbated the problems, as has dangerous overcrowding at these stations.

Society chair Paul Watts said: "The response from our members to the December 2022 timetable changes has been overwhelmingly against, but despite engaging with Southeastern at all levels, the company has not fully listened to our concerns. While they have offered a modest timetable amendment in May, it is clear our members and the wider public want a return to frequent direct off-peak Charing Cross trains and an agreement to a proper consultation process before any future changes to services".

Table with railway timetables for January, including sections for S.E.R.—NORTH KENT LINE, LOOP LINE, LONDON, CHATHAM & DOVER RAILWAY, and GREENWICH LINE.

The photograph shows an 1889 trains and bus timetable from the *Blackheath Local Guide & District Advertiser* which, compared to the present day's offering, seems a veritable delight for passengers wherever they wanted to go, especially direct to Charing Cross.

The timetable was also for horse-drawn buses, and the service from the Village to the Sun-in-the-Sands pub on Shooters Hill Road, was a yellow one-horse bus driven by Robert Blaker. When he retired, he claimed he had driven 424,320 miles over 20 years of service. Petrol driven buses were introduced on the routes by 1903 and the last horse-drawn bus ran in December 1912.

# FULL PROGRAMME OF SOCIETY EVENTS INTO THE SUMMER

WEDNESDAY 10 MAY AT 7 FOR 7.30PM. Join us for the Architectural Group annual lecture by Blackheath resident, architectural historian and curator Dr Neil Bingham celebrating his new book on the modern architect Patrick Gwynne (1913–2003). Gwynne is known in Blackheath for a number of bespoke houses he built on the Cator Estate, most notably the black fortress-like 10 Blackheath Park (see photo below). Gwynne's own house that he designed in 1938 and lived in his whole life - The Homewood in Esher, Surrey - is now owned by the National Trust and open to the public. The lecture is at St. Michael's Church in Pond Road and tickets at £10 (students £5) are on www.blackheath.org.

for building materials. It housed the Pest House, a Workhouse and a Plague Pit, so there are some tragic stories to be told and we will locate the homes of interesting past residents. (See photo below).



TUESDAY 20 JUNE AT 7 FOR 7.30. Blackheath Society AGM at St Mary's Hall, Cresswell Park, SE3. Further details to be announced.

THURSDAY 29 JUNE AT 10.30. Walk & Talk: Visit to London Mithraeum. The Temple of Mithras was originally constructed around AD240 and was first discovered in 1952. The remains are now part of an immersive experience in the temple's original location beneath the Bloomberg building at 12 Walbrook, London EC4 (below). They contain some remarkable Roman artefacts and illustrations and storyboards accompanying the exhibit. The entrance hall has a changing art display, at present the stunning ceramics of Oliver Beer in his work entitled *Albion Waves*.



MONDAY 10 JULY AT 12.30. Meet & Eat at The Princess of Wales. Join other members for a drink and a chat.



FRIDAY 19 MAY, 10.15AM. Walk & Talk, Lambeth and Waterloo. Join Society member Paul Wright on another Gateway to Central London walk around Waterloo and Lambeth. Hear about the Old Vic, two Waterloo Stations and the Necropolis railway. Learn about the ill-fated Eric Ravilious murals at Morley College, see their successors by Edward Bawden and discover the early days of variety and music hall in Westminster Bridge Road.

TUESDAY 23 MAY 12.30. Meet & Eat at the Princess of Wales pub. Join other members for a delightful, relaxing social drink and lunch.

WEDNESDAY 24 MAY AT 10.30. Walk & Talk Film tour. Join other Society members at the Old Royal Naval College for a fascinating behind-the-scenes tour of the various film locations at the College, described by Empire Magazine as "the most popular filming location in the world." The tour is complimentary to members of the Society and includes a tea or coffee. Donations on the day for the ORNC will be appreciated.

MONDAY 12 JUNE AT 10.15. Walk & Talk: Maidenstone Hill Revealed. David Whittaker, a Blackheath Society member and long-time resident of Maidenstone Hill, will lead a fascinating walk round an area that was a well-known topographical feature north of Blackheath Hill, but exists now only as a road name. The area has seen many changes and has been an important source

Committee members who attended a Lewisham Council Transport meeting on March 9 said the discussions only went through the motions, without any sense of real purpose or urgency. One said: "They only involved polite exchanges between mainly junior councillors and rail and bus officials."

