



The John Innes Society Newsletter

Issue No 286

March 2021



FOR CONSERVATION IN THE JOHN INNES ESTATE AT MERTON

Registered charity 803759

johninnessociety.org.uk

THE JOHN INNES SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

Wednesday 28th April 2021

Starting at 8pm, the postponed 2020 AGM followed by the 2021 AGM will be held by Zoom and 'phone – please see Notices, Annual Reports and Accounts circulated with this Newsletter.

Please apply to mail@johninnessociety.org.uk or phone 020 8540 3087 for a link or phone number to attend the meetings. Only members whose subscriptions are paid up to date are entitled to vote.

Can you help the Spring Plant Sale?

The Spring Plant sale on **Saturday 8 May (10.00am to 12.30pm)** will be spread across locations in a similar way to last year's two successful events to ensure everyone's safety.

Now is the time to get on with growing so that we have plenty of plants to sell. Last year's Spring Plant sale was a terrific success and produce was entirely locally grown and donated. Can we repeat last year's triumph? Can you dig up and pot on surplus plants, divide perennials or take cuttings from your garden? Sowing extra seeds is a great way to contribute and vegetable and herb plants are

much in demand as well as flowering plants. Please ensure your donations are clearly labelled so they can be identified. We will let you know nearer the time where to take your donations.

We'd also appreciate donations of cakes. Whilst we won't be able to sell refreshments, visitors are always keen to visit the cake stall and buy our homemade bakes to take home.

We expect to be able visit the plant wholesaler and offer bought-in annuals and a few perennials for sale in addition to the donations.

WANTED!

- * **Offers of front gardens with space to host a couple of tables**
 - * **Donations of plants**
 - * **Donations of cakes**
- * **Offers to help set up on 8 May**
 - * **Help to sell on the day**
 - * **Tidying at the end of the sale**

Please let **Ann Redfearn** know how you can help
on **020 8286 9983** or at ann@arke.me.uk

GREENING FRONT GARDENS

Plant cover in front gardens across the nation has increased by almost forty square miles in just five years according to the Royal Horticultural Society*. The transformation comes after a campaign launched by the RHS five years ago against paved-over gardens.

This increase in front garden plant cover is expected to bring benefits to people's health and wellbeing, to the environment and to wildlife. However, with more than a third of front gardens containing less than a quarter plant cover, and 2.5 million with no plants at all, there is still critical work to do.

It would be interesting to know whether such figures are replicated in our own area. In the March 2016 Newsletter, Pauline Bottrill, mentioning the RHS campaign, encouraged us to conserve our hedges and front garden planting rather than using the space only for car parking. In responding to planning applications, we comment regularly on the need to retain hedges and trees in front gardens and streets and not pave entire front gardens. Walking in the neighbourhood during lockdowns, we are increasingly aware of what is happening to front gardens – both good and bad.

The RHS researchers found that a greener front garden can make us feel happier, more relaxed and closer to nature. This supplements other studies which show plants help mitigate flooding, encourage biodiversity, reduce air pollution as well as improve our health



Waiting for the cars to come home.

and wellbeing. Professor Alistair Griffiths (RHS) says: 'With so many people gardening after discovering a passion to grow during lockdown the RHS hopes this research inspires more people to plant, from containers and window boxes to hedges and trees, in their street-side spaces.'

What can we do to conserve the character and beauty of our neighbourhood and bring benefits to people's health and wellbeing, to the environment and to wildlife?

Parking in front gardens: in small gardens, pave just the tracks where the car wheels go and fill the rest with low growing plants and gravel. Even small areas left un-paved can be valuable planting sites. While potted plants might seem an easy way to add greenery, plants in the ground are easier to look after, as you won't need to water or feed them as often. Planted areas can also act as soakaways, allowing excess water to drain away.

Sustainable Urban Drainage regulations prohibit run-off rainwater from flowing into the street so front garden designs need to allow for on-site drainage. There are many pervious paving solutions such as permeable paving, resin bonded gravel and concrete lawn bricks.

(continued on page 3)

GREENING (CONTINUED)

Hedges trap pollution, are good for wildlife and, depending on their height, can offer privacy. Remember to ensure hedges don't encroach on pavements – they need trimming once or twice a year, taking into account the potential for nesting birds.



A better example of a front garden, which although not ideal, shows how without much effort or expenditure, the situation can be improved.

There are lots of small trees ideal for front gardens and many offer multi-season interest such as spring blossom and autumn colour. A small upright tree won't affect parking or paths.

Climbers, over boundaries or house walls, take up little room at ground level and may protect your house from temperature extremes.

