Shout, shout, up with your song!
Cry with the wind, for the dawn is breaking;
March, march, swing you along,
Wide blows our banner, and hope is waking.
Song with its story, dreams with their glory
Lo! they call, and glad is their word!
Loud and louder it swells,
Thunder of freedom, the voice of the Lord!

Life, strife—those two are one,
Naught can ye win but by faith and daring.
On, on—that ye have done
But for the work of today preparing.
Firm in reliance, laugh a defiance,
(Laugh in hope, for sure is the end)
March, march—many as one,
Shoulder to shoulder and friend to friend

Ethel Smyth, 1911

Potted Biographies
Of the Women celebrated in the
Concert on March 9th in St George’s Church

By Cliff Watkins
MARCH OF THE WOMEN

Souvenir Booklet to accompany the Grand Charity Concert performed in St George’s Church, Beckenham on March 9th, 2013 by the Beckenham Ladies Choir, The Lewisham Concert Band, with Marie Vassilou (soprano) and Eunice Drewry (narrator)

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Votes for Women Event at Christ Church, Beckenham in 2003

1
The Suffrage Movement in and Around Beckenham

Introduction  Women across the country had been seeking the right to vote in national elections since 1867, but a national organisation was not formed until 1897. In that year, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was founded with two branches in London & 18 provincial ones. These were amalgamated under the Presidency of Millicent Fawcett and they endorsed any M.P. who supported them.

Little headway was made with the all-male governments so in 1903 six women led by Emmeline Pankhurst formed the Women's Social Political Union (WSPU) in Manchester on 10 October 1903. This women-only organisation adopted the slogan ‘Deeds, not Words’ and interrupted public meetings in order to have their say. When this failed, Emmeline started a militant campaign against property.

In 1909 a group of WSPU members formed the Women's Freedom League (WFL) led by Charlotte Despard. This more democratic group targeted the Government, held protests at trials of women, and started a tax resistance policy.

Meanwhile in the Beckenham area the first major meeting promoting women’s suffrage was held at the Christ Church, Lecture Hall, Beckenham, at the invite of the vicar, Mr Welsh on 16th May 1882. Further meetings were chaired by the Rev Charles Green, Vicar of St. Paul's Church in Beckenham helped by his wife, Mary. (See advert on right) Other supporters were more local clergymen, Mr Lloyd Phillips, founder of Abbey School, Beckenham and Miss Heppel the first head mistress of Bromley High School 1883 to 1908.

Mrs Kate Harvey, held meetings at her huge house Brackenhill on the heights of Highland Way, Shortlands overlooking the vale of Beckenham as far as the Crystal Palace ridge. She was a close friend of Charlotte Despard and, following the establishment of the WFL, Kate refused to pay taxes for herself and her staff of a children's school based in her home. She was also profoundly deaf which confounded visits by the local tax inspector. Later when bailiffs were sent in to take goods and household effects, they were seen off the premises by a huge crowd of Kate’s supporters.

Millicent Fawcett spoke to a large crowd in Bromley Drill Hall in 1907 and in that year Miss Alice Abadam became President of the Beckenham NUWSS group. She travelled the country, her inspiring and eloquent talks, often attracting audiences of 5000 or more. She had a ready witty tongue for hecklers and impressed people with her intellect and knowledge of women’s history. Miss Abadam was a prolific writer on the subject of women's oppression on issues ranging from women's employment to banning the white slave trade.
Leading up to the Parliamentary Election April 1908, the Suffragettes used the Cup-Final at Crystal Palace to distribute leaflets at railway stations and to fly a kite over the ground. After the game leaflets were distributed, this time with envelopes bearing the teams' colours inviting the men's wives to a meeting.

In 1910 The Pageant of Great Women by Edith Craig, daughter of Ellen Terry was staged at the Public Hall in Beckenham.

A house fire in Park Langley estate in Beckenham was blamed on the suffragettes in 1913, the year when a suffragette captured the headlines of both the national and local media. She was Emily Davison, killed when stepping in front of the King’s horse in the Epsom Derby.

**Votes for Women in Beckenham 2003**

This was held in the Christ Church Hall in Fairfield Road. Women trying to chain themselves to the railings were dragged away by police. A rally inside the hall was attended by the Mayor of Bromley. Below are photos from that event.

Ten years on the Beckenham Ladies Choir open the March 2013 Concert with the anthem of the Suffragettes – *The March of the Women*
Alison Prince

Alison Prince is a famous author, illustrator, biographer and TV scriptwriter.

She was born in 1931 and in the 1940’s attended the Beckenham County School for Girls in Lennard Road where she enjoyed grammar and Latin, but not maths. On her website, Alison writes that “I’d always thought I was going to be an artist, due largely to the fact that the Art Room in my very formal Girls’ Grammar School was the only place where any self-expression was permitted.”