At Southeastern's stakeholder meeting on March 10 its managing director Steve White acknowledged the company's failure to consult on last December's timetable changes had led to a breakdown of trust between Southeastern and its stakeholders.

He said he knew the company was not meeting its customers' aspirations, but that Southeastern has a huge financial problem as it is currently subsidised by the government by £1 million a day, and for the next two years it has to work within its existing budget as there will be no uplift in financial support. A further meeting was due to be held in Lewisham in early April with representatives of Southeastern and Network Rail.



The photograph above shows a bench placed on the Heath near Whitefield's Mount in memory of Pauline, the late wife of Roger Marshall, a longstanding member of the Blackheath Society's management committee.

PLEASE BOOK YOUR PLACE FOR ALL EVENTS, except the AGM and Meet & Eat. Full details are on our website blackheath.org with a direct booking link to Eventbrite and details of where to meet. If nearer the time you find you cannot attend, please let us know so that others may take your place.

## PLANNING GROUP'S WORK SUCCESSFUL IN 2022

The Planning Group's work involves 10 volunteers who look at issues of planning policy and scrutinise all applications in the Blackheath area. We work with a database, constructed from 'scraping' the portals of Greenwich and Lewisham councils, which records new planning applications and decisions.

In 2022 there were 668 applications, 350 in Greenwich and 318 in Lewisham - in 2021 the total was 649, with 363 in Greenwich and 286 in Lewisham. All were looked at and we then examined 88 in detail. We aim to be constructive in our approach to the councils and to gain credibility by consistently targeting and framing our limited number of objections.

Excluding trees, 52 objections were submitted, with 22 refusals. A further four withdrawn, meaning the local authority agreed with us on 50% of the applications where we took a position. A further 10 are awaiting a decision.

On trees, 16 objections were submitted, one was withdrawn and the others went ahead. But the result was more nuanced and positive, as our intervention also often led to the applicant modifying the application, or the planning officer imposing conditions. Particularly for trees, where the officers have limited powers to refuse. It is also noticeable that in a number of cases their interpretation of the planning rules was more conservative than ours.



Apart from the individual applications, our major strategic activity last year involved further work on the Lewisham Local Plan, in particular to prevent even taller tall buildings, to challenge overdevelopment generally and seeking to protect views from the Heath.

We also worked on the retrofit debate (improving the energy efficiency of buildings subject to conservation protections), triggered by a case in Telegraph Hill,

and with other Lewisham amenity societies to improve public engagement and the Lewisham planning process

Our most significant recent submission was on the application to convert the now disused Blackheath Post Office sorting office building into a mix of six apartments and a nursery. We found the design acceptable, but felt there were serious issues needing to be addressed by conditions.

The nursery, with 130 pupils envisaged, could result in a significant traffic issue in the already very congested Village if pupils were dropped off by car in Blackheath Grove. It should be made effectively car-free.

Traffic in Blackheath Grove would, of course, be seriously disrupted during the two or three years of construction, so the plan needs to be very carefully prepared, with a clear commitment to consult and inform local residents as this has been a major issue elsewhere in Lewisham.

We were pleased to see that the initial construction plan proposed for a very tricky approved project in Collins Street was rejected by officers. As the *Newsletter* went to press, the Post Office application had been withdrawn.

A significant project, which is under consultation and expected soon as a formal application, is the plan by Greenwich Builds, the arm of Greenwich Council dedicated to provide affordable housing, to put six town houses on the charming green space in Richmount Gardens conservation area (*seen photo left*).

We have supported Greenwich Builds in its general aims and projects in brownfield sites in Kidbrooke, but we registered our very strong opposition to this use of an important green space for a limited amount of housing.

The long outstanding Leegate project, which had been scheduled for a Lewisham Committee review in March, has been postponed again due to a new directive from the London Mayor, after the Grenfell Tower fire, that high-rise developments must have double staircase provision.

The issue of retrofitting buildings in conservation areas for enhanced energy efficiency also requires updated and enhanced guidance. In the medium term this will involve aspects such as heat pumps and the insulation of walls. Key issues currently concern double glazing, the use of UPVC and the location of solar panels.

Current guidance for conservation areas requires double glazing to be like for like, replacing windows with timber instead of UPVC at the rear of buildings. Solar panels are supposed to be restricted to the rear of buildings, but application of this guidance has not been clear, especially in Lewisham. We would like to see it updated, including an assessment of new materials which could further the energy agenda.

