



NEWSLETTER ■ WINTER 2024

BLACKHEATH VILLAGE FACES PLANNING CHALLENGES

Blackheath Village centre is facing a number of planning challenges, with three possible applications for supermarkets and controversial plans to develop the station car park into townhouses and flats, which may affect the future of the Farmers Market.

The preservation and enhancement of Blackheath has always been the core mission of the Society. This applies to the whole of Blackheath, but it is now especially topical for the Village.

Many factors influence its unique character: the mix of retail and residential, the variety of retail outlets, the rents demanded by the relatively small number of landlords and especially heavy traffic. The proposal to develop the Blackheath station car park, currently in consultation on behalf of the owners Acorn, is the most challenging of the projects under review. The plans revealed so far involve a terrace of 20 townhouses and 25 flats across two blocks which would require the re-siting of a large drain running through the site. The developers have held various meetings to present their concepts.

They are now seeking pre-application feedback and their proposals can be viewed online at www.blackheathstation.co.uk.

This is a very sensitive site and the Society has registered clearly with the developer a number of

significant issues which will need addressing. These include concerns about overdevelopment generally; loss of amenity for neighbours, in particular the houses in Collins Street; disruption to and potential loss or reduction in scale of the Sunday market; loss of parking for traders and the public and the impact of construction works, with John Ball School nearby.

Other concerns are a lack of clarity regarding any affordable housing; uncertainty about the proposed ownership of the development, including Network Rail's involvement, and residual issues resulting from the transfer of ownership of the site from Network Rail to Acorn.



This computer-generated image from the developers shows how Collins Street could look in the future.

Our overriding concern is that any development in the Conservation Area should preserve or enhance it as, if this application proceeds, it will have a marked impact on Blackheath Village.

The Society’s planning group is in contact with local councillors and our MPs to ensure that our views are heard. We thank the many members who have responded to the consultation and have been in touch, and we will update you on any further developments.

The future of the Lloyds Bank building, empty since 2020, is in play but the situation is still very unclear. We expected the arrival of the bakery Ole and Steen, who had received permission for their proposed alterations. But, to general surprise, a licensing application for much extended hours for alcohol and refreshments for Asda Express, appeared instead.

A very vigorous campaign by us and by concerned neighbours resulted in the unprecedented number of over 70 objections. The outcome was that a licence was granted consistent with existing licences in the Village.

But what happens now, and the status of the lease, is unclear. Any use by Asda will require a planning application to cover signage and presumably significant equipment. Requests for clarification from the protagonists have gone unanswered. This is a very unsatisfactory situation.

In contrast, the position regarding the listed building at the former Pares shoe shop, empty since early 2023, is more promising. The site was the subject of multiple applications, and seemingly unauthorised alterations, by the former leaseholder, which were all excessive and were rejected. It has now been repossessed by the freeholder Morden College, which has submitted an application for a Sainsbury’s Local shop, *and the proposed new frontage is shown below.*



This appears to be of appropriate scale, would respect and restore the building’s heritage features and is a welcome development. Members can access the application on Lewisham Council’s planning website at DC/24/137681. We are interested to hear your views.

The Society also understands that the leaseholders of the former Flower Shop next to the station have been discussing with Lonsis the possibility of that chain

taking over their premises, which could make it the third supermarket to arrive in the Village - if these discussions are pursued.

A smaller, and welcome, application for development in the Village comes from the Dyers Company - to improve significantly the mews passage behind Greggs at 25-27 Tranquil Vale. The paving would be restored, the waste and cycle-parking tidied up and security would be improved. But the application by another party to convert one of the units into a studio flat suitable for Airbnb type occupation has been refused.

The issue of shop signage and intrusive back lighting in shop windows in the Village is another aspect that has concerned us and we are pleased to see that the Conservation Officer of Lewisham Council shares this concern. We welcome members’ feedback on this issue.

It is pleasing to note that the renovation of Blackheath Station, a project championed by the Society, is now well underway. Work on the new canopies above the platforms is almost complete, painting the posts in their new colours is underway, *as seen below*, and Network Rail’s work will be completed by the end of the year. Southeastern has awarded its contract and the Railway Heritage Trust will be awarding a grant for work on the main station building. This will certainly enhance the Village and we will be providing more details in our next *Newsletter*.



