



Pirates herald the arrival of Alexander Selkirk

After our extremely eye-catching Christmas tree at the Christ Church Festival, Selkirk Summer 2011 celebrations are taking shape with growing support for the planned activities. Local schools are being contacted about the Alexander Selkirk story in order to get their thinking caps on for the summer art exhibition. The exhibition will be open to the public in September in the town.

Meanwhile the project team has sent a pre-application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to encourage young people to learn more about 18th century Erith at the time of our famous - or infamous - sailor whose travels were turned into the first English novel, Robinson Crusoe, written by Daniel Defoe.

Erith Operatic Society has come up trumps and chosen

The Pirates of Penzance as its latest offering at the Erith Playhouse between **March 21st and 26th.** Volunteers are hoping to be in the foyer to spread the word about our exciting local events.

We are also planning to be at the Erith Riverside Festival where we will be giving the public a taste of 18th century food. If you would like the team to bring Alexander Selkirk to your summer fair contact us on m.moneill@btinternet.com or 0208 301 3299.



Diary dates

ERITH TOWN FORUM
meets bi-monthly at the Vets' Club, Park Crescent, (corner of Glebe Way)
7pm - 9pm.

Dates of future meetings:
Wednesday 30th
March 2011

Wednesday 18th
May 2011 (AGM)

FORESHORE CLEAN UP
Organised by THAMES21 AND FORGE

Sunday March 27th -
11.00am - 3.30pm

A Sunday in May -
date to be announced

POLICE PANEL MEETING
20 April 2011 at Carrack House, Riverside Centre at 7.00pm.

LAST DATE TO COMMENT ON SDP ERITH WESTERN GATEWAY
4th April 2011

ERITH RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL
Sunday 5 June 2011

ALEXANDER SELKIRK RE-INACTMENT DAY
October 15th 2011 on the River front

SENIORS' CHRISTMAS EVENT
December 12 2011

If you have any news or dates for events to be included in the next newsletter, please contact erithtownforum@hotmail.com



Friends Of Riverside Gardens Erith

A new society, the Friends Of Riverside Gardens Erith ("FORGE"), was launched at the Erith Town Forum meeting held at the Erith Veterans Club on Wednesday the 26th January 2011. As well as the Erith Town Forum, FORGE has given presentations to the Erith and Belvedere History Society, the Women's Institute, Waters Edge Court and Christ Church.

The aim of the society is to seek to register the Erith Riverside Gardens as a Town Green in order to preserve them for present and future generations. To help us do this we have joined the Open Spaces Society.

For many years the Erith waterfront was enclosed and it took generations to open it up again. The then Erith Urban District Council had the

foresight to purchase the land from Cannon and Gaze Ltd., and changed its use to open space. Later, the London Borough of Bexley was gifted land by Wm. Cory Ltd., and added this to the open space. Any development on the present Gardens will revert to a "closing-in" effect - which we believe is a retrograde step.

The London Borough of Bexley, in its Community Strategy Draft, states that Bexley is one of the greenest London boroughs with over 100 award-winning parks and open spaces. However, Erith Town has only 2 open areas yet every development plan produced for Erith seems set on building on part of Erith Riverside Gardens. This surely should not be allowed to happen. The Council would not consider building on any



Riverside Festival 2010 on the Gardens



Land gifted to people of Erith by Wm.Cory Ltd.

part of, say, Danson Park or Footscray Meadows where far more land is available, so why even consider building on the Erith Riverside Gardens? Any building on the Gardens would spoil the area for the next 40 to 50 years! Ideally, the Town should cascade down to the Gardens, which should be an open vista to the River. It should not have an enormous carbuncle built upon it!

Our generation must fight to retain this unique area on the Thames for future generations and oppose any plans by developers to build anything on it. We understand that Bexley Council is now considering new plans for Erith Town which include a building on the Flagpole Site on the Gardens. We must fight against our own Council (of whatever political persuasion) if they allow any building to encroach on the open space of the Gardens. Planners make decisions for Erith together with councillors who often do not live in the area and probably never visit it.

The Gardens have been run down for many years as the Council have it in mind that a developer will alter them. The

Gardens now have a shabby look because the Council have spent no money on them for years, whereas open spaces in other parts of the Borough have been spruced up.

Part of the process to get Town Green status is to prove that the area has been used for various community purposes over the past 20 years - so we are inviting residents of Erith Town Ward to join our society, to enable us to achieve our aim. Forms are available which we hope you will complete and join our society. Membership of FORGE is £1 but we will, of course, be happy to receive any donation you may wish to make. It would be helpful if each individual in a household could complete a form and join because when counting numbers one household is only counted as one membership by the Council, even though it may contain four persons who are all of the opinion that they wish to preserve the Gardens. If each has their own membership the Council will count this as four.

Forms can be obtained from Joan 01322 332717, or Alec 01322 440199

Note from the Chair

Welcome to our spring 2011 edition of TOWN AND AROUND brought to you through funding from Capital Community Foundation.

Over the Christmas period, Erith Town Forum took part in the increasingly successful Erith Christmas Tree Festival. More extensive publicity this year certainly paid off and a record number of visitors came to see the spectacular display and enjoy that special Christmas feeling. Many new individuals and groups sponsored trees and very welcome funds were raised both for Christ Church and Greenwich and Bexley Cottage Hospice. The Festival will take place again in December 2011 so keep your eye out for details. This festival is unique in Bexley.

