



NEWSLETTER ■ SPRING 2022

BLACKHEATH WINS ITS OWN CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

Blackheath is finally to get its own children's play area. The natural-style play space will be sited at Talbot Place, in front of the disused changing rooms bordering the Heath.

A group of local parents, grandparents and interested residents developed plans and put them to Lewisham Council towards the end of last year. The group has now heard that it has obtained a £60,000 grant from the Council and, if all goes according to plan, the play area could formally be opened in early October, to coincide with the Blackheath Kite Day.

The project, which is supported by the Blackheath Society and several other local groups, is the latest in a long line of proposals put forward for Talbot Place in recent years. Various consultations have consistently resulted in calls for play facilities, as there is little play provision for children in Blackheath between the bottom of Greenwich Park and Manor House Gardens.

The Council has longer-term ambitions to develop the whole Talbot Place site which has remained derelict for years. The idea would eventually be to reinstate the sports changing rooms, toilets and other community



facilities, perhaps including a cafe. However, a capital project on such a scale is unlikely to happen in the medium term, given Lewisham's current finances.

The Friends of Blackheath Play Area, the group behind the plan, successfully argued that the 900 square-metre area of fenced-off land, which had become an eyesore, could now be put to good use as a

children's playground. The plan is to landscape the space with mounds and tunnels and put in structures using materials such as logs and willow. A similar-style play area (*see left*) exists in Beckenham Place Park, Lewisham's most recently-developed flagship park.

The Blackheath group says the idea is to encourage creative play, with the emphasis on provision for younger children, and ensure that the area is in keeping with the Heath as a whole. It is also hoped the space can be used for nature study activities by local schools, and as a meeting place for parents and carers, so seating will be an important element. Lewisham has also said it would look at providing temporary toilets for the site.

The old changing rooms would remain untouched and contractors maintaining the Heath would continue to use some of the site as a depot, with the buildings screened off with trellis and green planting. The car park, currently used by teachers at nearby All Saints' School, would be unaffected.

The work will be carried out by Lewisham Council, with the close involvement of the Friends group. Ian Chalk, an architect and parent living locally, has worked pro bono on the scheme, with other volunteers, enabling the scheme to be constructed far more economically.

Blackheath Society members wanting to support the play area can contact DianeBlackheath@outlook.com.

Funding for the latest project came from Lewisham's Neighbourhood

Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL), paid by private developers and distributed to each ward. Other successful bids in the ward were:

St Margaret's Church, Lee, - £20,000 towards a playground within the church grounds for use by children up to six-year olds.

Greening Blackheath Hill - £25,000 for a feasibility study of how a living "green wall" could be constructed on the south side of Blackheath Hill between Dartmouth Hill and

Dartmouth Row to lessen the effects of traffic on local residents.

Parkside Residents Association - £13,500 to improve community relations on the estate and reduce the number of incidents the police are called to involving anti-social behaviour by younger residents.

MammaKind - £10,000 to set up a Welcome Centre at St Margaret's Church where mothers with young children can socialise and access a baby bank of clothing and equipment.

BLACKHEATH BEACON HIGHLIGHTS QUEEN'S 70TH JUBILEE

The Blackheath Society is leading celebrations on the Heath to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee with an event that will include lighting a beacon and local choirs singing on the evening of Thursday 2 June, the start of the specially extended bank holiday.

Ours will be one of a string of about 50 beacons to be lit simultaneously across the UK at 9.30pm and it will be sited in the centre of the Heath near the paved circle known as the Hub.

The Society will appoint a temporary town crier for the day who will kick off the celebrations by proclaiming the beacon event in the Village during the afternoon. Across the UK and Commonwealth, town criers will ring their bells and proclaim a specially-written "Oyez, Oyez" to mark the Jubilee.

From 8.30pm local singers, mostly from Blackheath Halls, will give a concert and seven choirs will each pick a song from one decade of the Queen's 70-year reign. The programme will be varied with gospel, musical theatre and classical pieces. Just before 9.30pm, a bugler, Trinity Laban student Ed Habershon, will sound a specially-written tune announcing the beacon's lighting.

The beacon will be two metres high, topped with a crown and a flame that will burn for about an hour, and will be supplied by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. The plan is for it to be lit by the Young Mayor of Lewisham, 15-year-old Rosanna Campbell. The position is elected annually by school students in the borough.

The finale has yet to be confirmed but is likely to be the choirs coming together to sing a song specially composed for the Jubilee, with music and lyrics written by winners of a Commonwealth-wide competition.

The Blackheath Society is coordinating arrangements and has financed the rehearsing of the choirs by Blackheath Halls, with an additional grant from

Lewisham. We have also proposed a commemorative tree be planted on the Heath, probably in the autumn.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich is organising its own events, including a festival in Charlton Park on 2 June, and a picnic in the park on the following day.

Lewisham Council allocated a number of £300 grants to help support community celebrations, prioritising activities and events for older people. Street parties are planned in the two boroughs, mostly on the Sunday of the extended bank holiday, with some roads closed for parties.