It is an exceptionally busy period for consultation on new policy and in Lewisham we are scrutinising the latest Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Issues include possible changes in the influence of amenity societies, the consultation duties of developers and the working of the planning committee system.

In Greenwich, we will be scrutinising a major update of planning guidance in a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Urban Design Guide. This offers

high-level guidance on design policy, and includes detailed guidance on planning for extensions, basements, trees and shop fronts.

The Lewisham SCI consultation is online at Consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement-Lewisham Council-Citizen Space with a deadline of April 3, while the Greenwich SPD is Have Your Say Today-Royal Greenwich Planning-Commonplace, with an April 11 deadline. We welcome feedback from members.

## TALBOT PLACE PLAY AREA WINS LEWISHAM SUPPORT

The new play area for Blackheath has won planning permission from Lewisham Council, following a public consultation and finalisation of the designs.

Its finances received an extra boost with an £8,500 donation from the Balcombe Charitable Trust, which rarely funds small, local projects. Its board includes trustees who are long-term Blackheath residents who wanted to contribute to funding these much-needed facilities.

The play area, *seen below in an artist's impression*, will be in front of disused changing rooms at Talbot Place. It has faced many bureaucratic hurdles because of the protected nature of the Heath. Agreement was also required from the Government's Planning Inspectorate and Natural England.

The process seemed out of proportion to the low-key nature of the play area, which uses natural materials, log structures and planting in keeping with the Heath, rather than traditional playground equipment.

Meeting these requirements certainly slowed the project down, but construction should not be too far off now and the work should be completed fairly soon.

As the *Newsletter* went to press, the final hurdle was formal permission from Lewisham Council's Highways Department closing off a short section of the road in the front to traffic to make it safer for children to play and allow safe direct access to and from the Heath.

Senior council officers have assured us this permission will be straightforward. The plans

mean that access for bikes will be maintained and the entrance to the Talbot Place car park will not be affected.

The first job before construction will be some pruning of the row of lime trees along the front of the site and installing tree-protection barriers to prevent damage during the work. When the area is completed, the Heath will also gain another much-needed asset - a toilet.

This will be provided by Lewisham Council and located near the car park, as on past occasions for events on the Heath. It is expected to be accessible for people with disabilities and to have baby-changing facilities.

The project, supported by the Blackheath Society and a group of local parents and grandparents called the Friends of Blackheath Play Area, won a £60,000 grant from Lewisham Council in January 2021, recognising the absence of play provision for small children in a large and heavily populated area around Blackheath.

The building contract has been awarded to Glendale, Lewisham Council's contractors for maintaining the Heath, and EPD Landscape Architects are the designers. The project group is also grateful for the pro bono work of Ian Chalk, a local architect and Blackheath Society member who has campaigned for renewal of community recreational facilities on the site.



## WESTCOMBE WOODLANDS BLUEBELLS OPEN DAY IN APRIL

The Westcombe Woodlands is a 3.6 acre, steep and densely wooded area south of Maze Hill station which the Society previously owned via its subsidiary the Blackheath Preservation Trust.

It transferred ownership and running of the site in 2015 to a new body, the Friends of Westcombe Woodlands, who have done a wonderful job in maintaining it and making it accessible to the public.

The Friends are holding their annual spring bluebell open day on Sunday April 30. Starting at 2pm, it will provide refreshments, homemade cakes, children's



activities and give the public the chance to meet its committee members, as well as seeing the bluebells in flower (*photo above*). This is usually held on the first weekend of May, but was brought forward this year because of the coronation of King Charles III on May 6.

It is just one of a programme of events that includes volunteer mornings at the start of each month (*see photo right*), regular open days, an evening bat walk and the Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice Open Gardens Festival in June. Full details are on its website at [www.westcombewoodlands.uk](http://www.westcombewoodlands.uk).

Friends chair Tim Barnes said in its recent newsletter: "At a time of anxiety and mounting financial pressures for so many, the Westcombe Woodlands can provide a time and place for renewal and enjoyment. The unique atmosphere of the woodlands is something which so many people comment on.

"The larger the number of visitors, the more difficult it becomes to retain those unique qualities which make the place so memorable. We hope we have got the balance between public access and wild woodlands about right and, with spring just round the corner, that we will see as many of you as possible at one or other of our events."