Just as the hoardings came down around Phase 2 of the Gateway development near Lewisham station after over 10 years of construction, an application was lodged with the council to redevelop and regenerate the shopping centre across the road. This will take another 10 years.

Gateway has delivered nine blocks up to 29 storeys, containing 900 flats plus living, retail, food and leisure space, but almost all, except 362 Phase 1 flats, have yet to be occupied.

The new shopping centre plans include 15 blocks up to 35 storeys, which will be taller than the current tallest tower on the Tesco car park site. They will contain up to 1,719 flats, 445 co-living units and 661 student units, bringing the total number of people that can be accommodated to at least 5,700.

The co-living units are all to be delivered in Phase 1a in one 23-storey tower, roughly where Boots is

now. Though not reserved exclusively for them, it is mainly aimed at key workers and young people on low incomes and will be all-rental.

The tallest towers would be built along Molesworth Street, while the frontages and lower height of historic buildings along the High Street behind the market would be preserved. The proposal offers 20% affordable housing in a variety of rental forms, with the other 80% of residential units for private sale.

It includes at least 11,885sqm of open space, parkland and public areas comprising the Park, Northern Square, Eastern Terrace and the new Model Market. *An outline drawing of the proposals is shown below with the 23-storey tower in blue.*

The proposal meets the London Plan’s minimum Urban Greening Factor for predominantly residential developments and claims a biodiversity net gain of 346%, including 300 new trees, which would be a much needed improvement for the town centre.

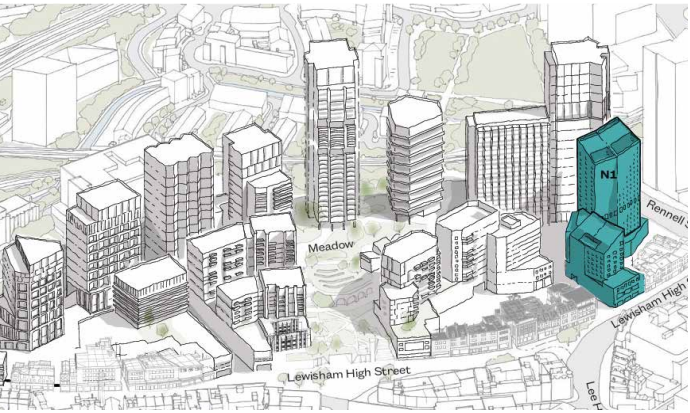
The application includes 99 large documents and the site, opposite Gateway, is expected to be developed in multiple phases. The developer, Landsec-U+I, intends to keep the centre operating during the redevelopment.

The plans include pedestrianised streets from the High Street to Molesworth Street and Landsec hopes they will open up the town centre. Car parking would be massively reduced. As part of Phase 1, a new market for food stalls would be built next to a large music venue and cultural space at the southern-most point.

Lewisham Council is currently repaving the High Street and refurbishing the library with regeneration grant funding. It plans to build a market hall south of the clock tower to house part of the existing street market.

We are pleased that the Lewisham Tree Officer accepted our plea to grant a tree preservation order on an important large elm in the Boone’s Almshouses gardens which will help secure its survival.

All the planning efforts detailed above are handled by the dedicated work of the volunteers in our planning group and we always welcome any new volunteers who would like to join us. We are also greatly helped by the interest and support of members sharing their views with us, which has been considerable recently.



LEE TERRACE TELECOMS MAST

In August local residents were surprised to see the erection, without any prior consultation or notice, of a large telecoms mast in Lee Terrace (*below*) near the junction with the Glebe in the Blackheath conservation area.

Legislation governing the erection of such masts is quite permissive. Infrastructure companies can generally benefit from permitted development and do not need planning permission.

But in conservation areas local authorities are expected to consider whether the visual impact of any development has been minimized as far as practicable, taking into account the nature and purpose of the site. They can object if the impact is deemed unacceptable.



Lewisham’s planning department said that the application, received in 2021, had been mistakenly deleted from their system before it could be processed. Because of this error, there had been no notification to residents or any consultation. Lewisham had by default raised no objection and the mast had been put in place using what is called “deemed consent”.

