



## KITES FLEW HIGH ON BRILLIANT DAY WITH LARGE CROWD

Brilliant sunshine and just enough wind made for probably the best Kite Day we've seen since the Society relaunched the event three years ago, following a gap of more than 12 years.

An estimated 2,000 people came to watch the display of giant kites, fly their own, and enjoy the last of the summer weather on Sunday October 8 at what looks set to become an established annual event for the Society.

On the same afternoon, the Friends of Blackheath Play Area opened the natural play space in Talbot Place, adjoining the Heath, giving out bubbles (*seen below*) and providing some refreshments, as children explored their new place for imaginative play.

The play project, developed by volunteers, was supported by the Society and local councillors, and financed by grants from Lewisham Council and the Balcombe Charitable Trust.

The day's highlight was again the giant kites supplied by the Kent Kite Flyers, an enthusiasts' group from the coast. It generously donates its time and the expertise of its volunteers and offers kites for sale.

The impressive display kites, which included flying teddies and a giant astronaut, needed to be securely tethered to prevent them taking off and landing on the A2. Several one-ton ballast bags were dropped for anchorage at strategic points the day before by a lorry and hoist, provided free again by J Hearnden Skip Hire.

This year we were also treated to a demonstration of traditional Asian kite flying by Dr Azhar Mir who, with his family, handed out small paper kites to children.

Blackheath was delighted to welcome back the musical stars of Grinling Gibbons Primary School in Deptford, who entertained us with their steelpan band. The serious concentration the children showed, and the support from parents and teachers, was impressive especially for an event out of school hours.

A reward for the children's hard work was supplied by Botton's Family Funfairs, with wristbands for free rides. We work closely with Jimmy Botton and his family and we are very grateful for their support for Kite Day and at Christmas, with festive trees for the Village.





A date for the fourth Blackheath Society Kite Day has already been set for 2024: Sunday October 13, when we will again be hoping for the perfect combination of sunshine and wind. Below are some of the best photographs of the day, including those taken by our talented volunteer photographer Stéphan Magne.

Our thanks once again to the Kent Kite Flyers, the Mir family, Botton's Family Funfairs, Grinling Gibbons Primary School, J. Hearnden Skip Hire, Glendale Lewisham and the many Blackheath Society volunteers.

*The photograph at the top of page 1 is of The Paragon, Blackheath, in the snow.*



One of the most interesting local houses, of which we have no image, stood on the corner of Eliot Hill and Lewisham Hill. Even our President and local historian Neil Rhind was unable to find one for the third volume of his Blackheath history after many years of searching.

But, thanks to the local history postcard collector Gareth Long and retired librarian John Coulter, we have now been given permission to reproduce what the second version of The Hermitage looked like - this is seen on the right. It was built on the site of the original structure in 1872 by paper merchant John Pollock and was a substantial property with three reception rooms and eight bedrooms, but was demolished in 1936 for the archetypal block which stands on the site presently. The first version, built in 1756, is interesting because it was one of a handful on the Heath, as was Holly Hedge House, the headquarters of the local TA battalion.

## HOUSING MARKET DROPS BUT PLANNING ACTIVITY STEADY

Activity in the housing market has dropped, so we have had a smaller number of planning applications to deal with, but there is still plenty going on.

We are still awaiting the committee stage of the application, mentioned in previous *Newsletters*, to put houses on the green space in the conservation area at Richmond Gardens. The community centre on the site is home to a mural by the well-known artist William Mitchell.

We supported an application to Historic England to have this listed, but did not succeed. Its fate will be one of many issues we and local residents have to deal with, as we object to this deplorable scheme.

One under consideration is the reappearance of the plan for the conversion of the Bowls Club in Brooklands Park as part of a project to relocate it to Blackheath Park.

The Society supported the objective behind the project in 2018, but had reservations about the justification offered for building on community open space. These concerns were shared by the council and an appeal inspector in 2019. We look forward to examining the new scheme for the future of the Bowls Club.

We have also responded to a consultation on the next phase of the Kidbrooke Village scheme. This will involve a series of tall buildings along Kidbrooke Park Road, all bigger and taller than in earlier plans, as the developer responds to the need for more housing. Issues include the fate of a number of mature trees along the road and the full application is expected shortly.

