



# *The John Innes Society Newsletter*

*Issue No 284*

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

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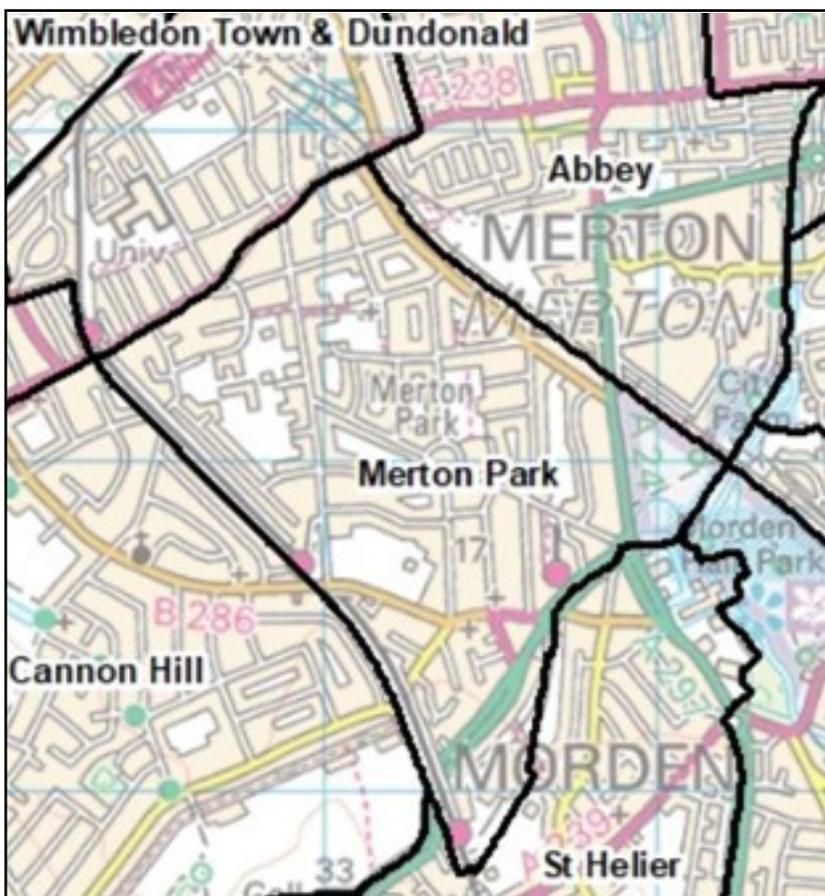
[johninnesociety.org.uk](http://johninnesociety.org.uk)

## **THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION DECIDES ... AND DIVIDES**

It was not all good news when the decision of the Boundary Commission on Merton Park's Ward boundaries was announced on 6th October. Many residents had asked for unification of the John Innes Estate into one Ward, but sadly, their representations were ignored.

Instead the Commission decided:

- ♦ The existing boundary with Cannon Hill Ward should remain, leaving all of the John Innes (Merton Park) Conservation Area and the roads up to and including Aylward Road within the Ward, because the railway line on an embankment formed a physical boundary.
- ♦ Despite submissions to the contrary, the Commission decided Kingston Road is also a physical boundary, so the North side of it and everything to the North of it will, from May 2022, move into the newly named Wimbledon Town and Dundonald Ward.



It's a missed golden opportunity to amalgamate Merton Park and its Conservation Areas into one Ward. It will make no difference to the aims and activities of the John Innes Society, for whom a community with a shared history and aims, is far more important than lines drawn on a bureaucrat's map. The Commission acknowledged that more than half the representations on the Consultation were received from residents of Merton Park, but it would have taken too many adjustments within the rest of the Borough to make such significant changes to their original proposals.

Grateful thanks to all those friends and neighbours who sent in submissions for this important Consultation.

## ... AND THE RAIN HELD OFF!



Melrose Road became a socially distanced community hub of activity on Saturday 3 October with people moving between different addresses to buy plants and produce at the Autumn Plant and Produce Sale and pausing to exchange greetings and chat along the way. It was lovely to be able to meet up with people again.

The cake stall sold out early and soon all jams and chutneys were also snapped up. People queued at the Coach House to buy donated plants, particularly wallflowers, which will provide a great show of colour in spring.

There were lovely autumn/winter bedding plants and varieties of spring bulbs to look forward to.

People were also collecting their pre-ordered compost which will improve and mulch our gardens over the winter.

Many thanks to everyone who helped make it such a delightful occasion with particular thanks to those generous people who let us use their front gardens. Thanks to everyone who donated plants, produce and cakes and helped to sell and clear up.



