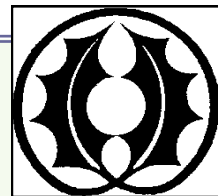


The John Innes Society Newsletter

Issue No 302

March 2024



FOR CONSERVATION IN THE JOHN INNES ESTATE AT MERTON

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johninnessociety.org.uk

Although Merton hasn't made London Borough of Culture this time round, here are a couple of heritage locations in the borough which are maybe not so well known – but certainly should be.

The All England Lawn Tennis Club houses the **Kenneth Ritchie Wimbledon Library**, named after Lord Ritchie of Dundee, a long-standing club committee member. It is a wonderful repository not just of thousands of books, but also journals (beautifully bound), news-paper articles and programmes. It was founded in 1976 and



Photo : AELTC / Florian Eisele

needless to say is one of the most important collections relating to tennis in the world. It is open all year round, but by appointment only. Please send an email to research@aeltc.com to arrange this.

The library is adjacent to the main museum so a visit could take in both but there is a charge for museum entry and for a tour of the grounds which also must be booked in advance. Conveniently, the Wingfield café near Gate 4 is also open all year round where strawberries continue to feature in the jam for their scones and sponge cakes. Needless to say a retail opportunity also beckons as the shop is also open all the time.

There is an online database for both the library and the museum which can be found at:

www.wimbledon.com/en_GB/wrapper/museum.html

LOCAL HERITAGE

Wimbledon Windmill was built in the early 19th century and remained working until 1864. It became a residence for local people until 1975 and then, as part of many restorations, the **Wimbledon Windmill Museum** has been curated to provide information about the many types of mills, complete with working models and enlarges on the importance of wind power right up to today. The first floor has examples of the actual milling processes, where hands-on activities are encouraged. Showcasing the local community and history is a reconstruction of a small room from when it was converted to living accommodation and how they lived in the 1870s. There is also a display of Scouting memorabilia as Lord Baden-Powell wrote the famous "Scouting for Boys" in the Mill House.

The website is extremely useful and contains a virtual tour, helpful if you don't think your legs will get you up to the first floor! Situated on



Display models of windmills on view at the Museum

Wimbledon Common with an excellent tea room nearby, it is open from the end of March until October at weekends and Bank Holidays. See www.wimbledonwindmill.org.uk for full details.

Alison Cousins

The John Innes Society Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 16th April 2024 at 8pm at Merton Park Primary School, SW19 3HQ

All members of the Society are invited to attend.

Nominations are invited to join the Committee. There are several vacancies to bring it up to full strength. Please contact Tim Fripp (Hon. Secretary) for details.

The Notice, Agenda, Annual Report and Accounts are distributed with this Newsletter. 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 meeting there will be a talk by Tudor Jones entitled “Who lived here? - The family history of the first residents of a house in our garden suburb” followed by an opportunity to socialise with complimentary refreshments.

WHO LIVED HERE?

Ever wondered who lived in your house before you? At our AGM on 16th April, former Committee member and local historian **Tudor Jones** will share with us the results of his research about the people who lived in his home in Merton Park.

How does one go about finding more about the history of your house? Census records and trade directories are good, but it helps to have names to get started. In Merton Park, most properties were subject to covenants when they were first sold so early title deeds are a rich source of information. You may have copies, in which case see who was named as the Purchaser when the deed of covenant was made.

If you don't have copies of your deeds, you can get copies from the Land Registry for very

reasonable fees. Information about how to apply can be found on the Land Registry's website www.gov.uk/get-information-about-property-and-land/copies-of-deeds

When you have the title entries, look in Section C Charges Register - which lists mortgages as well as details of deeds containing covenants and restrictions.

Beware of the numerous commercial sites on Google offering copies of deeds – they cost two or three times as much as the gov.uk official site.

Tudor's talk will be fascinating, and we hope it will encourage you to find out more about your own home. Please come on the 16th April and bring your neighbours and friends. They do not have to be Society members, but remember only paid-up members can vote in the formal part of the AGM.

Desé Child

UPDATE ON DORSET HALL

As many of our readers will know, Dorset Hall on Kingston Road was the home of suffragette Rose Lamartine Yates from 1906 to 1935, when it was sold to Merton and Morden UDC. It has been in Local Authority, and more recently Clarion Housing Association ownership, ever since. Although a Grade II Listed Building, over the past few years Dorset Hall has fallen into neglect and the social housing tenants had to be decanted when it became uninhabitable. The roof has been repaired but damage to the interior of the building is such that major works will be needed to make it usable again. It was marketed for sale at the end of 2023.