Apart from examining major applications, the planning group is also active in several smaller but important areas. These include examining implementation of commitments for tree planting in approvals for buildings, potential enforcement issues arising when building takes place without

appropriate permission, and a question about undertakings to rehabilitate the Heath after construction work on its border.

An important step in offering clear guidance on planning matters is in Greenwich, with the official publication of an Urban Design Guide. This document can be accessed at [www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200191/planning\\_policy\\_and\\_strategy/876/supplementary\\_planning\\_documents\\_and\\_planning\\_briefs](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200191/planning_policy_and_strategy/876/supplementary_planning_documents_and_planning_briefs). It updates and widens earlier guidance, including dealing with issues such as intensification of development, civic space and sustainability issues.

The Society contributed extensively to the preparation of this guide and we are pleased that many of our ideas, such as the treatment of trees, were adopted. The document is a subset of a new Local Plan for Greenwich, on which work will commence in 2024.

Lewisham, by contrast, is in a more advanced phase of finalising its local plan. After consultation this now proceeds for examination by a planning inspector before it can come into force, possibly next year.

The implementation of the new planning procedures mentioned in our previous *Newsletter* is progressing and necessitates amenity societies obtaining formal recognition by the Council. We do not expect difficulties, but it will be interesting to see what it might mean for smaller, but still important, local groups.

Outline plans for the future of Lewisham town centre have just been published for public comment. The developer, Land Securities, envisages a huge scheme covering the whole area currently occupied, and a new shopping centre with retail, food and beverage, culture and workspace facilities; new public spaces and green areas; and a significant amount of new housing located in towers along Molesworth Street. The proposed masterplan and consultation links can be accessed at [centrallewisham.commonplace.is](http://centrallewisham.commonplace.is). Probably to be progressed before this, Lewisham Council will be refurbishing its library, rejuvenating the market and improving the High Street using £19m in levelling up funding from the government, combined with £5m of additional match funding from the council.

The plan below shows existing Lewisham solid towers in the foreground with the railway to Blackheath to the left and to London on the right. The proposed new development is behind them shown with transparent towers and the view is north to south.





## ST MARGARET'S ANCIENT CHURCHYARD - PAST AND FUTURE

The Old Churchyard of St Margaret's in Lee Terrace contains one of the oldest structures in Blackheath, the medieval tower of the Old Church, as well as many tombs dating to the 18th century.

Ten tombs are in a particularly poor condition and need repairs to their stonework and structure. These date from 1727 to 1794 and, while legal responsibility for their repair falls to the descendants of those who erected them, they are not easy to find.



This is a major project, likely to cost in excess of £200,000 to complete in full. The sum of £82,000 was received in 2019 from the developers of the adjacent site for their repair.

This will be used for a first phase but will fall far short of what will be needed to restore the churchyard to its potential glory and offer access to visitors.

Significant fundraising will be required, from major donors and the community, to permit full restoration and the Society will be supporting this.

Although the total amount needed for their restoration

is large, the nature of the project, with various tombs requiring different degrees of repair, means it can be done in stages and small contributions can make a difference.

If you are interested in this effort or are able to assist with fundraising, to any degree, please contact the Society office or Amie Dotchin at [community@stmargaretslee.org.uk](mailto:community@stmargaretslee.org.uk).

Repairs in a first phase are planned to start in 2024 and further work will proceed in stages depending on funding success. We will report on these as they progress. It is hoped controlled access to the churchyard will be possible during the project.

Paul Wright gave an entertaining and informative talk on October 3 on some of the notable residents of the churchyard, *seen left*, which lies across the road from the current building. He talked about the lives of a Restoration era actress, an early resident of Dacre House and the victim of a murderous gardener.

Actor and Society member Rupert Frazer read a dramatic account of the kidnapping as a child of a claimant to an Irish title who was subsequently buried in the churchyard. Lutenist Daniel Murphy played two pieces by Daniel Bacheler a composer at the court at Greenwich Palace.

The talk, attended by about 120 people, concluded with insights into the lives of Sir Edmund Halley and Robert Cocking, who fell to earth when his experimental parachute failed.

Joanna Ecclestone, Senior Conservation Officer at Lewisham Council told the audience about plans to repair the listed tombs in the churchyard to halt their decay and address some of the safety issues that have led to it being closed to general access.

## LEGACY OF SIR IAN MILLS LIVES ON IN BLACKHEATH

Last year saw the passing of the distinguished local resident Sir Ian Mills, who did so much to improve Blackheath in his lifetime. Apart from the renovation projects he led which now adorn Blackheath, two other initiatives are thriving, both led by Society trustee Howard Shields.