We couldn't believe we got away without being soaked as the rain mostly held off in spite of the rest of the weekend being a wash out. A better profit than recent years was made – truly amazing in this year's circumstances. **Ann Redfearn**



## DISCOVERY DAY September 26th 2020

This was a much curtailed event this year and had been postponed from the usual May slot. With the Heritage Centre at Morden Library being impossible to use other than for one society (the Mitcham Camera Club) only those organisations with their own meeting places could consider offering anything “live”.

So we boldly offered to have a stall outside the Coach House in the hope that the weather would be on our side. Well, it was dry, but cold, and several people who were out for a walk, stopped by and chatted.

This has never been a fundraising event but more a promotional exercise, but we did manage to sell a few of our publications.



Knowing that there was also a Merton Park heritage-based trail which had been organised by one of the local councillors, we displayed copies of the original Merton Park “town” trail and a few local landmarks in the Coach House window, which was also adorned with Helene Nelson-Jones’ new holly frieze.

My thanks go to Helene for nobly braving the cold to help out (and supplying a coffee!!) and to Ann Redfearn and Keith Etherington for the loan of their gazebo.

With two events in consecutive weeks in Melrose Road we hope that the residents have recovered !

**Alison Cousins**

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## HOLLY HEDGES

It appears that during lockdown some of our holly hedges, like us, have also gained in girth and are encroaching too far onto the pavements.

We love our holly hedges in Merton Park and they are, we think, the king of hedges, giving our area a unique look. The streets have long runs of green boundaries and the shaped holly trees are a delightful feature.

These hedges are good for the environment, they improve air quality and give wildlife a helping hand. They are not fussy, deal well with drought and only need a trim once a year. We must not however let them run riot and make a nuisance of themselves. Please do check your hedge and just trim it back to a reasonable position so that it remains a beautiful asset to the neighbourhood.

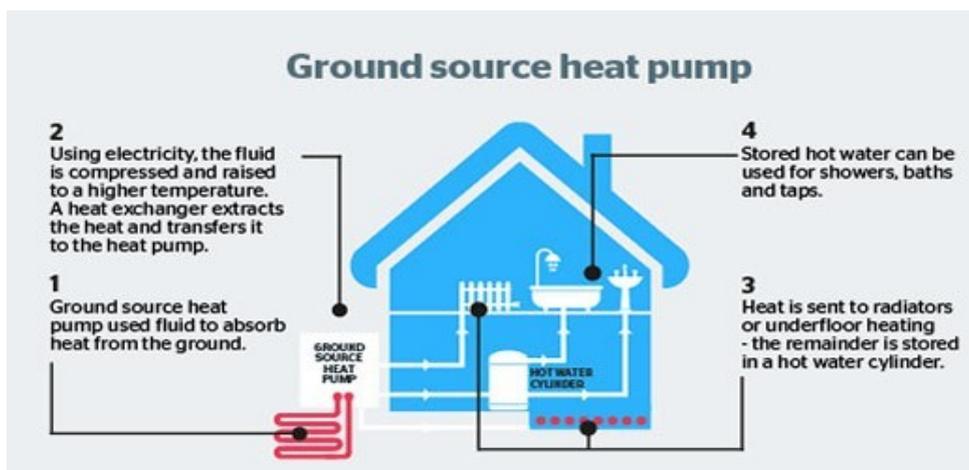
**Helene Nelson-Jones**



## HOW DO WE MOVE TO ZERO CARBON HEATING TO MEET OUR CLIMATE GOALS?

Home energy use is responsible for a quarter of UK greenhouse gas emissions and three quarters of this is for home heating and hot water. In order to meet the government's climate goals, domestic heating and hot water will have to be decarbonized. Home heating is one of the largest carbon producing sectors of the economy as 80% is met with natural gas. Transitioning from gas heating is both difficult to do and the government has no clear plans for how it would happen. Additionally, energy researchers are divided in how they think this is best tackled. However, one thing that is clear is that the existing stock of 23 million houses will need to be retrofitted to meet climate goals and all new build homes must be built with zero-carbon technologies and require a low heat and cooling demand (which is expected to increase with warmer summers).

Currently the majority of UK energy is supplied by fossil fuels (mainly gas and petrol/diesel). Less than 20% of UK energy use is via electricity but renewables make up 30% of this (mainly wind and biomass). Coal has been largely removed from the electricity generation mix – there were 18 consecutive days in 2020 when it was not used at all – the longest stretch since the electricity grid was created.



To meet carbon targets, the electricity supply will have to be expanded vastly (via renewables) and fossil fuels removed completely. A way of encouraging this renewable expansion is to purchase a green tariff therefore as household or

business switching to a 100% renewable energy supplier or onto a green tariff is an easy climate action to take.