The purchasers, Newridge Group Ltd. have submitted a planning application to build a block of five small flats on a space to the East side of Dorset Hall, part of which is currently occupied by garages. You can see the application

John Strover, the Society's first treasurer, sadly died in hospital on March 2nd. He had been returning home to Mitcham on the bus when he suffered an aneurism from which he never regained consciousness.

Despite having moved to Mitcham some time ago, where he was chair of the historic cricket club and a leading light in the Community & Heritage group he retained vivid memories of life in Merton Park and in particular of fellow John Innes Society founders which he would happily relate at social functions when so persuaded.

A celebration of his life will be held in June.

Alison Cousins

(23/P3608) on Merton's Planning Explorer.

The design of the new block is very basic. The Society has sent in representations to suggest how it could be improved to make it more appropriate for the setting of a Listed Building and in a Conservation Area, and raised questions about the lack of detail in the application. At the time of writing, the application is still undecided.

The purchasers also made a Lawful Development Certificate Application (23/P3356) for the ten flats into which Dorset Hall had been divided while used for Social Housing. This application was refused by the Council on the grounds that the flats had not been occupied for a continuous period of 4 years immediately before the date of the application. Both the Purchaser's application form and the Planning Officer's report referred to Dorset Hall as a 4 bedroomed house, even though it has not been that since 1935.

Official records show the following timeline:

- 1935 - sold by Mrs Lamartine Yates (by then a widow) to Merton and Morden UDC and used as offices for the Town Clerk.
- 1939 - Air Raid Warden Centre,
- Late 1945 - works instructed to convert it into flats for post war homeless.
- 1947 - first tenants moved into the flats.

We will monitor the situation as it progresses. Dorset Hall should be renovated and brought back into use as soon as possible. If there is room on the site for some new units to be built in an acceptable way to finance simultaneous repair work, then that should be welcomed.

Desé Child.



How we lived 100 years ago - Local news and Goings-on

The biggest local news item in the early part of 1924 was the impending arrival of the Northern line to Morden and the strength of feeling it invoked. In a slight parallel with today, around a century later, with the changes that the much discussed Morden regeneration programme is expected to bring, there were fears about the rapidity and scale of change to come: "one thing seems certain," it was reported, "that is Morden as we know it will have altogether passed away". Morden was at the time described as "a peaceful and refreshing oasis in the suburban desert", as it was "a village in the heart of the country". Commentators wrote about the inevitability of change, and that in many ways Morden was fortunate to have retained its village characteristics for so long. Not all opinion of course was fearful and sceptical about the underground's arrival and its resulting building boom. One article concludes emphasising the need to develop sympathetically and attractively in the hope that "Morden may still be almost as beautiful a suburb as it has been a village". I will let our readership judge to what extent that wish has been realised.

The other big local story in the first quarter of 1924 was the damning report conducted by the NSPCC on the overcrowding in Wimbledon. The Wimbledon Borough News reported that "our eyes should be opened to what is going on in our midst", "a scandal disgracing our town" and called on the Borough Council to take action. NSPCC's report detailed many situations of children living in extremely overcrowded housing including:

- A 1 bed flat in which 2 parents, 2 other adults and 7 children lived.
- A single room housing 2 parents and

4 children, eldest 4 years old, youngest a new born.

- A 1 bed in which lived 2 families, totalling four adults and 10 children.

As some residents today side-step past the badly 'parked' Lime and Forest e-bikes on our Merton Park pavements, I read several articles containing bike crime. As well as the usual mentions of stolen cycles, there was a report of a bike shop in Colliers Wood being charged with selling stolen bikes, and two school boys being very harshly fined for pushing their bicycles along a pavement (making it more difficult for pedestrians apparently)!

The local press picked up on a national debate, a question started in Leeds: "Have We Too Much Football?". It made me laugh, as football was such a different proposition back then before the advent of the television, the World Cup, or European competitions. But the crux of the discussion was about shortening the season to Sept - April (rather than Aug - May) for the benefit of cricket.

Scanning through the classifieds I saw that Wimbledon Motor Works Ltd were offering a brand new Rover car (with electric lights) for sale at £145, which is only £1 more than I paid to have my air conditioning gas topped up last summer! Another advertised Miss Grace Woollcott's Monthly Ballroom Dancing classes upstairs above the Elite Picture House on Merton Road. This, and many other ads, made me realise two things: that back in 1924 (i) Merton Road must have had a real High Street feel, full of shops; and (ii) how numerous the cinemas were in Wimbledon.

