

BLACK +GREEN BLACKHEATH +GREENWICH MAGAZINE

ISSUE 25 - SUMMER 2026

**Thompson Twins
interview**

**Thoughts on the
Blackheath car
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A visit to Bali

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It's always really gratifying receiving all the lovely comments we get about Black and Green Magazine. It is clear that there's a sizeable and growing readership that appreciates our strong emphasis on the best quality editorial, and we hope that you consider it a welcomed free asset to the community.

As well as covering local news and features, our quarterly magazine ventures further than south London, with celebrity interviews, lifestyle, property and travel articles, and much more.

We're hoping that you'll be keen to get involved in our magazine in some way, whether as a reader, advertiser, or perhaps stockist. We'd certainly welcome your views and suggestions, and please send us information, letters and photos you think suitable for the magazine.

Unfortunately, the magazine can't exist from advertising alone, so please consider helping secure its future by taking out a subscription to guarantee your copy (just email us at info@blackandgreen.biz), or perhaps by becoming an investor in this dynamic title.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

The Black + Green team

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What's on

RNLI Day

26 Sept, 11am to 4pm

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Cutty Sark, King William Walk, Greenwich, SE10 9HT; 020 8858 4422; rmg.co.uk; suitable for all ages; free with admission to the ship



Portrait of a City: A Century of American Photography

To 4 Oct

This major new exhibition brings together more than 100 landmark works by some of the most influential photographers of the 20th century. The exhibition charts the dramatic evolution of American city life from the early 1900s to the century's end, featuring images from New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and San Francisco. Showcasing 38 leading photographers of the modern era, *Portrait of a City* traces how photography has shaped our collective understanding of the American city. It demonstrates how rapid urban expansion catalysed the medium's rise as a tool to document changing conditions, presenting a compelling visual account of a nation in motion. The exhibition opens in the early 1900s, a moment when American cities expanded rapidly through mass immigration, industrial growth and new forms of labour. Evolving skylines became symbols of change. After the Wall Street Crash in 1929 photography took on an urgent social role, recording mass unemployment, poverty and migration. Also presented are intimate portrayals of marginalised communities in New York, and moving into the 1960s and 1970s the exhibition explores how photographers responded to a nation undergoing cultural and political transformation. There are powerful depictions of life on the margins, whether the realities of homelessness or communities affected by the AIDS crisis. Bruce Davidson's renowned *Subway* series, 1980–85, features vivid, unflinching photographs capturing the diversity, individuality and raw immediacy of New York life.

Dulwich Picture Gallery, 14 Gallery Road, Dulwich SE21 7AD; dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk; tickets £16 or £14.40 when booking online

Free on Fridays

25 Sept, 2 Oct and other dates, 1.30pm

The Blackheath Conservatoire runs free

lunchtime concerts on selected Friday afternoons. All ages are welcome, including babies and children. Entry is free with no need to book and there is an optional retiring collection at the end - all donations go directly to the performers. These concerts are, quite understandably, very popular so please arrive promptly to avoid disappointment. Running time is usually 45-60 minutes. On 25 September pianist and tutor Cathal Herron brings his trio to play jazz standards and favourites, with Oli Fitzgerald on bass and Ethan Sweeting on drums; on 2 October guitarist and composer Will Morgan will perform. He writes and performs fingerstyle guitar for steel string acoustic as well as classical guitar music on nylon string, and releases music under the name Will Moore on Spotify where he has built a steady following and accrued over 20m streams.

Blackheath Conservatoire, 19-21 Lee Road,

Blackheath SE3 9RQ; 020 8852 0234; conservatoire.org.uk; free

Jazzy Jeff Charity Fundraiser

Mon 31 Aug, 5pm

The Pelton Arms hosts lots of great live music events and tonight it's the pub's annual charity fundraiser featuring Jazzy Jeff and his spectacular 16-piece big band.

Pelton Arms, 23-25 Pelton Road, Greenwich SE10 9PQ; 020 8858 0572; peltonarms.com

Moon Celebration Week

12-20 Sept

Various activities celebrating the moon.

Royal Observatory Greenwich, Blackheath Avenue, Greenwich SE10 8XJ; 020 8312 6608; rmg.co.uk

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What's on

The Music is Black: A British Story

Until 10 January

This innovative, immersive exploration into the cultural footprint of the Black diaspora in Britain charts a 125-year story of resilience and survival through joy and expression. From the traumatic roots in Empire and the slave trade, through calypso, reggae, dub, Northern Soul, Brit funk, 2 Tone, UK garage, jungle, drum and bass, the Bristol sound/trip hop, grime and mainstream pop, it features cultural artefacts like early sound systems, Shirley Bassey's Goldfinger dress, JMEs Nintendo, Pauline Black's purple porkpie hat, Stormzy's Banksy-designed bullet-proof vest - all the while with an anthology of music, more than 120 tracks playing through Sennheiser headphones, it brings feelings of warm nostalgia of growing up in south London, the euphoria of warehouse raves and the DNA of modern Britain.

V&A East Museum, 107 Carpenters Road, E20 2AR; 020 7942 2000; vam.ac.uk/east; tickets £22.50, under 26 £11, Artfund £10

Greek Night

25 September, 7.30-10.30pm

A fantastic night of live Greek music from Thema Band, Greek dance lessons and delicious food, held in this historic building located amongst urban woodland.

Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road, Blackheath SE3 7SE; 020 8858 1749; mycenaehouse.co.uk; tickets £18.00



The Music is Black: A British Story - photo by David Parry

Dom Joly - Trigger Happy TV Live: 25th anniversary tour

17 September, 7pm

It's been twenty-five years since Trigger Happy TV burst onto our screens, transforming the hidden camera format with its surreal universe of characters and unforgettable pranks. Now, to celebrate a quarter-century of chaos, Dom Joly is

bringing his most iconic characters and sketches to the stage. Fans will experience beloved moments from the show and Dom will share behind-the-scenes insights on how these unforgettable moments came to life. But the surprises don't stop there – this is live theatre, and fans can expect the unexpected.

