



# The John Innes Society Newsletter



Issue No 280

March 2020

## FOR CONSERVATION IN THE JOHN INNES ESTATE AT MERTON

Registered charity 803759

[johninnessociety.org.uk](http://johninnessociety.org.uk)

### MERTON PARK SAYS NO THANK YOU TO THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION

Over 200 residents have written to the Boundary Commission to object to the proposals to remove large parts of Merton Park out of Merton Park Ward and transfer them to Cannon Hill Ward or Trinity Ward. We have been privileged to see some of those letters and their writers' heartfelt loyalty to Merton Park both as a place and as a community, has been overwhelming.

The Society has also sent in representations and our full letter can be found on our website. We sent in a copy of our historical booklet "The Birth of Merton Park", copies of maps of the four local Conservation Areas and a map of the John Innes Estate, which is our Area of Benefit. We objected to the proposal to split Conservation Areas so that parts fell into different Wards; to natural boundaries such as railway lines on embankments being ignored; to local community facilities varying from the Nelson Health Centre to our local Fish and Chip shop being severed from Merton Park. We emphasized that John Innes built not two, but one estate encompassing both North and South of Kingston Road. **The Boundary Commission should be left in no doubt that Merton Park residents live, learn, play and worship together, as John Innes intended, and they wish to remain that way.**

What happens next will not be known until around June 2nd. If the Boundary Commission perseveres with its current proposals, then the conclusion must be that we no longer live in the democratic society we hold so dear. DC.



**THE JOHN INNES SOCIETY**  
For the Merton Park Conservation Area and its environment



## Plant Sale

### Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May

10.00 am - 12.00 pm

5a Sheridan Road

Merton Park



*Sale of bedding,  
herbaceous and  
vegetable plants and  
shrubs*

Refreshments - coffee/tea  
and cake on sale



**Admission: members free; non-members 50p**



[www.johninnessociety.org.uk](http://www.johninnessociety.org.uk)  
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Registered charity 803759

follow us   
**@JohnInnesSoc**

#### Are you an Aylward Road Angel?

From time to time, usually early in the morning a lady, sometimes two, can be spotted with a reusable carrier bag in hand and a litter pick stick quietly collecting litter along the pavements, leaving us all with a fabulously clean Aylward Road.

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for doing such a wonderful job voluntarily!

KW



### Calling all budding photographers!

We have a new page on our website, showcasing the best photos from our area. If you would like to contribute to the gallery, or just view the pictures, the page is <https://www.johninnessociety.org.uk/seasonalgallery>



# OUR GARDEN SUBURB SPRING GARDENING SPECIAL

On Sunday 7 June between 1.30pm - 5pm we are again holding our popular Open Gardens event including an informal and impromptu gardens competition. Not all the open gardens will be of the manicured sort but some will be more natural and wildlife friendly. There is a place for both kinds and the more trees, shrubs, hedges and flowers our gardens contain the more successful they will be at keeping the air clean and wildlife happy.

Although we live in London we can have a huge impact on encouraging wildlife and protecting the environment through our gardens. If everyone contributes to making their gardens nature friendly the total effect will be significant. The trend now, encouraged by TV quick fix makeover programmes, is for rather lifeless gardens that incorporate a lot of paving and decking and even the horror of artificial grass. In the drawing below are shown a few features that can encourage wildlife into your garden and also help keep the air fresher and cleaner.

**GROW A HEDGE** and have climbers and creepers such as clematis, honeysuckle and ivy. Birds love to

nest in ivy and it is easy to grow and always green. There are different and more interesting varieties than the plain common green one.

**WILDERNESS AREA** even a small area of long grass with some wild flowers, a patch of nettles (for butterflies), a heap of dead leaves, a few logs, some dandelions (for bees) and a buddleia (bees and butterflies) will benefit wildlife. A shallow water container will enable them to drink when conditions are dry. Worryingly bees and other pollinators are in decline and this wilderness area will help their numbers increase.