The Woodlands were formally opened to the public in October 2015, four years after the Friends Group was founded. The freehold of the site is now vested in the Woodland Trust from which the Friends have a long lease. This arrangement means that the Woodlands can never be alienated or developed.

The Friends' first chair, Frank Smith, was also a previous chair of the Blackheath Society, and in 2011 the Preservation Trust ran a pilot project with Trees for Cities to encourage volunteers from the local community to be involved in the management and improvement of the woodlands.

The Friends are registered with the Charity Commission. Their principal aims are to secure the preservation, protection and improvement of the Woodlands, to educate the public in their history, natural history, ecology and biodiversity and to promote the work of volunteers in achieving those objectives.

Until the 18thC there were substantial gravel workings on the site as incoming ships to the London Docks, having unloaded the cargoes, required ballast for the return journeys, and gravel ballast became a valuable commodity.

Other parts of the woodlands were at one time used for market gardens, allotments and a pig farm. But the site's steep slopes, and the excavations left by the quarrying activities prevented any building.



## HALCYON BOOKSHOP FLOURISHES IN LEE ROAD

Halycon Books, a flourishing bookshop which opened a few years ago in Lee High Road, is going from strength to strength as new activities are introduced.

The family-run shop offers a variety of books - new, second hand and collectable. Coffee and cake is on hand, plus a sunny garden and Wi-Fi. There is also a regular evening book club at which participants discuss a short story. On Wednesdays the shop holds a 'Shut Up and Write' session, to which potential authors are welcome.

Recently, the local publisher Jantar has been promoting European fiction and the shop has started hosting evening author readings. Drop by and check it out, they are open 6 days a week.



### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Nina Angelova	Alastair Gordon	Liana Kypriotaki	Alex Seymour
Elisa Bello-Cano Powell	Sarah Griffiths	Moira Lindsay	Bing Shen
Joseph Bellon	Mark Helm	Robert Macdonald	Roland Stainton-Williamson
Steve Brown	Gillian Hester	Eleanor Martin	Oliver Start
Becky Cummings	Andrew Howell	Ann Monaghan	Rosemary Thornes
Rachel Dawson	Kevin Hughes	Nita Newsome	Caron True
Jenny Doak	Faye Jones	Steven Patterson	Aimee Walker
Cathryn Gabay	Richard Knight	Alistair Schaff	Lore Wolfson

## SEVERNDROOG CASTLE REOPENS WITH PERFECT CREAM TEAS

Severndroog Castle is the Grade II\* listed Gothic tower nestled in ancient woodland high on Shooter's Hill, a hidden gem with fabulous panoramic views of London, the river Thames and the edges of London's seven surrounding counties.

The castle is looked after by a preservation trust, an independent charity without regular funding which relies on donations and visitors.

Its tearoom has recently been taken in-house and is undergoing a refurbishment with the aim of giving visitors and the local community a place to enjoy its new menu, including a perfect cream tea.

The trustees are working hard to source ingredients locally to support small businesses and the local economy and give the castle a sustainable future. It will be reopening in April and, with spring in the air, they hope you will take the opportunity to discover a new spot for refreshment in an extraordinary setting. For more information see [www.severndroogcastle.org.uk](http://www.severndroogcastle.org.uk).



## GIFT AID DECLARATION FORM

[www.blackheath.org/giftaid](http://www.blackheath.org/giftaid)

From January 2022 the Blackheath Society changed its charity status from an unincorporated association of members to a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which is an up to date and more convenient way of managing the affairs of a charity such as ours, but we effectively remained the same.

Each year we make a claim to HMRC to increase your subscription fee by 25% if you have made a Gift Aid declaration.

Following the change to the new CIO, we are now required to obtain updated declarations from all

members who are eligible and are happy for us to claim.

We have set up a Gift Aid declaration form on our website which is straightforward to complete and we would be very grateful if you would be willing to do so on <https://www.blackheath.org/giftaid>.

Please note this should be completed by the person who makes the subscription payment.

Many thanks for your support for The Society.