She won a scholarship to the Slade School of Art. Completing a degree course there did not lead into art related jobs so she obtained a postgraduate teaching diploma at Goldsmith's College and then taught art at the Elliott Comprehensive School, in Putney.

Her teaching career was interrupted after she married a fellow teacher and had three children. She had a spell in journalism before running a small farm in Suffolk for eight years. Alison moved into writing for children's television, achieving fame with the pre-schoolers series Trumpton in conjunction with Brian Cant.

Below: Alison on holiday in Greece with her granddaughter

In the late 1970s, she turned to writing books for children, some based on historical characters. They include My Royal Story about Catherine of Aragon, which was re-released in 2010 and followed by further books about the Tudor queens. How's Business (1987), set in World War II, was shortlisted for the Nestle Smarties Book Prize and a thriller set in Dickensian London, Oranges and Murder won the Scottish Books of the Year Award, as did another book called Second Chance.

Between 1968 and 2011 she had 70 books published. Her updated Robin Hood story for young adults called The Sherwood Hero, about a girl stealing money to hand it out to the poor in the streets of Glasgow, made her the joint winner (with Philip Pullman) of the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize.

Alison wrote two well received biographies: The Fan Dancer about Hans Christian Andersen and a perceptive account of the Scottish author Kenneth Grahame called An Innocent in the Wild Wood which draws out his love for the natural world and his uncanny fears for what the future will bring.

Alison now lives on the Isle of Arran from where, when asked last year to select a piece of music for the Concert, she replied:

“What a lovely idea, to have a celebration of women! How about Handel's The Entry of the Queen of Sheba, as a suitable piece of music? It's a busy piece for whoever plays the tune, but most people will recognise it, and it's suitably cheerful.”
Miss Catherine Marsh

Frederick Courtenay Skene Chalmers was the Rector of St George’s Church, Beckenham from 1851 until 1873. Living with him and his wife, Matilda, in the 18 room Georgian Rectory (pictured below) were his father-in-law the Rev. Dr William Marsh and his daughter, the author and evangelical lay preacher Catherine Marsh (pictured right).

During her life, Catherine became a national figure for her exertions on behalf of the poor-and needy. Among them were some of the navvies who built the Crystal Palace and the railways into Beckenham between 1852 and 1857.

In her book of 1860, “English Hearts and English Hands” she wrote:

“Early in the year 1853, a large number of Railway excavators, amounting at length to nearly thousand, were gathered from different parts of the kingdom, to work in the grounds of the Crystal Palace ….. Nearly two hundred lodged in the village of Beckenham”

The book chronicles the life of the navvies; their arrival in Beckenham, the rebuilding of the Crystal Palace, originally designed by Joseph Paxton for the Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park, and then their recruitment into the Army Works Corps to build roads for the troops in the Crimean War.

Catherine records seeing them off on their ship from Greenhithe (pictured left); and renewing her friendships with some of the men and their families in later years.

In a preface to her book, Frederick Clements wrote that

“the sun’s rays may be seen gleaming from the crystal roof of that vast temple to the arts of peace, which has displaced the oaks and elms of the green woodland ….. whose were the hands that reared that colossal building? Its massive iron pillars, its huge girders, the ponderous supports of its complicated roofing, all tell us that it was the work of the hardiest and strongest of Britain’s sons.”

Catherine preached to these men in a barn in the Croydon Road, opposite what is now Cedars Road.

She interceded in disputes on their behalf and single handedly broke up a riot at the Penge entrance to the Palace.

Most famous were the tea parties for the navvies that took place in the garden of the Rectory (pictured right).
Mary Potter

This year – 2013 - the most famous orchestras, opera companies and conductors in 140 cities across 30 countries are celebrating the centenary of the birth of Benjamin Britten. Beckenham’s links with Britten began in the 1950s and in particular 1957 when he swapped his sea front Crag House for the legendary Red House in Aldeburgh. The other party to the swap was his close friend, the artist Mary Potter, one of the foremost British women artists of her time.

Beckenham School of Art

Born Mary Attenborough in Beckenham in 1900, she was a colleague and friend of Enid Blyton at St Christopher’s School in Rectory Road before she entered the Beckenham School of Art. From there she used an Orpen bursary award to go to the Slade School in October 1918.

In 1927 she married Stephen Potter who became famous for his books on gamesmanship which were adapted for the cinema and TV in the 1960s and 1970s. They lived in Chiswick and later in Harley Street in London before moving into The Red House in Aldeburgh in 1951. By 1957, after her two sons had grown up and Stephen had left her, Mary found The Red House was too big for her and agreed with a suggestion by her son Julian that she exchange homes with Britten. He was delighted with the exchange but Mary found that Crag House was not as suitable as she had hoped. Aware of this, Britten had built for her a bespoke bungalow and studio in the grounds of The Red House. This was called the Red Studio.