The Queen is the first British monarch celebrating a Platinum Jubilee. A drinking fountain erected in Tranquil Vale in 1897 was inscribed: "Erected by the inhabitants of Blackheath to commemorate the 60th year of the reign of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria".

The Blackheath Society established the Hub in the centre of the Heath, near where the beacon will stand, to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, as well as the London Olympics and the Society's 75th anniversary that year.



The photograph shows the Jubilee proclamation which will be read out in the Village. It was written by the Bognor Regis Town Crier Jane Smith, who is pictured.

ANOTHER PACKED PROGRAMME OF SOCIETY EVENTS

WEDNESDAY 20 APRIL: "You Should Go to Blackheath First" - Conan Doyle and Blackheath 7 for 7.30pm at The Bakehouse on Bennett Park. An evening illustrated talk by the authority on Conan Doyle, Roger Johnson, who will relate many connections between Sherlock Holmes and Blackheath, and close associations Conan Doyle had with our area - some were considered scandalous at the time. We apologise for the previous postponement of this talk due to Covid. Tickets via Eventbrite £10 include a drink.

WEDNESDAY 4 MAY: Rock Around Blackheath An evening talk with music, film and guests on Wednesday 4 May at 7 for 7.15pm at St Mary's Hall, Cresswell Park. Blackheath and the surroundings became home to many famous names from popular music in the second half of the 20th Century. The presentation will be richly illustrated with images and sounds. We will look at the connections that Manfred Mann, David Bowie, John Mayall, McGuinness Flint, The Rolling Stones, Kate

Bush, Albert Lee, Jools Holland and Squeeze have with the area. It will be led by local Blue Badge guide Mo Corcoran and Society member Paul Wright. Tickets via Eventbrite £15 include drinks.

WEDNESDAY 18 MAY: The Architectural Group Annual Lecture At St Michael's Church, Pond Road, SE3 followed by drinks in the garden. Dr Alistair Fair will speak on Peter

Moro, co-designer of the Festival Hall, who lived at 20 Blackheath Park. See story on page 5 for details. Tickets £15 from Eventbrite.

THURSDAY 19 MAY: Architectural Group Visit - Morden College From 9.50am to 12.30pm at Morden College, 19 St German's Place. This is an Architectural Group visit to Mae Architects' award winning new daycare centre, with director Douglas McIntosh, and an introduction to Morden College by David Rutherford Jones. The College is a Grade 1 listed building and the new centre makes reference to this. Tickets via Eventbrite £15. Meet at main gates at 9.50am.

TUESDAY 24 MAY: Meet & Eat At 12.30pm at the Princess of Wales pub. Join members for a convivial lunchtime chat at the welcoming hostelry on the Heath.

THURSDAY 2 JUNE: Lighting The Beacon to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee at 8.30pm on the Heath. See the story on page 2.

FRIDAY 10 JUNE: Mail Rail At the Mount Pleasant Postal Museum, Phoenix Place, WC1X ODA. Join other members for this fun visit to the Postal Museum at the Mount Pleasant Sorting Office. If you book online for the 1200pm train ride we can go together to experience the subterranean world beneath the streets of London. The Museum also has many interactive exhibits that bring to life the history of Royal Mail. Early booking through www.postalmuseum.org. Ticket prices vary. Meet at 10.30 in the café of the Museum. Farringdon underground is the nearest station. If you go via Thameslink at London Bridge it is an easy route.

WEDNESDAY 22 JUNE: Blackheath Society AGM at 7 for 7.30pm at St Mary's Halls, Cresswell Park, SE3.

THURSDAY 23 JUNE: Walk & Talk - The Authors Of Regents Park at 10.30am. Join friends and Robert Maurice Williams for a stroll around part of Regent's Park and Primrose Hill. We will find the houses of Edward Lear, Bernard Shaw, Thackeray, Kinglsey Amis, Alan Bennett, and Sylvia Plath and see where Penguin books started. It is a beautiful and interesting area of London and we know of a good place to stop for coffee and lunch. Meet at the street entrance to Regent's Park Station on the Marylebone Road at 10.30 am and please book your place through Eventbrite. Donations of £5 for the Society at the beginning of the walk.



WEDNESDAY 20 JULY: Turner's House (Sandycombe Lodge) at 11.30am at 40 Sandycombe Road, Twickenham, TW1 2LR. Join members on a guided tour of this picturesque cottage-style house (above) designed and built by JMW Turner. He was influenced by his friend John Soane and placed the house to overlook the Thames.

It has an interesting history, from a factory to its recent restoration as his home. Tickets £15 for a group tour with the Blackheath Society via Eventbrite. We meet there at 1120am. The Lodge does not have a café but there are some near the station. The nearest is St. Margaret's, you can travel from Waterloo and trains are on the hour and half past.

THURSDAY 14 JULY: Meet & Eat at 12.30 at PoW pub.

PLANNING GROUP SCANNED RECORD APPLICATIONS IN 2021

We are fortunate to have an outstanding group of volunteers looking after the Society's efforts on planning. Every year the group completes a review of its activities for the previous year, which is available on request.

The review for 2021 shows both the level of activity and the impact of the effort, since we scanned 641 applications for development in the Blackheath area, both in Lewisham and Greenwich. This was up 9% on the previous year, when Covid reduced applications.

