



## NEW LIFE FOR THE LIT&SCI

**Norman Plastow, Past President, writes:**

**One of Wimbledon's oldest societies closed at the end of last year after 124 years.**

The Wimbledon Literary and Scientific Society was founded in 1891 by some distinguished local residents to encourage the study of literature and science. Membership was by invitation and meetings took place in the homes of members, where they presented papers on a range of suitable subjects. The meetings took place after dinner, and in those days when it was usual to "dress for dinner" the dress was black tie. (In the early days almost all the members were men.) Most members followed this tradition until quite recently. Membership was limited to 80 but members could bring one guest, who had to be formally introduced before proceedings began.

The leading members in those early days included Sir Thomas Jackson and Sir William Preece. They arranged outings as well as the regular meetings. There was also an annual 'Conversazione' in the Village



*Above left: Norman Plastow presides over the final meeting where Secretary Sally Flew, centre, lectured on the Lit & Sci's prestigious history and distinguished list of previous presidents. But all is not lost. Andrew Simon, right, now heads a team that is resurrecting it for the future like a phoenix rising from the ashes.*

Hall which centred round a display of scientific instruments and objects. These included living physiological specimens, and even cholera and anthrax, exposed on a green baize table!

During World War One, the meetings continued, but with less lavish refreshments. The Lit&Sci flourished again between the wars, but during World War Two the Society had to suspend its activities for some time. When they restarted, meetings were held at 3pm and refreshments were limited, due to rationing. From 1945, the Society was resurrected by Dr Seligman who, as President, recruited

new members and chaired all meetings until the Society was fully re-established in 1948.

In the post war period, smaller homes were available for meetings. Seating became a problem and chairs had to be hired. Reluctantly, the Society moved from private homes to the Town Hall committee room, and then to church or school halls. These were less intimate settings and also increased the running costs. In addition to lectures there were dramatic readings and productions. Summer garden parties were introduced and a Christmas lunch at the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club. *(Contd on Page 3)*

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## Chairman's Report



Amongst the many activities of the Society, keeping the Museum of Wimbledon running is one of our most important. The mission of the award-winning Museum is to collect, record, conserve and display material relating to the history of Wimbledon, and to make it available to all. There is a rich display of local objects; and knowledgeable and helpful volunteers offer a great welcome to visitors every weekend. It is the willing team of volunteers that enables the Museum to carry on with its good work. And now we need more volunteers to fill a number of key roles – two Duty Officers, an Operations Manager and a Publication Officer. More information on the vacancies can be seen on the back page.

A strong sense of good comradeship prevails amongst our volunteers, and there is much to be said for contributing to the community. Your interest will be gratefully received and, in each case, there will be all the help and guidance you may need to fill the role.

By the time you read this, the election for Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators will be complete, and five newly-elected Conservators will be preparing for a new 3-year term. The Society played a part in supporting the election by co-hosting, with WPCC, a 'Meet the Candidates' meeting in January. All 17 candidates were invited to put their case to an interested audience, and then answer any questions. It was a well-attended, successful event, as it gave the audience a chance to decide voting intentions, as well as allowing the candidates to meet each other.

Finally, may I remind you that our AGM for this year will take place on Saturday 16 May 2015, at Christ Church Hall, starting at 5.00 pm. This will be a meeting of particular interest, as the guest speaker will be Philip Brook, Chairman of the All England Lawn Tennis Club. Do please make a note in your diary, and come along to support the Society. **ASIF MALIK**

## Wimbledon Society Newsletter

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(Contd from page 1)

The Committee eventually recommended closure of the Lit&Sci because fewer members were attending the meetings, and they were having some difficulty in finding members who would give talks.

**Cassandra Taylor writes:**

Some 12 years ago, I was on duty in the Museum with Dr Bobbie Headley. He said to me "Would you like to join a little story telling club I belong to?" I was thrilled and flattered. Bobbie and I had by then become good mates as we were quite often on duty together. He was the best possible company (see Oral History, Newsletter September 2014). The story telling club turned out to be the Lit&Sci, as it is commonly known. Bobbie explained that, to become a member, you had to agree to give a lecture – just one. "My advice to you", he said "is to get in quick, give your talk, get it over and then you can just sit back and never worry about giving another unless you want to."