Mary became part of Britten’s inner circle, exchanging visits with him two or three times a week when he was not away. Britten valued his relationship with Mary, who became his ‘mother confessor’. When he had a setback, he would consult Mary, who would rationalise the situation and calm him down.

In 1964, 129 of her paintings were exhibited in the Whitechapel Gallery in London. The catalogue had a preface by Kenneth Clark who enthused about her work and had become one of her closest friends. Kenneth became a public figure for his TV series Civilisation on TV in 1969. This was one of the first United Kingdom television documentary series made in colour, commissioned when David Attenborough (no relation) was the Controller of BBC2.

In 1981, a few months before she died, a Retrospective Exhibition in the Serpentine Gallery in Hyde Park featured 98 of her paintings chosen to span her career since 1922. Many of her works are held in public galleries and private collections all over the world. In this country, her work can be seen in 15 public galleries, including in Tate Britain.

Public Collections holding her paintings are the Arts Council, the Government Art Collection and The Red House, which has been extended to include the offices of the Britten-Pears Foundation. The Red House is undergoing refurbishment as part of the Britten Centenary but it will reopen to the public in June. Visitors will be able to compare “the elusive colours, fugitive shapes and textures in her pictures” with “the ephemeral quality of the spare coastal landscape around Aldeburgh” where she lived for thirty years.

This evening we celebrate Mary Potter as we listen to Jean Low, accompanied by Christian Strover, as she sings Johnny, one of Britten’s famous cabaret songs.

I am grateful for the advice and help of Julian Potter in writing this article. Julian’s biography MARY POTTER - A Life in Painting (Scolar press 1998) can be purchased from fine art bookshops.
**Dorothy Wordsworth**

Dorothy Wordsworth arrived in Grasmere with her brother William in 1799. She fell in love with the countryside around Grasmere and was devoted to her brother. She wrote a journal which her brother used time and again for inspiration, most notably for his poem ‘The Daffodils’. The photo is of Dove Cottage, the Wordsworths’ first home in Grasmere.

An entry in Dorothy’s journal dated April 15th 1802 describes a heavenly walk by the side of Ullswater and the daffodils growing by the shore:

“more and and yet more and at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot and a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity and unity and life of that one busy highway. We rested again and again.”

Two years later William wrote his poem ‘The Daffodils’. The words of the first verse are:

“I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.”

Local composer Eric Thiman set Wordsworth’s poem to music in 1955 for three-part ladies’ voices with the title I wandered lonely as a cloud. Eric’s works are often performed in Beckenham. For example his Gloria in excelsis Deo was performed in St George’s Church for the first ‘Buckenham’ Famous’ concert in 2002.

For this year’s concert, the Beckenham Ladies Choir selected I wandered lonely as a cloud as one of their pieces for the March of the Women concert.
Sheila Mossman

Sheila Mossman founded the Orpington Junior Choir in 1949. It became one of the premier Girls Choirs in the UK and by 1961 they had taken part in over 500 public appearances, including several on TV and Radio. With Sheila as their conductor, they won an enviable reputation for the beauty of their singing and the distinctiveness of their performances.

Their age range was between 8 to 19. The Singers were grouped into two sections, a Junior Section of over sixty girls and a Senior Section of some eighty girls.

In 1960 the senior girls came first in BBC’s “Let the People Sing Contest” and in the same year the Singers took part in the TV broadcast leading up to the Queen's broadcast to the Nation.

Among private engagements was a recital of Christmas music for Sir Winston and Lady Churchill and their family in 10 Downing Street and a programme for their President, the Master of the Queen’s Musick, Sir Arthur Bliss, who subsequently composed three songs specifically for the Singers, called Three Voices.

In 1966 the Singers took part in two memorable concerts in the Royal Albert Hall: Mahler’s 8th Symphony conducted by Bernstein, and Habergal Brian’s Symphony No. 1 (The Gothic) considered to be the largest symphony ever composed. For the latter, the company comprised four soloists, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, City of London Choir, Hampstead Choral Society, Orpington Junior Singers and the Choir of Emmanuel School, directed by Christian Strover.

Following Sheila’s untimely death, aged 49, in 1971, Carey Blyton composed five very short songs for a three part choir of sopranos and altos, entitled Ladies Only, which he dedicated to her memory. The first performance was by the ladies of the Swanley Choral Society in April 1973, conducted by the composer.