Building developments took 320, while 321 were for tree work, where planning controls are unfortunately very weak. We are very fortunate to have the volunteers we can look at trees very thoroughly.

We examined them and submitted detailed input, with objections or comments, on 85 applications. We are satisfied that, in well over half the cases, our input was effective in terms of securing refusal of inappropriate development or amendments to improve proposals.

In terms of recent and current applications, the most sensitive has been the application to replace the Tea Hut in its traditional site. It was badly damaged in a car crash in January 2020 and was closed until August 2021, when it returned as a smaller temporary structure. We made it clear in our submission that we are not against the continuing successful existence of the Tea Hut, a widely loved if controversial institution.

However, we believe the current application should not be decided before efforts to secure a more suitable location across the A2 in Charlton Way have been given a chance. And, if the current application were to be decided, it needs significant improvement in the level of detail provided in several respects, especially its scale, design, safety and impact on the Heath. This whole effort is likely to take some time.

A considerable number of other significant applications need review. A common theme is that, in our view, developers are significantly pushing the boundary of what is an appropriate scale of development, and the most extreme example was the case last year of 3 Morden Road which was refused. But current examples include the plans for 22 Meadowbank in Blackheath Park and the Bell House in Camden Row, where we were pleased to collaborate with local neighbours.

Among satisfactory outcomes in recent months have been: plans approved, with extensive conditions, for the long overdue renovation of The Gables in Blackheath Park which will finally enable the sensitive conversion of this important site into seven dwellings; the refusal, then modification, of plans for the over-development of the listed Pares property in Tranquil Vale; approval with significant changes (making it car-free) of plans for residential development at the rear of 29-35 Tranquil Vale; and the refusal of plans to build a new home in the rear garden of the beautiful Victorian listed property at 1 Church Terrace.



The Tea Hut has returned to its original site

KEVIN BONAVIA STEPS DOWN AS LEWISHAM COUNCILLOR

Kevin Bonavia, Lewisham Councillor for the Blackheath Ward, has announced that he is not standing for the May 5 local council elections and will be aiming to become a MP at the next general election.

Kevin has been a great help to the Society since he was first elected in 2010 as one of our local councillors. He was previously Cabinet Member for Resources and most recently for Democracy, Refugees & Accountability.

He told the *Newsletter*: "Serving the past 12 years as Councillor for Blackheath has been the greatest



Kevin, left, pictured with his Labour Party colleagues

privilege of my life, now it's time to move on and try new things." He will remain in Blackheath, returning to full-time legal practice, and hoping to be nominated for a parliamentary constituency.

He was Chair of the Blackheath Joint Working Party, which liaises with Lewisham and Greenwich Councils on the management of the Heath, and a trustee for the Talk About Art charity, which supports local, young creative talent and was founded by the late Sir Ian Mills (*see obituary on page 12*).

Kevin's other work included helping to launch the new Village library in Age Exchange after the old one closed in 2011, organising consultations on issues involving the 2012 London Olympics and helping a users group to improve access at Lewisham Station in 2014.

He chaired public meetings on controversial planning applications and On Blackheath music festivals, worked with businesses and residents to set up Blackheath Village Day with new Christmas lights and also helped the Blackheath Covid Mutual Aid Steering Group.

ARCHITECTURE GROUP ANNUAL LECTURE ON MAY 18

The Blackheath Society Architecture Group's annual lecture this year will be given by Dr Alistair Fair on the work of architect Peter Moro at St Michael's Church Hall, Blackheath Park, at 8pm on Wednesday 18 May.

Dr Fair writes: Peter Moro (1911-1998) was the forgotten co-designer of the Royal Festival Hall. A German émigré who worked with Berthold Lubetkin's famed practice, Tecton, in the 1930s, Moro was drafted to help realise the Royal Festival Hall in just two short years in time for the Festival of Britain in 1951 and, with a team of his former students, he created many interiors that we see today.

The Festival Hall was also a stepping-stone for Moro to a career designing many of Britain's finest post-war theatres, such as Nottingham Playhouse, Plymouth Theatre Royal and the renovated Bristol Old Vic.

He and his colleagues designed some exceptional one-off houses, as well as exhibitions, university buildings, schools and council housing, collaborating with leading talents such as the designer Robin Day.

This body of work includes his own house at the nearby 20 Blackheath Park, built in 1958, first listed in 1988 and now grade II*. The house is an outstanding example of its type and is one of the best of the period, both in layout and in use of materials and detailing.

I am a Reader in Architectural History at the University of Edinburgh, a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the author of *Peter Moro and Partners* published in 2021 by the 20th Century Society and Liverpool University Press. *The picture on the right shows the 20 Blackheath Park building.*

This is the first book devoted to the work of Peter Moro and his colleagues in architectural practice.

