



The John Innes Society Newsletter

Issue No 281

May 2020



FOR CONSERVATION IN THE JOHN INNES ESTATE AT MERTON

Registered charity 803759

johninnesociety.org.uk

With this May issue we originally wondered whether we would be defying the official description of a “newsletter” as the usual format of our regular events had been thrown to the winds. But as we know, the residents of Merton Park are resilient and very resourceful.

The **Walking Alternative Plant Sale** has shown how keen everyone is to support ingenious ways around the current situation. Whether you are reading this Newsletter on line, maybe for the first time, or have received a printed copy, we hope it will provide food for thought as well as some positive messages.

NEXT YEAR THE JOHN INNES SOCIETY WILL BE 50

Quite a milestone and one which we hope to mark with an exhibition of Merton Park during the past 50 years. **To do this we need your help.** Please can you search through photographs, records, letters, whatever you have, and let us borrow anything which you think would be of interest for the exhibition. We can copy originals by scanning, so no need to worry your precious memories will be lost or damaged.

Display items can be old or new. They can be of

any part of the last half century so even if you are new to the area, your written accounts of why you came to live here, and what was so special about it, will be equally interesting.

When you have found or written what you would like to share with others, please contact **Desé Child** (020 8540 3087) or send an email to mail@johninnesociety.org.uk.

Thank You.

OPEN GARDENS AND THE FRONT GARDENS COMPETITION – ALL IS NOT LOST



Open Gardens Day and the Front Garden competition cannot take place as planned, but in their place the Society invites everyone to take photos of Merton Park gardens. They can be of your own back garden or anyone’s front garden, with or without parking. All welcome.

Please send them to our email mail@johninnesociety.org.uk as soon as you like but no later than July 10th.

A selection will be included in the Society’s July Newsletter and others will be displayed on the website and/ or in the Coach House window for passers-by to enjoy.

Please do take a look at the Coach House window display as you walk around Merton Park. Helene Nelson-Jones has painted a lovely water colour of her front garden, which has been converted into a larger poster for us all to enjoy. Let that give you inspiration to get out your camera or phone and see what you can capture to record a remarkable year for blossom and flowers. Covid 19 is horrific but thank goodness for nature’s reassurance that life goes on. Look for more Merton Park In Bloom pictures on our website.



HOW MANY?

In the last Newsletter we reported that over 200 residents had written to the Boundary Commission to object to the proposals to split Merton Park up between different local authority electoral wards. Now the closing date for representations has passed, these letters are available on the Commission's website and the final number from Merton Park was nearer 300.

When one takes into account these were individual letters, not standard letters signed by different people, that is a truly remarkable number. It just goes to show how much residents really value our area and how all it has to offer is really appreciated.

Well Done and Thank You to everyone who wrote in.

COVID 19 and THE JOHN INNES SOCIETY AGM

The reports, accounts and notices for this meeting were circulated with the March Newsletter but it was not possible to hold the meeting on April 22nd due to the Covid 19 lockdown which banned all public meetings.

The Committee had to decide to postpone the AGM to a new provisional date of October 21st in the hope that such meetings will be allowed by then and provided the meeting can be held in a setting which will be safe for all those attending.



STREET TREES

We are fortunate that Merton Council has planted a number of fine new trees in our area. They are in the process of having labels attached to them asking that people water them.

Even a 2 litre bottle of water will help; newly planted trees are often in need of water even if there is not a drought. They need water delivered straight to their roots - that is what the nearby black pipe is for - it reaches down to where the water is needed.

So please help to keep these really fine trees alive and keep our neighbourhood a green, healthy and pleasant place to live. **HNJ**

SCAMS AND THE NEW SUSPICIOUS EMAIL REPORTING SERVICE

Scammers have been particularly active during the Covid 19 crisis including targeting the Bereaved with false claims that the Deceased owed money, or money was due to them, in an attempt to obtain banking or personal details. Beware.

If you receive any type of suspicious email, you should forward it to the Government's new service **report@phishing.gov.uk**

Do not click on any links within the suspicious email or reply to it.

The UK's National Cyber Security Centre ((NCSC) which is part of GCHQ, will then

- ◆ Seek to block the address the email came from, so it can no longer send emails.
- ◆ Work with hosting companies to remove links to malicious websites.
- ◆ Raise awareness of commonly reported suspicious emails and methods used.

In its first two weeks of operation, the NCSC dealt with 160,000 suspicious emails and closed 300 bogus sites.

The NCSC is for suspicious emails only, not for reporting other crimes.

If you have been a victim of fraud or cyber-crime, please report it to Action Fraud at **www.actionfraud.police.uk** or call **0300 123 2040**

POETRY PAGE—TWO DIFFERENT ANGLES ON COVID.



I was inspired for this poem by Simon's Armitage poem— Out of the Blue about 9/11.

I am enjoying writing poetry and there might be some more additions from me!