The department apologised for its mistake and said a new procedure had been put in place to ensure such errors would not be repeated. It also said: “Had the application followed the correct procedures and officers had carried out a formal assessment of the proposals, it would have been refused on appearance and for its impact on the setting of the Blackheath Conservation Area and the statutorily listed buildings nearby”.

But the department later reversed this position claiming that, on further inspection, it did not consider it especially harmful to the street scene.

The Society strongly disagrees with this assessment and has made clear that it its hopes such errors will not be repeated. We pointed out that similar proposals have been turned down in Greenwich, where the procedures have been properly followed. Members will be able to draw their own conclusions about this.

WINTER EVENTS - FIVE ZOOM MEETINGS, WALKS & TALKS

All events have further details on the website at www.blackheath.org where you can reserve your place for the live events using the link to Eventbrite. Members will be sent the link to join the Zoom meetings.

WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER, 10.15AM. Continuing his series on *Gateways to London*. Paul Wright will lead a walk around London Bridge and Borough High Street. This will cover the history of the bridge, London Bridge station and a number of other interesting sites in Southwark, Borough High Street and Guys Hospital.



TUESDAY 14 JANUARY, 7PM FOR 7.30 START. Zoom talk on *Architectural Embroideries*. At Blackheath High School Juniors, booking and information is on our website. Ana Sutherland will give a presentation based on Teresa Forrest's book *Amazing Embroideries*. Teresa is an architect who lived in Blackheath; her daughter Lucy was a victim of violence. Teresa moved away and focused on her embroidery of architectural designs, and some have been exhibited at the Royal Academy. They depict streetscapes, buildings (above) and landscapes, in intricate and detailed patterns. She published a book to help raise funds for the Lucy Forrest Scholarship at Blackheath High in memory of Lucy. It has 187 pages and wonderful illustrations, is for sale prior to January for a £35 donation via the the Society office.

WEDNESDAY 15 JANUARY AT 12.30PM. Meet & Eat. Join other members at the Princess of Wales, Blackheath, for a chat over a drink and or a light meal.

THURSDAY 23 JANUARY, 6PM. Zoom talk by Lynne Dixon from Mycenae House on the remarkable story of *John Julius Angerstein* (seen below in 1790 painting by Thomas Lawrence). It will cover his legacy to the nation and the local neighbourhood. An insurance broker, philanthropist and art collector, Angerstein lived at Woodlands House, Greenwich and 100 Pall Mall.

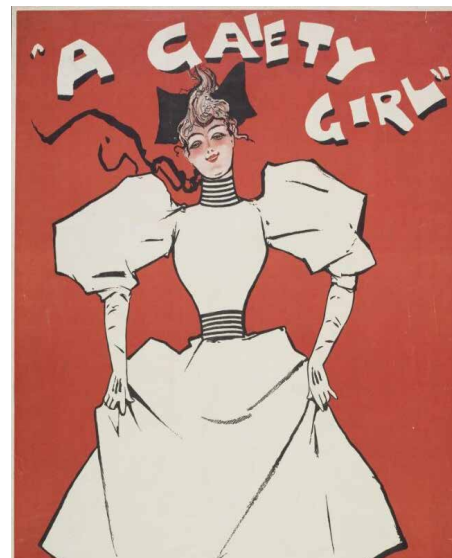


WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY, 10am. Walk and Talk: A winter walk led by Howard Shields covering Brockley 3 Peaks. We will meet at the church porch of St Mary's, Ladywell and follow the River Ravensbourne, then cross Blyth meadows, go via Honor Oak, One Tree Hill and down to Hilly Fields. About five miles passing great views, an interesting cemetery and good cafes.

WEDNESDAY 19 FEBRUARY, 6PM. A Zoom talk on *Murder Most Foul: The Origins and Evolution of the Detective in Fiction* by Professor Alan Downie, who for many years taught a detective story course at Goldsmiths. He will trace the development of the detective story from its earliest beginnings to currently the most popular genre among book buyers in the UK.

THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY, 7PM FOR 7.30PM. Architectural Group talk in St Michael's Church, Blackheath Park, by Clementine Fletcher-Smith on *Lighting Buildings*. She is a partner at Speirs Major, an award-winning international design practice that uses light and darkness to enhance the visual environment. Clementine says: "Lighting architecture is about transformation, the coming together of the solid and the immaterial to create something that transforms perception, atmosphere and people's behaviour."