Greenwich Theatre, Croom's Hill, Greenwich SE10 8ES; 020 8858 7755; greenwichtheatre.org.uk; tickets from £27.50



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At the Forum In Greenwich



Tom Bailey: photo by Nick Caro

'Suddenly fame and fortune came knocking - a very exciting experience': Tom Bailey of The Thompson Twins on his impressive career

BY BEN WEST

The Thompson Twins were amongst the biggest British pop bands of the 1980s, enjoying success in both the UK and the US and appearing at Live Aid in Philadelphia, with Nile Rodgers on guitar and Madonna on backing vocals. They are also amongst the select group of British artists who successfully 'broke' America.

Known for their unique fusion of pop, new wave and synth-driven dance music, combined with an eclectic visual style, their hit songs include *Hold Me Now*, *Doctor! Doctor!*, *Lies* and *Love On Your Side*.

The band's co-writer, lead vocalist and instrumentalist Tom Bailey now performs under the name Thompson Twins' Tom Bailey, his shows celebrating the band's greatest hits and more.

"This resurgence of 1980s music has been around for a while, and it's partly a demographic thing because the 1980s audience kind of drifted off because they were raising families and couldn't go out and they didn't have enough cash or time," he says. "And then suddenly, their kids have grown up and left home, so the parents are wanting to pick up where they left off."

"A substantial part of my audience is people from the 80s coming back for another look. But it's not entirely that. They sometimes drag other people along, and sometimes other people come entirely of their own volition because the access to recorded music on the internet means that people can discover you in all sorts of ways."

Tom is regarded as one of the UK's premier songwriters, performers and producers, and played on such hits as Grace Jones' *My Jamaican Guy* and Foreigner's *I Want to Know what Love Is* amongst many others. It is no surprise, then, that his interest in music started at an early age.

"My family were musical, my father particularly. He was a doctor, but he was a very keen amateur musician too. He was also an early adopter of home-building hi-fi. So he was always making big speakers and amplifiers and stuff. And therefore the music sounded fantastic, and that to me felt normal, but now I realise that had a big effect on me growing up."

"Then I joined a church choir, and just by becoming part of a group like that you learn things. I was never really taught anything formally by the choir, but things like my understanding of harmony I think goes back to those days. It becomes instinctive eventually."

Despite his musical background, getting Thompson Twins off the ground wasn't instant.

"It was difficult to break into the music business, we just had to persist. Living in

squats, we kept on going until we got a record contract. And even the first two albums didn't really do anything. But luckily there was an unexpected hit on the second album that suddenly opened things up for us in America. And then the English record company started taking us seriously. And suddenly fame and fortune came knocking. It's a very exciting experience to suddenly take off in that world. But, of course, it's not about that, it's not about being well-known. Celebrity is just a kind of transient thing in terms of its satisfactions. Music is the thing that started it and continues it for me."

And not just pop music.

"I particularly enjoy listening not to new music, but to music from the past nowadays. We're lucky enough to have the entire history of recorded music at our fingertips now because of the technology of the internet. My guilty confession is that I listen to Baroque music and to North German Romantic music almost exclusively now in my spare time."

"One of the things I do is play with Indian musicians, and I really, really enjoy that because it stretches me way out of my own experience and into a new system of music that really challenges me. I've visited musicians in India many times, and toured with them in India and in New Zealand."

"Touring in India with the Holy Water Band, playing in a village where there was no electricity and people were living very simple lives close to the poverty line, was amazingly functional and clean and sweet despite all the challenges. We got a little generator going and played some music and there was something so charming about that on a Sunday evening in rural India. And then you go from that to Live Aid in front of 100,000 people and millions on TV, and you think, well, both are amazing, in completely different ways. There's something really good about having to concentrate like you're on a tightrope. To get it right, rather than just do the easy things that we do because we've been doing it for 40 years. It's good to have challenges, and sometimes to feel nervous that you could get it wrong."

On the forthcoming tour, Tom will be playing a venue that has connections with the past.

"When I was 16 I asked my parents whether I could stay out all night and go to a concert that starts at midnight and finishes at dawn, one of those kind of hippie things back in the day. It was the early version of Fleetwood Mac, the blues version of Fleetwood Mac, that was playing. And my parents said no. I said, 'look, I'm going with these two mates, and one of them is the son of the reporter on the local newspaper, and he's going to cover the event. So there'll be a responsible adult there with us at all times.' I was kind of making that bit up. But they said okay, and so we went. And so that was the first time I



stayed out all night and felt like I was grown up."

"Weirdly enough, I'm playing in exactly the same room on this tour, Buxton Opera House. It's the first time I've been back to this room since that night. And even more weirdly, the two guys that were with me that night are coming to the show. They're both guitarists. So I'm tempted to say why don't they jump up and join me and we play a song together. And that kind of forms a weird loop back to my early experience of concerts and what have you. Who would have expected that?"

The music they'll play on the tour will substantially be Thompson Twins, but other stuff too.

"When you play festivals and you're told you've got 45 minutes, everyone's disappointed if you don't play the big hits. So there's no room for adding the unexpected songs. Whereas this tour, it's my own tour, so I've got a lot longer. I get to include some things that no one's expecting, including some things that haven't been played for a long time. Not everyone enjoys touring, it takes a certain kind of personality. But I really enjoy it. I don't see it as a chore in any way to go on tour. I burn myself out - I never realise until the day after the tour when I'm going to collapse, always. I've been living on adrenaline for however long. It is a good thing. In a way, you learn how to look after yourself as well. You learn how to pace yourself. It's not about crazy parties every night, it can't be, otherwise you'd just die in the middle of a tour."

What advice would he give to young people starting in music today?

"I think it's incredibly hard, partly because of the way that the streaming industries have taken over the way that you make money out of recording, and they pay very poorly. And they're also infecting the environment with AI-generated music, which dilutes the amount of money available to young bands."