Sir Ian established the charity Talk About Art (TAA) in 2015, aimed at bringing art education to children

in Lewisham who would otherwise not have access. It was successful in early years in promoting workshops and exhibitions to this end.

The Covid era required some successful adaptations to online education methods and, after Covid, its efforts have been focused on reaching children who are out of full-time education, where need has become acute.

The charity now has a talented new CEO, Emma-Jayne Taylor, who has a fine track record in arts

administration and fund raising and it is looking to expand its activity significantly to pursue this objective.

A second Sir Ian initiative was setting up a significant and sizeable fund in memory of his wife, The Elizabeth Legacy Fund (ELF), which aims to help disadvantaged youth in Lewisham in various ways. Working with Lewisham Council agencies, ELF is aiming to arrange the disbursement this year of over £200,000 to various causes. A fitting legacy for Sir Ian Mills.

## NEW SANCHO MEMORIAL IN GREENWICH PARK IN NEW YEAR

*Richard Bourne, secretary of the Ignatius Sancho Memorial Committee, writes:*

Several members of the Society and donors to the public appeal coordinated by Greenwich University, have been asking when the enhanced memorial to Ignatius Sancho will be erected on the wall of Greenwich Park.

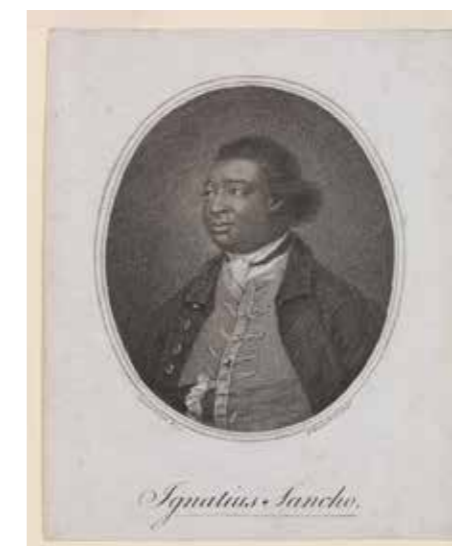
We had hoped for an unveiling on July 1 by the Mayor of Greenwich in the presence of Lord Boateng, the Chancellor, and other VIPs. Funds had been raised and our sculptor Christy Symington, whose studio is in Deptford, had made a ceramic relief based on Sancho's portrait by Gainsborough (*seen right*).

But late in the process a hairline crack was detected, and the ceremony had to be postponed.

Christy takes the utmost care to ensure her sculpture, designed to last, is perfect. She works with clay, a natural product subject to vagaries of temperature, and this enhanced memorial needs three firings because of the different colours used.

As members of the Society may remember, the memorial will sit above the 2004 plaque on the wall of what was Montagu House, now incorporated into the historic listed wall of Greenwich Park.

Sancho, who had been brought to our part of London as an enslaved toddler in the 18th century and



became a polymath and London celebrity, worked for the Dukes of Montagu.

Christy has been beset by family tragedies and health problems,

but is making steady progress and, assuming all three firings are successful, she expects to hand over the sculpture in perfect condition for installing in late January. This will not be simple, as the relief will need a metal frame for its security on a fragile late 17th century wall and the installation will take at least three weeks.

Our committee has resolved that the enhanced memorial will go up without fanfare and it should be a pleasant surprise for those walking in the park close to Ranger's House and the Rose Garden.

A more formal event will take place later next year when diaries permit and the weather improves.

Sancho's modern reputation continues to grow, thanks to the indefatigable work of the actor Paterson Joseph and the decision by the Royal Parks to name the new café in the Park after Sancho.

We would like to thank all donors for their patience. We believe the enhanced memorial will be an exciting new attraction in the park and a piece of public art worthy of this World Heritage Site.

## BENEDICT BIRNBERG SOCIETY MEMBER FOR OVER 60 YEARS

*Neil Rhind writes:* We very much regret to report the death in October of one of our longest-standing members, and perhaps the longest, the solicitor Benedict Birnberg.

The record shows he was a member of the Society as far back as the 1950s. His fame as a radical solicitor meant that he took on some of the most notoriously difficult cases. A great achievement was the posthumous pardon granted to Derek Bentley, who was hanged in 1953 for murdering a policeman, although he did not fire the deadly shot. It took Ben and the family 45 years to achieve success.