I took his advice, gave my talk within the first year of membership and have ever since enjoyed listening to others. I met many interesting people, some of whom became good friends and I also enjoyed the dressing up.

#### REVIVAL

**Andrew Simon, Chair of the new committee, writes:**

A committee has been formed to establish a new society which will continue the tradition of the original one. The first members' meeting was about to take place, as this was written, on Saturday 7 February. Meetings will once again take place in members' homes. Other changes are contemplated, including some discussion meetings, some experimental departures from the long-established Saturday evening meeting time.

## More power to our elbow

**Early visitors to *Playing with Fire*, the attractive new exhibition in the Norman Plastow Gallery, have been impressed by two splendid exhibits – historic rifles - on loan to the Museum by gun-makers currently working for London's leading firm of sporting gun and rifle makers, writes Monica Ellison.**

These firing pieces in their safety display case make a formidable contribution to the exhibition - a steely reminder of the serious business of the original National Rifle Association's meetings.

Exhibit 1: an Enfield .577 (1853 pattern) the first army rifle, which at the time of the Crimea War was considered to be the 'ultimate loading service rifle' has been loaned by Mr. Stephen Murray.

Exhibit 2 is a Martini Henry .577 breech loading (circa 1873). This is the same rifle used against the Zulus at Rorke's Drift. It has been loaned by Mr. Keith Ward. We thank both donors for their generosity.

Though not part of the gallery display, these rifles point the way to a remarkable show.

Reactions to the exhibition have been twofold - amazement at the immense scale of this historic Wimbledon event and amusement at the exuberance and fun which the story of shooting on the Common tells through the prints and wonderful watercolours on display.

Certainly the NRA meetings got off to a prestigious start, inaugurated on 2 July 1859 by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert accompanied by Lord Palmerston and a gingerbearded, Earl Spencer. The first event lasted for six days, and was such a resounding success that the following year the meeting lasted ten days. By the 1870s it had become two weeks, and the 'Wimbledon Fortnight'



had arrived on the social calendar. By that time there were 2500 entrants for the Queen's Prize and the prize money, originally a tidy £250 had grown proportionately. Wimbledon has a long tradition of paying big money.

The proliferation of trophies necessitated greater challenges. In 1863 a moving target trophy in the form of a running deer was introduced by Sir Edwin Landseer, who apparently first sketched the beast on a tablecloth. Subsequently this outline was made in metal, mounted on wheels which ran on a track across the firing range.

Not to be outdone in daring and novelty The Owl newspaper made its debut launching a Shooting Extraordinary Prize in 1864. The award was a silver owl and £50 in cash for a competition which took place at two hundred yards in the dark. Lights called Owl's Eyes were substituted for Bull's Eyes. No casualties were reported though the competition was not repeated on safety grounds.

The Owl was not the only paper that covered events. There was also 'The Earwig' which claimed to be a paper containing 'neither Politics, Literature, Science nor Art.' Certainly The Earwig's attempt at verse would not have disproved the claim though a mention of the Fenians, the terrorists of the day, might well have done so.

Perhaps we should consider the resurrection of this splendid title and rename our newsletter The Earwig.

## Clocks and sundials make a comeback

The Group has reported before on its surveys of public time-keepers, and members continue to keep an eye open for them.

Two sundials were spotted in the grounds of Chester House during the Society's visit there last year and across the Common there is also one at Old Pound House on Parkside that we had missed before.

We also recorded stopped public clocks. Since our report, the Prince of Wales pub got



its clock going for a couple of weeks in 2012, but it is now defunct again.

However, full marks are due

to whoever is responsible for the one at 3 High Street, over Cath Kidston, pictured above, which has been revived.

## Hanging up those problem Cardigans

The current gallery exhibition shows that the last duel on Wimbledon Common was fought in 1840 by Lord Cardigan, pictured right, and Captain Tuckett.

The miller, Thomas Dann, had been sworn in as a special constable because he was in a good position to see duels (or intended ones) from the Windmill. He witnessed the Cardigan duel, arrested the participants, and gave evidence at their trial.