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Seen here in action is a music lesson in progress, a book reading group, parent & toddler group and a bridge club – all taking place at the Blackheath Quaker Meeting House.



MUSIC

So it's very difficult for young bands to put food on the table. Therefore, many of them have to give up when they would like to keep going, because it just becomes a practicality issue. Sometimes you have to decide to live as a pauper for a while in order to pursue your artistic dreams, and that's certainly what we had to do.

"But you can't oblige everyone to do that as a matter of course. I think that things should be easier. And I partly blame the record companies for having given in to the streaming services. So now the only way of making any money is to play live. Back in the day, we used to lose money on tour, but it was alright because we were promoting our album, which we would then sell. And now it's completely the other way around. You only make a record in order to get ticket sales for your tour. It's crazy."

Despite such a long career, Tom has no plans to retire.

"I never expected to be doing this for 45 years after I started, so I've got to celebrate that as a high point. I'll be going back to New Zealand after this tour and spending time there writing and recording and arranging. I'm collecting a lot of material for a new solo album and we're going to do an American tour next year."

Sounds like we'll be hearing more from Tom and The Thompson Twins for years to come...

Thompson Twins' Tom Bailey and Blancmange tour the UK in September, including Indigo at the O2 on 19 September. Tickets on sale now: alttickets.com



Tom Bailey: photo by James Cumpsty

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Sharp and snazzy

We talk to the elegantly dapper Paul Ferguson

BY BEN WEST

Lee resident Paul Ferguson has a busy life. As well as holding down a job in tech he helps run and present his partner Nikki's disco revival nights out - Haven't Stopped Dancing Yet - which originated in Greenwich 16 years ago. He also volunteers for Suited and Booted, a charity that provides smart clothes for vulnerable men going for a work interview.

If that wasn't enough, Paul, 61, is increasingly in demand as a model - and in May he even made the front page of *The Observer*, which proclaimed him one of the 34 most stylish people in Britain (plus one dog).

"I've always been interested in style," he says, drinking an IPA at the Princess of Wales pub in Blackheath. "I grew up in Birmingham in the 1970s and 1980s. I'm the son of Windrush-era folks for whom appearance was very important. If you look at the old Windrush boat picture you see all these guys, and they're wearing incredible, immaculate suits.

"It was very much an important part of our culture. Folks got dressed up to go to church and all that sort of stuff. And my dad worked in a factory, and I think his natural style wasn't a conscious thing on his part, he was just wearing functional workwear. But he'd be wearing donkey jackets and two-piece overalls and big boots, and it just all looked cool. It's workwear with a twist.

"As I got a bit older there were all these tribes. You had ska, you had the skinheads with their Ben Shermans and boots, you had soul boys, you had the dreads and New Romantics, people wearing Italian knitwear, like Gabicci. All these tribes had different styles, all these different strong identities.

"You followed these trends a bit, so you'd buy bits and pieces of all of those looks. But I guess my personal style really evolved the older I got, it really formed properly when I hit my 40s. Because you learn a little bit more about stuff, you're earning a little bit more money, so you can be more discerning about what you buy. So you start buying more of

the quality stuff, and then you start learning about provenance. And then you look more for classic stuff.

"So I would say now my style isn't trend driven at all, it's what feels right for me. I have my personal style. And I will buy the best quality that I can, either new or pre-loved, to get that style."

Paul's love of fashion gets an airing at Haven't Stopped Dancing Yet, where he is disco MC, wearing an array of 70s suits. Haven't Stopped Dancing Yet is a club night featuring feelgood 70s and 80s soul, funk and disco classics, which started in 2010 at the Trafalgar Tavern in Greenwich, and which now has regular club nights at numerous venues, including an annual Christmas extravaganza at Blackheath Halls, which this year is on Saturday 5 December.

"I do some hosting, compering, helping out. I'll dress up all vintage. I think for a lot of people, the night takes people back to their younger selves. They dance to Sister Sledge or Chic or whatever. People love it. Whenever you hear a song from your youth, it just rises you up, it just has that effect on you, doesn't it?

"We get groups of people but also people come on their own, men and women. They have a great time. People have come from France, Italy, even a woman from Australia who actually planned her trip so that she could be there. We're for everyone, we have no dress restriction, it's just good fun. And 10% of everything the night makes goes to Cancer Research."

He also works as a volunteer for Suited and Booted, a charity helping vulnerable, unemployed and low-income men get into employment by providing suitable interview clothing, interview advice and mentoring. He initially donated some unwanted clothes and was so impressed when he visited, he decided to get more involved.

"Fortunately, I've worked for organisations that allow you discretionary time off to do things in your community. So, I use my discretionary time off to volunteer there. The fact that it fuels this interest of mine as well means it was always going to be interesting.

"The men we see come from all walks of life. They don't walk up off the streets, but are referred by different agencies. They're usually vulnerable, or unemployed, or low income, and get referred either through their job agency or through a homeless charity, or through the care leaver system. They get referred to us because they have an interview coming up, or because they have a careers fair to go to, or something like that, and they don't have an outfit.

"We sometimes receive dead stock from retailers, and get donations from men who



Photo: Nikki Spencer

no longer need their suits. And we receive financial donations also. We are not government funded, so we have to generate our own resources. There's a donation form on the website. All we ask, because we are a charity and we haven't got lots of money, is that the stuff needs to come to us clean and in a decent condition. Because we want people to feel good about what they're wearing when they go for an interview.

"The youngest people are care leavers, lads that are late teens, just out of the care system. They're just getting on their feet. Or we'll see people in the latter stages of school going to career fairs. Or someone in their mid-60s who's looking for a role. The type of men we see is a broad church. We'll have working-class folks, we'll have guys that had businesses but lost everything. We'll have someone that's come out of prison. I had someone who'd not worked for years because he was busy caring for his elderly parents and then lost his mum and then his dad a few years later. And therefore was totally new to the system. We've had people who were solicitors that fell off the wagon and lost everything, I've had a professional footballer come my way. So, it really is a broad scope of folks that come.