For our buildings to become zero-carbon homes, they will need to electrify with the electricity produced from renewable sources. Therefore, we need to think about how to move to the electrification of our home heating and hot water systems.

Home heating can be decarbonized in 1 of 3 ways. Firstly, through renovating each house to very high energy efficiency standards, secondly through the adoption of a non-carbon fuel such as hydrogen and thirdly through the use of heat pumps.

Renovating every house to the level required is very expensive – of the order tens of thousands of pounds each. This tends to include underfloor insulation, wall cladding (inside or out) and very high levels of airtightness. It is easier to do in new build but rare and rarer as a retrofit to an existing building.

Using hydrogen in a gas boiler is possible and Worcester-Bosch already sells 'dual fuel' boilers. The hydrogen would need to be created using renewable energy (it currently comes from fossil fuels) and gas grid upgrading is necessary to make

it hydrogen secure. This is all part of the much talked about 'hydrogen economy' which goes through cycles of popularity but never gets any closer.

Heat pumps are the most likely alternative – in combination with the cheaper home insulation measures (e.g. loft insulation and draft exclusion) and possibly with hydrogen

supplement for peak load when renewable energy supply is low. For now, heat pumps are a mature and well understood technology although for UK home heating there are currently fewer than 30,000 installations.

## ZERO CARBON HEATING (continued)

### What are heat pumps?

Heat pumps cycle a low boiling point fluid around a circuit which contains 2 heat exchangers. Between the heat exchangers on one side is a pump and on the other side a throttle. The circulating fluid evaporates in one heat exchanger, drawing in energy and condenses in the other heat exchanger, dumping energy. Energy therefore moves from the cold heat exchanger to the hot one and the amount of heat moved exceeds the power of the pump by a factor of up to 6 (depending on environmental conditions).

Heat pumps are used in fridges, freezers and air conditioners. When the hot heat exchanger is inside a building and the cold one is outside, they are known as heat pumps and can be used to heat a building for a small fraction of the energy of an equivalent gas boiler. They are used in various configurations – where the external heat exchanger is in the air or ground, where the internal heat exchanger heats the air or heats water which circulates through radiators or underfloor etc. Large hot water buffer tanks are used in water-based systems to meet peak load which would be unobtainable otherwise or in air to air systems.



The interior part of an air-source heat pump includes a fan that blows across the heated coils..

Photo credit: Island Institute

where (more expensive) ground source systems are more efficient.

There is a range of costs depending on whether heat is a supplement to an existing system, where it is a whole house solution (including hot water) and whether it is needed to provide cooling or not. Prices range from £1,200 to £20,000 per house depending on these configurations. Government grants can help with the cost (the renewable heat

incentive or the latest Green Deal), but they are generally limited to more expensive whole house systems with no cooling.

In summary, heat pumps will form a major part of the decarbonizing of the domestic sector. Whole house systems can be expensive but there are grants available. Domestic installations are rare but becoming less so. In Merton Park, where many homes have large gardens ground source-heat pumps maybe a viable option, but installation will be expensive and disruptive so would be best done when other renovation work is being done.

Heat pumps, which must comply with Building Regulations and may need Planning Permission, will be an easy to install low-cost heating retrofit option to supplement gas heating for many homes in Merton Park. The economics of these low carbon technologies become more viable if you are home much of the day.

The other part of meeting climate goals, which is important not to forget is not to waste energy. Take energy saving measures – insulation, LED lighting, heating controls, secondary glazing, and switch-off heating and equipment when not needed etc.

The new **Green Grant** is for up to £5,000 and is for various insulation measures, solar thermal, heat pump or biomass boilers, hot water tanks or heating controls

**Catherine Bottrill**



Air Source Heat Pump Photo credit: Centre for Sustainable Energy

## HOW WE LIVED 100 YEARS AGO ...

As the nights closed in, local residents began to turn their minds to entertainment, both as performers and as audience members. After lots of rehearsals in November, no doubt, the local Boy Scouts put on their annual concert at the Merton Parish Hall. The Wimbledon Borough News reported on 10th Dec 1920 that the 1st Merton troop of Baden Powell Scouts, Cubs and Brownies put on an impressive show. There was, we are told, “a well-executed Highland Fling by the Brownies” after which “Cubs Huggins and Beadle gave a charming Japanese dance.” I have been in a fair few Scout shows myself in the past, but I can’t say I ever remember a Japanese dance and I have no idea how two young boys in Merton Park in 1920 learned how to perform one! Perhaps more conventional was the performance by Scout E. Erickson, who was “a young violinist who shows very distinct signs of promise.” Do I detect a note of irony in that comment? It’s always difficult to know how to review enthusiasm if it is not necessarily accompanied by talent...