For many years the Birnbergs have lived in Eliot Place and one of his great delights was a tie made for him by his daughter, Ariadne, which depicted the Kite Festival on Blackheath. His obituaries in *The Times* and *the Guardian* were both long and generous.

On the right is a picture taken in 1990. Ben and his wife Felitsa flanked Roy Fox when the latter received the first golden scroll award from the Blackheath Society to mark his retirement as Keeper of the Heath. He lived in the house by the Folly Pond for over 10 years.





## ARCHIVE NEWS - LETTER BOOK FOUND & MARY CORR LEGACY

Our archive collection grows and grows.

Thanks to sharp-eyed local resident Bernard Rice we now have the letter book of the surveyor and estate agent William Dyer, who took over George Gilbert's business at 17 Montpelier Row in the 1850s.

It later became Dyer Son & Hilton and then Dyer Son & Creasey and moved to a shop in the Village after bomb damage rendered the Montpelier Row building uninhabitable at 22 Tranquil Vale, where its name stood on the fascia board until the 1970s. It was a remarkable run of over 120 years.

The letter book starts at 1853 and is hand-written, no doubt by a long-suffering and underpaid clerk, until the start of the 20th century, with some items produced using carbon paper and a typewriter.

Bernard found the company letter and account books in a rubbish dump and, when he saw the number of Blackheath mentions, he promptly gave it all to us, for which we are most grateful.

It contains copies of letters sent by Gilbert, then Dyer and his successors, to clients with survey details and valuations. Many entries relate to houses still standing.

His house at 74 Shooters Hill was let to ship owner Lemuel Brocklebank (1815-1879). Dyer recommended a rent of £90 per annum in June 1853 and charged £5.11.0 for a schedule of fixtures and fittings and his fee. It now enjoys an English Heritage blue plaque.

This marks the residences of brothers Joseph and William Lindley, Europe's water and drainage experts. It was owned by Perceval Moses Parsons (1819-1892), the engineer who invented manganese bronze in a furnace he erected in his back garden at 136 Shooters Hill Road. This house certainly also deserves a blue plaque.

Number 28 Shooters Hill Road was also valued at a rental of £90 per annum in February 1853 and Dyer charged £4.10.0 for his professional efforts.

Glebe House, 10 The Glebe, was assessed in 1890 for a new tenant James Blyth Leckie, a rich and prosperous silk merchant, and was described as a "superior and substantial detached family residence with nearly an acre of well-shrubbed ground". Dyer's value was a colossal £3,000 - near £2m by today's reckoning. His daughter Jean married author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Mary Corr (1931-2020), *seen below*, was a schoolteacher and headmistress who enjoyed a genuine enthusiasm for local history. Over the years she accumulated an enormous collection of material relating to our area and southeast London generally.



This includes notices of events and reports of activities in Blackheath, Greenwich, Charlton and Woolwich as well as local history books and pamphlets. She decided that her collection should be distributed among the various amenity societies.

We were contacted by her niece and executor, Suzanne Rixon, and the Blackheath and Greenwich material has come to us. It is a considerable and valuable amount and will need assessing and cataloguing in due course.

One of the problems in acquiring archival material is that the items usually need indexing. Last year we acquired the minute book of the Westcombe Park Estate Company from the 1870s to 1886. We now have the Dyer letter book and both are very large volumes containing much data.

Both now need indexing if they are to be of any real value to local historians and researchers into the neighbourhood of their own houses. So if you feel inspired and perhaps have recently retired with not a lot of things to do, please step forward and contact the office and we will show you what is required.

*Correction:* In our autumn *Newsletter* we referred to the death of Greenwich resident Sir Alan Bailey as Robin Bailey. This was a slip of the typewriter by our informant and we are pleased to make the correction.



The photograph on the left of haybales being harvested on the Heath during the summer should bring a warmer glow as winter sets in.

## SOCIETY HOPES FOR MEMBERS RECORD & SEEKS VOLUNTEERS



*Society chair Paul Watts writes:* I am sure that I am not alone in wondering where the time has gone this year, but looking at the activities reported on in this Newsletter gives me a clue.

The Society has had another successful year, with increasing membership numbers. We hope to welcome a 1,000th household as a member in 2024 and we would like to thank our old and new members for all that you do for the Society.