The Forum again held a Seniors' Christmas Afternoon of Entertainment and this was much enjoyed by all who attended. We are hoping to organise a summer outing for our seniors in early summer. Details will be given later in the year.

The London Borough of

Bexley continue to produce comprehensive plans for the future of the borough and the community is once again asked to comment. As a Forum we have considered the draft proposals and submitted our comments. We have also responded to the Council's planned cuts in services. These comments can be found on our website at www.erithtownforum.org.uk. Needless to say we are totally opposed to the closure of any libraries and the withdrawal of essential services to the most needy in our community, be they young or old.

A Supplementary Development Plan (SDP) for the Erith Western Gateway has also been put out for consultation and I urge you to look at and respond to these documents either on the Bexley website or in hard copy in the libraries. Sadly once again there are plans

for very dense housing and business development and the inclusion of a "Landmark building" on the Riverside Gardens. What does "Landmark" indicate? Very high?? Our front page article sets out how the community of Erith is getting together to preserve the Riverside Gardens at its present size. Are you a Friend of Riverside Gardens Erith? Become a member of "The Big Society in Erith" trying to preserve our own piece of Green land.

The shopping centre continues to improve with the new shops and extended restaurant, and the opening of a carpet and bedding shop in the old Woolworths premises much improves the look of Pier Road. Of course the old swimming pool mural is an excellent addition to the Shopping Centre site.

Sitting on the River Thames gives Erith Town the edge

over other parts of the borough. We all need to take more care of our environment. How we are doing this is detailed in the article in this newsletter, "Local volunteers required to help clean up Erith Riverside", written by the officers of Thames21

Can you help?

Erith Town Forum is involved with all the activities and events going on in this area, please make a note of the "Dates for your diary", come along to our meetings, become a Friend of Riverside Gardens Erith, and send in to Bexley Council your comments on their plans for the development of this part of Bexley.

If you have an article which you feel might be of interest to the community then send it to us at erithtownforum@hotmail.com

Doreen Ives - Chairperson

Local volunteers required to clean up Erith Riverside

Friends of Riverside Gardens Erith (FORGE) have teamed up with environmental charity Thames21 to tackle the build up of rubbish in the river by Erith Riverside. Thames21 mobilises over 8000 volunteers every year across London, aiming to transform neglected and littered waterways into areas that everyone can use and enjoy.

At low tide, along the riverside walk around Erith Pier and past Riverside



Erith Foreshore Debris

Gardens there are a huge number of shopping trolleys, traffic cones and other large items of debris embedded in the tidal mudflats. This creates a terrible eyesore for local people.

The muddy foreshore makes clearing this area a real challenge. Thames21 are confident that with the support and hard work of local volunteers a significant difference can be made. Volunteers can help in a range of ways; where the shore is solid, they can pull on some wellies and clear rubbish with litter pickers and bin bags. Any litter along the riverside walk can be cleared in a similar way. Thames21 staff will



Volunteers take the strain

tackle the deeply embedded larger items down in the mud. Ropes will be attached to these items and volunteers are needed to help pull them free of the mud and onto the riverwalk. Bexley Council have agreed to support the efforts of the volunteers and remove the debris.

Thames21 will supply all the necessary equipment. Volunteers just need to turn up on the day in old clothes that they don't mind getting dirty. The first event is planned for 27th March from 11am to 3.30pm. All volunteers are welcome. For more details visit the Thames21 website - www.thames21.org.uk.

ERITH SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

Sgt Coomber and his Policing Team have again had an excellent three months fulfilling their tasks set by the Panel. The priorities were metal theft, drug abuse and anti social behaviour. Arrests were made with regard to these three ward priorities. Their visible presence on our streets has also led to a reduction in burglary and anti- social behaviour.

The four priorities set for the next three months are residential burglary, drug abuse, nuisance vehicles

and metal theft. We still need more input from local residents who have been experiencing problems within their community. The next Panel meeting will be held at Carrack House Riverside Centre on the 20th April at 7.00pm. If you have any concerns, please come along and discuss them.

Let's make Erith a safer and pleasant town to live and work in.

Jerry Martin

Channel Swim Team

Members of Erith & District Swimming Club are, for the second year running, swimming the Channel.

Last year seven members of club (six swimmers plus a reserve) successfully swam the Channel in 11 hours and 4 minutes raising money for the Greenwich and Bexley Hospice and the Swimming Club.

This year another group of masters' swimmers are attempting the crossing. Their first obstacle is to

complete a two hour continuous swim in Dover harbour (temperature below 16 degrees) followed by various open water sea competitions along the south coast.

The team consists of Lisa Corder, Jayne Deal, Sam Grover, Adrian Hollman, Stephanie Turner, Dennis Vick and reserve Lorraine Stevens. By mutual agreement the chosen charity is the Alzheimer's Society (this form of dementia affects more than 350,000 people in the UK)

and again the Swimming Club will benefit. The club provides an environment for local children to learn to swim and to compete.

Fund raising has already begun with a successful Burn's Supper at the Erith Veterans Club raising over £800. A sweepstake for the time of crossing will be running at the Swimming Club at the leisure centre in Avenue Road, Erith from 1st April 2011, with a chance to win £50!

If you wish to donate contact www.justgiving.com/Jayne-Deal



Channel Swim Team at the start