The following year his wife gave birth to a son, and they named him Cardigan. *Punch* thought that a bad idea, saying 'give a dog a bad name and hang him'.

Our research did not find that he was hanged. In fact, he joined the Navy, married, had children – and named one of them Cardigan too. With a name like that, the two boys must have been teased at school.

**CHARLES TOASE**



### More butchers

In September we reported on the closure of Hartshorns, in Coombe Lane, a butchery chain founded by one family.

Another closed too: Gardners in Arthur Road whose history has been written. A third butchery chain run by the Kingston family from the 1900s to the 1960s had three shops at 387 Durnsford Road, 26 Leopold Road, and 8 Lambton Road.

None of these groups was in the Village or town centre but there were, of course, butchers in the High Street and the Broadway until the supermarkets killed them off.

### What's in a name?

*We are investigating origins and pronunciations of local road names. Four especially are frequently mispronounced.*

*Alwyne, named after a Dean of Worcester who technically 'owned' the land, should be pronounced AL-IN, not ALL-WIN. Barham, the name of a battleship named after Baron Barham, should sound like BAA-RAM (silent H). Cliveden has a short i as in cliff, like the National Trust house associated with the Profumo affair of the early 1960s..*

*Mispronunciation of Pepys is a familiar problem. There are two families of the name, the best known being that of the diarist Samuel who, of course, pronounced it as PEEPS.*

*However, the road takes its name from the Cottenham family of Pepys, and they call it PEPP-IS. Indeed, when it first appeared in Kelly's Wimbledon directory it was printed as Peppy's Road.*

*It is probably too late to persuade residents to correct their pronunciation now!*

## LOCAL HISTORY



Past performances at the old Wimbledon Civic Hall and Cannizaro House for the BBC in 1998.

This month sees Wimbledon Choral Society celebrating last year's official centenary with a special performance of Brahms' *Requiem* and Saint-Saëns' *Organ Symphony* at the Royal Festival Hall on 30 March. It's another prestigious event for this proud choir, as TILLY RICHARDSON explains.

Past presidents of the Wimbledon Choral Society have included the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams and Master of the Queen's Music George Malcolm. The current post-holder is tenor Ian Partridge, while past choir members have included Dame Janet Baker, now one of the great international mezzo-sopranos.

Amateur choral societies often employ newly graduated musicians and prize-winners, giving them experience and helping them start their professional careers.

Wimbledon Choral Society celebrated its centenary last year, having given concerts almost continuously since 1914. However, newspaper records show that the first concert was actually much earlier, on 5 April 1880 at the Drill Hall in St George's Road. Tickets cost up to five shillings. It was 'an unqualified success' said the *Wimbledon Courier*.

## Still going strong after a century of song

Many years later on 17 October 1914, Dr G. Coleman Young, a local music professor, organised the choir and music for the ceremony *Salutation to the Belgian Flag* on Wimbledon Common in aid of refugees from World War One. It was a huge success and a follow-up concert took place at the Bath Halls in Latimer Road.

The Wimbledon 1914 Choral Society performed there again on 22 March 1915, making a profit of £5 10s for the refugees. They also sang in November but from 1916 suspended any further activity until the end of the war as ever more members were called up for service. Everything restarted in 1919 and the first post-war concert was on 29 April 1920.

Renamed just Wimbledon Choral Society, it has been singing ever since. Performances to capacity audiences were at the 1500-seat Civic Hall in the town centre from 1935, with three main concerts

there each season, including Handel's *Messiah*. This ended in 1988 with the demolition of the Civic Hall whose roof by then was leaking.

One of the choir's last concerts there was on the night when Wimbledon Football Club won the FA Cup. The hall had been decorated in blue and yellow flowers and choir members were invited to take these home with them.

Wimbledon's MP Sir Cyril Black was president of the Choral Society from 1967 to 1992 and is remembered for always paying for refreshments at the annual general meetings.

Since 1988 the choir's membership of up to 150 singers have been unable to find a suitable permanent local venue. Yet they have gone from strength to strength, performing in most of London's main concert venues.

Highlights have included performances for the annual televised British Legion Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall, especially pertinent last year. It also sang *Pavane* by Fauré for the BBC's *Football World Cup 1998* and has performed in television's *Songs of Praise*.

