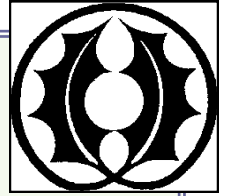




The John Innes Society Newsletter

Issue No 305

November 2024



FOR CONSERVATION IN THE JOHN INNES ESTATE AT MERTON

Registered charity 803759

johninnesociety.org.uk

ANOTHER GREEN FLAG AWARD FOR THE JOHN INNES PARK

Having successfully maintained our Green Flag Award for the John Innes Park this year, we recently received the Green Flag Report and Action Plan.

The inspection in early June found the Park was clean and well maintained, it felt safe and was being used by a variety of different community groups.

Active community groups work in the park, the Friends group, bird group, recent engagement with Rutlish Cadet Force, and the ongoing engagement with our local primary school. The park offers a range of activities for the local community: tennis, croquet and bowls and has access to disabled toilets and free parking on site.

The Park has clear, informative notice boards explaining the many original historic features.

The recently replanted front border was commended as sensitive and in keeping with other beds at the front of the park. The Park also has a good range of mature trees.

It was noticed that attention is paid to biodiversity with the woodland area under regular review, bird boxes and other habitats for wildlife.

The Pond was under renovation at the time of inspection, in accordance with a recent RSPB report.



It was suggested that Green Flag Heritage status could be applied for in future years, and there were further suggestions including the development of a Tree Trail walk, and also further work to complete the yew hedge renovation project around the bandstand with particular consideration for the widened gap where yew hedge has been removed. The historic wooden gate at entrance to the park requires sensitive renovation works.

Overall, the report is very complimentary about the wonderful work the Friends do to make the Park a welcoming and interesting place to visit. The contribution of the Society is also acknowledged in its support for the Friends, its provision of information boards and the annual Music in the Park Summer Concert held around the Bandstand.



Photo credits: Davinia Miln

Jo Pfeifer and Desé Child

TREES AND AN APPEAL

Many of you will have noticed that a lot of trees are being felled in the area particularly the cherries and the chestnuts. The cherry trees are coming to the end of their lifespan and have fungal brackets. The horse chestnuts have leaf blotch and also bleeding canker which prevents the tree from taking up water. The Council is felling the worst affected trees and are replacing them with different species, but good strong specimens. We have however requested that Mostyn Road is replanted with Indian chestnuts which are much less susceptible to disease. John Innes was fond of avenues of trees of the same variety but it can be a drawback if they all succumb to the same disease.

If we have a new tree planted in our road we should all make sure it is watered and looked after. The many street trees and the holly hedges give our area a particularly beautiful and unusual appearance which needs to be protected.

Lots of us who live here love it and many have worked hard over the years to keep it green and beautiful. It does not stay like this by magic but by the efforts of many dedicated people, heroes actually, who have given up countless hours to protect it. Against whom you may ask? Well, sometimes in the past the Council has been a bit too enthusiastic in chopping down trees and not replacing them. Fortunately this isn't the case now and there is much more respect for the environment. Most people have got the message that trees are not just an adornment but vital in keeping the air clean, preventing flooding and helping our diminishing wildlife.

The other danger to our area is, surprisingly,

some of the residents themselves! Those who would prefer not to have a tree outside their house or who want to rip out all shrubs, trees and hedges in order to concrete their front gardens to create a small car park.

To consider such an action in a Garden Suburb in which many of us are striving to maintain the green credentials is rather dismaying and also ignores the heritage of the area.

It is possible to have a green front garden and park your car as well and there is a display on this theme in the Coach House window in Melrose Road.

I have mentioned those who have worked hard for many years to protect the area, the unsung "heroes". Unfortunately some of them are getting on a bit but they carry on regardless because, I am afraid to say, few younger people are willing to step in. Many of you are wonderful and give time and effort happily to help us with our events like the Plant Sale and we are very grateful to you. We do though desperately need some younger members to join the Committee to form a solid base for our work and activities. Will any of you come forward? We have several vacancies and if we have a full committee it will take the pressure off the older members some of whom are now in their eighties. We can see at our Plant Sales, Coach House talks and the recent Open Gardens event how much you love getting together. All this will end if we cannot get a full committee with some younger members.