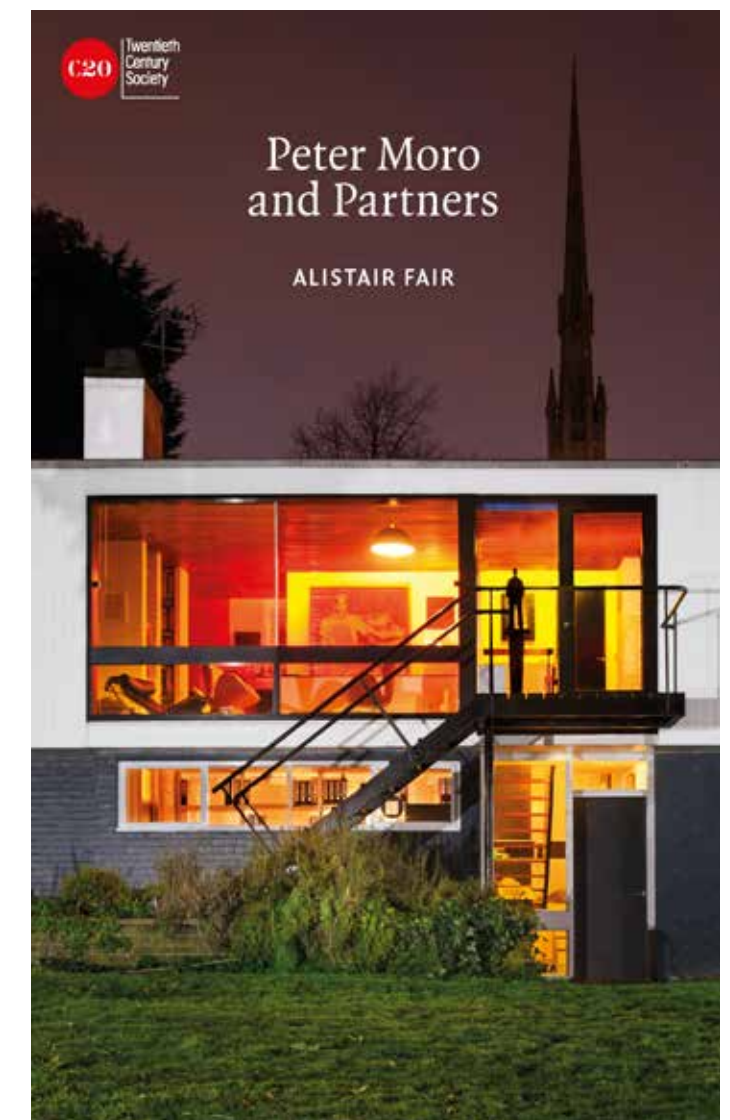
Ranging from the 1930s to the 1980s, it explores Moro's belief in a rigorous modern architecture which was functionally sound and aesthetically rich.

It sheds new light on his body of work and enriches our understanding of the experience and diversity of

modernism in Britain.

I have been interested in architecture, town planning, and street lighting design from an early age, and I studied Modern History before specialising in Architectural History.

My other most recent major publications are on the architectural history of Britain's modern and contemporary theatres.



BLACKHEATH PREP TO CELEBRATE ITS 200TH ANNIVERSARY

Neil Rhind writes: There are few schools in our area with a considerable antiquity, apart from two charity foundations - Roan School and Blackheath Bluecoat in Greenwich. The oldest is the flourishing Blackheath Prep situated at 4 St Germans Place.



Established on the site as an independent boys' school by the Reverend William Greenlaw in 1822/23 it has survived in an almost unbroken span, changing name and status over the years, but not leaving its Grade II-listed premises.

Greenlaw (1781-1850) ran a school in Chiswick in his young days and Percy Bysshe Shelley was a pupil who achieved distinction there. Greenlaw moved the business over to Montpelier Row where his sister Mary conducted a school.

He decided to establish his academy in Blackheath, and in 1822 built brand new premises on the east side of the Heath on a lease from the Eliot family, later the Earls of St Germans. This was renewed and amended several times until 1958.

Greenlaw, being an ordained clergyman, created his own proprietary chapel next door to provide his pupils - 54 on the roll in 1841 - with a spiritual education as well as Latin, Greek and Euclidean geometry. But he did not stay long. He was appointed Rector of Woolwich in 1837 and the chapel was put in the control of his brother, the Rev Dr Richard Bathurst Greenlaw (1794-1855).

Mary Greenlaw sold the school, and its chapel, one presumes, to the Rev Joseph Paul who called it the Blackheath Military School. But it did not flourish and pupil numbers dropped to 23 in 1851. From the early 1850s the school passed through various owners, of whom some showed ability and distinction.

In 1894 it was acquired by Rev Frederick Wilkins Aveling (1851-1937), who had been headmaster of Taunton School in Somerset.

It was called Christ's College because Aveling brought his old school badge, shield, colours and motto to Blackheath. The original adjacent Greenlaw chapel was acquired in 1894 by the diocese and adopted as a regular church.

Aveling retired in 1913 and the school passed to his then business partner, Rev Arthur Conrad Wire (1876-1936) who took on a flourishing business and a private boy's school of some distinction.

A young man, Alexander Crombie, took over as headmaster in 1920 and ran the school (seen on the left) until his retirement in 1960.