"They get to keep the suit. Quite often we have guys that come who literally don't even have the bus fare to get to us. We've had people walk in from whichever borough they're in. And we'll always, where we've got the money, we'll give them the bus fare."

"It is a joyful thing to do. And I think the charity should be in every major city in the country because, yes, these problems are acute in London, but it's not just in the capital. There are similar schemes for women, Smart Works and Dress for Success. It's just a brilliant idea, it's awesome."

Further information:
Haven't Stopped Dancing Yet
(havenstoppeddancingyet.co.uk);
Suited and Booted
(suitedandbootedcentre.org.uk)



Photo: Nikki Spencer



The ultimate in tranquility around Bali's Day of Silence

BY BEN WEST

The Indonesian island of Bali has a reputation for being rowdy and crammed with tourists. Areas like Kuta, Seminyak, Uluwatu, Legian and parts of Canggu are known for their loud beach clubs, bars, and late-night partying. It is seen as the Benidorm equivalent for Australian tourists (or Cancun for Americans), being a cheap, close and accessible mass-market overseas destination for Aussies.

However this generalisation does Bali a disservice. For the island is large and diverse and has many quiet villages, cultural hubs, and peaceful retreats far away from the hullabaloo.

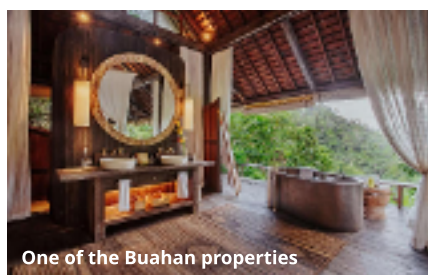
Indeed I found staying at the adults-only jungle resort Buahan, A Banyan Tree Escape, one of the most tranquil places I've ever been to. Situated on the fringes of a small village of the same name, it is only a 40-minute drive north of Ubud, one of Bali's busiest, most touristic centres, yet feels a world apart.

It has just 16 properties spread generously apart and dotting the hillside. Each is a *balé*, an open-air building with wooden column supports and a vaulted thatched roof. They have no walls, just curtains and roll-down bamboo shades for privacy and for when it rains.

This may sound pretty basic yet they are luxurious and supremely comfortable with features such as a hand-hammered copper bath, hand-carved ornate wooden mirrors and a large, luxurious bed with its own air conditioning system.

Surrounded by thick rainforest, terraced rice fields or even views of central Bali's seven mountain peaks, you can lounge in your own private plunge pool and breathe in the frangipani-scented air amongst the exotic animal calls and birdsong. The small resort also has a beautiful communal pool, an outstanding restaurant and a peaceful spa overlooking the Ayung River.

Remote and free from tourists, this is not a place for partying - you can take a walk in the sleepy, friendly village and nearby rice fields, explore the local temples and *warungs* (small shops and cafes) or perhaps take a tour in the hotel's vintage VW convertible - but essentially this is a retreat in which to unwind to the greatest degree.



One of the Buahan properties



Woman from Buahan village: photo by Ben West

The peacefulness continued when I experienced an ancient Melukat purification ritual at Pura Taman Pecampuhan Sala, a serene temple (one of Bali's oldest) nestled in the rainforest at Bangli, tucked between two sacred rivers near Ubud.

After changing into a sarong, I gave offerings to the gods and was welcomed by a priest, who led me to enter the temple for a short meditation. I then walked along the river to a waterfall, bathing under it to feel the sensation of being at one with nature, before continuing to another waterfall located within a rock cave.

Along with others I performed a purification at a holy spring water fountain before entering the temple by hitting the hanging bell at the entrance three times. After descending into a pool of holy spring water for a final purification I sat by a large altar as the priest chanted mantras to promote a sense of peace, purify my soul and unite me with mother earth.

However the ultimate in serenity occurred on the sacred day of *Nyepi*, or 'The Day of Silence', marking the *Isakawarsa* (New Year) in this magical province of Indonesia. Set by the Balinese lunar-solar Saka calendar, the date shifts every year to align with the dark moon but is usually in March but sometimes in April.

It really is an extraordinary experience never to be forgotten. Following a feast for the senses with raucous, colourful and crowded processions through the streets and vibrant purification rituals the day before, life comes to a complete standstill. Businesses close, lights are extinguished or dimmed, no flights take off or land, and the whole population refrains from travelling anywhere and instead

stays home and enters a state of deep introspection. *Nyepi* in 2027 will begin at 6am on March 8 and end at 6am on March 9.

Traditionally, Balinese Hindus spend the day fasting, meditating, and refraining from all activities, and it is believed that the silence tricks evil spirits into thinking the island is deserted, allowing for spiritual purification. Tourists must also join in, but as it is such an unusual experience, this is not a problem.

For one day Bali must be one of the most tranquil places on earth.

It's a pity such a day of silence doesn't catch on in other countries. Who doesn't crave a day of complete quiet in this crazy, hectic world?

Further information

Untold Story (020 7523 5858; team@untoldstorytravel.com; untoldstorytravel.com) can create a bespoke Bali itinerary taking in these experiences, travel and accommodation



Working in the rice fields: photo by Ben West

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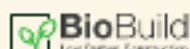
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TRAVEL

A Birmingham base - at the Belfry Hotel

Research shows that UK staycations are becoming increasingly popular, especially due to uncertainty over the ongoing situation in the Middle East and as holidaymakers seek 'coolcations' to avoid rising temperatures in many popular holiday hotspots around the world.

If you're looking for a base when visiting Birmingham or the Midlands more generally, the Belfry Hotel and Resort at Royal Sutton Coldfield in North Warwickshire may be the answer. Situated in 550 acres of grounds 10 miles from Birmingham, it has a choice of restaurants and bars, a fitness centre, spa, sports hall and three golf courses, the Brabazon, PGA National and The Derby.