One of our main challenges, as with many membership organisations, is to encourage people not only to join, but to actively participate in our activities. We are fortunate in having a committed band of volunteers in many areas and we thank you all for your help again this year.

But we do need new volunteers, particularly to work in our archive where we are looking for people with an interest in local history and a familiarity with or readiness to pick up new computer skills, as this would help us digitise it.

We particularly need help in organising events and covering planning applications, and we are looking for people with experience of charity governance, IT, publishing, transport and ecology.

We also need member volunteers to steer a project to install defibrillators out of doors in the Village. At present we do have some in buildings, but none is available 24 hours a day.

Lewisham Council is aware of the situation and is prepared to support an application from the Society to the Department of Health and Social Care for a defibrillator to be placed somewhere outside buildings, where it will be accessible all day and night. Is there a member or group of people who would be able to head this project?

I would encourage anyone with an interest or experience in other areas that you think might be useful to the Society to make themselves known as well.

Please let our secretary Sacha know at the office if you can offer some time and experience to help in any of the areas mentioned above. I would like to thank all our trustees, and of course Sacha for keeping such a full programme going in 2023.

I do hope that you enjoy a relaxing and peaceful Christmas. Best wishes to all for a Happy New Year.

### GIFT AID DECLARATION FORM

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 the Society remained essentially 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 this 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 make this 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. There is no need if you have already done this in 2023.

### DERBY MERCURY

29 March 1733

On Wednesday last a Highwayman, having robb'd a Coach at the Bottom of Shooter's-hill, rode off towards Eltham.

And sometime afterwards coming round on Black-Heath, the Coach stopping at the Green Man, they knew the Robber, and called out for Help; whereupon he rode thro' Greenwich to the Ferry-boat at the Waterside, and desired the Ferryman to put off immediately, but upon his scrupling to do so with a single Passenger, he offer'd him his whole Fare

He was got but a little Way from the Shore, when the Pursuers coming down, stopt the Boat; Upon which he jump'd over-board, and swam his Horse; but a Galley being instantly fitted out, they seized him, and brought him to Shore, and he was confin'd at Greenwich that Night, it being pretty late.

The next Day was sent to Maidstone Gaol: He was formerly Footman to a Gentleman in Greenwich.



## OVER A DOZEN SOCIETY EVENTS FILL PACKED PROGRAMME

**TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER, 9AM.** Visit the Royal Troops in Woolwich. Join us for this very special visit. Founded in 1947, the role of His Majesty's Mounted Ceremonial Battery of the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery includes firing Royal Salutes to mark the grand state occasions. We will watch the Troop (*below*) conduct a practice parade and tour the lines with a trip into the forge, saddlers and tailors.

Meet at 8.50am at Repository Road, Woolwich, SE18 4BB. Numbers are limited so please reserve your place through Margaret Drummond who is organising the event. Her email is drummond\_margaret@hotmail.com.



**WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY, 6pm ZOOM meeting.** Alan Terrill, editor of the Folly Fellowship Magazine, will give a guided tour to the world of follies in the garden and on the estate. Members will be sent the zoom link.

**WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY, 12.30PM.** Meet & Eat at The Princess of Wales. Join other members for a drink, something to eat and a chat.

**THURSDAY 18 JANUARY, 10.15AM.** Walk & Talk: Canon Street & Walbrook. Enjoy a short New Year walk with members led by Jonathan Causer around the vicinity of Cannon Street station and Walbrook. We visit the stunning altar at St Stephens Church and meet by the Plumber statue, platforms 5-7 at Cannon Street Station. Please book via our website link to Eventbrite.

**FRIDAY 2 FEBRUARY, (TBC).** Architecture Group Visit: to Feilden Fowles. Join us for a visit to the award-winning architects' studio and adjacent Waterloo city farm.

**WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY, 6PM.** ZOOM talk: A dead man in Deptford. The Murder of Christopher Marlowe. Professor Alan Downie will reveal the mystery around the death of Christopher Marlowe. Why was he in Deptford? Was he a spy? Why was he killed? Or did he not die at all but live to write Shakespeare's plays? Professor Downie, from Goldsmiths College, University of London, is an authority on Marlowe's life and he will reveal all. Members will be sent a link to join the Zoom.

