

Views from the Hill

NEWSLETTER OF THE TEWKESBURY LODGE ESTATE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

May 2024



National Garden Scheme



An American visiting our open garden afternoon, part of the National Garden Scheme, asked me what pests we had to deal with. With a huge sigh I told him about the slugs and snails that sneak out at night to devour everything newly planted; the squirrels that sit in the trees watching (with binoculars I'm convinced) and waiting for the first fruits to appear and the foxes that poo everywhere and smash the flowers when they're mating. "What pests do you have?" I asked, "Oh the usual" he replied, "Bears, mountain lions, deer, raccoons and rattlesnakes." I asked: "How do you garden with all that?" He replied "Very carefully".

So, what is the National Garden Scheme (NGS) that now attracts not just local visitors but people from across the globe? Founded in 1927, long before the National Health Service, it encouraged people to open their gardens to raise money for nursing care for the poorest people. 609 gardens opened then, but 3600 gardens now open, raising millions for nursing charities, including Marie Curie, Macmillan, Parkinson's UK, Hospice UK and Maggie's cancer centres, and for projects using gardening to support people with mental health problems. Our own group openings also raise money for St Christopher's Hospice.

Pat Rae, now in her 90's, has been opening her beautiful courtyard sculpture garden since 1981. She said "The NGS is a fantastic cause to support and I love sharing my garden and gardening tips with visitors."

Our gardens are not show gardens, just our own gardening efforts which we are happy to share with others to raise money for fantastic causes, and are all very different. One is an urban garden with intricately planted terraces combined with roses and herbaceous borders. Another, new this year, has a beautiful pond as its centrepiece, whilst another is a vintage garden designed to interest children as well as adults, where the chickens are always a draw. There is a garden full of colour with a cut flower and vegetable plot and another has fruit trees and a rill running the length of it.

Yes, it involves a lot of work to get ready for the opening such as organising volunteers, getting the teas ready for up to 600 visitors, putting up signage and ensuring our gardens look as good as possible, but we work as a team to organise it all. Then there are those wonderful people who support us by baking cakes, afternoon tea is always a highlight of the event, and helping out as volunteers on the day. We can never thank them enough.

So why not come along, enjoy the gardens, have afternoon tea, buy plants and help to support this great cause and if you are able to bake a cake to donate it will be very gratefully received. If you are interested in opening your garden and want to know more come along for a chat as the NGS is always looking for new gardens.

Steph Blackwell

**19th May, 12 to 5 pm
featuring five
gardens:**

*25 Westwood Park,
28 Horniman Drive,
The Coach House at
The Hermitage,
7 and 75 Canonbie
Road*

**23rd June, 12 to 5pm
features three differ-
ent gardens:**

*53 Ringmore Rise,
27 Horniman Drive
and*

*35 Netherby Road,
plus possibly 2 more
pop ups (gardens that
don't commit until the
last moment)*

*Admission is £9.00 per
person to see all the
gardens open that day
and children under 16
go free. We regret no
dogs unless service
ones.*

*All proceeds will go to
St Christopher's
Hospice*

*All the details for the
openings are on the
National Gardens
Scheme website under
Forest Hill Garden
Group
<https://ngs.org.uk/>*

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Trees and mental health

We are very lucky in Forest Hill to have significant access to green spaces, and our local environment on the Estate has been enhanced through the excellent recent planting initiatives. Trees are of course very important for carbon capture, biodiversity and aesthetic reasons. There is also evidence that being around trees, or in green spaces, is good for our mental and physical health.



A number of studies have looked at the physical and psychological changes which occur when we regularly access green spaces and some relate specifically to tree density. Using such space can lower blood pressure, lower cortisol levels (the stress hormone – so cortisol levels are indicative of stress), and improve mood. These changes can logically be linked with preventing common mental health problems such as depression, and physical illness such as heart disease. I say logically linked because from a research point of view it is very hard to have cast iron proof of specific effects – for example people in deprived communities often have less access to green space. However, I would now say the evidence base makes a pretty compelling case for green spaces and trees in the general sense that there are likely to be health benefits. One recent fascinating study (Marselle et al. 2020) linked lower anti-depressant prescription rates to higher tree density. How does this work? The human mind and body and the interlinking of mental and

physical health are so complex that it is only possible to suggest likely pathways. Being in green space takes us away from our day-to-day concerns, provides exercise or physical movement (mild exercise is fine) and access to sunlight. I suspect there is also a kind of spiritual dimension to this, somehow it is better to look at a tree than a concrete wall, but I wouldn't go too far with that! However, any connection with nature acts on us in a positive way to improve health. And because physical and mental health are inextricably linked the benefits can be wide and person specific. For example, depression and diabetes are closely linked but exercise in green space can help with the risk factors for both. None of this should be surprising as humans as a species are not designed to sit inside in the dark out of contact with nature.

