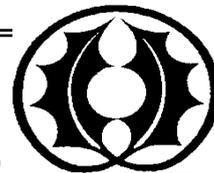




# *The John Innes Society Newsletter*

*Issue No 279*

*January 2020*



## **FOR CONSERVATION IN THE JOHN INNES ESTATE AT MERTON**

Registered charity 803759

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

### **Merton Park and the Boundary Commission**

The Society's status as a Charity prohibits involvement with potentially political issues, but the membership should know about The National Government Boundary Commission's proposed new Ward boundaries which would considerably downsize Merton Park.

The map of the possible new Merton Park Ward boundaries show that if this suggestion goes ahead, one side of Watery Lane (even numbers) and everything to the West of that including the Nelson Health Centre, Manor Road, Manor Gardens, Bakers End, Aylward Road, Cannon Hill Lane, Cleveland Avenue, Liberty House and all of Wimbledon Chase, will no longer be in Merton Park. Everywhere North of Kingston Road including the North side of Kingston Road and Warwick Court, Henfield Road, and as far as Wimbledon Chase station, will also no longer be in Merton Park. All these areas will be added to expanded Cannon Hill or Trinity (Wimbledon) Wards. The Leather Bottle pub and the historic site of Merton Park Film Studios will be in Trinity. Dundonald Ward will cease to exist.

At the moment the Ward Boundary just about coincides with the Parish of 900-year-old St. Mary's Church Merton, and also with the John Innes Estate at Merton Park, which is the Society's Area of Benefit. The Boundary Commission says it wants Wards to reflect local communities but seems to be unaware of what a thriving and close knit community we have in Merton

Park and how pleased we all are to live here, in all parts of it, and enjoy its village atmosphere. That is such a rare bonus in London. No wonder Merton Park has been ranked as the most successful Ward in Merton Borough for "Social Capital" which essentially contributes to our unique identity. Over the years the Society has been at the heart of activities to foster this and ensure its continuity.

To keep Merton Park intact, it needs more residents because the changes arise from the decision to reduce the total number of Councillors in the borough from 60 to 57 and to even out the number of residents per Councillor. The proposal would fragment Conservation Areas between Wards and maybe this is an opportunity to unite the whole of the John Innes Estate at Merton Park and local Conservation Areas into one Ward by extending North of the Kingston Road into the Wiltons, Merton Hall Road and the Chase Conservation Areas.

**You can find out more about these proposals at**

[www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/greater-london/greater-london/merton](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/greater-london/greater-london/merton)

**Representations must be made before 2nd March to:**

**The Review Officer (Merton),  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
1st Floor, Windsor House, 50 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0TL**

**Or by e-mail to The Review Officer (Merton) at  
[reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)**



**FOR ALL THE LATEST  
NEWS AND EVENTS, VISIT  
OUR WEBSITE AT**

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



## 2020 SUBSCRIPTIONS

We kindly remind you that membership subscriptions are due for renewal on 1 January 2020 unless you have previously bought a three-year subscription which includes 2020. Membership forms were in the November newsletter.

You can pay by cash or cheque - payable to The John Innes Society— and send it with the completed form to: Ann Redfearn, Membership Secretary, The John Innes Society, 21 Poplar Road, SW19 3JR.

Alternatively, complete the membership form, scan and email to [memsec@johninnessociety.org.uk](mailto:memsec@johninnessociety.org.uk), or post it to the Membership Secretary and make a transfer to Sort Code 20-96-89, Account Number 43851281. Please use the first part of your address for the reference number (e.g. 21 Poplar).

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

You can use this “QR code” which will take you directly to our subscriptions page.



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	Previous price / new price for a year	Previous price / new price for 3 years
Single pensioner	£5 / £6	£15 / £15
All adults at one address	£12 / £15	£36 / £40

## THE TREASURES OF WIMBLEDON THEATRE IN HIDING

The “Gaiety Girl” article in the November Newsletter stirred up happy memories for me.

I was a Merton Social worker for the Elderly in the mid 1980’s and through my work I met Miss Mulholland. Her father owned Wimbledon Theatre and on his death, it was bought by a theatre company who renamed it, after much discussion, “The New Wimbledon Theatre”.

Miss Mulholland recalled her childhood with her father and knew all the old stars of the Music Halls and the leading stars of pantomimes. She was completely bedridden but her mind was sharp and she enjoyed entertaining her helpers and visitors with many stories about the Theatre.