## FROM THE ARCHIVE - WESTERN TIMES

### SATURDAY 16 OCTOBER 1830

### BLACKHEATH MYSTERY

The inhabitants of Blackheath, Greenwich, and its neighbourhood, have been for some days in a state of much anxiety and excitement, in consequence of the discovery of a very singular and mysterious description, which took place on Wednesday night last, the circumstances of which are as follows :- At about half-past nine o'clock on the night of Wednesday last, a Mr. Kreckler, residing at Greenwich, was returning home from Lewisham, across Blackheath near the Hare and Billet public-house when he kicked before him a boy's cap ; Mr.K picked it up, and turned about to see if he could discover its owner, but none could he find, and he proceeded towards home, when in passing a piece of water, designated Mount Pond, his attention was again roused by a something lying by the edge of the pond; he approached, determined to ascertain what it was, when, to his surprise, he found it to be the clothes belonging to two boys, consisting of black jacket, two pair of black cloth trousers waistcoats, and a cloth cap, which was trimmed crape. Mr. Kreckler, upon the discovery, explored the vicinity of the pond, but could find nothing to lead to any clue as to whom they belonged ; and taking possession of the clothes, he proceeded instantly to the Hare and Billet, where he related in what manner he had found them, and at his suggestion drags were immediately procured, in order that the pond and also another contiguous piece of water called the "Chocolate," might he searched, as it was conjectured the owners of the clothes might have gone there to bathe and were drowned. Many Persons tendered their assistance, and lights being obtained, the ponds were minutely searched, but no bodies could he found, and all further enquiry ceased for that night, but it was resumed again the morning with great vigilance. The mysterious details having been soon circulated, a vast crowd assembled on the spot, amongst whom many parents attended, whose children had disappeared lately from the neighbourhood under very odd circumstances, and nothing could exceed their anxiety during the search; however, nothing whatever was discovered to solve the mystery in which the affair is enveloped. On Saturday the police were occupied in endeavouring to find out persons who could identify the clothes, and papers giving their description have been circulated, but at present they have not had the effect desired. It is believed by many, and very currently reported, that the owners of the clothes have been trepanned and murdered for anatomical purposes, as, within these three months several children have vanished in the neighbourhood, and up to this period have never been heard of. The clothes are in the possession of Mr Kreckler, residing in London-street, Greenwich, inspection, and the police have received orders to make every inquiry relative to the singular affair.

## NEW OWNER FOR JOHN CHARLES BUTCHERS

John Charles, the Blackheath Village Butchers for over 100 years, has a new owner.

Nick Ellis has been a butcher throughout his career. Starting as a Saturday boy at John Andrews in Downham, he moved to Waitrose in the butcher's department. From there he completed his apprenticeship at Pole Hill and then worked for Allens of Mayfair. He is well known in Greenwich as he worked for Drings for 11 years before finally buying his own shop.

Sundays, and the staff work a four-day rota to cover the service.

Nick plans to renovate the shop, while maintaining the old features which give it so much charm. He's introducing new free-range suppliers, including chicken and duck from Devon, and for Easter there will be Cornish and Herefordshire lamb to enjoy, as well as seasonal specialities throughout the year.

wanted to buy a shop together and have found our perfect site in Blackheath". They specialise in British produce, buying from markets in Billingsgate, Brixham, Plymouth and the Shetlands.

They will be selling the famous Whitstable oysters and introducing new suppliers and produce from all over Britain. They're open six days a week, apart from Mondays, and are also considering offering fish meals to take away and eat-in oysters and champagne.

Madeleine's ice cream shop celebrated its fifth birthday in the Village in January and owner Josua Gerasch told the *Newsletter* they offered their loyal customers one free scoop for the day.

An independent store, they make all the ice cream on site in the basement, offering over 30 flavours, with their best-sellers pistachio and salted caramel.

Madeleine's won the prestigious Great Taste Award, the industry's largest and most trusted food and drink accreditation scheme. This supports and promotes large and small producers and Madeleine's will be entering again this year.



The hours are long: at 4am he's at the market and the Blackheath shop is open from 7am to 7pm, with shorter hours at the weekend. Unlike the previous owner, the shop is open from 10am until 4pm on



Finally we have a great Fishmongers in Blackheath. Partners Kevin Hughes and Paul Earles opened their Fishmongers, Rockpool at 12 Montpelier Vale, in March. They have worked together throughout their careers and have 36 years' experience between them in buying and selling fish and shellfish. Kevin told the *Newsletter*: "We've always

## CIRCUS ELEPHANTS ARRIVE AT BLACKHEATH STATION

Society member Lucy Chapple found this fascinating photo of elephants from Billy Smart's Circus at the station taken, she thinks, by her father in the late 1950s/early 1960s.