How then can we make use of our area to benefit our health? How we use our green spaces will vary from individual to individual, but taking time for a walk in the park or cemetery and building that into our day is a great starting point. Just looking outside at trees or using our gardens more will help too. Trees are not just about climate change and good looking streets – although these are both important – they are about our health and that of our families too.

Dr Andrew McCulloch (formerly CEO of the Mental Health Foundation)

Having fun and fund raising

We hope all TLERA members and families will come and enjoy our five annual social events. They are also an opportunity for members to raise funds for various causes dear to the hearts of people on The Hill.

- Since 2009 the Garden Group's **Open Gardens** event has raised the amazing sum over £52,000 for the many different cancer and nursing charities supported by the **National Garden Scheme**.
- In December 2023 we were delighted to raise £750 for Crisis, the charity for the homeless, at our Carols by Candlelight.



- We have sent a total of £1739 raised from donations at our **Easter Egg Hunts** to **Demelza**, the local charity which provides 'extraordinary care for extraordinary children'



- The **Apple Pressing and Harvest Festival** is another popular event for families to meet each other and enjoy autumnal activities, with money raised also going to **Demelza**.

TLERA works so well because we have so many wonderful volunteers on The Hill. Helping at events is a great way to get involved and meet people - so if you would like to join in, or suggest other charities or events, then please do get in touch via the website. We are always grateful for new volunteers and new ideas.



It was a fantastic effort and ended with our **Big Help Out Clutter Sale** on the Coronation Bank Holiday.
Frankie Locke



- The **Summer Picnic** in The Triangle sometimes coincides with a national event. In 2023 this was the **Big Help Out**. For the two months running up to the Coronation weekend TLERA had been encouraging a Big Clear Out on the Hill and collected a huge amount of good quality stuff for three charities:
 - **Siobhan's Trust** (now <https://www.hopefull.org.uk>) - who delivered two van loads to Ukraine,
 - **Tools for Africa** who received three big car loads of tools and sewing machines, and
 - **St Christopher's Hospice** shops, who received several more carloads of donations.



Flooding of the Night Walk

The 'Night Walk' is a public right of way which links Westwood Park to London Road. It is maintained at public expense by Lewisham Council being the Local Highway Authority.



Most of the path is bounded by Horniman Gardens and the Horniman Nature Trail. Members will be aware that the footpath suffers from seasonal and periodic flooding, principally due to run-off from the

higher meadow land in the adjoining gardens, underground streams and also from the nature trail bank. This flood water has damaged the surface of the footpath and regularly forms large muddy puddles making the path unsafe and almost impassable.

The Horniman Museum's Nature + Love Project which TLERA reported about in the last

newsletter, proposes to capture surface water run-off from the adjoining meadow land, using a sustainable urban drainage system (SUDs). This involves the construction of a series of soakaways and an underground water storage area of sufficient capacity to retain the run-off flow. The water will then be used in the proposed cafe and toilets, with foul water subsequently discharged into the main sewer. The footprint of the new development will impact on the existing boating pond, removing its ability to hold flood water, which the SUDs scheme will now have to absorb, otherwise the footpath may be adversely affected.

As your TLERA representatives, we have requested the Horniman Project Team to provide full details of the approved SUDs scheme, so that members can be informed of its design and potential effectiveness. This matter will be pursued at forthcoming meetings with the contractors, which TLERA has been invited to attend. Remedial repairs to the footpath are the responsibility of the Council and TLERA will be pressing local Councillors to implement these works, as the existing condition raises Health and Safety issues for users. An update on these issues will be provided in a future newsletter.