Ravi Walker of Sheridan Road (12 years old)

I appreciate that some of you may have already seen this poem and are aware of the back story. For those of you for whom it is new, the poem was originally attributed to a nineteenth century Catholic writer called Kathleen O'Mara, and also thought to have been reissued during the 1918 flu epidemic. It whizzed round social media last month and was widely admired as being so appropriate.

However, further checking revealed that the poet is alive and well and living in the USA and is Cathleen (or Kitty) O'Meara who wrote it quite recently. Her writings on her blog (The Daily Round) are quite prolific.

It is still a very relevant and timeless poem and a thoughtful change to all the spoof versions of everything going the rounds (but please don't stop those if you get sent some good ones !!)

We reproduce it here with full permission and best wishes from the author. **Alison Cousins**

*And people stayed at home
And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply
Someone meditated, someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,
The earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.*

Kitty O'Meara

We watch : A Covid-19 poem

*It arrived
All prickly and
Round, all
Infectious and
Deadly
Calm
The world at one
And then a
Virus pops up
And the world
Watches.
Just watches
As a body falls
And a body falls
And a body falls
Viciously attacking
Sweeping the life
Of people
Grandma,
Grandpa,
Mum
Dad
Through the touch of
The hand
The cough of a
Stranger
Or the breath of
A friend*

*Still the rest of
The world gawks in awe
Hand sanitiser here,
Soap there*

*And the cases rise
In China
And others too*

*Jokes are made
Why? Do they not know?
Can they not grasp it?
People are dying
And you could too*

*Then it hits
And Italy is
The epicentre
An outbreak of
Death
Virus
And illness
Heads are turned*

*People worry
Britain prepares
For battle against
Corona*

*It arrives again
But not with
A bang
It slowly
Grasps the UK
Its infectious grip
Claws its way
Into
Cities
Houses
People*

*Precautions are taken
And still there are idiots
They spread it
And the cases speed up
But so do the deaths
And a body falls
And a body falls
And a body falls*

*Schools close
Lockdown starts:
Keep 2m
1hr out
Essential shopping only
High risk
Stay home
And let no one in
A bit later
The loneliness emerges
Sadness
Grief
Boredom as well
But fun is found
Rainbows
Smiles
And Clapping
Clapping for heroes
For the army
The army of blue
Some come back injured
Worried
Or dead
Still we clap
Still we clap
Still we watch.*

Ravi Walker

THE WALKING ALTERNATIVE PLANT 'SALE' - 9/10 May 2020

Walking or cycling round the neighbourhood to pick up plants from 16 houses, in beautiful sunshine, was much appreciated by local residents on Saturday and Sunday 9/10 May. Many addresses had 'sold' all their plants by 11am on Saturday and some were digging up and potting additional plants to deal with demand. Amazingly, Viv Tuley and Kay Nemoto were able to find/pot up more plants for Sunday morning. There were queues (socially distanced!) outside some addresses by 9am and some people's leisurely mornings were disturbed by those waiting outside with the question "are you putting any plants out?"

Those donating plants enjoyed being able to talk about their plants but regretted not being able to join the perambulations. Not only did people 'buy' plants, they had an enjoyable time chatting to friends and strangers in the street on their way between the various addresses. People commented it felt "almost normal for the first time in weeks".

It started as a way of ensuring seeds and plants grown in anticipation of the plant sale weren't wasted and turned into an event which worked well and was very popular. It was lovely to hear positive messages of appreciation and we could have 'sold' 100's more plants if we had them. It lifted spirits for people to meet in a safe way, respecting the current climate.

A huge thankyou to our amazing community of growers. Those who dug up plants from their gardens or did extra potting on of seedlings, really went the extra mile to avoid disappointing people who arrived later. Many thanks also to everyone who donated so liberally to John Innes Society funds – we are extremely grateful. The generosity of these donations, about £2,000 at the last count, was so unexpected and gratifying.

OUR THANKS TO PAUL MILLIE

Publicity for the Walking Alternative Plant Sale increased visits to the new John Innes Society website to over three times its normal use which included more than twice as many new viewers. Thanks are due to Catherine Bottrill and Paul Millie, who between them designed and launched the new website including incorporating up to date methods for paying subscriptions and making donations.

Sadly Paul has felt it necessary to retire from the Committee due to other commitments, but not before he has made a huge contribution to the vitality of the Society and its place within the Merton Park community. We thank him for all he has done and we send to him and Anja all our very best wishes for the future. Thanks also to Ingrid who is taking over the website from Paul.



What we would have seen at 5A Sheridan Road had the event been at its normal venue...