One day Miss Mulholland asked if I could find her notepaper as she wanted to write some letters.

There was one large locked room in her home which was full of stored furniture with everything covered in dust sheets. With William, a helper from Age Concern, we made our way into this

storeroom to look for her stationery. We noticed a very large mound covered in sheets and I remarked “that looks like a large chandelier for a very big ceiling”. William pulled off the cloth and revealed the glass dome that used to sit on top of Wimbledon Theatre. When we asked Miss Mulholland about this she said it had been taken down at the beginning of the War as it was regarded as a target for the German bombers and would guide them to Wimbledon station which was being used to transport troops and arms.

I wonder what else was lying under those dust sheets? Maybe Laetitia, the Roman Goddess of Gaiety, that Ingrid recognized? Like many people I always thought it was an angel on the top. Now I shall look at it with happy memories of a lovely lady who was such a pleasure to have helped and who had obviously known so many wonderful days in the past. Thank You John Innes Society Newsletter for helping me recall these happy memories.

**Doris Dean – a very long retired Social Worker.**

## Arts & Crafts and Moving Pictures

We have been treated to two excellent talks in the Coach House in the last few weeks.

Firstly, on November 9th **Margaret Smart**, a member of the Wimbledon and Victorian Societies, gave us a gloriously illustrated presentation on the **Arts and Crafts movement** pertaining to the architecture influenced by William Morris and as seen in Merton Park. The examples she showed us were displayed on a huge 55" TV monitor elevated by several volumes of Encyclopaedia Britannica. ( Who says the book is dead? 15 Kindles couldn't match it!). As if we didn't already know it, Merton Park has some splendid examples of this style.

She defined some of the elements of the movement for us and in particular, the ability of William Morris, whose workshops abutted the River Wandle at Collier's Wood, to interpret the thinking of Pugin and Ruskin amongst others, into practical results. One feature in particular she mentioned was the Diocletian or Palladian style of window – semi-circular and vertically divided into three



By kind permission of the owners

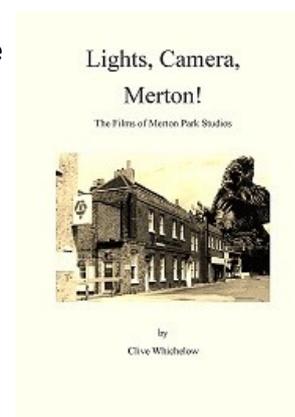
sections, as evident on Steep Roof on the corner of Watery Lane. Many of us were unfamiliar with this nomenclature and there was much note-taking!

The talk generated much interest and sadly time did not permit everyone present to consult the several screens of examples which Margaret had brought along. Happily, she has promised to bring them to a suitable future event. Our thanks went to Margaret and her husband Chris, who set up the slideshow so effortlessly. A dedicated copy of "Elbow Room" and some flowers were presented to Margaret.

Good news is that further copies of "Elbow Room" on the work of Sidney Brocklesby are now available through the Society, thanks to the generosity of Christopher Spencer, the author of the book.

The second talk on December 11th given by **Clive Whichelow**, a well-known local historian and author, was in support of his book **"Lights, Camera, Merton! : The Films of Merton Park Studios"**.

Clive exploded some of the myths that had grown up around the history of the studios and described the various genres of the medium produced there, mainly crime and horror, a few children's films and documentaries. We learnt how some of the future big names in British cinema had either started their careers there, or appeared as child actors e.g. Petula Clark and Michael Crawford.



J. A. Rank's career actually kicked off there and Edgar Lustgarten's Scotland Yard series was filmed there in the 1950's. In one episode the police file of double murderer Neville Heath appeared in a shot but Heath had been hanged in 1946 and so this ex-Rutlish pupil didn't achieve screen fame in person.

Clive was particularly amused at some of the local venues which had masqueraded as more exotic locations. A film called Kanga had a giant ape rampaging through Croydon - the cover of his book depicts Kanga beside the studios. One surprising fact was that a retake required for the nude fireside wrestling scene in Sons and Lovers was actually filmed at Merton.

Although the studios were effectively active only between the 1930's and the 1970's, output was prolific and Clive's book catalogues these films with considerable detail and indicates whether copies are still available, in what format, and whether there are any Merton Park locations to identify. A labour of love to have researched, sourced, and watched so many films!