Stuart Checkley and Dennis Stevenson

*Footpath or Riverbed?
 Photo by Steve Griffiths*

Migration Museum

Two unexpected things right in the middle of the Lewisham Shopping Centre! Firstly, you come face to face with two sections of the Berlin Wall. One section is painted by the artist



Hey, I like your red mittens...

STIK with one of his recognisable stick people, the other features a colourful image by fellow street artist Thierry Noir. Between 1984 and 1989 Thierry Noir illegally painted over five kilometres of the Berlin Wall as an act of artistic resistance with the intent of changing the perception of the Wall, to demystify it and remove its threat by making it colourful and ridiculous.

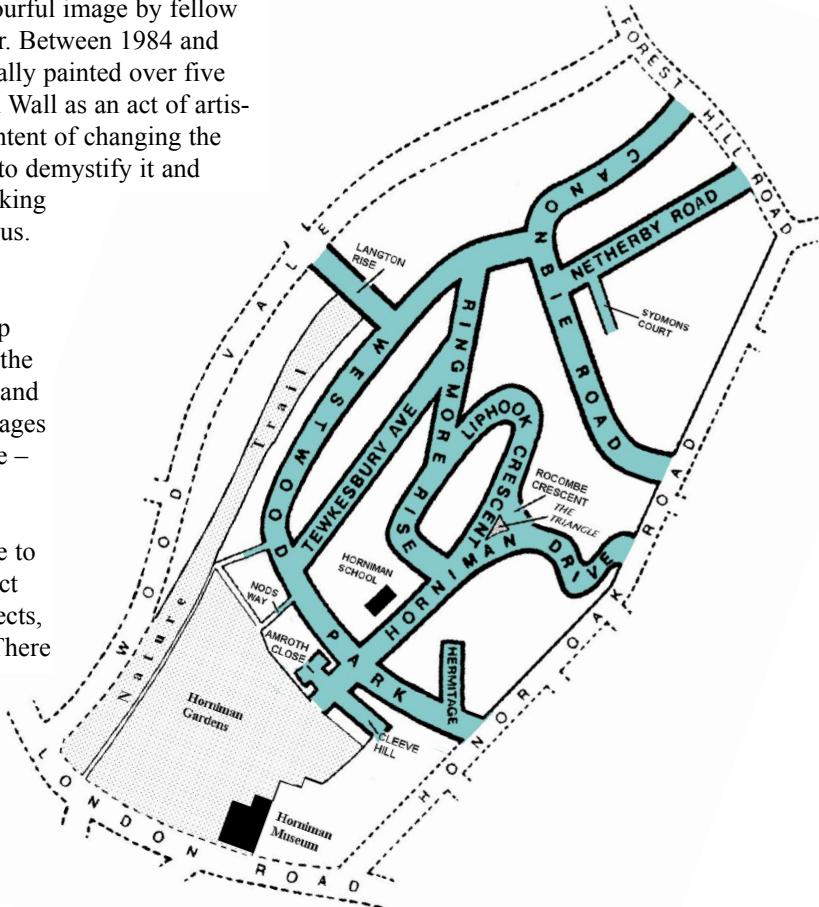
Adjacent to these, the Migration Museum occupies one of the shop units and explores how the movement of people to and from Britain across the ages has made us who we are – as individuals and as nations. The museum provides a cultural place to come together and reflect on how migration connects, rather than divides us. There

are various activities for children and they have an extensive education programme. They have recently been awarded Museum of Sanctuary status which celebrates organisations which go above and beyond to welcome people seeking sanctuary into their communities and promote a culture of inclusion for all.

Their current exhibition *Heart of the Nation* tells the stories of people who came to Britain to work in the NHS, including photography, film, oral histories and an immersive experience combining singing and storytelling. The exhibition is at the museum until 27 July. The museum also hosts the Migrant Makers Market, an award-winning concept store and maker-space dedicated to selling products from migrant-owned businesses and creators, otherwise unavailable in high street spaces. Among the products are the stories of the entrepreneurs behind them.

Until 27 July the museum is open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 11-5.30. Admission is free and no booking is required. Beyond July you will need to check the museum's webpage for opening information: <https://www.migrationmuseum.org>

Chris Dobb



Contributions to the newsletter are very welcome and can be emailed to:
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