Why not contact one of us and at least have a chat and find out what it entails.

Helene Nelson-Jones



GLA DECISION ON WIMBLEDON TENNIS (AELTC) EXPANSION PLANS

In common with many other environmental organizations, the John Innes Society lodged representations on these proposals, concerned about the impact such a large-scale development would have on Metropolitan Open Land, and the precedent it might establish.

The site, which used to be a golf course, is within both Merton and Wandsworth boundaries. Merton's Planning Committee granted consent for the development. Wandsworth refused it.

The application was called in to the GLA and on 27th September, after a hearing lasting many hours, the decision was announced to grant permission subject to conditions and a legal agreement.

The text below is taken from the GLA website and sets out the decision and the reasons for it.

Planning application approved

Following a public hearing today at City Hall, Jules Pipe, the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service, has approved the planning application for All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) to transform the former Wimbledon Park golf course.

The plans will see an additional 38 grass courts, as well as a new Show Court, allowing the AELTC to bring the Wimbledon Qualifying event on-site for the first time – with the tournament bringing a wide range of economic and social benefits to London and nationally.

At today's public hearing, GLA officers provided a detailed update on the proposals. Jules Pipe then heard views from Merton and Wandsworth Councils, and a range of supporters and objectors who had registered to speak.

The plans include:

- An additional 27 acre (11.1 hectares) of public park, the site of a former private golf course, to be publicly accessible, managed and maintained as parkland.*
- Improvements to Wimbledon Park Lake and the creation of a new 3km boardwalk for the public. This is together with over £10 million of further improvements to the existing public park to in-*

clude the provision of an enhanced multipurpose sports and leisure facility, drainage improvements to the sports fields, improved footpaths and new toilets, alongside a range of other recreational and heritage enhancement works.

- A minimum of seven new Championship standard grass tennis courts open for community use.*
- The planting of 1500 new trees and an increase to the extent and quality of biodiversity across the land, with a suggested measurable biodiversity net gain of at least 10 per cent.*

Increased provision of tickets to the Championships to the local community and schools, including 450 tickets per day prioritised for Merton and Wandsworth residents at face value and 50 made available free of charge through the Wimbledon Foundation. 1000 free qualifying tickets for the Qualifying Event will also be made available for school children in Merton and Wandsworth.

The GLA considered the benefits and disadvantages of the proposals in relation to a range of areas including environmental, design, transport, social, economic and cultural. While the plans have a significant effect on the use of metropolitan open land, the GLA considered the overall benefits to outweigh any harm in this area – including the provision of 11.1 hectares of publicly accessible parkland that will be managed and maintained.

The GLA found that the total economic impact of the Championships, incorporating these plans, are projected to be worth in the region of £336 million to the UK economy each year, of which it is estimated that £326 million would occur within London. These plans will support 40 new jobs across the year and more than 250 new jobs during the Championships. Additionally, the plans will employ an average of between 50 to 400 construction workers per day between 2025 and 2033.

As one would expect, those who have worked long and hard to oppose these plans are now taking legal advice to see if the approval can be challenged in the Courts. The Society will continue to monitor the situation, looking out in particular for the future environmental implications for Metropolitan Open Land.

Desé Child

THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY VISIT TO MERTON PARK

On Saturday 21st September a group from the Victorian Society visited Merton Park for a walk led by Tony Woolfenden.

We were able to provide refreshments in the Coach House and made available a few of Quartermain's plans, especially of properties which had been identified in a very detailed and profusely illustrated booklet which Tony had produced for every member, having purchased copies of our main publications the previous year. However, we were also able to sell a few copies of our own Heritage Guide and of course several of Nick Burton's study of Quartermain.

In June 1981 Tony had led a longer walk in the



Dorset Road houses, H G Quartermain architect, 1891

area from Collier's Wood to Merton Park, the notes from which we still have. Tony had been a scholar at Rutlish so knew the area well.