At both of the talks, Desé Child kindly organised the refreshments, but any future offers to do so would be gratefully received.

**Alison Cousins**

# R.I.P. JOHN VEALE – OUR ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION

(7 OCTOBER 1941–2 DECEMBER 2019)

John was the Society's committee member with responsibility for Sustainability and the Environment and had determinedly attended our monthly meetings whenever his health permitted until just a few weeks before his death.

John was by profession an engineer having worked with George Wimpey and Co. and was responsible for many major projects both at home and abroad. One such in the 1980's was being part of the Severn Tidal Power Barrage feasibility study, a project initially rejected on the basis of costs, but revisited recently in view of global concerns of energy sustainability, which was close to John's heart.

John moved to Merton Park in 1968 and joined the John Innes Society in its early years. He supported the opposition to the proposed Merton Relief Road ( the extension of the Merantun Way to the Kingston Road ) between 1987 and 1989 and identified the probable resultant traffic issues.

John had a keen eye for detail, as befits an engineer, and the committee has benefitted greatly from his keen proof-reading abilities and preference for plain English, demonstrated in his revision of our Constitution in 2013. As a member of the Committee, he took on responsibility for maintenance of the Coach House including installing thick insulation in part of the loft. He was also the organizer of our annual Music in the Park for many years, show-casing the talents of local young musicians whenever possible.

Last year he was instrumental in trying to persuade IDVERDE who are administrating Merton's Greenspaces contract, to follow the aims of Pesticide Action Network UK. From 2012 he became our representative on what is now the Merton Heritage Forum and Councillor Nick Draper and Sarah Gould of that body have both paid tribute to John's contribution.

As a musician, John's abilities were many as a chorister, cellist and pianist and as a founder member of the Merton Music Foundation. He was also a supporter of various orchestras in the UK and abroad, mainly those encouraging young people to partake in music education. For one of us, an abiding memory is of John singing lustily, supported by his crutches, having vehemently refused a chair, as part of the huge "flashmob" choir assembled for the unrehearsed production of T. Tallis' "Spem in Alium" in the Chapter House of Merton Priory in November 2018. His wonderful voice was clearly discernible amongst the other 39 members.



*Keeping it in the family - dad John Veale encourages nine year old Sam (right) and eight year old Meg.*

We extend our deep sympathies to his wife Kate and his four now adult children Guy, Sam, Meg and Jan.

In the words of the prayer at his funeral just before Christmas -

*"We give thanks for his abiding love for his family; for his skills as an engineer; his gifts as a musician and his passion for music; for his love of the natural world and for his deep concern for the welfare of the environment; for his humanity and humour ; for his patience, resilience and courage in the face of suffering ; for his delight in life's richness and diversity, and for all*

*that he taught us and showed us through his knowledge and by his example".*

**Although John Veale's shoes will be very difficult to fill, we shall now be looking for someone to represent local Heritage and Environment issues on the committee. Could you help? Do you feel strongly about the nature and character of Merton Park and the importance of sustainability? If you are interested and would like further information please contact any of the committee members listed on the back page.**

**Alison Cousins and Desé Child.**

## SIXTEENTH ANNUAL GREEN FLAG AWARD FOR THE JOHN INNES PARK

Our congratulations go to the Friends of the John Innes Park, Merton Council Green Spaces Officers and Idverde, their contractors, on the 2019 Green Flag award for the John Innes Park. Green Flags are not easily achievable and are only awarded to parks that display a high level of maintenance and where local involvement keeps the Green Space in line with the needs of the local community. The John Innes Park has won this prestigious annual award every year since 2004.

The volunteer Friends of the John Innes Park meet in the Park at 9am on the second Friday of each month and work to ensure the gardens remain true insofar as possible to the major renovation project which took place in 2004. Over the past few years the Friends have concentrated on retrieving the rockery from being overgrown with weeds and re-planting some carefully chosen rockery plants with the help and advice of the 2004 renovation team. The resultant colour in the rockery this year has been very rewarding. The rose pergola received many hours of attention to show off the beauty and fragrance of the climbing roses and the lavender planted beneath, with the flower bed behind the pergola being sorted out and new plants added.