His stewardship was astonishing. He saw it evacuated in 1939 and requisitioned by the London Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service. He repaired the school after war damage. It reopened in August 1945.

But further disaster struck when the building developers Wates acquired some of the Blackheath leaseholds from the Eliot trustees, intending to demolish the school and the original chapel, Kidbrooke Church.

This had been irreparably damaged in the war and Southwark Diocese would not sanction repairing what it thought of as a ruin beyond redemption, although its dwindling, congregation did not hold that view.

A vigorous campaign by Crombie, his staff, parents and neighbours raised the necessary funds and Christ's College bought the property. By 1960, the school was safe and Crombie was encouraged to retire, knowing that his school was secure in its listed buildings and well-established. Its school roll then rose dramatically.

But by the early 1990s interest in the school had dwindled. Numbers were falling and it began to face financial difficulties. In 1996, the Governors decided to open a co-educational Nursery and Pre-Prep on the site in an effort to attract a new cohort of parents and this quickly became a popular choice for local families.

By 1998 the Governors deemed the boarding school financially unviable and Christ's College finally closed its doors. New buildings were added, including a new multi-purpose hall, dining hall and music suite. The old chapel was converted into a library and the stained glass windows, depicting former teachers as King Arthur, Sir Galahad and Sir Percival, remain in place today.

Blackheath Prep quickly became established and demand regularly outstripped pupil spaces. In 2020 a new Head, Alex Matthews, joined from St Paul's Juniors and started a programme of renewal which brings new life into this long-standing Blackheath educational establishment. Its 200th anniversary celebrations will take place in 2023, with a series of community events and performances and the launch of an alumni association for former pupils, staff and parents.

Christ's College also bought the old Blackheath Art Club, at the far end of Bennett Park, in Blackheath Village, but this became surplus to requirements and it was sold to the Blackheath Preservation Trust for restoration and de-conversion to its original form as artists' studio flats. It still survives as a Grade II building of historic interest.

SOCIETY PROTESTS AT STATION PARKING LOCAL BUSINESSES

The Society has protested to Network Rail and Euro Car Parks about their recently imposed charges in the car park at Blackheath Station for drivers who are just picking up or dropping off people from the trains.

Several members complained to us about fines of at least £60 imposed for not paying £1.10 for a minimum period of 30 minutes when they stopped briefly just to collect or drop off someone for the trains. It is believed that cameras have recently been installed to enforce these parking charges.

We asked Euro Car Parks, which runs the site, to allow a free 15 minute drop off grace period without incurring a charge and told them: "This is totally unacceptable as the only way to drop off at the station is via the car park. Elderly or disabled passengers cannot be expected to pay for this inconvenience."

There is no possibility of stopping outside Blackheath Station, so providing a short grace period free of charge at the car park is the obvious solution.

A Southern Region spokesman told the *Newsletter* that Network Rail sold the car park to the Acorn Property Group in September 2021. He said the cameras are actually programmed to allow people 10 minutes free parking to permit drop-offs and pickups, but that this has not been publicised.



We have not yet had an explanation from Acorn and we will continue to press for a solution to the problem.

Our member Dr David Skidmore told the *Newsletter*: "As customers of the station and rail network we have an absolute right to deliver and collect passengers especially in bad weather and when arrivals are incapacitated, or have luggage and children. I intend to challenge the alleged infraction and have done so successfully in the past."

At press time the Trustpilot consumers' website showed 654 national reviews of ECP, with 99% rated as bad. Comments included: "Criminals. That's it. That's the review." "Parasites - companies like this encapsulate everything that is wrong with society."

The local website site Nextdoor ran the first complaint about the ECP's parking policy in late February and it registered 74 responses after then, mostly from people who had been fined or were upset at the change.

Neil Rhind adds to the story on new Village businesses on page 10:

Old, and even some quite new names, have gone and new names have appeared over old fascias in the Village. Rumours arose of big retailers opening small branches in Blackheath but nothing is confirmed

One grave loss, from the Society's point of view, was the closure of our branch of Lloyds Bank on the corner of Bennett Park & Cresswell Park leaving just one bank - Barclays - in the Village and none in Westcombe Park, as the Barclays branch there is being fitted out to become a pub/brewery and the former NatWest on Old Dover Road is still empty.

Lloyds was with us for 92 years, opening in the old and much-altered Alexandra Halls & Public Swimming Baths, in July 1928.

A big change is the removal of Paydens, our only retail pharmacy, from 30 Tranquil Vale to 14 Montpelier Vale, a few shops to the northeast. A pharmacy opened at Tranquil Vale well before 1845, trading as the dispensary of Samuel Long Hiscox, a chemist and druggist - the style in those days.