Gafyn Macmillan

How we lived 100 years ago - The development of Merton Park

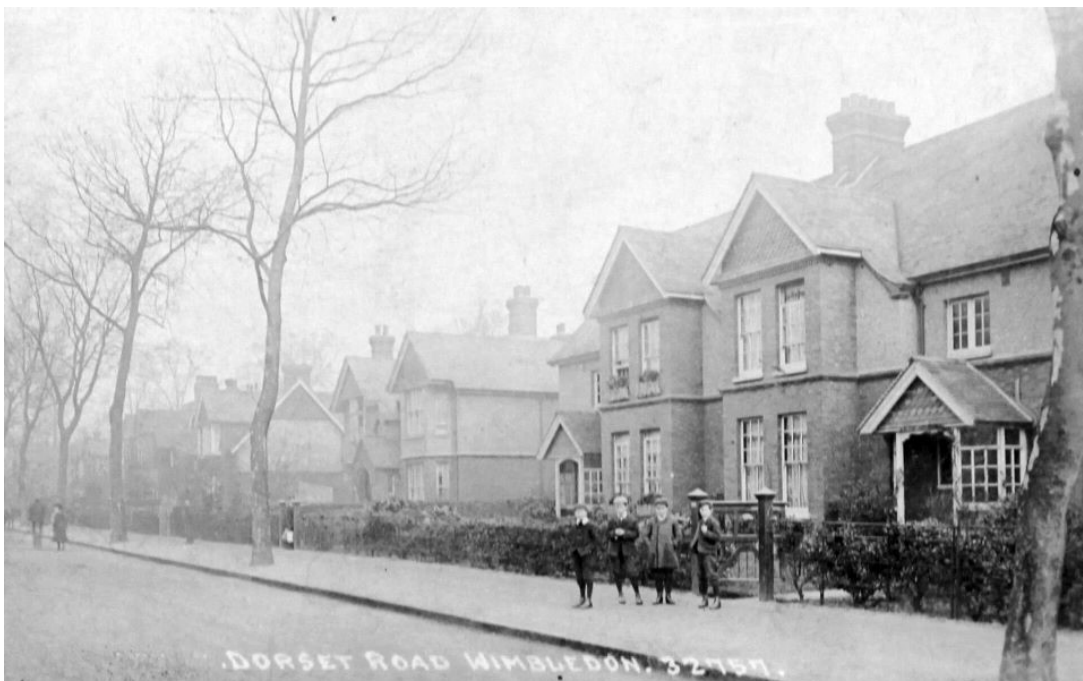
By 1924, most of the plots within what later became the John Innes and Wilton Crescent conservation areas had been built on, but no houses existed outside them in Merton Park (apart from what is now 33 Mostyn Road). However, Brocklesby had recently drawn plans on behalf of a developer (i.e. non Arts & Crafts designs) for 12 houses at the northern end of Poplar Road.

The most significant house built on the eve of 1924 was Flint Barn, which is the only statutory listed current residential home within Merton Park. A hundred years ago witnessed the construction of other significant local houses of great character including numbers 38 and 40 Sheridan Road. Like Flint Barn, these were faced in knapped Flint. The flint for these houses, and others, was reclaimed from a large barn at Bakers End Farm, which was demolished to facilitate the continued housing development in the wider area. Like the timber beams Brocklesby salvaged from the original Church House, he was keen in reusing old characterful materials in his Arts and

Crafts designs. Brocklesby's flint houses were influenced by the north Norfolk vernacular, in which he spent much of his summers, as were his Dutch gable designs. Norfolk having long been visited by ships from Holland sailing across the North Sea, and vice versa.

Other houses erected in our locality in 1924, were the large semi-detached houses built with London brick on Church Path: Stoneleigh and Mostyn Cottage. Two detached houses on Dorset Road, the double fronted number 4 with it's array of stained glass windows, and number 28 in a typical '20s suburban style situated at the south eastern end of the John Innes conservation area. Also two identical detached residences were constructed, with mock Tudor elements, on Mostyn Road, numbers 58 and 56. Outside the conservation areas, numbers 69, 71 and 73 Mostyn Road were built, as well as those mentioned in Poplar Road - the latter marking the beginning of the development south towards the anticipated tube extension to 'north Morden'.

Gafyn Macmillan



A section of Dorset Road. Photo reproduced by permission of London Borough of Merton.

The John Innes Society Open Gardens Day on Sunday 9th June 2024

Visit stunning gardens in Merton Park and the Wiltons, on **Sunday 9th June, from 1.30pm to 5.30pm.**

So far we have twelve enthusiastic gardeners who will open their gardens for you to enjoy. Many of the gardens this year are new and did not open in the Society's past Open Garden events.