THURSDAY 13 MARCH, 6PM. Zoom talk on *Gaiety Girls and Stage Door Johnnies* by Society Member Jonathan Causer on the Edwardian gentleman's interest in the theatre and music halls. PG Wodehouse was among the crowd at the stage door and this was an opportunity for all classes to mix and girls from humble origins to hobnob with the upper classes.



MONDAY 24 MARCH, 12.30PM. Meet & Eat: Join members at the Princess of Wales pub for a chat over a drink and or a light meal.

TUESDAY 25 MARCH, 6PM. Join us on Zoom with Candy Blackham who will explore *The Green Spaces and their history in Lewisham and Greenwich Boroughs*, into corners beyond Greenwich Park.

KITE DAY BECALMED BUT STILL ATTRACTS LARGE CROWDS

Blackheath, famous for its winds, left the Society's Kite Day becalmed this year. Even so, it was a hugely enjoyable day, with large crowds of visitors from Blackheath and beyond.

The free event, held on the second Sunday in October, is usually treated to a display of giant kites, including flying teddies, dragons and elephants. But this year there was not enough wind to get the big kites off the ground.



The Kent Kite Flyers, enthusiasts from the coast who support the event every year by bringing their display kites, enjoyed a brief few minutes at the start of the day to show off what they could do. After that, it was only the smaller kites, mostly brought by members of the public, that were able to launch.

Many parents had an unexpected workout, running valiantly across the Heath to take advantage of every breath of wind. Among the kites that did fly were lightweight traditional ones from Pakistan, brought by Dr Azhar Mir and family and sold for a nominal amount to lines of waiting children. The Kent Kite Flyers also did a brisk trade in kite sales. The Blackheath Society handed out free badges to everyone who brought their own kite, whether or not they had them flying.



All the photographs of Kite Day were taken and kindly supplied by Stephan Magne.

Stars of the show were the children of Grinling Gibbons Primary School in Deptford who again provided entertainment with their impressive steelpans band. This year they were joined by children from Lucas Vale Primary School, who are also learning the steelpans.

Both schools, which are part of the Phoenix Federation, were accompanied by parents and school staff, including the Federation Head Dean Gordon. We are grateful to all at the schools who put so much effort into supporting the event, especially since it was out of school hours on a Sunday.



There were small kites for all the children who had played in the band and a reward, excitedly anticipated, of free rides at Botton's Family Funfair at the end of the afternoon. The funfair ran the whole weekend, to coincide with Kite Day. We had double the number of children playing this year, so this was doubly generous of Jimmy Botton and family. See page 6 for our focus on the Botton family.

Our thanks, again, to everyone who volunteered and contributed to making the event such a success, even though the weather conditions were not perfect. We plan to be back again next October and so, we hope, will Blackheath's famous wind.



BOTTON FAIR FAVOURS BLACKHEATH



Jimmy Botton and his family have a favourite venue for their children’s funfairs: Blackheath.

Three times a year they bring their under-12s rides and games to the Village end of the Heath, at February half term, July and, most importantly for the Society, in October to coincide with Kite Day.

Coordinating with Jimmy has become a vital part of making the Blackheath Society’s Kite Day such a success each year. If, as this year, there was little wind, at least the funfair was there to make the expedition worthwhile for families. And even when the kites do fly high, there is the extra treat of a ride or two.

Botton’s Family Funfairs have also been generous in helping Kite Day and other events with logistical support. One year they provided portable toilets when the promised ones didn’t turn up, and this year it was large water tanks to act as anchors for the Kent Kite Flyers giant kites. “Every problem has a solution” is Jimmy’s motto.

Most generously, the children from Grinling Gibbons and Lucas Vale Schools who play in the steelpan band are issued with wristbands and treated to free rides, a reward that is much appreciated by the excited musicians.

As well as Kite Day, the Botton family supports the Village by donating a Christmas tree. This year the tree promises to be particularly spectacular. At about 28 feet it will

be much larger than previous years and will be situated in a prominent position on Montpelier Green.

Jimmy is a third-generation showman from south London, though he has had other businesses over the years, including a skip company and shops. About 25 years ago he started the fairs again, spotting a niche for smaller fairs for younger children.