Now, 177 years later, it has moved but at least it stayed in the Village. At Tranquil Vale, there was a branch of "Boot's the Cash Chemist" from 1944 to 1981. And now we also have a pet shop, the first since pre-war days when Arthur & Percy Shave sold dog biscuits, poultry food, and much else at 17 Montpelier Vale.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Vivienne Ahmad
Riky Bains
Andrew Bullivant
Dara Dhanowa
Helen and Tim Evans
Ian and Bronwen Fair
Paul Gubbins
Fiona Hamilton

Lesley Hodsdon
Howard Hughes
Esme Johnstone
Tom Kesterton
Emma Marlow
Kirsty Morgan
Lesley Rahamim
Anatoly Savin

Pragya Singh
Craig Smith
Claire Swindale
Joel Thomas
Ross Udall
Luke Warner
David Whittaker

HISTORIC TELEPHONE BOX RELAUNCHED AS MINI LIBRARY

Local residents have rescued a rare, listed telephone box dating from 1927 from dereliction and turned it into a community mini-library where books can be donated, borrowed or exchanged.

The grade II listed phone box in Kingswood Place was relaunched in December by Blackheath Ward councillor Juliet Campbell and Lewisham East MP Janet Daby who switched on lights and cut a ribbon (*photograph by @michaeloreillyphotographer.jpg*).

This marked the culmination of a two-year restoration project overseen by the Friends of Dacre Telephone Box, made possible with the support of the Blackheath Society and funding from Lewisham Council's Blackheath Assembly.

"Blackheath Society helped us buy the telephone box from BT, while

the council funding was crucial to pay for the repair work needed as the box was in a sorry state. The box is now being very well used by the community, with a good



flow of books, in and out, and it really looked splendid all lit up on a cold wintry evening," the group's chair Trisha O'Reilly said. "We ran the box as a mini-library during lock-down before it was restored. Feedback from the community was tremendous. Many saw it as a lifeline and missed it when we had to close for the refurbishment, so it's wonderful to have it up and running again."

Society committee member Howard Shields said: 'We are delighted to be able to support this wonderful initiative by the local community. It will be an important part of enhancing the character of this special part of Blackheath, with nearby links to the historic St Margaret's Church and Boone's Almshouses'.

This is a rare surviving example of the first public telephone boxes installed in the UK designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. If anyone is interested in a project to restore the similar box outside Blackheath Post Office, the Dacre Park team will be pleased to share their knowledge and experience.

There were originally 1,700 of this 'K2' type of phone box introduced after 1926 but only about 200 remain. Local residents took action after its condition deteriorated. Trisha can be phoned on 07711 896 254.

WHITE BOX GALLERY SHOWCASES CONTEMPORARY ART

Blackheath's White Box Gallery is a community showcase for contemporary art that has provided local people with a chance to see the work of local artists for the last five years.



Overlooking the Heath and the Hare and Billet pond, it has a small frontage (*seen above*), wedged between John Payne's office and the owners' house at 1 Grotes Place.

It is run by artists Frances and Graham High but is not a commercial gallery, so does not make a profit from its exhibitions.

It aims to support the careers of under-exposed full-time artists, and gives the local community a chance to see contemporary artwork which the owners believe deserves more exposure.

Graham told the *Newsletter*: "Our aim is to offer a point of interest to the community and to provide Blackheath inhabitants with a chance to see the work of interesting and committed artists. Judging by comments in our visitors' book, we have become a much valued point of interest locally."

They do not charge artists for gallery space, but take a 25% commission towards costs. They produce an online monthly newsletter but do not engage in advertising.

Artists nearly all live locally, as the exhibitions are self-invigilating, but some have also exhibited nationally and internationally. Kit

Boyd, who designed the Society's 2021 Christmas card, has a show of paintings and prints at the gallery from March 29 to April 13. Next shows are *Paintings, Tiles and iPad Art* by Elisabeth Meadows and Vanessa Maurice-Williams from April 23 to May 8 and *New Sculpture* by Graham High from May 14 to 29. A further 11 weekend shows are planned this year covering sculpture, paintings and prints.

Next year it will show a retrospective by Ti Parks, who lived in Blackheath but has twice represented Australia at the Venice biennale. Prints, sculpture, paintings, ceramics, performance and photographic works have all been hosted at the gallery.

The opening hours are between 11 am and 6pm on Saturdays and Sundays, its website is at www.gallerywhitebox.com and the email is whiteboxblackheath@gmail.com.

MIGRATION MUSEUM FINDS TEMPORARY HOME IN LEWISHAM

The National Migration Museum, currently housed in the Lewisham Shopping Centre, opens a new show in April about migrant entrepreneurs and the making of Britain, with an education programme and a showcase of local artists with a migrant heritage.

The museum, founded in 2013, has led a peripatetic life, staging pop-up exhibitions, events and education workshops at a wide range of different venues across the UK. Its current lease runs for two more years, when it will be looking for new permanent premises.



Its previous venues have included the Southbank Centre, the National Maritime Museum and City Hall in London, the Museum of Oxford, Leicester railway station and the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh.

From 2017 to 2019 it was based in a former London Fire Brigade workshop in Lambeth, reaching over 30,000 visitors through a series of acclaimed exhibitions and events.

The museum opened in Lewisham in 2020 but then closed due to Covid restrictions. It plans to reopen on 6 April when it will take down its previous exhibitions and install a new one called *Taking Care of Business: Migrant Entrepreneurs and the Making of Britain*.

Its previous main exhibition *Departures* covered the times through history that groups of British people have left these isles for foreign parts, for example Welsh people going to South America.