He had also brought with him a splendid scrap-book which he had obtained from Margaret Quartermain. Those of us without sticky fingers were able to have a quick look at it during tea.

Despite the group being larger than expected tea was swiftly served, thanks to Ann Redfearn and Bernadette Jones. Tudor Jones expanded on the plans as required which was much appreciated. Our thanks to all three for giving up a Saturday afternoon and to The Victorian Society for a generous donation.

Alison Cousins

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A MILK BOTTLE

Have you ever wondered what happens to the plastic you put in your recycling? Or how the vehicle used to transport it to the local waste facility is emptied? Or how a milk carton becomes the raw material for a new product?

The Boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Merton and Sutton have joined under the South London Waste Partnership umbrella to work with Veolia to do just this.

Once recyclables arrive at Veolia's Material Recovery Facility at Rainham, the plastics are extracted, the milk cartons separated from other plastics to be transported to a Specialised Plastic Facility.

Here they are shredded, washed and converted into a high quality food grade HDPE pellets - the raw materials for new milk bottles and more. The scale of the operation is monumental processing up to 100,000 tons of hard plastic a year!

Our thanks to the people of Veolia who helped us get the images seen here.

Vince Harris



Calling all volunteers.....

After many years of voluntary service, Tim Fripp, our wonderful Honorary Secretary will be stepping down in the New Year. So we are now looking for a new Secretary. As you are aware, the Society is involved in preserving the heritage of this beautiful area.

The main components of this voluntary position involve taking minutes of the monthly committee meetings held locally on a Tuesday evening, maintaining an online calendar of events and assisting the Co-Chairs and Treasurer to prepare the paperwork for the Annual General Meeting each April. We can of course work in some flexibility to this job description.

If you feel you would like to help, or can suggest someone who might be interested, please contact either Desé Child or Alison Cousins for an informal chat or more information. Our contact details are below.

Thank you!

BLUE CONSERVATION AREA STREET SIGNS RESTORED

Congratulations and a huge thank you to the Watery Lane resident who, with great skill, has repainted and restored two street signs in his area.

The Society was delighted to pay for the materials. There are many more needing similar treatment from a volunteer with suitable expertise – paint is available.

Desé Child



Can you help the 1st Merton Park Scouts?

We have spaces for uniformed leaders and fundraising committee members as well as adult volunteers. Please [email](#) and let us know how you would like to help out. Thank you!

The John Innes Society Contacts

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Bridge group 45A Dorset Road SW19 3EZ	Michael Forbes 020 8542 8314	* These members are also trustees.	

REMEMBERING BABS COOMBES

Babs, better known as the “mad bird woman from Merton Park”, lived happily with her husband Brian for more than 50 years. She was born in 1949 in Breconshire, South Wales where she lived with her parents and three siblings. Although well educated and very proud of her Welsh roots, she moved to London because the best she could hope for at that time she said, was a job in Woolworths!

Once in London, she worked for The National Savings Banks where she met, the love of her life, Brian. They were married in 1972 and ten years later came to live in Aylward Road. Here they enjoyed gardening and entertaining family and friends.

Babs loved to travel, especially to Egypt fascinated and very knowledgeable as she was by the local temples, ancient history and architecture. Brian introduced Babs to the world of greyhound racing and together they owned numerous dogs, travelling far and wide to see them in action. Her stepson Gary recounts that whenever he visited their home, her beloved iPad would be out showing him how the dogs were progressing in the latest race.

At home, Babs loved keeping birds from budgerigars to cockatiels. Even the local vet would call on her and ask her to nurse wildlife back to health so that they could be released back into their natural habitat.

As a child she enjoyed listening to the boxing on the radio with her Dad. She loved the game of

rugby and in the 1970’s enjoyed watching the invincible Welsh team! However, when the national anthem was played Babs used to say “I am the only Welsh person who cannot sing!”.



Once retired, Brian and Babs offered to run the Bingo and Social events in the Coach House for JIS until 2011. The “socials” consisted of a quiz or a card game broadly based on whist. And “Chuckle Corner” for those present wanting to tell a joke! Originally it was a monthly event but given, Brian’s sense of humour and Babs’s enthusiasm, the events were held fortnightly.