**NESTING BOXES** should be installed before the breeding season

**TREES** planting fruit trees and native trees is a good idea e.g. silver birch, yew, alder, crab apple.

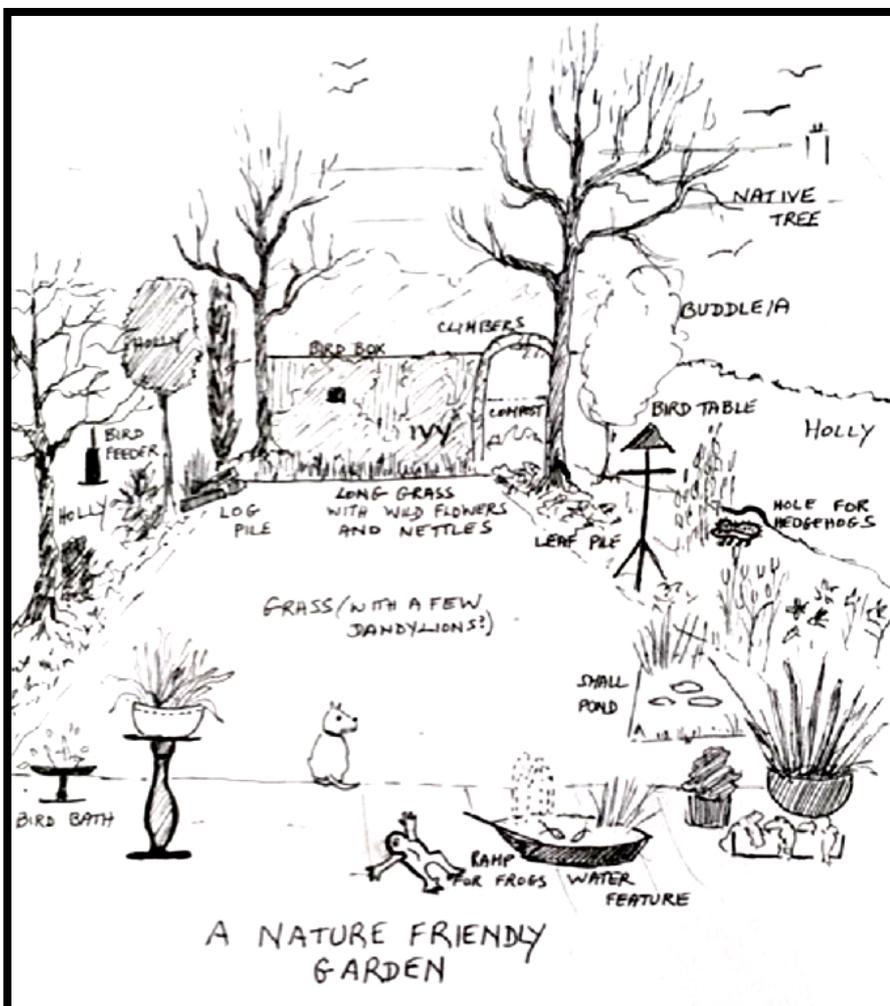
**BIRD TABLE AND BATH**, keep these clean with an occasional wash with boiling water. Even in winter the birds love a quick splash.

**POND OR WATER FEATURE**, even a small water feature will attract many different species. Have a small ramp or shallow place so that frogs can get out of the water.

**HEDGEHOGS** are useful little creatures and they are also in decline especially in London. They eat beetles and slugs so will benefit from the log pile and the pile of dead leaves in your wilderness area. Hedgehogs need to wander far and wide in search of food so each of us should have a small hole in our fences and hedges - a hedgehog highway. The hole only needs to be 13x13cms. They will also appreciate a small shallow container of water. Don't be tempted to put out bread and milk for them - it plays havoc with their digestive systems.

I hope this has given you a few ideas about making your garden friendly to wildlife and thus creating a more lively and fascinating place to spend your time.