**THURSDAY 29 FEBRUARY, 11AM.** Architecture Group visit to the Straw Bale House, Islington. See the pioneering Straw Bale House by Sarah Wigglesworth Architects at Stock Orchard Street, Islington. This

will be led by Jeremy Till, who shares the studio with Wigglesworth. Built in 2001, it was recently upgraded.

**MONDAY 11 MARCH, 12.30PM.** Meet & Eat at the Princess of Wales. Join other members for a convivial lunchtime drink, chat and eat.

**THURSDAY 14 MARCH (TBC), 11AM.** Walk & Talk: The Holland Park Circle followed by visit to Leighton House (National Trust). Join members on the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea Tour of the artist studios. Meet at Leighton House (*seen in an engraving below*) for the guided walk. Then visit the House after lunch at 2pm.



Booking on its website will be available nearer the date and we will update you through our members' emails.

**WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH (TBC).** Architecture Group Visit to Stiff+Trevillion Architects Studio, W9. Founded in 1981, the practice now has a large studio working across all areas. The visit is led by founding partner Michael Stiff. We learn about their work and projects.

**WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL, 9.30AM TO 4.30PM.** Architecture Group day trip to Brighton. Our first day out travelling to Brighton is for a guided tour by the curator at The Georgian Town House, an 1820s building by architect Charles Busby, followed by lunch. We visit Embassy Court, an 1935 building by architect Wells Coates and then walk back to Brighton station, spotting other landmarks and public spaces in town.

**TUESDAY 14 MAY, 7PM.** Architecture Group Annual Lecture. This year by Professor Graeme Brooker, Head of interior design at RCA's School of Architecture, on the theme of re-use. Graeme grew up in the area and has recently published a book on the subject. Drinks will be served and copies of the book will be available.

**THURSDAY 23 MAY.** Architecture Group Visit: The Muse by Bere Architects. Visit to this pioneering eco house by Bere Architects, Newington Green.

Later in the summer dates tbc. Talk on Sydney Opera House, by Richard Frewer FRIBA and visit to Wick Lane, mixed-use scheme by dRMM Architects, Hackney Wick.



Our annual Heath cleanup in October attracted 20 volunteers and was blessed with fine weather. It was pleasing to see that there seems to be continual improvement year by year in the amount of litter we recover.

## GREENWICH REGAIN CRICKET'S GOLDEN ELEPHANT

The original day booked for our annual cricket match against the Greenwich Society was July 4, but this was rained off and we were only able to obtain the much later date from Greenwich Park of September 6, with its shorter hours of daylight.

So the match was agreed to be 15 overs each, rather than the usual 20, but it was a gloriously sunny afternoon if a little warm for the time of year. *Both teams are seen below after the match.*

Unusually, Blackheath batted first and the opening father and son partnership of James and Richard Fleming got the team off to a promising start with a combined total of 46 runs. But that is where the good news ended and what followed can fairly be described as a major collapse. The rest of the team added only 38 runs for a total of 84, not a score likely to worry the opposition and so it proved. Greenwich, to their credit, cruised past this target in just 11 overs with six wickets remaining.

This was a surprisingly one-sided match bearing in mind that Blackheath just scraped a win last year by

one run in the last over and the year before we had a tie. The difference is always in the numbers - and one particular set of figures says it all. Last year three of our top scorers amassed 74 runs and on this day the same players scored a total of just six, perhaps due to good Greenwich bowling, especially by 12-year old Josh Book who took three wickets in one over.

Anyway, it was a lovely day and we all enjoyed a quintessentially English occasion within the historic setting of a Royal Park. Players were in their whites, and friends, families and supporters gathered on the boundary line with hampers of cool drinks, strawberries and cakes. It was nice to see our President Neil Rhind amongst the crowd with a visitor from South Africa, and the Deputy Lieutenant for Greenwich.

Many thanks again to Olly Taylor, our captain, and the team and to Denise Mabey and Howard Shields who volunteered as scorers. Thanks also to our gallant umpires John Bartram and Sam Gardiner who both sported umpires' white coats in the heat of the day. It was also most kind of Tim Barnes to invite both sides to refreshments at his home after the match.





## BLACKHEATH BOOKSHOP ON THE HEATH FOR SALE

Blackheath's Bookshop on the Heath at the top of Tranquil Vale, which first opened in 1949, is up for sale again.

Owner Ian Irvine told the *Newsletter* that he is very keen for it to remain as a bookshop. He is willing to wait until he finds the right buyer and is looking for more than the £105,000 he paid for it six years ago.