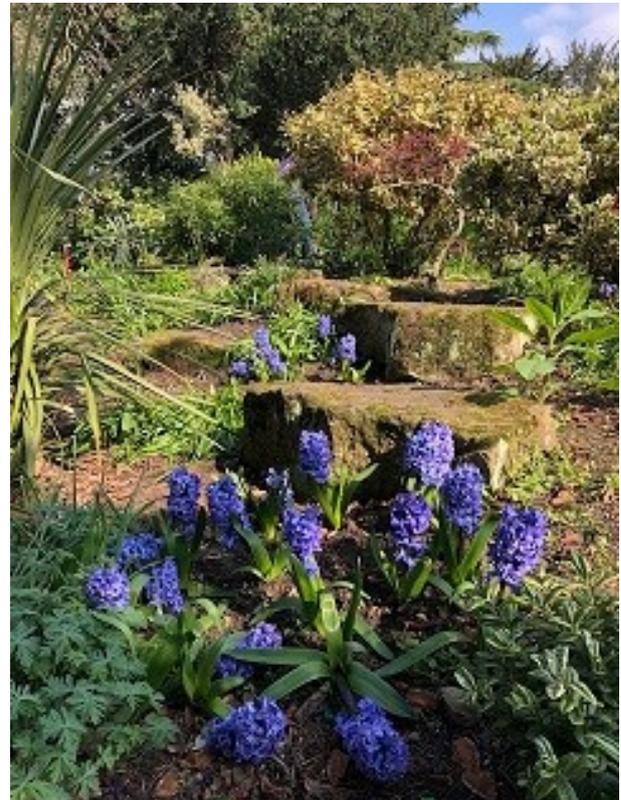
The group also endeavour to encourage the sustainability of the Park by providing a wildlife area and habitats such as a bug hotel and bird and bat boxes. Local birdlife enthusiasts monitor the nesting boxes and



have recorded sightings and the call of tawny owls, green woodpeckers and the greater spotted woodpeckers (who have had an excellent go at making their new nesting box much bigger). Both woodpeckers have raised young in the last few years. Birds also love the Church Glebe Fields, which as a bird flies, are directly next door to the Park. This year ten of the bird boxes had nests in them. They are mainly used by Great and Blue Tits as they have quite small entrance holes. The boxes are cleaned out at the end of each nesting season and it looks as if most chicks do fledge. New boxes are regularly placed

around the Park, the Glebe Fields and the Churchyard. There are a couple of bat boxes on trees and Pipistrelle bats can be seen on summer evenings swooping over the Churchyard and local gardens. It is not possible to check the boxes to see if they are inhabited but we hope they offer shelter.

Merton Park also has one of the largest number of Holly



Blue butterflies in the country. This butterfly needs both Holly and Ivy for their breeding, which Merton Park has in abundance.

As many residents know, The John Innes Park is at the hub of the local community, with popular activities including the Bowls Club, The Croquet Club and Tennis Courts. The Society hosts Music in the Park there each June, with a picnic concert around the Bandstand to raise funds for the Park. The Friends rely on volunteers and would welcome anyone who would like to help at their monthly gardening sessions. Contact details can be found on the back page of this Newsletter or "just turn up." Plans for 2020 include replanting of the gap in the yew hedge around the Bandstand Lawns as well as more planting and nurturing of the work that has already been done.

**Jo Pfeifer, Davinia Miln and Viv Tuley**

*The Society is proud to provide funds to sponsor all the aspects of this work and is very grateful to the volunteers and their enthusiastic Friends Leader, Jo Pfeifer, for their dedicated hard work to keep the Park and local wildlife in such good heart for everyone to enjoy. Thank You.*

## HOW WE LIVED 100 YEARS AGO

An advertisement in a January 1920 issue of the Wimbledon Borough News suggested that overcrowding on public transport is certainly not just a modern problem. In the advertisement, passengers were advised that “for Winter Sales” they should “travel between 10am and 4pm” when there will be “more room in the Motor-Buses” and “more room in the Trains.” Of course, commuters, then as now, do not usually have the luxury of deciding when to travel, and conditions on the trains into central London from Merton Park and district seemed to be getting much worse by 1920, to the extent that the 2nd January edition of the Wimbledon Borough News made this the focus of the week’s Editorial:

“We are not surprised that the Merton Council should have decided to support the protest against the overcrowding and discomfort in trains in the district. The conditions are a good deal more than a scandal, they are a danger to life and limb. The public are very long suffering but there are limits, and it seems to us that the limits should now be reached. Nothing will ever be done until people make themselves distinctly unpleasant. This seems to be a difficult task for Wimbledon and Merton residents, with their well-known docility and amiability, but unless they rouse themselves and make the effort they will probably have to put up with the very unpleasant conditions indefinitely.”