It recently underwent a substantial investment

n excess of £80 million across the resort. This includes the opening of 149 new bedrooms - making 468 in total - including The Belfry's first-ever two-bedroom suite, complete with king-sized beds, a balcony and double-aspect views.

These new rooms are spacious, plush and contemporary, with such features as mottled wallpapers and windows that are almost from the floor to ceiling, letting the light flood in, and enjoying views over one of the golf courses.

The development also includes The Club, a new state-of-the-art fitness and leisure club. The Club is home to two pools, including a large family-friendly swimming pool with a flume, plus a lap pool, an extensive



multi-purpose hall ideal for sports such as badminton, and an array of revitalising poolside facilities such as a sauna, steam room, feature showers and bubble pools both indoors and out.

The large gym area has the latest Technogym equipment and offers far-reaching views of the resort's championship PGA National golf course. The space also includes four spacious, light-filled studios: a tranquil yoga studio, a dedicated reformer Pilates studio, and a spin studio with over 30 bikes.

Further information: The Belfry; Litchfield Road, Sutton Coldfield, B76 9PR; 01675 238600; thebelfry.com



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The trouble with things that don't look important

Swapping Blackheath farmers' market for a new housing development would erode community

In March 2025 Acorn Developments submitted a planning application to Lewisham Council to build 45 homes on Blackheath Station car park. The scheme has been almost overwhelmingly rejected by locals, with more than 1200 objections to the development received by the council and public figures with a local connection including Jude Law, Dominic Cooper, Mark Knopfler, Jools Holland, Terry Waite and Dame Joan Ruddock all lending their support.

Those objecting fear that the plans will harm the Blackheath Conservation Area, cause loss of residential amenity, school safeguarding and essential public parking, damage local businesses, create construction traffic and disruption, and cause the potential loss of the weekly farmers' market.

The planning application was deferred by Lewisham Council in March, saying that it didn't have enough information to make a decision. However, the threat of this wildly unpopular development plan remains.

Here SARAH TUCKER reflects on how development plans like this can do untold damage to communities.

A man is handing over £8 for a loaf of sourdough. A woman is examining a beetroot with the concentration usually associated with brain surgery. Three dogs appear to be conducting diplomatic relations. Somebody is discussing mushrooms with such intensity that you begin to suspect they may be negotiating a peace treaty rather than lunch.

Around them, at Blackheath farmers' market, dozens of people are drinking coffee, meeting neighbours, exchanging local gossip, supporting small businesses and participating in exactly the sort of community interaction that councils, planners and developers spend a great deal of time trying to encourage.

Reading about the debate surrounding Blackheath Station car park recently, where the farmers' market is held, I found myself wondering whether everybody had accidentally identified the wrong thing.

Although I live in Richmond rather than Blackheath, where our own farmers' market occupies a car park every Saturday, the discussion felt immediately familiar because it appeared to rest on an assumption so obvious that nobody seemed to be questioning it.

We assume the car park is the important thing and the market is the temporary visitor. What if it is the other way round?

At first glance this sounds ridiculous, which is



Blackheath Farmers' Market - photo by Ben Sutherland, Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic License

often an encouraging sign because lateral thinking frequently begins with an idea that appears faintly absurd before revealing an uncomfortable truth. The market returns every week. It generates economic activity every week. It creates social interaction every week. It supports traders every week. It gives people a reason to leave the house every week. The cars, by contrast, merely visit.

Seen from this perspective, it becomes possible to argue that Blackheath does not contain a market occupying a car park. It contains a car park that occasionally occupies a market.

The reason this matters is that London undoubtedly needs housing, and few sensible people would argue otherwise. The current proposals for Blackheath Station car park include dozens of new homes and, as with almost every planning debate in modern Britain, the conversation has quickly become framed as a choice between development and preservation.

Yet what if that is the wrong question?

One local resident described the farmers' market as "the village square we never had." Another pointed out that she sees more people she knows during a couple of hours at the market than she does during the rest of her week. Traders have expressed concern that successful markets depend on habit, visibility and routine; qualities that are remarkably difficult to recreate once disrupted and almost impossible to manufacture artificially.

These comments struck me because they echoed conversations I hear regularly in Richmond. Every Saturday our local farmers' market performs the same transformation.

Nobody attends because they are passionate about tarmac. People arrive intending to buy vegetables and somehow end up discussing politics, schools, grandchildren, local restaurants and the weather. Dogs acquire admirers. Children acquire cake. The shopping itself becomes almost incidental.

This is the point at which economists and planners often become slightly uncomfortable because the most important product of a farmers' market may not actually be the produce.

A loaf of bread can be purchased elsewhere; a conversation cannot.

The difficulty is that modern society has become exceptionally good at measuring some forms of value and surprisingly poor at recognising others. Housing units can be counted. Financial returns can be measured. Projected revenues can be modelled. What proves much harder to quantify is the value of running into a neighbour beside a cauliflower or the reassuring familiarity of seeing the same stallholder every Sunday morning for years.

Edward de Bono, the inventor of lateral thinking, used to argue that societies instinctively award gold medals to whatever can be counted while overlooking forms of value that can only be experienced.

Housing numbers receive a gold medal because they fit neatly into spreadsheets. Financial returns receive a gold medal because they fit neatly into reports. The sense of belonging created by a thriving market receives considerably less attention because nobody has yet invented a reliable formula for calculating the economic value of unexpectedly meeting a friend while

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

buying asparagus.

Yet those encounters matter because communities are not built from buildings alone.

Applying a little lateral thinking changes the nature of the debate entirely. Suppose somebody proposed removing the market while retaining every parking space. There would be understandable outrage. Suppose somebody proposed retaining the market while eliminating parking altogether. There would be a different sort of outrage. What this suggests is that neither the market nor the parking is the central issue. The real issue is flexibility.