Jimmy and his wife Marina, *seen on the left*, have two children, Tallulah (19) and Jimi Junior (18) who both work in the business. Marina takes care of administration, social media and the applications and paperwork to apply for and run the events. During Covid she developed all the safety protocols necessary to enable Botton’s as one of the first funfairs back up and running when restrictions eased.

As well as family members, Toby, who is almost like family says Jimmy, is employed as a manager. He helps with building fairs and organises staff training, rotas and up to 14 other young people who come and work on them. All live locally to Lewisham and they are generally 16 and 17 year-olds related to people who are known to the family and have worked on the fair in previous years.

They have events in Bromley, Croydon, Merton, Southwark and Greenwich, as well as Lewisham, but Jimmy says they decided their favourite three venues were Blackheath, followed by Wimbledon and Dulwich. Will there be a fourth generation of the family carrying on the fairground traditions?

Jimi Junior is working in the business but hasn’t yet decided what he wants to do longer-term. Talullah is described by Jimmy as driven and ambitious. The fairground games are hers and she already has her own catering set-up, offering crepes, donuts and hot drinks - another reason to be grateful to the Botton family on an October Kite Day.

CRUST & WINE

After two years as an empty premises, Crust & Wine has opened in Blackheath at 1-3 Lee Road.

An independent restaurant, owned by friends Ajay and Prasad, it is the Village’s first multi-cuisine restaurant and it prides itself in offering original recipes and home-cooked food.

Indian-style tapas feature among the starters. The main courses include locally-sourced lamb chops spiced with chilli and ginger.

They possess an oven for a wide range of homemade pizzas, *seen below*, and also carry a pasta menu, while all desserts are homemade.



Crust & Wine would like to offer all Blackheath Society members a free glass of wine with every main course - simply quote CWBSM24 when booking during the first two weeks of December.

Another change in the Village is at the former Barclays Bank building, which will re-open as Aesthetics by Lauren Turner, who is a qualified nurse, and she will be offering beauty treatments in her new clinic.

The possible arrival of three supermarket branches in the Village is covered in the front page story. We will update members on more new arrivals in the next *Newsletter*.



The Society has been given this original Banx cartoon of our late President Neil Rhind, who died in February. The cartoon, which perhaps depicts Neil’s latest publication *Up Above*, first appeared in the Greenwich Society *Newsletter* as part of its obituary tribute to him. We plan to present the original to Neil’s wife Liz. Award-winning Jeremy Banks (Banx) is a cartoonist whose work has appeared in *Private Eye*, *Punch*, *The Spectator*, the *Financial Times* and many other UK national newspapers. He lives in Greenwich with his wife and four children.

NEW MEMBERS

We would like to welcome the following new members who have joined the Blackheath Society since our last publication:

- Madhumita Abram
- Halide Bey
- Cathy Bird
- Paul Burrow
- Karen Malivoire
- Penny Matheson
- Anthony McCullagh
- Shaheer Muhammad
- Samuel Payne
- Michael Phipson
- Melissa Roskell
- Alexander Shepherd
- Natali Tombak Demirer
- Peter Walsh

As reported in the last *Newsletter*, our membership has now exceeded 1,000 households and we would of course welcome more new members. Please pass on the word about our activities to your friends.

WEST KENT GUARDIAN
March 31, 1849

MESMERISM. A course of lectures on this subject (Mesmerism) has been lately delivered by W. Reynoldson, Esq., at the Lewisham and Blackheath Literary Institutions, on the practical adaptation of mesmeric science to the cure of disease - with numerous illustrations.

Some vexatious opposition was raised at one of the lectures by some of the leading members at Lewisham, who wished the lecturer to produce the sleep upon someone they knew; the lecturer, in reply, would not pledge himself as it might prove failure, but a gentleman well known in this neighbourhood, stepped forward and in a few minutes succeeded in inducing the sleep in a young female promiscuously taken from the audience.

At a subsequent lecture Mr. R. removed the pain, by means of mesmeric passes, from the strained ancle of Mr. Timpson, jun., of five or six days’ standing, enabling him to walk with perfect ease without the least return of the pain he experienced but a few minutes before.