**Helene Nelson-Jones**



## Green Flag Award - Abbey Recreation Ground

Abbey Recreation Ground, Merton Park Green Walks and Nursery Road playing field are located right in the centre of Merton. Together they form the largest green space in South Wimbledon.

The Willmore End Residents Association (WERA) has taken a keen interest in this area over the past ten years with the aim of making it a cleaner and greener place where wildlife may flourish and visitors may relax and play. With the support of the Merton Council Greenspaces team, Idverde and the London Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) a Green Flag was awarded to the Abbey Recreation Ground / Merton Park Green Walks in 2018, one of only six Green Flags in the borough. We have also put a lot of effort into the adjoining Nursery Road playing field by planting in excess of 2,000 whips, even though the playing field is not

included in the Green Flag area as it is not open to the public.



To qualify for a Green Flag an area needs not only to be available to the public, but also meet eight key criteria, including being a welcoming space, providing a park that is healthy, safe, secure, clean and well maintained, with

sustainable management of resources, appropriate management of conservation and heritage features, and where community involvement is encouraged.

Over the past two years the 'Monday CRC Payback Team' has transformed Abbey Recreation Ground by painting railings, edging paths, removing bamboo, preparing ground and planting shrubs, cleaning playground equipment, planting whips and applying wood chips, picking litter and cutting grass. A wildflower bed has been established. Along the Merton Park Green Walks brambles have been cleared around the free to use tennis courts and more whips have been planted. The seasonal pond built by WERA several years ago is due to be refurbished later this year.

Funds applied for by WERA over the years have come from a number of sources. The largest amounts (£93,000 and £250,000) were provided by



the London Marathon Charitable Trust and Viridor Credits, with additional amounts coming from several smaller funds. These monies have paid for whips, the tennis courts and most of the cost of replacing the changing rooms in Abbey Recreation Ground, as well as professional tree work, pond materials, wildflower turf, seeds and bulbs.

Since the middle of last year a second 'Wednesday Payback team' has been working in Nelson Gardens. Recently the 'Monday Payback team' has worked in Kendor Gardens and is already making a noticeable difference. Most of the railings have been painted and the big job of edging the paths has begun. This should enable the Friends of Kendor Garden to focus on plants and planting rather than heavier manual tasks. Both teams use Abbey Recreation Ground as their base which is where the tool room is and where they take their breaks.

With a long list of projects and the hard work of two Payback teams per week we look forward to our local green spaces becoming even more pleasant places to visit over the coming months.

**Keith Hunter**



## An update on nest boxes in the John Innes area



The John Innes Society over the years has installed 12 nest boxes dotted around the John Innes Park and Glebe Fields. Ten of them are tit boxes with a relatively small hole and the others, much larger, are a woodpecker box and an owl box. As explained last year, they are regularly cleaned and disinfected in November by a team of volunteers which now numbers four (L to R: Davinia Miln, Simon & Viv Tuley and Michel Julien). For 2019 we found that 11 out of the 12 boxes had been successfully occupied. The elaborate tit nests made from compacted moss interlaced with feathers, cobwebs and man-made fibres were removed (see photograph), some still with old eggs or bits of shell



in them. The owl nest was relined with fresh straw. The woodpecker box hole had been enlarged by what must have been a magnificent specimen. Some of the reasons for the success lay in the choice of secluded locations, the height and orientation of the boxes, protected from noise, driving rain and prevailing winds. If the birds had no problem finding the boxes, it may in the future be more of a challenge for the volunteers, so this year their locations have been recorded on a map for The John Innes Society's safe keeping.

**Michel Julien**

## "TED'S TREES" LINE RESTORED

Helene Nelson-Jones's welcome return to the John Innes Committee is beginning to yield results, and she has been working on encouraging the planting of more new trees. Thanks to the generosity of a local resident who paid for a replacement oak tree for the one lost to vandalism in the John Innes Recreation Ground, Helene arranged for Merton's Tree Wardens to source and plant a new sapling, and this was done



on February 11th. A small group of John Innes Society volunteers were there to cut and clear turf away from around the remaining eleven trees.