Later in December the professional pantomime at Wimbledon Theatre opened, on Boxing Day as was then always the case. In 1920 the chosen title was Cinderella,



always among the most popular of pantomimes. This was the 11th panto under theatre manager J. B. Mulholland and written by him under the pseudonym Jay Beahm. The Wimbledon Borough News was delighted to report that a local amateur performer, Gwen Price, played the title role, although “some disappointment was felt that the audience are not allowed to see her dance more in the second act.” Her big number was “Blowing Pretty Bubbles.” The Ugly Sisters were played by the Sisters Sprightly, “their attempt to pitch a picnic tent being a miniature pantomime in itself.” There were originally three Sprightly Sisters in the act (Maud, Florrie and Vesta) but one seems to have gone missing by 1920. A performer whose name may be still recognised by some older readers today, Leslie Sarony (1897-1985),

pictured left, played the hen-pecked Baron, though “his forte perhaps is his clever and eccentric dancing.” The leading role in drag was the Baroness, played by the wonderfully named Bert E. Evremonde.

Miss Gladys Lloyd was a “winsome Prince Charming” and there was a large cast as well as two principal dancers, eight “lady dancers” and ten “merry little maids.” The first act must have ended as is traditional with the Fairy Godmother transforming Cinderella’s fortunes and sending her off to the ball, as “the scene depicting the Fairy Boudoir with its delightful transformation effects could hardly fail to entrance the eye.” The Era, the show business paper, advertised the costumes for sale at the end of the run, as can be seen by the advertisement from the issue for 26 Jan 2021. Sadly, there will be few such scenes on show this Christmas either at large professional theatres or by groups like Parish Players in Merton Park; let us all hope that pantomime can return in full strength for Christmas 2021.



Chris Abbott

## JOHN INNES PARK: September litter pick

Can you believe a team of six litter pickers collected in one afternoon no less than 8 bag loads of plastic wafting around the park, lurking beneath the shrubs and trees? Thankfully, the park now has never looked cleaner. I gave a virtual gold star to the litter pickers!

I found myself reflecting on this issue as we rummaged for rubbish. About 90% of the litter is plastic or foil wrapping from snacks. Much of the litter had been there a long time and it is noticeable that plastic does not degrade; it simply breaks into small pieces which become more difficult to collect as they decrease in size.

Much of the plastic wrapping is unnecessary, for example, we picked up hundreds of plastic

coverings for straws which are attached to small juice cartons. It strikes me that the straw element is superfluous if the carton could be designed with a rip off corner so that the juice could be drunk directly from the carton. We have reported our reflections on this litter pick to Sustainable Merton and I sincerely hope that pressure on the manufacturers will eventually lead to less packaging.

My grateful thanks to Ewa Stacewicz, John and Anne Braithwaite, Alison Miller, Camilla and Michael Hornsby who helped. In the meantime, let us all do our bit to keep this beautiful park in tip top condition by placing our litter in the bins provided or better still, take it home with you!

**Jo Pfeifer**



### VIRTUAL JOHN INNES SOCIETY QUIZ 2020

For those of you missing our annual quiz, here are a few “taster” questions on the history of the Society. More will appear in the next newsletter.

1. In which month and year was the Society founded?
2. Which national event coincided with the restoration of the Coach House?
3. Which radio programme did the Society help organise in Rutlish School in 2009?
4. What was the name of the trophy awarded for the Best Front Garden?
5. Can you name the artist who sketched several locations in Merton Park and who produced and illustrated some of the Society's booklets?

Answers on page 8

**Alison Cousins**

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## LOCAL CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

Are you looking for ideas for Christmas presents or know someone new to Merton Park who might like to read up on how this historic garden suburb developed?

We have a series of excellent booklets at very reasonable prices, including “**The Birth of Merton Park 1865 to 1904**” and “**Elbow Room**” - the story of John Sydney Brocklesby, which is unavailable elsewhere.

Please look at our website and for further details click on the **Publications** button. You can pay by cheque or PayPal. **A Cousins**

## COACH HOUSE WINDOW NOW LIT UP AFTER DARK

New spotlights have been installed so the Society’s Melrose Road Coach House window is illuminated during the dark evenings. Helene Nelson-Jones is very skilled at mounting interesting and artistic displays in the window so do have a look next time you are passing. **D Child**

## Answers to the Virtual JIS Quiz 2020

1. January 1971. (If you answered February, that was the date of the inaugural meeting )
2. The Queen's Silver Jubilee (1977)
3. Gardeners' Question Time
4. The Edmund Barclay Cup
5. John Wallace

### 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, 13th January 2021**. It will be distributed on **Saturday, 30th January 2021**.