He received two offers after mentioning the sale to friends but these were unsuitable, so he is now advertising it more widely on the Internet. He signed a new 8-year lease with his landlord Keith Steward in May but this time it did not stipulate the building must remain as a bookshop.

Keith told the *Newsletter* this was an oversight when he arranged the new lease and said he was keen it should remain as a bookshop.

Ian has expanded and improved the business which is now solvent. It holds up to 30,000 mainly second-hand and antiquarian volumes, with some dating back to 1660, and about the same number of books is stored in a warehouse.

In 1949 Jameson Benbrook opened an antiquarian bookshop on the site which he sold to the Misses Aitken and Korn, who retired in 1962. May Roberts took the business over until 1970 when she sold it



to her manager, Louis Leff. The Bookshop was then bought by Richard Platt who ran it with his wife Jasmine until transferring it to David Wilson. He took it over in 2014 and Ian bought the shop from him in 2017.

Its fiction selection ranges from everyday reading copies to signed first editions, with sections for crime and adventure, poetry, plays and science fiction. There is a large collection of children's books, covering travel, local history, religion and spirituality, art and architecture, photography, politics and philosophy, plus a selection of competitively priced paperbacks on the bookshop trolleys.

The Bookshop also maintains a stock of original prints and reproduction maps, which focus on the Lewisham, Blackheath and Greenwich areas.

## MORDEN COLLEGE BUILDING WINS NATIONAL RIBA AWARD

Morden College has won this year's prestigious Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling prize for the country's best building with its new John Morden Centre, designed by Mae Architects.

The RIBA awards are given to buildings in recognition of their significant contributions to architecture. Built between 2019 and 2021, the Centre is a day care building for residents that brings together facilities previously spread across the site to tackle social isolation among its older residents.

Meryl Davies, who became Morden's Chief Executive Officer in October, told the *Newsletter*: "We're immensely proud that our John Morden Centre has won the Stirling Prize. The team here worked with Mae architects to create a space which embodies the values of community and connection for people in later life. The prize recognises and acknowledges how the fundamental link between people and place is essential throughout our lives."

The College, founded in 1695 by pioneering merchant Sir John Morden for less fortunate colleagues, is a charity dedicated to supporting older people.

*The Guardian* said it was not hard to see why the Centre won the award. "In its arrangement of spaces, carefully judged details and tactile material qualities, it is a model for how to create a sociable setting for life in older age, a beacon of optimism after a decade of swingeing social care cuts." *The Times* said the judges praised the architect's focus on countering older people's loneliness and described it as a place of joy and inspiration.



## FOUR NEW ESTABLISHMENTS OPEN IN BLACKHEATH

**Café East** restaurant has moved to Montpelier Vale from Canada Water where the site is being developed. Manager Yen Ly lives in Lee and says she always wanted to find a site in Blackheath.

The food is based on south Vietnamese cuisine, priding itself on fresh ingredients, and the café has a relaxed, French colonial design. But it has never served alcohol and Yen has noticed that some Blackheath customers crave a drink. They may be hoping that she will apply for a licence.



**Buzz Café**, which opened in Blackheath station in the autumn, is a business venture run by partners James Rushton and Steve Daly. This is their third café after West Hampstead and Blackfriars and they are hoping to expand into more train stations.

They pride themselves in offering single estate Brazilian coffee from a family farm which is shipped to the UK under a carbon-neutral programme, minimising the food miles, and they like to use local suppliers for everything else, such as the milk and pastries. They are open every day and look forward to becoming a Blackheath favourite.



Situated on Montpelier Vale, **Lark** is a welcome addition to Blackheath Village. This is a family owned company by Dominic and Priya Auroa-Crowe who have been expanding their business. They looked for a shop in Blackheath for some time and it took three years to find the perfect location. They sell gifts for women, men and children as well as some clothes, and aim for mid-priced products offering good quality and a unique character. They are also dog-friendly.



The maths learning centre **Mathnasium** has opened in the Village. Its methods have been developed over 20 years and it now has 1,200 centres worldwide, of which 28 are in the UK. Children from reception classes to GCSE are helped to improve their maths skills, and receive one-on-one tuition after assessment to build an individual learning plan in line with the UK curriculum.