The Society’s newsletter noted that in March 2008 a special

Easter event was held to which Floss Hughes and Peggy Holmes turned up wearing their Easter bonnets and decorated eggs were provided by Edna Barton, Doris Cathie, Doris Green and Mary Wilson. Joy Cellard’s contribution was “Flowers of the Season” .



In recognition of their sterling work organising these social afternoons – often the only source of a get-together for some locals - the Society presented them with a framed plaque (pictured above) in 2013.

Babs Coombes died on September 17th 2024. Although she had not enjoyed good health for several years, she had improved of late, but had a sudden relapse and died in St George’s Hospital.

Our condolences go to Brian and the family.

Contributions from Alison Cousins and Gary Coombes

HOW WE LIVED - 50 YEARS AGO

In November 1974 the Transport Committee at the Greater London Council proposed banning cars from Morden town centre, in what they described as an obstacle course for shoppers. They highlighted the dangers of having the shops, an underground station and a main traffic route so close together. Meanwhile, Merton Council set up a new free-phone hotline in an attempt to reduce child cruelty locally. In what was dubbed "baby bashing", the phone service's purpose was to give parents who feel they could no longer cope an outlet via someone to talk to before they risk harming their infant.

The M&M News reported that a young Wimbledon wife, suffering depression due to matrimonial problems, phoned the Savoy Hotel claiming she had planted a bomb there, causing a full scale evacuation. Upon putting down the telephone, the 22 year old took an overdose of sleeping pills. Traced by the 999 operator, the police knocked her door down and found her unconscious. Emergency treatment at St George's saved her life. Claiming she was very drunk at the time, she escaped with a fine.

1974's festive panto at the Wimbledon Theatre was Goldilocks and the Three Bears, starring Dick Emery and TV wrestler Jackie Pallo; and included acrobats and a live horse on stage. Meanwhile, St Mary's Parish Players panto of choice 50 years ago was Jack and Jill.

The biggest local sports news of the time

was George Best's attempt to purchase Wimbledon Football Club. Best and his associates had put in a bid for 80% ownership of the club, with rumours that had it gone through he would have become their player manager, and also attracted other star names to play for the Dons.

The council reported that the average land acquisition and build cost of a council house now stood at c.£16,000.

I was surprised to see, with 1974 being within my lifetime, that most of the jobs advertised in the classified pages were separated into 'Male Jobs' and 'Female Jobs'. These included clerk typists earning £30.66 per week, and assembly hands for 47p/hour. Although I did not notice a big discrepancy between the male and female pay being offered. Also in a sign of the times, M&M News, using language of the day, reported a terrifying armed robbery "in a quiet Merton Park street" (Branksome Road). The newspaper described the perpetrators as "four coloured men" and "West Indians".

And as we end the year, several complaints were made in Merton Park and elsewhere in the borough regarding what one commentator called the 'Housewife Tax': binmen knocking on doors and almost demanding a Christmas tip. The Wimbledon News described the practise as illegal and the council promised to stamp out the activity

Gafyn MacMillan.

Published by The John Innes Society

Printed by Prontaprint Wimbledon

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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 8 January. It will be distributed on Saturday 25 January.

*Wishing our members a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!*



Coach House window display in 2023 by Helene Nelson-Jones. Photo credit Ann Redfearn

SAVE THE DATE!

Christmas Market: Sat 30th November from 11am to 2pm at St Mary's Church, Church Hall and Vicarage Garden. Church Path, Merton Park SW19 3HU

Parish Players: "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" A pantomime by Nigel Holmes
Thurs 9 to Sat 11 January 2025 at 7.45pm and Sat 11 at 2.30pm at St Mary's Parish Hall.

Book tickets at www.parishplayers.net/wizard-of-oz

At the Coach House

Bridge Club: Mondays at 7.30pm

Bridge Classes: Thursdays at 7.30pm

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

*New gardening volunteers most welcome. Just come along or contact Jo Pfeifer on
07531 524538*