A camel and llama were also there.

We have also found an article in the Blackheath Bugle, with a photo, said to come from a local history book *A Century of Lewisham* by John Coulter, which shows a caravan of camels traipsing up Tranquil Vale towards Billy Smart's Circus on the Heath in the 1950s. The paper said the camels were supposed to have been Algerian veterans from the Foreign Legion.

The Society would be glad to publish any other interesting old photos that members may possess, so please have a rummage in your attic and do send any good ones that you find to the office.



## PARK MANAGER RETIRES

Greenwich Park manager Graham Dear (*below*) retires in April after 13 years at the Royal Parks. Graham and his team were heavily involved in hosting the successful riding section of the modern pentathlon, and the equestrian dressage and jumping events, during the 2012 Summer Olympics.

A temporary equestrian course was built, designed for the cross-country part of the eventing competition, with a main arena in front of the Queen's House in the grounds of the National Maritime Museum.

Emily Brett, Royal Parks Communications Manager, told the *Newsletter*: "More recently, his drive and passion for the park led to the inception and development of the Greenwich Park Revealed Project, and he has been instrumental in driving this forward since funding was secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

"Graham has been an inspirational Park Manager who delivered significant improvements to the landscape quality and visitor experience in Greenwich Park. He will be missed across all the Royal Parks, and we wish him the best of luck in his retirement."



He said: "Greenwich Park means so much to so many people and it has been my honour to run the park with my excellent colleagues and volunteers for the last 13 years. I'll miss it immensely but intend to stay in touch as a member of the 'Friends of Greenwich Park'."

Clare Lanes will be the new Greenwich Park Manager. She is the first female manager at The Royal Parks in over 30 years. A Parks statement said: "It is hoped she will inspire a new generation of women and girls in the landscaping and horticultural sectors."

Clare has over 25 years' experience in the landscape industry across the south of England and in Sydney, Australia. She has worked with the National Trust as a parks manager and Medway Council Unitary Authority, where she delivered a Strategic Environmental Management Scheme on the Hoo Peninsula in Kent.

## WREN OLD ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE TRICENTENARY

This year marks the tricentenary of Britain's most famed architect, Sir Christopher Wren, and the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich is celebrating this as part of a national programme of events.

Wren was commissioned to design the now listed site, then the Greenwich Hospital for naval pensioners and seamen, by King William and Queen Mary. He reflected his legendary St Paul's Cathedral in its iconic twin domes by the river, and the building remains identical to the architect's original plan, 300 years after he died.



*The photomontage above shows Wren in front of the Old Royal Naval College, seen from the opposite bank.*

The site attracts over 1.2 million visitors a year. The celebrations will include tours of the domes and historic site, visiting Wren's Studio, with interactive models, drawings and animations.

There will also be a photography exhibition, a family-friendly fun programme during the school holidays and a special display of a letter by Wren about building the site.

On 12 May the Chapel of St Peter and St Paul will host the renowned Brandenburg Sinfonia for a Baroque concert in which it will perform music by Handel and Purcell, supported by the 35-strong Trinity Laban Chapel Choir.

The family events run during the May half term and in the summer. In the Painted Hall, a special display will show a letter written by Wren on 11 October, 1700, to Thomas Gilbert, the Overseer of the King's Quarries of the Isle of Portland, requesting 2,000 tonnes of Portland Stone for the building.

The letter will be exhibited for a year from the date of the tricentenary on 25 February this year, and the tours will run to the end of September.

## BLACKHEATH PREP CELEBRATES BICENTENARY

Blackheath Prep School will celebrate its bicentenary this year with a series of *200 Challenges*, including making seed bombs, discovering history facts, acts of kindness, writing poems, making charity donations and a community day.



Pupils will take part in the London mini-marathon on April 22 and a concert will be held at Blackheath Halls on May 25, with 150 pupils performing. The school will also take part in Trinity Laban's summer 2023 show, collaborating with professional dancers, and a new school song by composer Emily Barden will be commissioned.

A free Community Day will be held on Saturday July 1 with music and dance performances by local children, entertainment, street performers and games. In October a new commemorative sculpture for the school grounds will be created in its ceramics garden.

Last January pupils walked 200 miles around the school in one week and the Mayor of Greenwich, Cllr Leo Fletcher (*below*), visited the school for a special tree planting ceremony and tea party. On its Bicentenary Day in March pupils dressed up in costumes throughout the ages and formed a human timeline.