The ground was so sodden by recent heavy rainfall this turned out to be an extremely muddy, hard and heavy task. Huge thanks are due to the Friends of the John Innes Park, who completed this work and spread mulch around all the trees on 14th February. The aim is to stop gang mowers cutting too close to the young trees, which damages their bark and lets in diseases. Grateful thanks to Jane Plant and her helpers for planting and staking the new tree so professionally.

**DC.**

## JIS EVENING TALK: Creating the Wimbledon Guild Community Garden using No Dig

On January 21st, **Greg Alleyne** from the Wimbledon Guild opened this talk explaining how this local charity provides help and support to Merton people in need, by aiming to reduce social isolation and poverty, to help people facing difficulties in life as well as to enable older people to remain active and healthy. The Guild, aided by 200+ volunteers, delivers social welfare services to over 2,000 people in Merton every year.

The HomeFood Café, for which the Community Garden grows vegetables, serves over 7,000 meals a year for vulnerable people as well as providing valuable work experience opportunities for those with complex needs. The Mitcham-based charity shop and the Community Garden are also vital community resources.



**Dawn Canham**, Lead Volunteer, then showed us lots of before and after photographs while explaining the philosophy used to create this organic, No Dig community vegetable garden.

Designed in 2015 using Permaculture principles, the land was divided into zones with the centrally-located Zone One requiring the most intensive labour and watering, and Zone Five containing plants and trees needing least intervention. The Permaculture concept was created by David Holmgren and his Lecturer, Bill Mollison, at the University of Tasmania in 1978 as a reaction against the industrial agricultural practices destroying the environment. It works with nature to minimise waste and labour. Today it is a philosophy for living as well as for farming and gardening, with its core tenets being: Care for the Earth, Care for the People and Fair Share.

Dawn and a couple of volunteers covered the bed areas with cardboard and well-rotted chicken manure to a depth of 10cm, following Charles Dowding's No Dig method which he developed over almost forty years as a professional market gardener. He recommends only using fully-composted mulches which deters slugs and retains moisture by as much as 50%. The mulch covers up weed seeds and returns carbon and nitrogen to the soil in the quantities the plants need to flourish. By feeding the soil micro-organisms, nutrients are released directly to the plants, via mycorrhizal fungi hyphae in exchange for sugars, instead of leaching away as chemical fertilizers do. It has

been discovered that plants communicate with each other chemically via these hyphal networks, passing nutrients and warnings of drought to each other. Digging releases CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere and encourages weed seeds to germinate. It breaks up the mycorrhizal fungi networks and the roots of perennial weeds such as bind-weed into many more plants. Digging over a standard allotment would mean moving 156 tonnes of soil!



Although the aim of No Dig is to avoid disturbing the soil unnecessarily, it is still necessary to keep on top of annual weeds by hand weeding or hoeing; and perennial weeds by troweling them out, especially in the first three years of converting a weedy plot. It is also acceptable to dig a hole to plant a shrub or a tree, to remove rubbish or a bramble crown, and to wiggle a long-handled garden fork to loosen the soil around deep-rooted tap roots.

The garden is 7 mins walk from Wimbledon Guild's HomeFood Café and the vegetables are delivered on foot. All of the café's raw and cooked food waste is returned to the garden for composting using a Japanese anaerobic fermentation system

called Bokashi which means 'fermented organic matter'. Bokashi bins are bucket-sized with an airtight lid, a carrying handle and a drainage sump and tap. The



café fills two bins every week, pressing down every 5- 8 cm of food to exclude oxygen and then sprinkling with a bran inoculated with bacteria which ferments the food waste anaerobically. After two weeks' fermentation, this is added to the garden's pallet composting system.