Mr. R. reminded his audience that he never made sleep a condition in his practice - it was not necessary; he then narrated cures he had effected of every kind of nervous affection, also fevers and consumption, by infusing a healthful action into the system. As Mr. R. is a resident of Greenwich, we hope to hear and see more practical effects from him, before we can form an opinion of his theories

ST MARGARET'S CHURCHYARD RESTORATION

The ancient churchyard on the opposite side of Lee Terrace from the splendid St Margaret's church has been long neglected. This was the site of a church for around 800 years until the middle of the 19th century and its Grade II listed tower is still standing.

The churchyard may have seen up to five thousand burials, including those of local dignitaries, prominent historic figures from the arts and no fewer than three astronomers royal.

was made possible by using funds paid to Lewisham Council by the developers of the Forbury estate next to the churchyard, perhaps better known now by some members as the location of the Majestic wine shop.

These funds, which the Society was instrumental in securing and earmarked for the purpose, have been used to secure the services of specialists.

Under the expert guidance of Joanna Ecclestone, Lewisham's senior conservation officer, they are

of restoring one of the other tombs, partly using the receipts of the Forgotten Neighbours talk in October 2023 which told the stories of several prominent occupants of the graveyard. A written version of this talk can be found on the Society's website at www.blackheath.org.

The level of local interest in this ancient churchyard can be gauged from the fact that more 120 people attended illustrated talks on it conducted by Society member Paul Wright as part of the Open House weekend last September.

It has long been a goal of the Society that this unique historic asset should be available as a safe open space for Blackheath residents to enjoy.

The most recent work takes things a long way in that direction and it is hoped that the ancient churchyard can be opened as a public amenity next year.

Notwithstanding the extensive recent work, more will remain to be done, including to the tower (*seen below*), and a fundraising effort may be launched, probably led by the church but with the full support of the Society, in the next year or two to finance further improvements to this valuable historic site.



Until recently it presented a sorry picture of dereliction as it was overgrown, the tower was crumbling and many tombs of great historic and architectural merit were neglected and decaying. Over the past year, however, all that has changed with the churchyard receiving more attention than it has for many years.

The most important development is the restoration and stabilisation of several prominent tombs. This

now fully restoring five tombs and starting repairs to four others, all of which are listed by Historic England. The current phase of the works will cost about £100,000

The leading restoration (*seen underway above*) is that of the Grade II* listed tomb of Samuel Fludyer, a local dignitary responsible for the extension of the Dacre House estate in the 18th century. The Society has contributed £2,800 to the costs



GREENWICH LTN TRIAL AFFECTS SURROUNDING AREAS

After extensive consultation and discussion, the controversial trial of the Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) in East and West Greenwich began on November 27.

It will affect everyone who uses vehicles other than bicycles in the Westcombe Park, East Greenwich or West Greenwich areas, as well as those who live or use boundary roads in the surrounding area, particularly the A2/Shooters Hill.

This will potentially have knock-on effects, in terms of traffic and pollution, further afield, including Blackheath Village and Charlton.

The scheme will operate from 0700 to 1000 and 1500 to 1900 on weekdays, and the necessary equipment to monitor and penalise unauthorised users entering the areas is being installed.

The council says the scheme is a trial for 18 months, when it will be reviewed, and a consultation process has been established. We have been assured that the necessary protocols for establishing baseline measurements of traffic and pollution, against which the outcome can be compared, have been established. Comparable schemes elsewhere in London have been controversial, so we will be keeping a close eye on the progress of this one and we would welcome members' views as it progresses.

Information about the scheme, including the opportunity to comment and apply for an exemption, can be found at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greener-safer-greenwich.commonplace.is.