Blackheath Prep, originally known as Christ's College, is co-educational, with 390 pupils, and was founded as a boys' boarding school by Reverend Greenlaw in 1823.



## EAGLE-EYED ARCHIVIST SPOTS LOCAL GOLFER IN CAMBODIA

Blackheath and its history appears in the most unlikely places. Society committee member Allan Griffin visited Cambodia in December and at Tonle Sap, the largest freshwater lake in south-east Asia, he called at a floating village for a much-needed restorative drink.

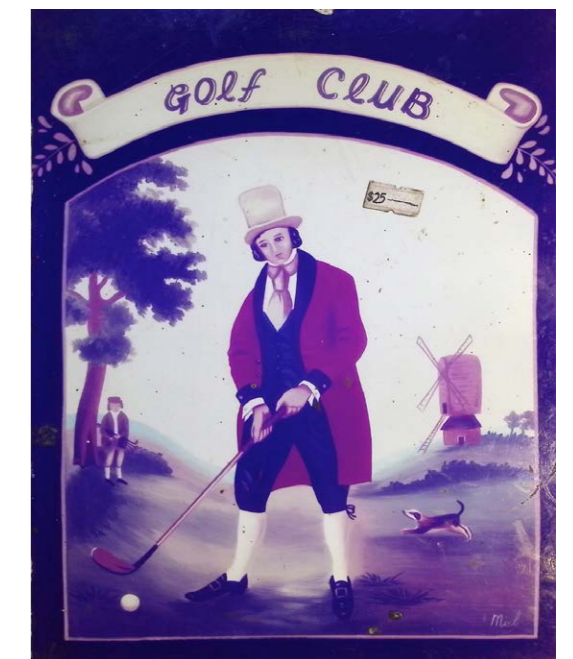
Trying to ignore the water snakes under his feet and the crocodiles, which were farmed and fortunately safely penned in, he looked through the bric-a-brac on display.

Among the motley collection of pre-1950s objects, mainly French as France was then the colonial power, Allan noticed something called Golf Club, an A4 size piece of wood which turned out to be an image of an early golfer on Blackheath.

Clearly evident is the windmill which used to stand on the Heath and Whitefields Mount, with an attendant caddie.

An unusual find in a most unexpected location, and quite why golf in Blackheath should turn up 6,000 miles away is a mystery.

This must have been the memento of a nostalgic expatriate Frenchman, reminding himself perhaps of the pleasures and challenges of early 19th century golf in a gentler climate on the Heath.



It has now been brought back safely to its spiritual home in Blackheath and will be kept in our archive, which Allan manages.

# REBEKAH ADEY JOINS AGE EXCHANGE AS INTERIM CEO

Rebekah Adey (*seen below*) joined Age Exchange in March as its new interim Chief Executive Officer for the rest of this year, succeeding Raj Kapoor.



She was previously Managing Director for Southern England for Age Exchange's parent charity, Community Integrated Care (CIC). She will be supported by its Artistic Director, David Savill, and the Community Hub Manager, Gemma Catnott-Bell.

Age Exchange celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. It said it had developed a new organisational strategy, has received several new commissions to deliver innovative projects, regionally and nationally, and has been recognized by the National Diversity Awards.

At the CIC Rebekah oversaw a diverse portfolio of services and led more than 500 colleagues. She has worked in the social care sector for over 25 years.

Bridget Prentice, Chair of Age Exchange, said: "Rebekah brings a wealth of experience to the role, as well as a life-long passion for arts and community engagement."

As we head towards our 40th year, we are entering a brilliant new chapter of our history. We are delighted to have appointed someone with such an exceptional career history and natural passion for our cause to help lead us as we venture into this next phase of our journey."

CIC Director of Partnerships and Communities John Hughes said: "Rebekah will play an important role in helping to develop the unique relationship between our two charities."

Age Exchange has planned a programme of celebrations for this year, including an exhibition of art works created by service users from Caring Services that have been delivered at Age Exchange, Lambeth or further afield.

A plaque to celebrate Age Exchange's founder, Pam Schweitzer, was unveiled in the building last November and the photo below shows (from the left) Dora, David and Pam Schweitzer, Raj Kapoor and Rosalie Vexter. Pam was artistic director of the Age Exchange Trust and Reference Centre from 1983 to 2005.



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