The garden started opening to the public in the spring of 2018 and can be visited on Thursdays and Saturdays between 11am and 2pm, subject to the weather and volunteer availability, or at other times by arrangement.

**Dawn Canham.**

## How can you help the Spring Plant Sale?

Last year we asked for volunteers to spread the job of potting up and growing on plug plants for the Spring Plant Sale. We had a good response and more growers are needed this year. These annuals are eagerly bought at the sale. Deliveries of plugs are usually received mid to late March so only need looking after for 6 weeks or so. Two trays of 18 plug plants don't take up much room, need watering and the occasional feed. See the [Sow and Grow](#) web page. If you have any spare plastic pots – around 9cm and 15cm only - or any hanging baskets, please drop them at 21 Poplar Road for re-use.

However, it's not only growing on plug plants which needs your support. Can you dig up and pot on surplus plants, divide perennials or take cuttings from your garden? Purchasers welcome plants from local gardens which prove they grow well in our area. Sowing a few extra seeds is a great way to contribute because buyers usually want a couple of plants rather than a whole seed packet full. Vegetable and herb plants are in demand as well as flowering plants and shrubs. Please ensure that pots

are clearly labelled so we can identify them. Donations can be delivered to 5a Sheridan Road or 21 Poplar Road in the week before the sale which is on **Saturday, 9th May**.

Don't be put off if you're not a gardener, we also need donations of cakes for the cake stall, help setting up on Friday 8 May and selling produce on the day itself.

You will be able to buy hanging baskets, bedding plants and some herbaceous perennials bought in at wholesale prices so wait and see what we have before going to the garden centre. It's also a social event where you can chat to friends and neighbours, make new friends whilst enjoying coffee and cakes.

Please put the date in your schedule and join us between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon and pass the date on to friends. If you can help in any way, contact **Ann Redfearn** ([ann@arke.me.uk](mailto:ann@arke.me.uk) or 020 8286 9983).

### COFFEE MORNINGS

Held monthly on the second Wednesday at the Coach House between 11am-1pm.

Why not join our friendly neighbourhood group for a pleasant chat over coffee, biscuits and homemade fare! We hold a competitive quiz followed by a raffle of useful prizes.

Everyone is welcome!

Entrance fee is 50p, raffle entry is 50p.

### SECURITY LIGHTS

Save energy by making sure any timers are working well and the lighting is directed to the intended area. Check lights are pointing downwards into your own property so that they don't dazzle your neighbours.

### HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 2020 SUBSCRIPTION?

Thank you to everyone who has paid already.

If you have yet to pay, a renewal form was enclosed with the November Newsletter. You can pay by cash or cheque (to John Innes Society) sent to Ann Redfearn at 21 Poplar Road SW19 3JR or pay at the AGM or complete the membership form from our web site.

You can pay online at [www.johninnesociety.org.uk/options2020](http://www.johninnesociety.org.uk/options2020) using Paypal or credit card.

And you can use this "QR code" which will take you directly to our subscriptions page.



## THE JOHN INNES SOCIETY 49th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, 22nd April at 8pm at Merton Park Primary School

All members of the Society and friends, neighbours and guests are invited to attend. **Nominations are invited to join the Committee.** There are several vacancies to fill and especially we are looking for someone to become our new **Environmental Champion** now John Veale is sadly no longer with us. Could this be you or someone you know? Please contact Tim Fripp (Hon.Secretary) for details - 020 8542 1402 or any committee member listed on the back page of this Newsletter.

The Agenda, Annual Report and Accounts are being distributed with this Newsletter. The Agenda is also available [online](#). Please bring them with you to the meeting. Only members whose subscriptions are paid up to date at the time of the AGM will be entitled to vote.