Two of these brilliant miniatures, King David and King Solomon and The Mating Game will be performed by the Beckenham Ladies Choir in the Concert on March 9th.
**At the age of three months, Enid Blyton arrived in Beckenham where she lived in seven different houses. Life at home was disrupted after her mother successfully petitioned for a legal separation in 1911 following her father’s three years of adultery. At that time Enid was at St Christopher’s a typical small private school run by two ladies in a large converted Victorian house in Rectory Road, Beckenham. There were just 50 pupils (see photo c. 1914) and hardly more than ten girls in Enid & Maud’s peer group. They all knew each other. Enid was the leader of a group of four close friends – the others being Phyllis Chase, Mirabel Davis and Mary Attenborough.**

Enid had been trying for years to be recognised as a writer before her first known published work appeared in 1917. As she explained to her nephew, Carey Blyton forty years later: *It’s very difficult to get a start in anything – I had over 500 rejections when I first began writing! You don’t put me off with the tale of your disappointments – such a tale is quite usual – most of our well known music writers would be able to vie with your disappointing beginnings!*  

In 1917, three poems appeared in Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine by or related to Enid. They were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Author’s Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Have you --------?”</td>
<td>March 1917</td>
<td>Enid Blyton</td>
<td>Beckenham, Kent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I Have --------?”</td>
<td>June 1917</td>
<td>Maud Dyrenfurth</td>
<td>Sydenham, Lewisham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Summer Prayer</td>
<td>August 1917</td>
<td>Enid Blyton</td>
<td>Beckenham, Kent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The poems were not for children. Previous contributors to Nash’s Magazine included Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, and HG Wells.

Who was Maud Dyrenfurth? There was only one Dyrenfurth family in the UK in the 1911 Census. In 1917 they were living on the border between Lower Sydenham and Beckenham. Like Enid, Maud might have been a pupil at St Christopher’s School in Rectory Road, a one mile pleasant walk across farmland from her home.

Enid had been trying to have her work published for some time. Was Maud the author of the second poem or did Enid steal Maud’s name to reinforce recognition for her first Nash poem? If so this ploy worked because Nash published the second poem in June and a third in August. Was Maud indeed the author of the poem in her name? If so she needs acclaim for encouraging Nash’s Magazine to publish the second Blyton poem.

March 9th 2013 will be the world premiere of Gordon Carr’s setting of the three 1917 poems to music. Will the performance of these songs in Enid Blyton’s home town of Beckenham shed any more light upon the legend and legacy of the author who went on to inspire generations of young readers?
Beckenham Ladies Choir

The choir provides the district with a musical base for women who want to enjoy and participate in music.

There are 35 members who like to help raise money for a variety of good causes. Regular annual concerts are held in Penge Congregational Church and St George’s Church, Beckenham.

In the choir there are a number of very fine singers some of whom contribute solo performances and write songs for the choir. Members also take part in the Beckenham Festival both as competitors and administrators.

In an evening that celebrates women, it is very appropriate the Choir will be singing the Premiere of *A River’s Song* written and composed by two of their members.

It is based on a poem by Marjorie Tyler about a river in North Wales from its birth in a spring in the mountains to a river used for paddling by children in a village. The composer, Mary Sawyer has written other pieces for the choir.

The Andrews Sisters

Three choir members, Joan Hepworth, Glynys Honor & Melanie Jones, have formed a group where they perform songs made famous by the famous American trio, The Andrews Sisters. During the concert, they will sing *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy*.

It was Joan Hepworth’s idea to form the tribute group, inspired by her war time childhood memories of hearing the Andrews Sisters on the radio during evacuation and the post war years.
Eileen Howard

Eileen was born in Edmonton, North London, was evacuated at the beginning of WW2 but was back home by Christmas 1939. After the house was bombed twice during 1940, Eileen’s evacuation resumed and she did not see her home again until 1948 and then only briefly because the opportunity came for her family to move to Beckenham in the same year. She has lived in the same house ever since.

Due to family commitments, it was not until 1961 that she applied to Beckenham Hospital and was accepted for nurse training. Eileen qualified as SRN in 1964 and then did Part 1 Midwifery during 1965/66 at Beckenham Maternity Hospital in Stone Park Avenue.

She returned to Beckenham Hospital as staff nurse to Sister and was promoted to Sister on the Male Surgical Ward in September 1966 and stayed in that post until retirement in 1989.

The Hospital was continually under threat of closure due to various financial crises in the Bromley Group of Hospitals. It was small and vulnerable and situated in the centre of Beckenham. Numerous attempts were made to partially or completely close it and sell off part or all of the land. The staff had formed an Action Committee and asked Eileen to be Chairman and they fended off these threats. But as pressures increased, they organised a petition of 22,000 signatures gained in just six weeks in support of the hospital. This was presented in Parliament by Beckenham’s MP Sir Philip Goodhart and the hospital survived.