Director Lauren Hampson told the *Newsletter* they aim not just at children who are struggling with maths, but also coach advanced students to help fast-track their performance. They run a rewards scheme to recognise students' good work and are open Monday to Thursday from 3.30 to 7.30pm and Saturdays from 10am to 2pm.





# VILLAGE BUTCHER'S 100 YEARS

Next year the Village butcher's shop celebrates its 100th anniversary on the same site.

In 1924 the station master's garden was let for development to Walker Bros at 12 Blackheath Village and it has remained a butcher's shop ever since.

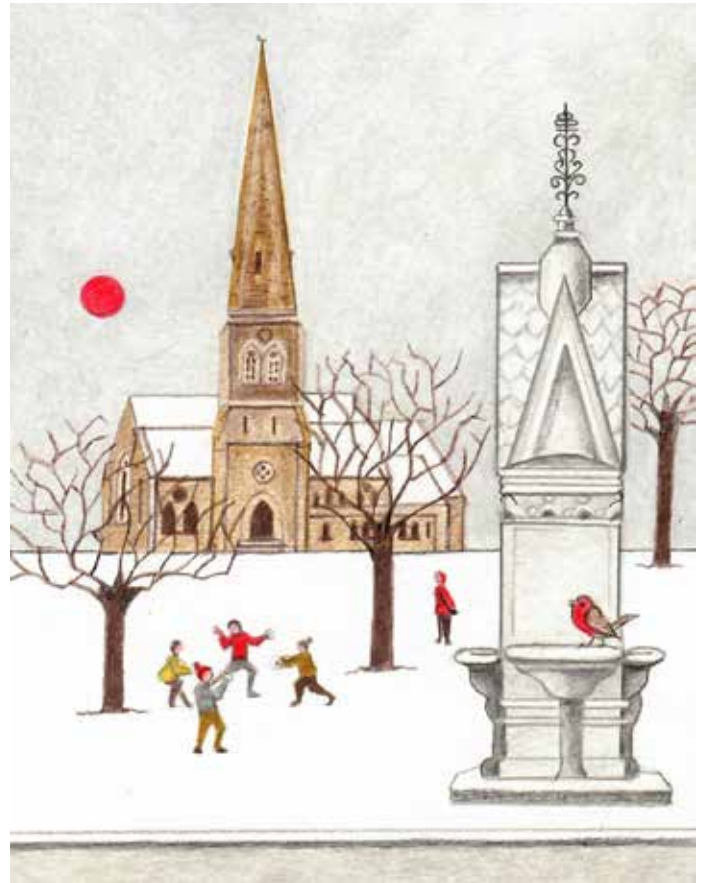
There have been seven owners since then and this year we saw the John Charles shop transformed by new owner Nick Ellis. It is now larger inside and offers far more products.

The interior has been re-tiled, but the beautiful old wooden dividing wall with glass inlays remains and the store has been restored. In 2024 Nick will be creating a Blackheath Banger sausage to celebrate the 100 years and more festivities will follow.

Butchers have existed here for much longer. Thos Watson started at 12 Montpelier Vale and successors, including Parsons, built up a chain called Cobb of Knightsbridge, but it was closed in the mid-1980s.

Walker brothers built the shop near the station in 1924 because the lease had expired on their old one at 19 Montpelier Vale, where they had traded since 1884 and their predecessors had been selling meat there since 1852. And 15 Tranquil Vale, now a Chinese food takeaway, was a butchers from 1832.

It was bought out by Bernard Parsons but he closed the shop in 1924. Parsons had been unstoppable, but Walker Bros were then riding high. Both slaughtered their own products.



**Our Christmas card** this year, designed by Lindsey Malin, is available at Selectric in the Village at £5 for a pack of 10. Lindsey lives in Blackheath, is a member of the Blackheath Art Society and regularly exhibits with them. You can learn more about her activities on her website at [www.lindseymalin.com](http://www.lindseymalin.com).

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mark Baker Cowell

Candy Blackham

Gill Blair

Grace Choong

Colin Cook

Anne Francis

Lauren Hampson

Nicola Harrison

Winifred Hayes

Elvira Mambetisaeva

Alison McArthur

Clare McKinley

Ann Newnham

Lola Olakunbi

Louise

Orcheston-Findlay

Lola Perez Gavino

Evelyn Sheehy

Sebastian Steele

Andrew Stevenson

Richard Swann

Celia Whitchurch

Ed Wiseman

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