The museum was founded by Barbara Roche, a former British immigration minister. Around 14,000 students from 400 schools, colleges and universities have participated in workshops run since 2013 by its education team, which also advises on the national curriculum through its partnerships with major examination boards.

Its website is at www.migrationmuseum.org. The opening hours will be 11 am to 5pm Wednesday to Sunday, with free admission, and advance booking is not required.

THE 1921 CENSUS AND BLACKHEATH

Our President Neil Rhind reports on the how to use the 1921 census results to discover the history of your house.

Big news for eager local family historians came as the National Archive released the full findings of the Enumerated 1921 Census return for England, Wales & Scotland, kept confidential for 100 years.

You can discover who lived in your house at that date via the *Find my Past* website at <https://www.findmypast.co.uk>.

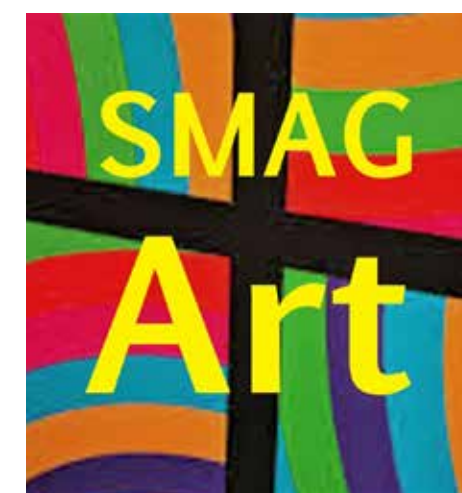
But be careful, as the street numbers may have changed. It will be easier to find if you have the owners' names and my books may help. But access will not be free for

a couple of years as the website charges £3.50 for a full print out of the entry for your house and £2.50 for a transcript.

Transcripts are also not always fully reliable because the person who filled in the form may have had poor handwriting and transcribers have in the past been notoriously, and sometimes deliberately, unreliable.

The next census will be the 1951 version but it will not be available until 2052. The 1931 records were destroyed during the WWII in a 1942 fire and no census was taken in 1941 because of the War.

The 1939 Register can be searched by name or address, but it has some very poor handwriting and some pages were damaged.



The next St Michael's Art Group exhibition will be a summer event held at the church on Blackheath Park from 23 June and open daily until 2 July. The page 1 photograph of the magnolias next to the church was taken by SMAG organiser and Society member Tim Keeler.

MORE NEW BUSINESSES OPEN IN BLACKHEATH



Owned by Ly Tran and her family, **Buddha Taste on Royal Parade** is a welcome addition to Blackheath's restaurants.

She told the *Newsletter*: "I came to Blackheath aged 14 and always dreamed of opening a restaurant specialising in Asian vegetarian food and now I can hardly believe we're here". Taking on this site was no mean feat as it had been empty for 10 years and there was much work to do to convert it into a restaurant.

The food is Vietnamese, with influences from Korea and Japan and the emphasis is on healthy cooking, so all dishes are vegan or vegetarian. The philosophy is not to imitate meat but to present a real alternative. The family is Buddhist and healthy food is a way of life for them. The restaurant seats 24 and is open from 11am to 9pm. They also offer takeaways and all their packaging is compostable.



Pets Corner opened in late February to a flurry of excitement, as on the second day the store was full of shoppers and their dogs. The company is family owned by Dean Richmond who inherited it from his parents Sandra and Mark, founders of the company in 1968.

It is proud to be carbon neutral and recycles 95% of its waste, while all staff are trained to be able to advise customers on pet nutrition. Acting store manager Hannah said: "We are the home of natural pet food and sell products which are not available in the supermarket". One of their new brands is Yora, an insect-based food for cats and dogs.

The company supports Canine Partners, a registered

charity that transforms the lives of people with physical disabilities by partnering them with assistance dogs, *as seen below*. Its website is at www.caninepartners.org.uk. All the money from selling 10p bags in its 160 UK stores goes to Canine Partners and it has sponsored three dogs so far to help people with disabilities.



Eclipse Financial Planning - Tom Kesterton has lived in Blackheath since 2014 and set up his business during Covid, a brave move for what is essentially a face to face concern. But he is part of the Quilter Financial Planning Group and has their support. He offers financial planning to help people manage their wealth covering tax, inheritance and mortgages. "Now that we're coming out of Covid restrictions, sitting down with my local clients is where I want to be" he said. His phone is 07551848989 and the email is Tom.kesterton@eclipsefinancialplanning.co.uk.



Blackheath Creatives Pop-Up, in the former Cafe Rouge building (*seen above*), has popped up in our Village for 2022. Claire Swindale is the creator, curator and manager and it includes a group of sole traders and creatives.

Blackheath Village folk love to browse for unique pieces and have always enjoyed a shop like this, so it has been well received. The response from local artisans wanting to join has been equal to that of customers, and it offers silk scarves, furniture, candle making, vegan cookery, sherry, shop nights and vintage and classic designer clothes for hire or purchase.