One of the least appreciated characteristics of successful places is their ability to perform multiple functions. The village hall that hosts yoga classes on Monday, a council meeting on Tuesday and a wedding reception on Saturday is more valuable than its architecture would suggest. The church hall, scout hut and recreation ground all operate according to the same principle. Their value lies not in what they are but in what they enable.

The Blackheath site belongs to this overlooked category of places. During the week it serves commuters and shoppers. At weekends it becomes a market. At other times it functions as informal public space. It is less a location than a piece of civic equipment.

Perhaps this is why I find myself unexpectedly sympathetic to Blackheath residents despite living several boroughs away. What I recognise is not the specific site but the pattern. Across Britain we seem

increasingly determined to create places that perform a single function while quietly losing places capable of performing several. Flats are for living in. Offices are for working in. Shops are for shopping in. Every square metre has a designated purpose and a management strategy.

A flexible space, by contrast, behaves more like a Swiss Army knife. It adapts. It changes. It responds to different needs at different times.

The irony is that this flexibility is often mistaken for underuse.

A market occupies the site only once a week, therefore the site must be underused.

A village hall stands empty for much of the day; therefore, the hall must be underused.

A recreation ground sits quietly between football matches; therefore, the ground must be underused.

Yet this logic would lead us to conclude that a spare bedroom, a public library or a fire station are failures because they are not operating at maximum intensity every minute of every day.

Perhaps the real question is not how many homes can be built on the site but whether modern Britain has become so obsessed with maximising every square foot that we have forgotten the value of places that are useful in more than one way.

If I were making the decision, I would begin not by asking how many homes could fit onto the site but by asking how many existing functions could be preserved, expanded and improved before a single brick was laid.

Could housing be introduced while strengthening the market? Could public space be enhanced? Could better drainage, electricity supplies, seating, planting and facilities make the site more useful rather than less? Could development increase flexibility instead of reducing it?

These are not anti-development questions - they are questions about intelligent development.

The potholes can and should be repaired. Housing can and should be built. The market can and should be improved. None of these objectives are mutually exclusive. The challenge is recognising all the different kinds of value a place already possesses before we accidentally build over them.

Because the most valuable places in Britain are often the ones that look entirely unremarkable. They are the places we barely notice until somebody proposes removing them, at which point we suddenly discover how much work they had quietly been doing all along.

Further information:
rejectblackheathstation.co.uk



Sarah Tucker is a journalist, travel writer and the biographer of Edward de Bono, inventor of lateral thinking. Her latest book, *Love Laterally*, explores relationships, creativity and modern life through the lens of lateral thinking, published by Aurora Metro Books.

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Why you should replace missing teeth: insights on implants

**Deji Olaore Sunkanmi
at Sparklysmile**

Losing a tooth can feel like a minor cosmetic inconvenience, but the truth is, it affects far more than just your appearance.

Deji at Sparklysmile explains: "Your teeth are a cornerstone of your overall health and wellbeing - and when they're missing, the consequences can ripple through every aspect of your life. After all, when it comes to your health, investing in yourself is always worth it."

The hidden dangers of missing teeth

It's tempting to think that one missing tooth won't make much of a difference. But your body tells a different story. Without a tooth in place, the bone that once supported it begins to shrink. Surrounding teeth can start to tilt or loosen, and gaps become a trap for food, increasing the risk of cavities and gum disease. What starts as a small gap can quietly undermine your dental health over time.

Deji notes that depending on which tooth is lost, your ability to eat comfortably or speak clearly can be affected too. Over time, missing teeth can even alter the shape of your face — affecting not just how you feel physically,

but how you carry yourself and the confidence you project to the world.

Can you get implants years after losing teeth?

If you've been living with a gap for years, you may have assumed it's too late to do anything about it. The good news? It's never too late to invest in your health. Deji assures us that if your jawbone has sufficient density and your general health is good, dental implants can be placed — even five or 10 years after tooth loss.

If significant bone loss has occurred, a bone graft can restore the foundation needed for implant placement. Sparklysmile uses a state-of-the-art 3D jaw scanner to assess bone readiness with precision, ensuring every procedure is planned carefully and confidently.

Why choose dental implants over dentures?

Deji is clear on this: implants are a game-changer. Unlike dentures - which are removable, require constant maintenance, and can slip at the most inconvenient moments - implants are a permanent solution that looks, feels, and functions just like natural teeth. Anchored securely in your

jawbone, they give you the freedom to eat, speak, and laugh without a second thought.

That freedom is priceless. There's a quiet confidence that comes from knowing your smile is solid, reliable, and entirely your own.

How soon after tooth extraction can you get implants?

In some cases, an implant can be placed on the same day as an extraction. More typically, implants are placed around three to six months after removal, allowing the bone time to heal properly and ensuring a strong, lasting foundation for the implant.

Do dental implants prevent bone loss?

This is where implants truly shine. When a tooth is lost, the jawbone begins to shrink through a process called bone resorption — because without the pressure of a tooth root, the bone has no stimulus to maintain itself. Dental implants change that. By integrating directly into the jawbone, they stimulate bone growth, prevent further deterioration, and help preserve the natural structure of your face and jaw for years to come.

Protecting your bone health today pays dividends well into



the future.

Ready to restore your smile — and your confidence?

Whether you're concerned about bone loss, missing teeth, or simply want to feel like the best version of yourself again, the team at Sparklysmile are there to help. With the latest technology and a warm, caring approach, they'll guide you through every step of the journey.

Dental implants are more than just a tooth replacement - they're an investment in your health, your confidence, and your quality of life.

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AESTHETICS
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The Year of the Dog

A new book offers almost endless activities for dogs and their owners

BY SARAH TUCKER

There was a time when dogs were dogs. They chased balls, barked at strangers and occasionally embarrassed themselves in public. Today they have social lives, dietary requirements and enough organised activities to leave many humans looking distinctly underachieving.