After the AGM there will be a talk by Susannah Hall followed by a discussion on about how we can make best use of our gardens in a changing climate, Warmer, wetter winters, and hotter, dryer summers mean that some of the plants we have been accustomed to will no longer thrive and our methods of cultivation may have to change. For some ideas, please see Dawn Canham's article in this Newsletter about the Wimbledon Guild Community Garden.

## HOW WE LIVED 100 YEARS AGO

Spring 1920 saw a new initiative in the area although one that was to be short-lived. The Wimbledon Borough News reported that *"The preliminary step to the inauguration of a Wimbledon and district branch of the Middle Classes Union was taken on Thursday night last week, when a fairly well attended public meeting was held. Councillor T G Hatherill-Mynott said it seemed to him there was no better evidence of the necessity for organising the Middle Classes than the empty chairs in the hall."*

The MCU was founded in 1919 after the Reform Act 1918 increased the number of working class people who had the vote. It seemed that many of those who identified as middle class felt threatened by the thought of the working class getting the vote. The MCU was mainly involved in opposing socialism and strikes but also got involved in eugenics as a supposed way to reduce poverty. By 1921 it had evolved into the slightly less extreme National Citizen's Union but that later aligned itself with British Fascism before disappearing at the beginning of WW2.

Lest anyone might think that for the most part times were more law-abiding a hundred years ago, we should also note that April saw an attempted armed robbery at the Post Office in Morden. The WBN of 2<sup>nd</sup> April tells us about the woman who saved the day:

*"Miss Adams, the postmistress of the Morden post office had an exciting experience in which she showed a presence of mind which probably prevented serious consequences. She was alone in the Post Office when two young men in tweed caps and shabby khaki overcoats, which were open down to the last button, came in. One asked for a three-halfpenny stamp and the other moved forward and pointed a pistol at her. She rushed into the private room, locked the door behind her and ran upstairs. Then leaning out of a window she blew the police whistle as hard as she could."*

Later that month, the Nelson Hospital had its annual meeting at which statistics were given which tell us something of the ailments and surgery undergone by our ancestors. The meeting was told that 534 patients were treated during the year, *"of whom 425 were cured, 30 relieved and improved, and 31 had died. ...the death rate has been somewhat high, many of the cases being hopeless on admission. 433 operations under anaesthetics were performed in the theatre, 24 in the wards, and 21 to casualty cases in the receiving room."* These days hospitals and health services are inspected by the Care Quality Commission, who look at other kinds of data...

**Chris Abbot**

## The John Innes Society Contacts

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<b>The Friends of Kendor Gardens</b> 30 Daybrook Road SW19 3DH	<b>Fred Rayner</b> 020 8715 5569
* These members are also trustees.	

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## Save the date!

All in the Coach House unless otherwise indicated.

### **Bridge Club and Bridge Classes**

*Most Mondays and Thursdays*

### **Coffee Mornings**

*Second Wednesday of the month. 11am to 1pm*

### **Friends of the John Innes Park Gardening Group**

*Second Friday of the month 9am John Innes Park*

## Coming our way!

### **Annual General Meeting**

**Wednesday 22nd April, 8pm at Merton Park Primary School, Church Lane, SW19 3HQ.**

### **SPRING PLANT SALE**

**Saturday 9th May, 10am—Noon at 5A Sheridan Road, SW19 3HW.**

### **HERITAGE DISCOVERY DAY**

**Saturday 23rd May, 12:30pm—4:30pm at Morden Library, Merton Civic Centre, London Rd, Morden SM4 5DX.**

### **OPEN GARDENS**

**Sunday 7th June, 1.30pm—5pm around Merton Park.**

### **MUSIC in the PARK**

**Sunday 21st June, 2pm—5pm at John Innes Park with the Putney & Wimbledon Brass Band**

### **HAVE YOUR SAY!**

Please send your submissions for the next issue of *The JIS Newsletter* to [mail@johninnessociety.org.uk](mailto:mail@johninnessociety.org.uk) by **Wednesday, 13th May**. It will be distributed on **Saturday, 29th May**.