THE WALKING ALTERNATIVE PLANT 'SALE' - 9/10 May 2020

“Thank you again for making it happen and for organising it and us all so well, a lovely event for people during lockdown, I hope it is a success”

“Well, that was fun. I didn’t manage to get a photo of me with all my plants, because the first one had gone before I had put them all out! I started just before 10am, and by 11.30 they had all gone”



“Our little stall sold out by midday, and I had a lovely chat with a few people, who returned in the afternoon to see if there were any more leftovers. I managed to dig a couple of things out of my crowded garden for them! Suffice to say, a huge success everywhere, and it was lovely to hear such a positive message of appreciation for the plant sale. Our neighbourhood were very, very pleased to see the plant sale, and it was definitely worth all the hard work put in by the people who run the show! Well done, you are amazing”

“Thank you for organising the Alternative Plant Sale and it was such a pleasure to contribute. I met so many friendly neighbours wanting to talk about plants or the unique Brocklesby houses on our street. I quite enjoyed the format of hosting in our different locations and seeing people with maps exploring the different roads. Shame I couldn’t do the same! “



“I’m glad we had some tomatoes to offer after yours sold out. Good timing for plant sale just before the garden centres reopen, visitors were delighted with the tiniest of my offerings. It was a great turnout - well spaced queues, we really enjoyed chatting to everyone”

“It was a lot of fun! I had a queue (2m apart of course!) and sold out my plants in an hour too! (70+) I was astounded by the demand. I’m busy potting up more for tomorrow”

“All sold by lunchtime and money banked”

BATH TIME IN MERTON PARK



This collage of photos was contributed by **Michel Julien**. We hope it encourages you to think about having a bird bath in your garden.

Nature blooming during lockdown...



HOW WE LIVED 100 YEARS AGO

Even in Spring 1920 there were echoes to be heard of the Great War, with gallantry awards still being presented and memorials unveiled. The Wimbledon Borough News of 18th June reported a ceremony honouring a Merton Park resident.

“Lieut. E. Gerald Birtles of the East Surrey Regiment, son of Mr Edgar Birtles of Kia Ora, Church Lane, Merton Park attended the investiture held at Buckingham Palace on Friday, when he had the honour of receiving the Military Cross from HM The King.”

He was given the award for events during service in France in August 1918. The London Gazette reported in October 1918 that the award was for “conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. This officer was in command of raiding parties on two different occasions, and it was owing to his leadership that both raids were successful. In withdrawing his parties he saved many casualties by the way he superintended the retirement himself, taking good advantage of the ground to shelter his men from the enemy barrage fire.”



The Military Cross is awarded for gallantry during active operations against the enemy. It is described as a straight armed silver cross with the Royal cypher in the centre. It had first been awarded in 1915 and recipients (officers and warrant officers) can put the letters MC after their name. The ribbon has three stripes of white, purple and white.

Gerald Birtles was born in 1897 in Gospel Oak, London and died, we think, in 1970 in the Godalming area. If anyone locally remembers this brave man, perhaps they have a photo?

Chris Abbott

Letter from the Past

Following the article ‘Picture Postcard from the Past’ by Nicholas Burton July 2015, five years on I have finally found a letter that I discovered when I took up floorboards in our hall at 117 Merton Hall Road, some thirty-five years ago.

The letter, addressed to Mr Wale, Draper and Outfitter at 37 Cromwell Road, Wimbledon had been readdressed 117 Merton Hall Road and was franked at 9.15pm on 29th March 1936. That means it lay under the floorboards for around forty years. It must have been posted through the letterbox and fallen straight into a gap between the boards.

The letter is from Mrs Jefferson, 3 Acacia Rd, Mitcham and reads:

Mr Wale,

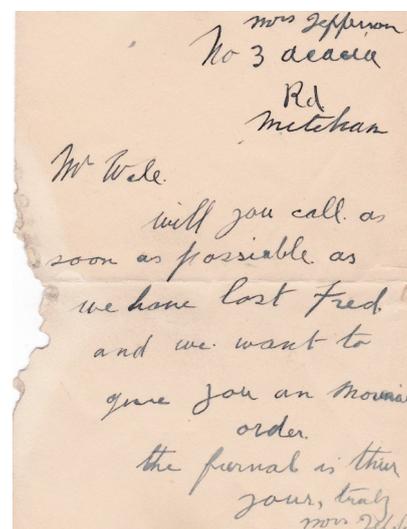
Will you call as soon as possible as we have lost Fred and we want to give you an mourning order, the funeral is thurs.

Yours truly

Mrs Jefferson

Sadly, Mrs Jefferson probably never heard from Mr Wale...

Kevin Williams



The John Innes Society Contacts

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All on hold - normal service will be resumed as soon as feasible

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 soon... we hope

HERITAGE DISCOVERY DAY

at Morden Library, Merton Civic Centre, SM4 5DX.

OPEN GARDENS

See page 1

MUSIC in the PARK

Next year with the Putney & Wimbledon Brass Band

AUTUMN PLANT AND PRODUCE SALE

Saturday 3rd October between 10.30am and 12.30pm

POSTPONED ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 21st October, 8pm at Merton Park Primary
School, Church Lane, SW19 3HQ.

AUTUMN QUIZ NIGHT

Saturday 21st November, 7:30pm at St Mary's Church Hall

HAVE YOUR SAY!

Please send your submissions for the next issue of *The JIS Newsletter* to mail@johninnessociety.org.uk by **Wednesday, 8th July**. It will be distributed on **Saturday, 24th July**.