This thought occurred to me at the launch of *The Year of the Dog* by Deana Luchia, a book containing 365 activities for dogs and their owners. Three hundred and sixty five. By comparison, many people would struggle to identify 365 activities for themselves.

Luchia, a Kew-based writer and devoted dog enthusiast, has produced a cheerful and affectionate guide to making life more interesting for dogs. There are adventures, games, outings and dog dates. Not dates involving dogs, but dates for dogs. We have reached that stage. The remarkable thing is that nobody seems to find this unusual anymore.

Certainly not in places like Blackheath and Greenwich, where dogs have become a form of parallel society. There are people who know every dog in the neighbourhood and only a vague selection of the humans. Entire conversations begin because two spaniels happen to like each other. Friendships are formed. Telephone numbers exchanged. In some cases, I suspect, marriages arranged.

Dogs have achieved what local councils, community groups and social media platforms have spent years trying unsuccessfully to accomplish. They have made people talk to one another.

I should confess at this point that I am not naturally a dog person. Nor, for that matter, am I especially fond of cats. What I like are animals with discernible personalities. The best cats are practically human. The worst are simply cats. The same principle applies to dogs.

Years ago my son wanted one. Knowing perfectly well how these arrangements usually work, I pointed out that while the dog might nominally belong to him, I would almost certainly end up feeding it, walking it and financing its existence. We reached a compromise. Instead of buying a dog, I joined an organisation called Pals4Pets.

The idea was admirable. Owners who were going away but disliked kennels could leave their dogs with approved volunteers. The vetting process was formidable. By the time I was accepted, I felt less like a prospective dog sitter than a candidate for a sensitive government position.

The arrangement worked beautifully. My son was frequently elsewhere and, as predicted, I ended up looking after the dogs. Thank goodness I never bought one.

People often tell me I should get a dog for



Photograph by Janusz Konarski

company. They point out that it would encourage me to go for walks in the park. This argument has always struck me as slightly flawed. I am already capable of walking in the park. Access is not restricted to dog owners. Nor am I especially attracted by reorganising my schedule around another creature's emotional needs. It all sounds rather too much like a man.

Through Pals4Pets I encountered a surprising range of canine personalities. There were adolescent cocker spaniels with enough energy to power a medium-sized town. There were nervous dogs who regarded a carrier bag as a potential terrorist threat. Then there were the snobs. Dog owners know exactly what I mean. Some dogs take one look at you and decide you are acceptable. Others behave as though you have arrived at a private members' club wearing the wrong shoes. I seemed to attract these dogs in unusual numbers.

My favourite was a tiny terrier cross called Beethoven. Beethoven possessed intelligence, judgement and a healthy degree of skepticism. He was not one of those dogs who regarded every passing human as the answer to his prayers. He assessed people. He formed opinions. I liked him immediately.

I often wonder what Beethoven would have made of Luchia's book. He would certainly have approved of the adventures and the opportunities for exploration. Whether he would have embraced every suggestion is another matter. Luchia is notably relaxed about dogs rolling in unpleasant substances, a pastime many dogs appear to regard as one of life's great pleasures. Beethoven struck me as a dog with standards.

The launch itself provided a useful reminder that dogs remain gloriously indifferent to human aspirations. During proceedings one of Luchia's own dogs wandered confidently into the centre of the room and promptly relieved itself in front of the assembled guests. There followed a stance involving its

bottom in the air that suggested complete satisfaction with events. Quite. No publicist would have recommended it. The dog, however, seemed entirely untroubled.

That may be the secret of their success. Dogs have no interest in status, personal branding or social advancement. They are not building professional networks. They have never attended a leadership seminar. They are blissfully unconcerned with what anybody thinks of them.

Perhaps this explains their growing appeal in an increasingly complicated world. They provide company without conversation, affection without negotiation and loyalty without conditions. They are expensive, occasionally destructive and capable of generating astonishing quantities of mess, but then so are many people.

Luchia's book succeeds because it understands that dogs are not really the subject at all. The subject is us. More specifically, it is the curious place dogs now occupy in modern life. They have become companions, confidants, social facilitators and, in some households, the most important member of the family.

Whether they genuinely require 365 activities remains open to debate. Beethoven, I suspect, would have had views. And unlike most dogs, he would probably have expected them to be taken seriously.



The Year of the Dog by Deana Luchia is published by Quiller Publishing, £18.99

Sarah Tucker is an award-winning journalist, bestselling author, travel writer, lecturer and broadcaster. Amongst her works are Love Laterally, the biography of Edward de Bono, inventor of lateral thinking.

Blackheath High School – a school where girls boldly go

Choosing the right school has never been more important – or more complex. Alongside academic excellence, parents are increasingly looking for a school that will prepare their child to thrive in an ever-evolving world, where confidence, creativity, critical thinking and resilience matter just as much as grades. They also want an environment where wellbeing takes centre stage and every child feels known and valued.

At Blackheath High School, those qualities underpin everything we do. An all-through school for girls aged 3-18 and part of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), we combine academic excellence with exceptional pastoral care and an extraordinary breadth of opportunity, from the Junior School Mighty Girls Challenge to specialist Sixth Form programmes such as the GDST Space Technology Diploma. The result is an education that inspires a lifelong love of learning and gives every girl the confidence to embrace a future full of possibility.

Academic excellence is the foundation: in 2025, 77% of GCSE grades were awarded at 7–9 and 41% of A-level grades at A*–A, with students progressing to leading universities to study subjects ranging from Medicine and Law to Art, Fashion and Engineering. As part of the GDST, they also benefit from exceptional academic opportunities, including the Year 6 Maths Conference at Oxford University, and specialist programmes and partnerships with organisations including NASA and the University of Cambridge. Exceptional results are the natural outcome of a culture that nurtures curiosity, ambition and a genuine love of learning.

Educating girls without limits

For nearly 150 years, Blackheath High has been educating bold, brilliant girls to become bright thinkers, creative problem-solvers and the changemakers of tomorrow. While the world has changed dramatically since then, our ambition remains the same: to inspire every girl to be curious, courageous and ready to shape her own future.