Photo credit Alison Cowie.



To give you a flavour of the gardens that will open this year, we have:

- a tranquil Mediterranean garden with a white wall backdrop and water feature;
- a challenging north facing garden that has been transformed into a beautiful green garden with lifted canopies providing a peaceful space;
- a newly renovated garden where entertaining friends and family is the centre piece under a vine draped pergola;
- a cleverly designed courtyard garden

with a summerhouse from which to enjoy the serene planting;

- a professional designer's garden;
- a garden for children with a mini train track.

The John Innes Society's Open Garden Day is open to everyone. Come along and bring your families, friends and neighbours for a great day out. Coffee, tea and cakes will be provided in the Coach House, Melrose Road.

Tickets for the Open Gardens day will go on sale shortly. For further information and to apply for tickets, please email:

jisocgarden@gmail.com

Nasreen Rahman

FAKE PARKING TICKET SCAM

Scammers are finding new ways to deceive people. One recent example is for fraudsters to stick phoney QR codes on parking meters and parking signs, redirecting people to fake payment apps. Another example includes fake parking offence tickets (with QR codes), placed on your car's windscreen to look like the genuine black and yellow ones.

Please do watch out at all times.

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HAVE YOUR SAY!

Please send your submissions for the next issue of the Newsletter to mail@johninnessociety.org.uk by Wednesday 29 May.

It will be distributed on Saturday 15 June.

MUSIC IN THE PARK 2024

The John Innes Park will be the location once more for our popular Sunday afternoon concert around the bandstand. This year it will be on **June 30th**.

The concert starts at 3pm and ticket prices are being held yet again at £10 per adult. Up to 3 children may come along free provided they are with an adult ticket holder. The

proceeds of this event go towards the fantastic work done by the Friends' Group in the park. The event is being jointly organised by the John Innes Society and the Friends. If you feel you could help on the day, please contact Jo Pfeifer who heads this group on **07531 524538**.



Merton Concert Band at Westminster Abbey Gardens, 2023 Photo credit Janet Smither

This year **The Merton Concert Band** will be performing – a group many of you may already know as they have been going for some time. So do come and give them your support – bring your own picnic and chairs or rugs (unfortunately, we can only provide seating for the band). The bandstand area has little shade or shelter so please be prepared to bring appropriate protection. Well-behaved dogs on leads are welcome but please

respect the wishes of other members of the audience.

Tickets will be available from the end of May from AlisonCousins@gmail.com or see the last page for alternative contact details.

Alison Cousins

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR SPRING PLANT SALE ON SATURDAY, 11 MAY

Can you dig up surplus plants, divide perennials or take cuttings from your garden? Purchasers welcome plants from Merton Park gardens which prove they grow well in our area. Sowing a few extra seeds or potting on extra plug plants is a great way to contribute as buyers usually only want a couple of plants rather than a whole seed packet full. Vegetable and herb plants are in demand as well as annuals, perennials and shrubs. Please ensure pots are clearly labelled so we can identify them. Donations can be delivered in the week before the sale to 5A Sheridan Road, SW19 3HW.

We also welcome donations of cakes for the cake stall, help setting up on Friday, 10 May at 2pm at 5A Sheridan Road, SW19 3HW and, of course, on the day itself to sell produce.

You will be able to buy bedding plants and some perennials bought in at wholesale prices. Please put the date in your schedule and join us between 10am to 12 Noon and pass on the date to friends and neighbours.

If you can help towards the success of the sale in any way, contact me on ingrid@holtz.co.uk

Ingrid Holtz

SAVE THE DATE!

AGM: Tuesday 16th April at 8pm at
Merton Park Primary School Hall, Church Lane, SW19 3HQ

SPRING PLANT SALE: Saturday 11th May between 10am-12 Noon
in the garden of 5A Sheridan Road, SW19 3HW

THE JOHN INNES SOCIETY OPEN GARDENS DAY: Sunday 9th June 2024

MUSIC IN THE PARK: With the Merton Concert Band on Sunday 30th June 2024

At the Coach House

Bridge Club: Mondays at 7.30pm

Bridge Classes: Thursdays at 7.30pm

Coffee & Social Mornings: First Friday of the month. 11am - 1pm

Friends of the John Innes Park Gardening Group: Second Friday of the month at
9am by the mulberry tree

The John Innes Society Contacts

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Coffee mornings	Thelma Amer 020 8540 2536	Wine tasting 110 Aylward Road SW20 9AQ	Godfrey Spence 020 8544 1345
Bridge group 45A Dorset Road SW19 3EZ	Michael Forbes 020 8542 8314	* These members are also trustees.	