Under the last Government’s Local Initiative Finance Trust, the hospital was completely rebuilt and now as the Beckenham Beacon it will continue to provide comprehensive services to local residents, as it has done since its foundation in 1872.

*****

2013 is the 60th Anniversary of the the Queen’s Coronation. Eileen remembers the Coronation in 1953 very well. Her cousin, the bass, Frederick Dalberg, lived in Beckenham with her family in the early 1950’s. He was chief bass at Covent Garden Opera and created the role of Sir Walter Raleigh in Benjamin Britten’s opera Gloriana, performing before the Queen in the coronation performance.
Irene was married to Arthur E. Carr who was the Chief of the Staff of The Salvation Army from 1974 to 1977. Irene and Arthur moved into The Drive, Beckenham at the end of WW2 with their three sons, Wesley, Gordon (mentioned elsewhere in this booklet) and Howard. On Sundays the Carr family walked to the Salvation Army Hall in Maple Road, Penge.

Wesley was born in 1941 and educated at Dulwich College before going to Oxford. He was the Dean at Westminster Abbey from 1997 to 2006. During that time he organised the funeral service of Diana, Princess of Wales on 6 September 1997. In 2002 he officiated at the funeral of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

Howard went to Beckenham County School and thence to Wye College, which prepared him for a career in agriculture. While at the County School he was leader of the School Orchestra [and his daughter, Rhuti, continues the family’s music tradition. In addition to her many other engagements, she is Principal Oboe for the Handel Collection based at St Stephen Walbrook, near Cannon Street Station].

Irene served the Salvation Army for 48 years where she was known as ‘Mrs Commissioner Carr’. In the concert she is remembered by the Lewisham Concert Band playing *Share my Yoke* composed by fellow Salvationist Major Joy Webb. Joy remembers Irene as a lady of great ability and charm who was a great help when Joy “as a young Salvation Army officer was facing great challenges by being thrust into the searchlight of immense media attention with the advent of Joy Strings in 1964.”

She told Cliff Watkins that *Share My Yolk* “has been featured and individually recorded by almost all the Premier bands in the USA and Great Britain, including those in the Military”. It had begun as a song with lyrics inspired from scripture – “the words of Jesus that have been enshrined in our minds from Handel’s wonderful Messiah”.

Joy told Cliff that “I am sorry I cannot be at your concert but I hope it will a fitting tribute to all the women featured, and especially Commissioner Irene Carr”.

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Irene Carr
Dame Cicely Saunders

Born 22 June 1918 in Barnet, Cicely went to Oxford University in 1939 but broke off her studies to enter the Nightingale Training School to become a Red Cross nurse. During her three year training she developed severe back trouble and though she qualified she was told to give up nursing.

She returned to university, completed her degree and then trained as hospital almoner in 1947. During these years she became a devout Christian with a vision to provide palliative care. This required her to successfully train as a doctor and, age 38 in 1956, she started her new career and began research into the control of pain in terminally ill patients. This led to her vision of a dedicated medical facility and Cicely began fundraising.

In 1963 she found a suitable site in the Beckenham half of Lawrie Park Road close to the border of Sydenham. But it was another four years before she had raised £500,000 to complete the building which was opened as St Christopher’s Hospice by Princess Alexandra (Mrs Angus Ogilvie) in 1967. The opening ceremony was covered on the front page of the Beckenham Journal (as shown above). She received an OBE for her work in the same year. In 1980 she was created a Dame Commander of the British Empire.

She lived close to her place of work at 50 Lawrie Park Gardens. Cicely died in St Christopher’s Hospice on 14 July 2005. In her obituary In The Guardian on 16 July it stated that “Saunders claimed that after 11 years of thinking about the project, she had drawn up a comprehensive blueprint and sought finance after reading Psalm 37: ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.’” Dame Cicely Saunders did indeed put her faith into practice by founding the Hospice Movement.

During the concert, Marie Vassilou will sing A Beautiful Morning and Alone with Thee as a tribute to Dame Cicely. They are two of the 43 prayers which Irene Carr wrote during her ‘retirement’ from the Salvation Army, and which have been set to music by her son Gordon.
Barbara Heseltine and Monica Furlong

Barbara Heseltine (née Pitt) was a head girl at the Beckenham Grammar school and is now assistant non-stipendary priest in St Feock, Truro, being one of the first 32 Anglican women priests in 1994, and previously a deaconess from 1988.

The late Monica Furlong was a member of Holy Trinity Church in Lennard Road. An author and poet, she campaigned hard for women to become priests. In 1991, she observed that “Attempting modestly to catch a small fish, to get women ordained, we were astounded to discover that we had got Leviathan at the end of the line”.