Hide bins with screening perhaps with a living roof.

Ann Redfearn

Illustrated by **Helene Nelson-Jones**

* <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/articles/Green-front-gardens>

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* These members are also trustees.

PLANNING NEWS: CONSULTATIONS ON INFILL, MERTON CHARACTER STUDY, SCHOOL STREETS AND LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Mayor's new London Plan requires Merton to build over 9000 new homes in the Borough within ten years. Not having large sites available where 100's let alone 1000's of new homes could be constructed, Merton is classed as an *Infill Borough*, which means there is pressure to identify and build on smaller sites. The promoters of the London Plan had previously said they did not expect new homes to be built on back gardens, but this policy appears to have been abandoned and now Merton has published its *Small Sites Toolkit* which sets out policies and a design guide as to how small sites can be accessed and developed.

Merton has also published the *Merton Character Study*, in which the map on page 136, classifies Sandbourne Avenue, Daybrook Road, the Morden end of Dorset Road, the Morden end of Kenley Road, Windermere Avenue, half (Morden end) of Grasmere Avenue, Morden Road, Martin Way (Morden end) and all roads to the South and West of Morden Road and Martin Way, as within an Area of Opportunity.

An Area of Opportunity is defined as "having development capacity to accommodate new housing, commercial development and infrastructure (of all types) linked to existing or potential improvements in public transport connectivity and capacity. Taking maximum advantage of these sites being unlocked means delivering significant volumes of high quality, high density development including strategic housing growth."

The consultation period on both documents ran from 9th February to 23rd March. The Society has submitted representations which draw attention to the immense damage these policies would cause not only to the character but also to the ecological value of our Garden Suburb. Satellite images of Merton Park show its extensive tree canopy,

which has developed over nearly a hundred years. Building on gardens will inevitably cause the loss of a huge number of mature trees. There is an unreconcilable contradiction here between Merton's Local Plan strategic policies for a Green, Healthy and Sustainable Borough, and the policies now emerging to enable the density of development to be increased.

SCHOOL STREETS

Consultation on the school streets around Merton Park Primary School runs until **2nd April**. If you live in or near a school street is life better, or have there been unsurmountable problems during restricted hours for instance for deliveries, Carers' visits, or travel to hospital appointments?

You can Google Merton Consultations to find out how to send in your views.

MERTON PARK'S PROPOSED LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHEME

A formal decision is awaited, but due to the number of objections to the proposals which had the potential to transfer traffic onto other streets and/or required vehicles to add to the congestion on Kingston Road, it seems unlikely it will proceed.

You can sign up for email alerts from Merton on all their consultations which usually only run for 6 weeks and often fall awkwardly with the publication dates for our Newsletters. It is so important as many people as possible take part, as once a scheme or policy has been adopted, it is exceedingly difficult to change it. All too often, policies are proposed without adequate research into the unintended consequences and it's only when local people react that these come to light.

Desé Child

PLANNING NEWS (continued)

A WONDERFUL PICTORIAL EXPLANATION OF THE VALUE OF A MATURE TREE FROM KINGSTON'S TREE STRATEGY 2015-2021

A tree...

Visualise
a 100 year old beech, almost 20
metres high and with a treetop diameter of 12
metres. It's got 600,000 leaves which convert its base of
120 square metres into some 1,200 square metres of
leaf-surface. Due to the physical structure of the leaves themselves,
this amounts to a total surface area of 14,000 square metres for gaseous
exchange, which equals the area of two football pitches. On a sunny day, this
tree converts 9,400 litres, i.e. 18 kilogrammes, of carbon dioxide.
With a carbon dioxide concentration of 0.03% in the air, almost 36,000 cubic
metres of air have to flow through these leaves. The leaves also filter out
many airborne particles like bacteria, fungal spores, dust and other harmful
substances. At the same time the tree evaporates almost 400 litres of water
per day and in doing so it humidifies the air. Furthermore, through
photosynthesis, the tree produces 13 kilograms of oxygen, which
equals the needs of 10 people. Moreover, the tree produces 12
kilograms of sugar on a single day, from which it develops all
its organic substances. Some of these substances are
accumulated as starch, others are used to build up the
tree's new wood. If the tree is chopped down,
because it must give way for a new
road or someone
has complained
about the shade
from the tree
or just because
the space is
needed for a
new shed, one
would have to
plant some
2,000 new trees, each with a tree top
volume of one cubic metre in order to compensate fully for the
loss of the tree. The cost of this would amount to roughly £150,000.