For further information please visit the website [www.wimbledon-choral.org.uk](http://www.wimbledon-choral.org.uk)

# Lights, camera, action!

Exactly 48 years ago in March 1967 the last of some 130 films was produced at Merton Park Studios, 267-269 Kingston Road. It was the end of an era that had seen the studios churn out B movies, public information films and TV ads that were familiar nationwide for decades.

For a few years more, some 15 projectionists continued to be based there, taking films on road shows and watching as baby chimpanzees were filmed advertising Brooke Bond tea among other commercials produced by outsiders hiring the site. But by 1973 the arrival of video tape had rendered the core 35mm film business obsolete and everyone was made redundant.

In 1976, Long Lodge, the building was sold, becoming offices, and the grounds were developed for housing. Long Lodge itself, which dated originally from the 18th century, had been the home of Pre-Raphaelite artist Frederic Shields from 1895 to 1911 and from 1912 that of the local arts and crafts architect J S Brocklesby, a crucial figure in the development of Merton Park as a whole from the original John Innes estate. From 1930 Brocklesby had shared the site with Merton Park Studios. In 1939 he had moved out and the whole place been taken over by the film studios. It was owned by the Film Producers' Guild in the 1940s, remaining open throughout the Second World War when producing films for the Ministry of Information, later to become the Central Office of Information.

Among more memorable



*Edgar Wallace, crime writer extraordinaire whose bust (above left) appeared in most of the series filmed at Merton Park Studios.*



*The ever lugubrious Edgar Lustgarten who presented true tales of heinous crimes and the sorry end suffered by culprits, thanks to the police and justice system.*

productions were the classic advertisement *We are the Ovaltineys*, *Happy Girls and Boys*; a government information film for air pilots called *Flying with Prudence* featuring a cockpit ghost of that name; and director Joseph Losey's *The Criminal*, starring actors Stanley Baker and Sam Wanamaker.

Merton Park Studios' real heyday came in the 1950s and 60s. Under the leadership of producer Jack Greenwood (1919-2004), the studios were used to film two true crime series, *Scotland Yard* and the *Scales of Justice*, both presented by the crime writer and broadcaster Edgar Lustgarten (1907-1978).

Each film depicted a true crime story with its police solution and conclusion at the Old Bailey.

Equally successful were the studios' other main productions, the *Edgar Wallace Mysteries*, a series of dramas based on the stories of that other crime writing Edgar Wallace (1875-1932) was one of the most prolific writers of the 20th century and it was a coup to win the rights to film many of his stories.

These films - of varying quality - were all produced from 1960 onwards. Dozens of them appeared with an output of one a month and on rock bottom budgets as Jack Greenwood was noted for his tight controls on expenditure. Each began with a revolving image of a bust of Wallace in half shadow as a 1960 hit recording by the Shadows (without Cliff Richard) entitled *Man of Mystery* played to the credits.

Merton Park Studios' last film production of its own was the Wallace mystery, *Payment in Kind*, starring John Thaw, later famed as television's Inspector Morse.

**(With thanks to those whose memories made this article possible.)**

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## KIRK BANNISTER - THE INTERVIEW

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West Wimbledon resident Kirk Bannister was awarded the first Richard Milward Memorial Prize for Local History for his essay, *New Wimbledon: the growth of a Victorian suburb 1851-1891*. It was based on his post-graduate MA dissertation on historical research for Roehampton University.

I was born in April 1983 in St Helier Hospital and have lived in Wimbledon most of my life. I went to Joseph Hood School, then Hill Cross and finally Rutlish. I did history for A level at Kingston College, then at Reading University and afterwards at Roehampton.

It was a part-time MA. We studied demography, palaeography and the philosophy of history. Then I focused on my dissertation.

I felt it would be interesting to do some original research on the local area. In Morden Library I looked at the Tithe and Ordnance Survey maps on Wimbledon and Morden and saw a profound change in the layout from rural to very urban between the 1840s and the 1890s. I decided to focus on it.

So my entry was essentially visual – looking at maps and how they had changed, with supporting documentation. I also looked at how the community changed. So the dissertation had two parallel lines, looking first at the physical landscape and then the people. Who were they and where did they come from?