Today, that vision is brought to life through an outstanding academic curriculum, a rich co-curricular programme, an ambitious ethos and a supportive community. From their first day, girls are encouraged to ask questions, embrace challenge and develop the PowerSkills that underpin everything we do: curiosity, collaboration, creativity, resilience, independence and risk-taking.

These are embedded at every stage, encouraging girls to see mistakes as opportunities, approach unfamiliar challenges with confidence and develop the resilience to keep learning.



Designed for girls

Every subject here is a girls' subject and every sport a girls' sport. We place girls at the heart of everything we do. We design our curriculum, create our environment, shape our day and build our pastoral and co-curricular programmes to meet their needs.

Free from gender stereotypes, girls are encouraged to take intellectual risks, adopt leadership roles, challenge ideas and embrace new experiences. Whether captaining sports teams, leading societies, debating big ideas, or performing on stage, every girl is encouraged to find her voice and discover her path. This is the only time in their lives they will be in an environment designed specifically to enable girls to flourish. The result is a culture where they don't simply learn to believe in themselves; they discover what they're capable of.

Opening doors to the future

Preparing girls for the future begins long before they start thinking about university or careers. In the Junior School, experiences such as the Mighty Girls Challenge, the Future Forward careers event and early STEM opportunities encourage girls to solve problems, collaborate and develop new interests.

As they move through Senior School, those experiences evolve into leadership roles, meaningful work experience, specialist careers guidance and our Futures Programme. Through our Wollstonecraft Speaker Series, partnerships with leading organisations and opportunities to work alongside industry experts, girls gain first-hand insight into the careers and industries shaping tomorrow's world.

One school, one community

Pupils benefit from being part of a community that grows with them. Younger girls are inspired by older pupils through initiatives such as Big Sister Little Sister, while seamless transitions mean every stage of their education builds naturally on the last.

For all its ambition, Blackheath High is, above all, a warm and close-knit community.

Girls are known as individuals, supported to be themselves and encouraged to look out for one another. Strong pastoral relationships ensure every girl feels valued throughout her journey, creating a culture where girls feel confident to take risks, celebrate one another's successes and know there is always someone in their corner.

Harnessing the power of the GDST

Being part of the GDST gives Blackheath High students access to the UK's most extensive and ambitious networks of girls' education. From Year 6 Maths Conferences at the University of Oxford to Trust-wide leadership opportunities, pioneering STEM programmes and collaborations with students across the country, girls benefit from a vast range of experiences.

When they leave, students join a global alumnae network of more than 100,000 remarkable women working across every sector and every continent – women who create change, lead businesses and shape the future. It is a powerful reminder that every Blackheath girl belongs to something much bigger than a single school, and that the support, inspiration and connections she builds here can last a lifetime.

We're delighted that our Junior School has been commended for Prep School of the Year in the Independent School of the Year Awards 2026 – recognition that reflects what our families tell us every day: Blackheath High is a place where girls are encouraged to be curious, kind, ambitious and unapologetically themselves.

In a world where change is the only certainty, our commitment remains the same: to give every girl an outstanding education and a future of limitless opportunity.

We'd love to welcome you to experience Blackheath High for yourself. Join us at our **Senior School and Sixth Form Open Morning on Saturday 19 September**, or our **Junior School and Nursery Open Morning on Saturday 26 September**, to meet our pupils, talk to our teachers, explore our outstanding facilities and discover the Blackheath High difference.

blackheathhighschool.gdst.net

Space, access and architecture

Lee Coppack



Blackheath Quaker Meeting House from Lawn Terrace. Photo: Jo Underhill, www.structuraleye.co.uk

Space, access and architectural importance. Blackheath Quaker Meeting House is a Grade II listed building in the heart of the village that offers all three – and a piano – to users and hirers.

The Meeting House is home to Blackheath Quakers, a faith group that works for equality and peace. Prominent local architect Trevor Dannatt RA (1920-2021) designed the building for the Quakers. It was completed in 1972 and won a Civic Trust award in 1973 and a Concrete Society commendation in 1974.

In his design, Trevor Dannatt faced the challenge of a site spanning two closely adjacent roads, Lawn Terrace and Independents Road, with a steep slope between them. His innovative solution was a split-level building with generous and light and space on two floors.

The Meeting Room on the top level has a lobby entrance from Lawn Terrace. The large room on the lower level, which can be divided by a retractable screen, is accessed internally or from Independents Road. Both have disabled access and kitchens.

On Sunday mornings, we meet for worship in the Meeting Room in our peaceful, traditional manner between 10.30 and 11.30, followed by coffee and tea. All are welcome to attend. For the rest of the week the building is available for letting.

More about the building

The main structure enclosing the Meeting Hall on the upper level is in board-marked concrete, square in plan with chamfered

corners, supporting a pyramidal roof topped by a square lantern. Its relationship to the adjacent church hall recalls that of a chapter house with a cathedral – an impression reinforced by its octagonal shape as seen in several English monastic chapter houses. The structure is rotated by about 45 degrees to minimise interference with the light to the church hall. At the corners the concrete wall is extended upwards to form turrets.

The structure rests on five concrete piers, and the walls function as beams supporting the floor. The trussed roof structure, with exposed timber compression struts and steel tension members, carries the roof lantern, clearly visible from the street, to provide the principal lighting for the Meeting Room. Additional daylight comes from skylights in each corner.

In the survey of Quaker meeting houses conducted by the Architectural History Practice for Historic England and Quakers in Britain in 2015, Blackheath was heralded as a 'Brutalist jewel' and 'of exceptional aesthetic value'.

In May 2019 the Meeting House was awarded Grade II listing for special architectural interest.

Blackheath Quaker Meeting House, Lawn Terrace, Blackheath SE3 9LL; blackheathquakers.org.uk



The Quaker Hall interior



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