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SAVING DORSET HALL BY ALISON COUSINS

Many of you will be aware of current initiatives to remedy the poor condition of Dorset Hall on Kingston Road. The building has been empty for several years and while security measures have mostly held off vandalism, they have failed to repel the ravages of weather. Until recently, attempts to obtain any action from the current owners, Clarion Housing, had achieved no results, but at last scaffolding has now been erected around the building. The instigators of the campaign are to be congratulated on this achievement.

Our interest in this property is due to its past connection with John Innes, who purchased the Hall around 1870 and who ironically also let the building stand empty off and on until he instructed H.G. Quartermain, his architect, to draw up some plans for alterations in 1883. It is also a rare example of Georgian architecture in the area, and of course was for some time the home of the suffragette Rose Lamartine Yates. It was awarded Grade 2 listing in 1954.

However, work on the house is only part of the story. There is also a request to Merton Council to clarify the situation regarding access to what is left of the rear garden after Rose sold the building to Merton and Morden District Council in 1935 with the proviso that the Council should maintain the grounds for some public access. By the end of WW2 this had already been conveniently “forgotten”.

The Society has published two of the most authoritative booklets relating to the Hall. That by the late John Wallace, *Dorset Hall in Merton*, contains a detailed historical profile up to the 1990s, while Judy Goodman’s *Dorset Hall 1906 – 1935 : A House, A Family, A Cause – Votes for Women* deals specifically with Rose’s occupancy. We would recommend reference to these primary sources for accurate information on events connected with the Hall. To order either of these please go to the website or directly to me (see Contacts on page 2).

Have you paid your subscriptions for 2021?

My thanks to all those members who have renewed their subscription for this year.

If you have yet to pay, this is a reminder that subscriptions were due on 1 January 2021. The rates are as follows:

	ONE YEAR	THREE YEARS
SINGLE PENSIONER	£ 6	£15
ALL ADULTS AT ONE ADDRESS	£15	£40

We accept a variety of payment methods; please see the January newsletter.

Ann Redfearn

DESIGNING MERTON PARK - THE ARCHITECTURAL PLANS OF H.G. QUARTERMAIN BY ALISON COUSINS

The Society has recently acquired the architectural drawings of Henry Goodall Quartermain, who was John Innes' architect between the late 1860's and 1904.

We are indebted to Bill Morgan, formerly of Finch's Estate Agents, where this collection had been housed over the years. Bill had expressed a wish that the plans should come to the Society and was preparing to upgrade the folios when he sadly died last year as the result of an accident. Our thanks go to Derek Cox for facilitating the delivery of these plans.

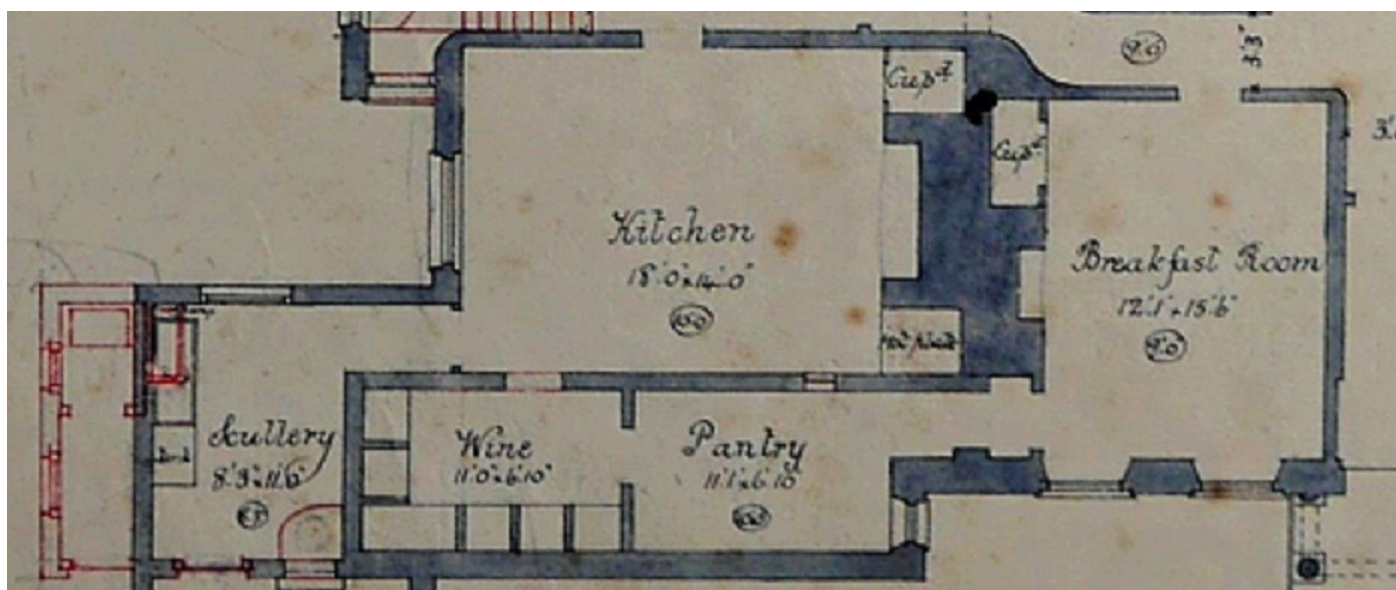
With ownership of such a unique resource comes a certain amount of responsibility, and suggestions were made that the architectural schools such as the Architectural Association, the Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL, or of course the RIBA, should be offered this resource. But there are frequent requests from residents, especially if undergoing restoration or newly moved into the area, to see these original plans. So we have decided to make these institutions aware of the