A year later on the 11th November 1992 the Archbishop of Canterbury announced that the Synod of the Church of England had passed a motion that women would be priests.

Included among the hymns and music played during the first Ordination of Women Service in Bristol Cathedral in 1994 were Panis Angelicus (Franck), and Lift Up Thine Eyes to the Mountains.

Both will be sung by the Ladies Choir. The first to celebrate Barbara’s 25 years as a parish priest and the second to remember Monica Furlong.

Barbara Heseltine with a panel showing the Lords Prayer in Cornish.
Jean Rhys

Jean Rhys was the author of the novel ‘Wide Sargasso Sea’, the prequel to Charlotte Bronte’s ‘Jane Eyre’. Jean was a creole born on the Caribbean island of Dominica in 1890 and sent to England by her father in 1907.

From 1946 to 1950 she lived in a large Victorian house on the corner of Stumps Hill Lane and Southend Road, Beckenham. Here she saw little of her loving but financially inept third husband, Max, who was losing his and his employer’s money to post war fraudsters. Her only company were her three cats.

The house was cold, damp and in need of repair and they let the upstairs floors to tenants to help pay the bills.

Left alone for long spells, Jean turned to drink and engaged in furious rows with her tenants and especially with her neighbour, who kept a dog. In 1949, Jean was remanded in Holloway Prison for 5 days after being convicted for assaulting and beating her neighbour. Jean’s defence was that the neighbour’s dog had killed two of her cats.

Jean hated Beckenham. In two years she appeared eight times before the Bromley Magistrates. After Max was given a two year sentence in Maidstone jail for fraud in 1950, Jean left Beckenham. In 1957 she began work on Wide Sargasso Sea which was eventually published in 1966. Her novel won awards and she was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

In 2003, Polly Teale wrote and produced her play ‘After Mrs Rochester’ for the Shared Experience theatre touring group. In it Polly skilfully draws parallels between the life of Jean Rhys (rebellious, prone to fits of violent temper and feeling misunderstood) and to the mad woman in the attic in Jane Eyre. In the preface to her play, Polly writes:

“by the time we meet Mrs Rochester in Jane Eyre, she has become a monster, scarcely recognisable as human. It is not surprising that Jean felt a desire to rewrite Mrs Rochester’s story, to tell it from the beginning. To tell it from the inside.”

In Beckenham, Jean was not locked in the attic of a large house away other people. But without her husband and any local friends and relatives, Jean would have felt similarly isolated living alone in a very large house. Most of Jean’s published novels are autobiographical - disguised accounts of her own experiences – and there is a sense that her four years living in Beckenham are reflected to some extent in the characterisation of Rochester’s wife in Wide Sargasso Sea.

What music can reflect the life of Jean Rhys? We offer a short lullaby to soothe her tortured soul composed by Beckenham composer, Carey Blyton and sung by Jean Low.
Emmeline Pankhurst (née Goulden; 1858 – 1928)

Emmeline is mentioned earlier in the article about the Suffrage movement in and around Beckenham.

She was named by Time magazine in 1999 as one of the 20th Century’s 100 most important people, stating that "she shaped an idea of women for our time; she shook society into a new pattern from which there could be no going back”

Emmeline was born and raised in Manchester. In 1878 she married Richard Pankhurst, a barrister 24 years her senior known for supporting women's right to vote; they had five children over the next ten years. She quickly became involved with the Women's Franchise League. After it folded, she attempted to join the Independent Labour Party through her friendship with Keir Hardie but was initially refused membership by the local branch of the Party on account of her sex. She also worked as a Poor Law Guardian and was shocked by the harsh conditions she encountered in Manchester workhouses.

After her husband died in 1898, Pankhurst founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), an all-women suffrage advocacy organisation dedicated to "deeds, not words." The group placed itself separately from— and often in opposition to—political parties. The group quickly became infamous when its members smashed windows and assaulted police officers. Pankhurst, her daughters, and other WSPU activists were sentenced to repeated prison sentences, where they staged hunger strikes to secure better conditions. As Pankhurst's oldest daughter Christabel took the helm of the WSPU, antagonism between the group and the government grew. Eventually arson became a common tactic among WSPU members, and more moderate organisations spoke out against the Pankhurst family. In 1913 several prominent individuals left the WSPU, among them Pankhurst's daughters Adela and Sylvia. The family rift was never healed.

Ethel Smyth was an active member of the WSPU. Her suffragette anthem, March of the Women opened the concert. It is repeated as a tribute to Emmeline who died in 1928 and she was commemorated later with a statue in London's Victoria Tower Gardens in April 1930.