I was introduced to probate records, conveyances, and a whole range of documents. I concentrated first on the construction side and then census documents. A very popular 19<sup>th</sup> century journal was *The Builder*



*Kirk Bannister*

which carried information on tenders for house construction and land auctions. There I found references to plots being sold and tenders for housing. The area under study was the four or five roads behind Wimbledon Theatre including Griffiths and Pelham Roads between Kingston Road and Hartfield Road.

In the Surrey Archives I found pamphlets and guides produced by one of the big freehold land societies. Their initial inception was to do with building houses, putting people in them and getting votes. They were quite political.

Half of the land in this area was bought by the British Land Company while the other half was bought by a smaller company, the Church of England National Freehold Land Allotment Society. I was lucky to find one of its pamphlets showed mapping of the entire area. Hundreds of plots and some interesting stipulations on pubs and shops with the rest residential.

The houses had to be of a certain value so controlling quality of build too. They were socially engineering the sites – controlling the sort of people

who would live there. The British Land Company's own documentation was largely lost to wartime bombing but it was interesting to see the difference between its building and that of the other society.

The National Freehold wanted higher value houses. They were actually quite small and looked more like workmen's cottages than villas but they were semi-detached with bigger gardens than those of the British Land Company whose houses were all close together, terraced and a lot smaller.

I looked at other things too. The railway came to Wimbledon in the 1830s but there wasn't much growth in the area until the 1860s. By then, London's cholera epidemics had brought a more general concern for sanitation which forced the water companies to act. They put in new pipes upriver at Staines and a line came down through Wimbledon towards Brixton, bringing clean drinking water downhill from the Village for the first time and providing a newly viable basis for construction of homes.

You can still see a range of building styles. Hepburn Terrace, for example, was built in 1884 and very distinct compared to other houses built earlier. Also, because they were new constructs, people from different backgrounds and places came to live there. Not just Surrey or London but from India, the colonies, from Wales, Ireland, Scotland as well as France and Germany.

*Kirk's winning essay is available at the Museum. This feature is based on an interview which can be read and heard on the Oral History Library at [www.wimbledonmuseum.org.uk](http://www.wimbledonmuseum.org.uk)*

## A schoolgirl collected grasses 60 years ago

The Museum has been given a collection of pressed grasses from the Common and Putney Heath dating back 60 years. DAVE DAWSON explains.

Sheila Dunman's nature study project at Wimbledon Park County Primary School in 1950 is neat, tidy and well-labelled. The hand-bound booklet provides a glimpse into the botany of the Common in a period 1939-2010 for which we have no systematic records.

Grasses are difficult to identify so it was an ambitious project for the young Sheila, who was able to put an accurate name on only a minority of the 14 species she found. However, the individual specimens are well-preserved and can be identified accurately.

As one might expect, she found species that remain abundant in the area today: Creeping Bent-grass and Wavy Hair-grass. Others are



One page of Sheila's booklet

still widespread: False Oat-grass, Yorkshire Fog, Perennial Ryegrass, Cock's-foot, Wall Barley and Annual Meadow-grass.

Two species that remain abundant today were mis-identified as grasses: Ribwort Plantain and Heath Rush, understandable mistakes, as horticulturalists still sell many plants as grasses which belong to other groups, such as sedges or rushes.

Sheila failed to find two other Meadow Grasses and three of the most abundant grasses today: Purple Moor-grass, Fine-leaved Sheep's-fescue and Common Bent. But perhaps most interesting are four species found in the 1950s but now rare or absent: Galingale (actually a sedge), Quaking-grass, Meadow Foxtail and Yellow Oat-grass.

Inland records of Galingale are generally of planted origin. The other three are found mainly on chalk or more fertile land than the acid soils of the Commons. The four may have declined in competition with other better suited species.

## You can help protect our rivers from pollution

**River pollution comes in many forms, all devastating for wildlife. Misconnected drains, for example, can mean discharges of contaminated water. Here POLLY BRYANT explains how the South East Rivers Trust is working with the Environment Agency to improve the water quality of our own local rivers.**

A volunteer scheme has been established on the River Wandle where local residents have been trained to attend and assess Category 3 pollution incidents on behalf of the Environment Agency. This has

already reduced response time to minor pollution incidents and has allowed causes to be traced, so reducing pollution entering the river.