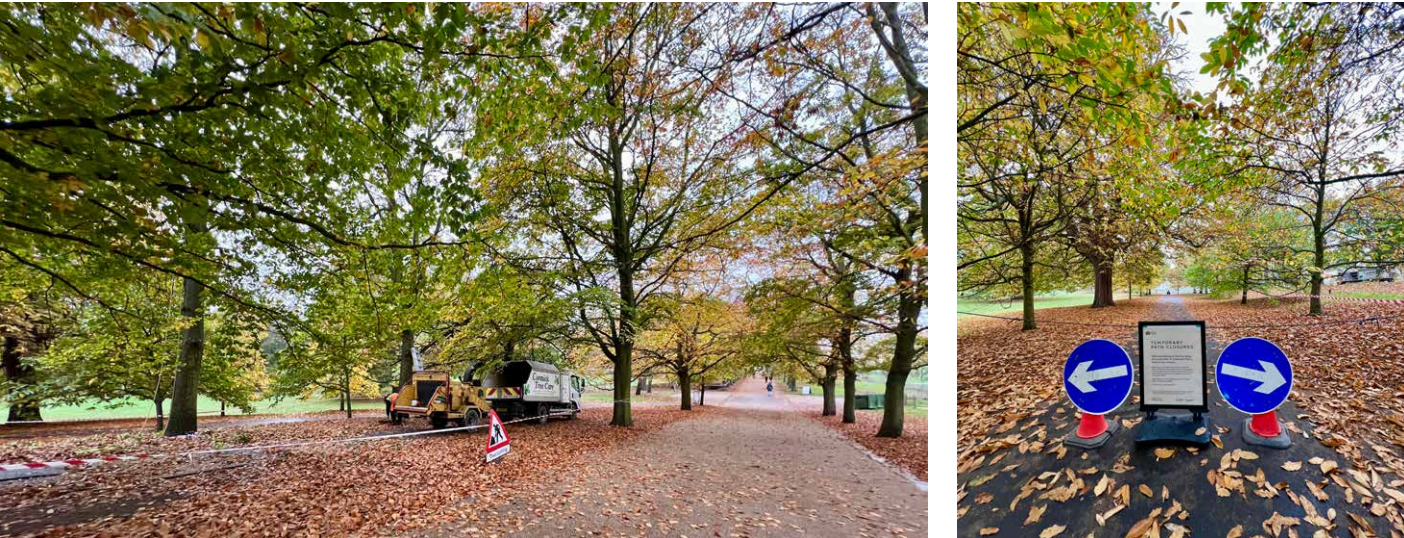


This lime tree in Tranquil Vale fell over early on 13 November, damaging a parked car when its owner was in a nearby shop, and no-one was hurt. There was no strong wind and it collapsed from the roots which were rotten. Tranquil Vale is a very challenging environment for trees to flourish. We will be contacting the council on the need to ascertain the cause and to protect the remaining trees in the road. We will also campaign for a replacement, possibly elsewhere if necessary.



It is a tradition now for members of the Society to join our friends in Glendale, who have the responsibility of keeping the Heath clean, for an afternoon of litter gathering, and this year it took place on Saturday October 26. We always collect a huge array of material, especially in the verges along the roads. But this time it was striking that the many small nitrous oxide canisters we used to find are now being replaced by fewer, but extremely large, ones. We were pleased to see more young people join our efforts this year. Many thanks to all who helped.

GREENWICH PARK REVEALED PROJECT NEARS COMPLETION



The final phase of the Greenwich Park Revealed programme is due to be completed by the end of this year with four key projects now underway.

The Royal Parks said these are tree work in the Western Parterre, resurfacing around the General Wolfe statue and tree relocation and irrigation in the Grand Ascent.

Senior Communications Officer Zoë Toone told the *Newsletter*: “We will be doing our best to keep closures to a minimum and will be sharing information across our digital and in-park platforms. There will be signage in place to clearly mark closures. In 2025 we will also see the deer return from Richmond Park and the installation of the new coffee kiosk by the General Wolfe statue.”

In the Western Parterre the Park is embarking on the final phase of the restoration of its historic tree avenues. Many trees are declining and showing signs of damage and disease. So planting healthy, semi-mature trees will secure healthy avenues for the future.

Elms will be re-introduced, as these are the original species of the 17th century landscape. Dead wood

from the removed trees will be stockpiled in several locations before being moved to several sites across the park to benefit biodiversity.

The pathway at the top of the Castle Hill path between the General Wolfe statue and the Royal Observatory will be resurfaced as it is patchy and uneven.

The hawthorn trees on the Grand Ascent leading up to the statue have not flourished and will be moved to a more suitable landscape that will encourage them to thrive. Relocation is due to last five days and complete by end-2024. There will be no impact to pathways or places accessible to visitors.