At the ceremony for the unveiling event, the then Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin declared “no woman in the years to come will fail to gain inspiration from the example and the courage of the heroic woman whose statue we unveil today.” Loudspeakers enabled the ceremony to be heard up to half a mile away. Dressed in cap and gown, Ethel Smyth conducted the Metropolitan Police Band in several of her own compositions including ‘The March of the Women’ and extracts from ‘The Wreckers’.

Ethel’s music is performed in the concert by the Lewisham Concert Band on March 9th 2013.
Dame Julie Andrews

Julie was born on Oct. 1, 1935, at Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, to parents Ted and Barbara Wells who christened her Julia Elizabeth. In 1939 Barbara, a pianist, met another Ted (Andrews), a tenor, and they became a double act touring the country. In 1943, ‘Uncle Ted’ (as she called him) decided to give Julie singing lessons. He and Barbara were surprised to discover that Julie’s singing voice had extraordinary strength and range, and a doctor told them that their seven and half year old daughter had an almost adult larynx.

Later that year they moved into 15 Cromwell Road, Beckenham which became their home for the next five years. On November 25th, 1943, shortly after her mother’s divorce from Ted Wells, Julie agreed to call Ted Andrews ‘Pop’ rather than ‘uncle’ and her name was officially changed from Julia Elizabeth Wells to Julie Andrews.

The Cromwell Road home had room for a baby grand piano housed in the parlour - a back room leading onto the garden which had a square pond and a green mound covering an Anderson air raid shelter, in frequent use during the doodlebug attacks during 1944. Standing on top of, Julie used her four octave voice to alert the neighbourhood when V1s approached.

From her 9th birthday, it was decided that Julie commute to London for music lessons. This was a punishing regime of education and commuting, and Julie became so exhausted that Barbara enrolled her daughter at Woodbrook School for girls in Hayne Road, Beckenham, starting in September 1945.

Before entering the school, Julie had joined her parents’ vaudeville act, thus already a ‘professional’ performer. However, at the school she was treated like all the other pupils, some of whom became friends - the first of her own age. Jane Smith recalls that it was a great pleasure to have known Julie and to have heard her coloratura voice hit high C at our end of term concerts.

She found Woodbrook to be a very fine girls’ school run by Miss Mead and Miss Elvin, who provided Julie’s first formal academic education. Julie loved the senior girls voices singing hymns in assembly and the opportunity to act in the school plays. She also enjoyed cycling to school with her satchel in a basket on the front. With her friends, she went to Saturday morning pictures at the Regal cinema.

In 1946 her parents were performing at the legendary Stage Door Canteen theatre in Piccadilly that was run by the NAAFI for service personnel during and after the war. One day at school Miss Mead came to find Julie to tell her she would leave school early because she was going to sing in London that evening.

It was not until she reached Piccadilly that she learned that the Queen (later Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother) and Princess Margaret would be attending the show that evening. Julie sang the Polonaise - Mignon and after the show she was introduced to the Queen. Julie’s remarkable voice can be heard on You Tube singing this number.

Misses Mead and Elvin were eager to learn more from their star pupil, and the other girls were impressed by Julie’s celebrity status. The Daily Express and Daily Mail had rave articles about her performance. Soon afterwards, Julie had to say goodbye as her parents moved to a new, bigger house - formerly the servants’ quarters for a manor house near Walton-on-Thames - but she is still remembered by local people who knew her in Beckenham.

The Beckenham Ladies Choir have chosen to celebrate Julie with two songs from each of My Fair Lady and The Sound of Music. 

Julie’s Memoir.

This book about her early years was published in 2008. (author’s collection).
Two Notable Anniversaries

Queen Elizabeth II

The Lewisham Concert Band open the second half of the concert with the music for two Courtly Dances from Britten’s Opera Gloriana which was first performed at Covent Garden before the Queen to celebrate her Coronation in 1953.

The Coronation Year celebrations included a host of special edition magazines and newspapers. WIFE and HOME’s April 1953 issue included a free copy of a fold out pictorial supplement narrated by Enid Blyton, as shown above.

Sixty years on the concert concludes with Christian Strover’s arrangement of the National Anthem which was commissioned by the Beckenham Ladies Choir.

Benjamin Britten

In the first half of the concert, one of Britten’s Cabaret Songs, Johnny, was sung by Jean Low in memory of a Beckenham born artist. Mary Potter who became a valuable companion to Britten in Aldeburgh. There is another Britten and Beckenham connection.