location of this collection, but they will remain with the Society in respect of Bill's wishes. They are in archive quality boxes and a listing will be available.

The majority are for domestic properties with a scale of 8' to 1" and show frontages and elevations but there are also larger dimension drawings for a proposed fountain next to Manor Club on Kingston Road, details of an elaborate chimney piece for the dining room in Manor Farm (which became John Innes' home and renamed Manor House), and plans of Dorset Hall dated 1883 with proposed alterations prepared for John Innes.

Most are in reasonably good condition but a few have attached tracings, which are quite fragile. To consult them, please contact me – details on page 2 – and if possible indicate which property(ies) you wish to see.

A biography of Quartermain is being prepared and although the author has recently moved away from the area it is hoped to have it published by the Autumn.



A section depicting the kitchen and associated areas from Quartermain's plans of Dorset Hall, 1884

HOW WE LIVED 100 YEARS AGO ...

The Merton Parish Magazine of a hundred years ago proudly displayed the chosen design for the St Mary's War Memorial. Parishioners were told of the design that "its simplicity and dignity have appealed to all, and won wide approbation... The sooner we can get it erected the better." Following publicity the month before in the Wimbledon Borough News, the final £200 was then being raised by a house to house collection during the revision of the Electoral Roll. Among the other activities for the St Mary's community this month were an organ recital ("with some solos appropriate to Lent") and a talk by Dr Lucas, "Bishop of Mackenzie River, in the frozen North" (of Canada). Fund-raising was on the agenda, as ever, to fund the new electric light and boiler in the church, and to pay for repairs to the organ, where "large and costly expenditure is required to remedy its many defects." The community were also raising funds for the proposed extension to the Nelson Hospital.

The sermons for Lent in 1921 had a novel twist, as all were related to what was described as Religious Teaching in Shakespeare: Macbeth (Heresy), King Lear (Ingratitude) and The Merchant of Venice (Revenge). The Vicar at this time was still the Rev. Jagger, and the standard services on Sundays were at 8am, 11am (Morning Prayer), 12 noon, 3.15pm (Children's Service) and 6.30pm, with the Sunday School also meeting three times every Sunday at 10am, 11am and 3pm.

The April 1921 Parish Magazine carries a summary of classes and activities in the Parish Hall. No Zumba or Keep Fit then, or indeed Parish Players, but Bible Class, Scouts and GFS (Girls Friendly Society) were meeting regularly. The Parish Nurse, Nurse Daniel, is also listed alongside the clergy and churchwardens.

As with Parish Matters today, there are also many advertisements from local businesses. The largest adverts were for Morden Hall Farm Dairies ("a very large herd of cows is kept, the pastures and grazing are of the best") and G. and M. White, 185 Kingston Road (opposite Rutlish Road) where they had a large stock of "Dainty Underwear, Chic Blouses and English Made Hosiery." Among the smaller display adverts at the back of the magazine were a range of suppliers to meet all needs, and all of them in Merton Park, Kingston Road or Merton High Street: no need to go as far as Wimbledon for anything then. Advertisers ranged from a choice of local family butchers to a bookseller, a boot and shoe store, a draper, a printer, a photographer, a baker, a tailor and hatter, builders and decorators and even a corn and flour merchant called W. T. Abbott at 103 Merton High St, selling groats, oatmeal and pea sticks – not to mention "coal and coke at wharf prices." Not a relative as far as I know!

Chris Abbott

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HAVE YOUR SAY!

Please send your submissions for the next issue of *The John Innes Society Newsletter* to mail@johninnessociety.org.uk by **Wednesday, 12th May**. It will be distributed on **Saturday 29th May**.