HOPES RISE FOR NEW SANCHO BAS-RELIEF IN PARK

Richard Bourne, Society member and Secretary of the promotional committee for a local Ignatius Sancho memorial, writes:

We are hopeful that, within the next two years, there will be a better memorial for Ignatius Sancho, the 18th Century celebrity who grew up in Blackheath and Greenwich. The plan is to have a coloured ceramic bas-relief, based on his Gainsborough portrait, placed above the plaque (*below*) unveiled in 2007 on the wall next to Queen Caroline's Bath in Greenwich Park.

The story of Sancho, the first black man to vote in a Westminster election, is almost incredible. Born around 1729 on a slave ship in the Atlantic, he was taken to the Spanish empire - probably now Colombia - where both his parents died.



Shipped as a two-year-old to three sisters living near Dartmouth Row, his freedom was bought by the nearby Duke of Montagu. The Duke realised his talent, gave him books to read and subsequently the Duchess - who commissioned his portrait by Gainsborough - employed him as head of her household by the Park.

When he was no longer able to do his duties - he was a man who liked the good things of life and became obese - the Duchess funded him to

set up a grocery shop in Charles Street, Westminster. There he was recognised as a man of letters, corresponding with Laurence Sterne, composing over a hundred dances and minuets and a lost book of composition.

After his death in 1780 his letters to friends were collected, with aristocrats like Pitt the Elder and early abolitionists like Charles James Fox subscribing to two volumes whose sales gave his widow a substantial legacy.

Our campaign for a better memorial in the Park received a big lift before Christmas when Lord Paul Boateng, former Labour cabinet minister and High Commissioner to South Africa, agreed to take the chair of our promotional committee.

Born in Ghana, he is the Chancellor of Greenwich University and has a personal interest in art, so he is ideal. Our committee needs to send the Trustees of the Royal Parks an expression of interest, as the wall is Grade 2 listed, and then a planning application will go to Greenwich Council.

Further announcements this year will include naming the artist commissioned to undertake the relief, a timetable of events and details of the crowdfunding appeal for a charity account.

Covid has delayed progress on major lottery-funded improvements to the Park and this has encouraged it to publicise its Sancho connection. The Tramshed Theatre Company in Woolwich is putting on a community opera about Sancho in the Park from June 22 to 24 next year, and it would be fitting if the new memorial can be unveiled at that time.

Awareness of Sancho has been rising, as more Londoners realise a large part of our diverse, multicultural history has not been properly recognised. A plaque for Sancho exists on the wall of the Foreign, Commonwealth and

Development Office in Charles Street, but so high up that no pedestrian can see it.

Last year Sir Lenny Henry, one of our supporters, referred to Sancho in his BBC4 programme on black classical musicians. The actor Paterson Joseph, one of the most passionate members of our committee, has just discussed Sancho's portrait, alongside that of Gainsborough's 'Blue Boy', in a conversation at the National Gallery and he is also pressing to bring the Gainsborough Sancho picture back from Canada. A new Sancho biography is being prepared by Jo Langston.

While Sancho was dismissive of racists, his attitudes were often those of an 18th Century Englishman, disapproving of Washington and his revolting American colonists.

My interest was piqued by the fact that Sancho is the name of a modern house in Bennett Park, where I live in the Village. With my own career in Commonwealth activities, and having distant Caribbean relations, it did not take a lot to persuade me that this is a cause for today, and the enthusiasm of more knowledgeable members of our committee has given the necessary fillip. My email is rbourne40@yahoo.co.uk.



Gainsborough's portrait of Ignatius Sancho

BLACKHEATH LEGEND SIR IAN MILLS DIES AGED 86

Blackheath lost a towering influence on the local scene with the death on March 6 of Sir Ian Mills, who created an amazing legacy in our community.

Born in 1935, he led a successful career in accountancy and consulting and became an influential figure in NHS management in London, the reason for his knighthood in 2001.

His retirement was just the beginning of an extraordinarily active 25 years, during which he had a significant impact on Blackheath and Lewisham.

His early focus, working closely with his beloved wife Elizabeth, who died in 2017, was on St

Margaret's Church in Lee Terrace and its surroundings. He was the key organiser of the complete renovation of the church.

As Chair of the Blackheath Historic Buildings Trust, he masterminded restoration of the amazing churchyard and its ancient church tower, the complete restoration of the Grade 1 listed Boone's Chapel, Lee Road, and the Lee Trail history panels.

He then became Chair of Age Exchange and was responsible for its physical and organisational renewal. This included the opportunistic rescue of the threatened Lewisham Library, now to be found in Age Exchange, and the opportunity for the Blackheath Society to vacate its premises above Blackheath station in 2015

and move to its splendid current location in the Bakehouse.

As if that was not enough, Ian devoted his later years to running the Lewisham spinoff of its youth services as YouthFirst - for this and his other achievements he was awarded the Freedom of the Borough in 2017 - and to sponsoring the successful charity Talk About Art, which is devoted to bringing art to deprived children.

In all his efforts for Blackheath and Lewisham Ian displayed enormous energy, creativity and financial generosity.

He is survived by his two children, Katie and Richard, and he leaves a huge legacy of achievement. The funeral will take place at St Margaret's Church, Lee, at 1200 on Monday 9 May.



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