In 1965 Britten switched his music publishing to the new music subsidiary of Faber & Faber. For some six years his personal music editor at Faber was the composer Carey Blyton. During that time Carey worked specifically on Britten’s new compositions like Songs and Proverbs of William Blake and a full rehearsal score for Curlew River with Imogen Holst. Britten was well satisfied with Carey who received a letter thanking him for all his efforts.
POSTSCRIPT

“In preparing this concert, I was pleased to meet John Drewry, husband of the Concert Compere, Eunice. He told me about the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), and how the many voluntary nurses have almost been whitewashed from history. If I had known of their importance 18 months ago, I would have included some music as a tribute. To make up for my omission, this page describes their role and the plans for a memorial at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire” Cliff Watkins

NO WAY BACK
A VAD’s Journey

The Nursing Memorial Appeal is a fundraising initiative by The New Cavendish Club in Marble Arch. The club was originally formed as The VAD Ladies’ Club by Lady Ampthill in 1920, a haven for the Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses who served in WW1. The Appeal is to raise funds for a memorial at the National Arboretum to all the nurses who died, and to support a nursing research scholarship.

The VADs were volunteers recruited in significant numbers from the upper classes, shire girls and vicars’ daughters, many of whom couldn’t even boil an egg. Their enthusiasm to do something useful exceeded any conception of what they would walk into. Many were posted to France, and most of those who didn’t die out there courageously stuck it out and saw it through, but were changed forever by what they witnessed and experienced. Many saw action again in WW2.

The target for donations is £100,000, to be divided equally between the memorial, and the research scholarship including educational material about the nurses’ work, their wartime experiences and sacrifice.

For more details about the Appeal charity, please contact: nursingmemorialappeal@gmail.com
www.newcavendishclub.co.uk/nursingmemorialappeal
www.facebook.com/nursingmemorialappeal

Apologies events include a production of John Drewry’s dramadoc, NO WAY BACK, a 45-minute narrated and acted drama with music, telling the VADs story. The script is based on sources from diaries, reports, military bulletins and WW1 poetry. If you wish to be kept informed about forthcoming production dates and venues for NO WAY BACK, or would like to discuss hiring the production and its actors, please email virtual.theatre@drewrys.com, or call 0800 043 0428.

NO WAY BACK is also available as a reading script for groups or societies who may wish to perform it themselves. It has been designed to be very simply staged almost anywhere, requiring minimal furniture and props. Because it is largely a play for voices, it would also be very powerful as a radio play. To request a copy of the script, please email virtual.theatre@drewrys.com.
Concert Programme

Choir            The March of the Women          Ethel Smyth
Band             The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba
                  March in E flat               G F Handel
Jean Low         Johnny (Cabaret Song)           Benjamin Britten
Choir            I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud
                  Ladies Only (King David and King Solomon
                  & The Mating Game)           Eric Thiman
Melanie Vassilou Enid & Maud (Premiere)          Gordon Carr
Choir            A River's Song (Premiere)          Majorete Tyler &
Joan Hepworth,   Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy          Raye & Prince
Glynys Honor &   Raye & Prince
Melanie Jones
Band             What a Wonderful World        Thiele & Weiss
The Company &    Jerusalem                           Hubert Parry
Audience

And did those feet in ancient time Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Walk upon England's mountains green? Bring me my arrows of desire!
And was the holy Lamb of God Bring me my spear! O clouds untold!
On England's pleasant pastures seen? Bring me my chariots of fire!
And did the countenance divine I will not cease from mental fight,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills? Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
And was Jerusalem built here Till we have built Jerusalem
Among those dark satanic mills? In England's green and pleasant land.

Interval

Band             Gloriana – two Courtly Dances
                  Share My Yoke                       Benjamin Britten
                  Joy Webb
Jean Low         Alone with Thee        Gordon Carr
Choir            A Beautiful Morning     César Franck
Choir            Panis Angelicus            Mendelssohn
Jean Low         Lift Thine Eyes to the Mountains
Band             Lullaby                               Carey Blyton
Band             March of the Women
                  Overture to The Wreckers            Ethel Smyth
Choir            The Sound of Music
                  (The Hills Are Alive &
                  Do-Re-MI)                           Rodgers & Hammerstein
Choir            My Fair Lady
                  (All I Want is a Room Somewhere &
                  I Could Have Danced All Night)    Lerner & Loewe
Choir, Band &    National Anthem
                  Audience                           Arne arr.
& Audience
Choir only       God save our gracious Queen,             Christian Strover
                  Long live our noble Queen,
                  God save the Queen!
                  Send her victorious,
                  Happy and glorious,
                  Long to reign over us,
                  God save the Queen!
Choir and audience Thy choicest gifts in store,
                  On her be pleased to pour,
                  Long may she reign!
                  May she defend our laws,
                  And ever give us cause,
                  To sing with heart and voice,
                  God save the Queen!
Emmeline Pankhurst
1858 - 1928

Emmeline's statue is in Millbank by the Victoria Tower, Houses of Parliament