A hosepipe irrigation system will be installed in the hedgerow flanks on the northern side of the Grand Ascent, using an existing borehole water connection. This will provide a watering point for trees and grassland, making it easier to maintain this expertly restored historic landscape.

The photographs *above* show two of the Park’s tree avenues before the work started, and two before and after photographs of the resurfacing work that took place around the General Wolfe statue.

OUR CHAIR PAUL WATTS REPORTS ON A BUSY 2024

The Society has been busy in 2024. We were sad to hear the news of the death of our President and well-known local historian Neil Rhind MBE FSA in February and we paid due tribute to him in our spring *Newsletter* and at a special evening at Blackheath Halls in July, which many members attended.

We are working closely with his literary executors and hope to publish two of his final works next year. *Walking Westcombe* in the spring and Volume 4 of his *Blackheath Village & Environs*, covering northwest Blackheath, by the end of the year. We also look forward to working on Neil’s extensive archive.

As you will read elsewhere in this edition, a number of planning proposals are coming forward that could have a major impact on the Village, and the Society is keen to represent the views of our members in these important issues.

We have also kept an eye on the repairs and redecoration to the station, which we hope will complete in the spring. We also intend to keep pressure on Southeastern trains to return additional direct Charing Cross services to the timetable.

We have been active in many other areas as you will have seen, with a full events programme, including another successful Kite Day, continued work on our archive and keeping up with matters related to the Heath and the Village.

We welcomed many new members in 2024 and met some of you at our new members’ evenings. If you would like to become involved in any aspect of our work and join our volunteer teams, please do come forward and let us know.

I am grateful as always to my fellow trustees and our secretary Sacha for all their hard work. Finally, best wishes for Christmas and a Happy New Year.

SOCIETY ACTS ON LIME BIKES PARKING COMPLAINTS

The Society has written to Lewisham council about parking Lime bikes in the Village following many complaints from members about the thoughtless way in which they are often left, particularly on the Heath and our narrow pavements.

Our main concern is the complete absence of any provision for them by the Council in central and southern areas of the Village. Bikes are now abandoned on a regular basis, sometimes two abreast on the narrow pavements.

We asked for a minimum of two bays, possibly located in the shoppers’ car park opposite the Post Office and in the parking area of the taxi company next to the station, assuming that the station car park may soon be unavailable. There may also be some availability in Independents Road.

Our letter replied to the Council’s consultation on its proposals to provide docking areas for Lime e-Bikes in Blackheath. We supported the development of new regulations and providing responsible parking areas.

The letter said: “In general terms, we are pleased to see that all the bays proposed for our area are on the roadways rather than on the pavements and that none will be sited on the grass of the Heath.”

But we said we were concerned about losing car parking bays, particularly in residents’ areas where parking was already often difficult to find, and we asked for more such bays.

We were pleased to see bays for the bikes had been provided around perimeters of the Heath and hoped these would encourage cyclists to avoid spoiling the natural environment of the grasslands and meadows.

And we were concerned that the limited number of spaces in each bay might not be sufficient to accommodate the number of bikes in use in those areas, particularly in busy periods.

We are waiting to hear details from Greenwich for plans for their side of Blackheath and we hope that the two boroughs can work together to achieve an integrated provision. Our problems are shared with many other London areas and negotiations are taking place between Transport for London and Uber, who are responsible for the Lime Bikes.



CHRISTMAS CARDS DESIGNED BY LOCAL ARTISTS



The photographs below, taken by two Society trustees, show the Hunter's Moon looming over Blackheath on October 18. Known as a sanguine or blood moon, the term is used to refer to a full moon appearing in October.



This year the Blackheath Society is offering Christmas cards designed by two professional local artists and we are very grateful for their generous support. They are *Christmas Airmail from Blackheath* by Alison Jay (top) and *Lights over Blackheath* by John Fisher. The cards can be bought in the Village now from Selectric and the Bookshop on the Heath at £5 for a pack of 10. Alison's paintings, prints and cards are available from the Alison Jay Gallery Etsy Portfolio at childrensillustrators.com and you can follow John's work on Instagram @johnfisherart.



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The Old Bakehouse
11 Blackheath Village
London, SE3 9LA

THE
BLACKHEATH
SOCIETY

020 8297 1937
office@blackheath.org
www.blackheath.org