Interesting to note the assertion that local residents are well-known for their “docility and amiability;” I wonder if what remains of our local newspapers would make such a claim today?

A later Editorial, on 6th February, struck a more positive note when making the point that residents of Merton seem to have been even more amiable than those of Wimbledon, at least when it came to putting on a flower show:

“Hearty congratulations to the Merton Horticultural Society on the splendid success which has attended its efforts. It is no small feather in the cap of Merton that it should be able to run a horticultural society so successfully, while Wimbledon has had to do without for so long. The committee and officers deserve great credit for the excellent management, which has made the Society so important and successful a feature of the public life of Merton.”

The Society is also reported to have decided to hold their next show on July 24th 1920 in the John Innes Recreation Ground; perhaps an event to recreate one day?

**Chris Abbott**



A wonderful weekly market providing a great mix of local produce, crafts, hot food and community stalls.

Wimbledon Chase Primary School, Merton Hall Road, SW19 3PX

Every Sunday from 10am—3pm; pop down and see for yourself !

# JIS SPRING PLANT SALE

We look for contributions so please think about planting a few extra seeds or plug plants, propagating cuttings or dividing plants. We also need volunteers to grow on plug plants which we buy in bulk. Can you plant up and nurture a tray or two (usually 18 pots per tray)? They don't take up much room, only need looking after for 6 weeks or so and they are eagerly bought at the sale.

Please contact Ann Redfearn 020 8286 9983 21 Poplar Road SW19 3JR.

## CLIMATE CHANGE, FLOODING, HARD LANDSCAPING IN GARDENS AND HEDGES

After a very wet autumn, several gardens in the area have been under water and streets have suffered from huge puddles. The normal drainage system on its own cannot cope when the water table rises.

It may be difficult to find space for the billions of new trees needed to combat climate change, but we can do something to make our gardens, front and back, stay useful. The RHS says "Paving, including paving for off street parking, is a major factor in causing severe flooding . In 2007 alone, the associated damage was £3million in the UK. Laws are now in place that require most non-permeable, traditional paving to have planning permission, whether new or replacement".

As to front gardens, the RHS have published a very helpful guide on how to accommodate parking while still allowing it to prevent flooding, provide homes to 260 species of wildlife, absorb pollutants, keep us cool in summer, help insulate homes in winter, and make us "feel good" when we come home. Consider paved tracks with the rest of the area covered in gravel laid over a permeable membrane to keep weeds a bay with holes cut in the membrane for plants and shrubs.

See [www.rhs.org.uk/science/pdf/Gardening-matters-Front-Gardens-urban-greening](http://www.rhs.org.uk/science/pdf/Gardening-matters-Front-Gardens-urban-greening)



Please remember how much a thriving hedge can help to reduce pollution levels, noise reduction, flood mitigation and, last but not least, support wildlife. Holly, being evergreen, long lived and not too fussy about its location is a good choice. The berries feed the birds, it only needs cutting once a year and it will tolerate shade. Most of the Merton Park signature holly hedges are protected by planning controls and now is the time to give them a feed.

Helene Nelson-Jones

## The John Innes Society Contacts

E-mail: [mail@johninnessociety.org.uk](mailto:mail@johninnessociety.org.uk)

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<b>Friends of John Innes Park</b>	<b>Jo Pfeifer</b> 07531 524538
<b>Bridge group</b> 45A Dorset Road SW19 3EZ	<b>Michael Forbes</b> 020 8542 8314
<b>Coffee mornings</b>	<b>Thelma Amer</b> 020 8540 2536
<b>Wine tasting</b> 110 Aylward Road SW20 9AQ	<b>Godfrey Spence</b> 020 8544 1345
<b>Heritage Forum</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
* 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!

### **The Great Green Leap: Tree planting**

*Saturday 29 February, 10am-3pm at Morden Hall Park  
Free event, booking essential. Call 03442491895 .*

### **New Wimbledon Theatre Tours**

*Thursday 20th February and Thursday 26th March at  
10:30am. Booking essential; contact the theatre.*

### **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.*

### **MUSIC in the PARK**

*Sunday 21st June, 3pm—6pm at John Innes Park.*

### **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, 4th March**. It will be  
distributed on **Saturday, 21st March**.