The scheme has been a huge success to date and the trust is keen to expand it to the Hogsmill and Beverley Brook. Training is now under way for a pollution monitoring scheme on these local rivers as well as the Wandle.

Volunteers are trained to attend Category 3 pollution incidents and report back vital information to the South East Rivers Trust and Environment Agency. Problematic outfalls

such as misconnected drains are regularly monitored.

If you live near one of our local rivers why not join the Pollution Patrol and learn how to identify and assess any pollution incidents?

For more information or to volunteer, please email [pollution@wandletrust.org](mailto:pollution@wandletrust.org) or call Polly Bryant, Project Officer (Volunteer Support) at The South East Rivers Trust/ The Wandle Trust on 07833 497599. Address: Environmental Sustainability, London Borough of Sutton, 24 Denmark Road, Carshalton, SM5 2JG

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## PLANNING COMMITTEE

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**Just before Christmas, the Council received the official application from Galliard Homes/AFC Wimbledon for redevelopment of the Greyhound Stadium at Plough Lane.**

The proposal is for a 20,000-seat stadium with associated housing (602 flats) with some retail and leisure facilities. The opportunity for a Wimbledon football team to return to the former home of its Dons predecessor has been a strong motivation.

But our Planning Committee has a number of concerns. These include the transport arrangements and how local centres could cope with the many supporters who would attend matches.

Furthermore, as the site is susceptible to flooding from the River Wandle and designated part of the flood plain, it is unsuitable for a vulnerable use such as housing. Indeed, government planning policy states that homes should not be built on such land.

We have also questioned the overall design and height of the buildings. Although the flats would be built above ground floor, flooding would affect residents stranded up to ten storeys high.

Having no access to flushing toilets or clean water because flood water has overwhelmed the sewerage system is no one's idea of fun. Flooding would also damage property in the residential underground car parks.

Building on a flood plain means excess water would have to drain off somewhere else, simply spreading the problem further away.



*Wimbledon Stadium, open since 1928, was London's last race track for greyhounds. From 1962 it was also used for stock car racing, as seen here.*

## Can this plan really be the best future for Plough Lane?

Roads around the existing stadium already struggle with the current level of traffic. This development would bring significantly more cars on to Plough Lane and Summerson, both very narrow.

There seems to be no parking provision for visitors on match days, either for cars or coaches. The developer simply proposes that spectators and residents alike would use Earlsfield, Wimbledon Park, Wimbledon and Haydon's Road stations.

### No affordable homes

This could cause overcrowding on the pavements, forcing pedestrians on to the road. In any case, Haydon's Road, a very basic station with little cover and no toilet facilities, is not staffed on Saturdays. Might Merton ask the developer to fund refurbishment of the station? This would benefit match-goers, new residents and the area generally.

The development is for 602 units but makes no provision for affordable housing. Even though housing is not an acceptable use, any such proposal should surely have

included a significant amount of social housing. The plans include a convenience store but not other amenities such as a doctors' surgery.

The Government Planning Inspector did not challenge the earmarking of the site as a place for sporting intensification but he made no mention of football or AFC Wimbledon specifically.

Other sporting activities could be based at Plough Lane but Merton has not consulted residents as to what they might be. On the contrary, they have been given the choice of AFC Wimbledon or continuing deterioration of the area. Rather a Hobson's Choice.

Redevelopment of the Plough Lane area is vital to the local community, both for industrial and residential usage. Yet these plans seemed aimed just at maximising profit for the developer.

For such an important development, it is unfortunate that there was no significant pre-application engagement between the promoters and the various local interests. Yet that was recommended by the British Property Federation and the LGA in their report last year.

Merton has decided to out-source some services currently delivered by Council teams, including street cleaning, waste and parks management. Merton are co-operating with the South London Waste Partnership, a consortium of four Councils (Merton, Sutton, Kingston and Croydon). Initially there will be a joint agreement on parks between Sutton and Merton Councils.

The contracts will be put out to tender and bids will be evaluated by Merton Council staff alongside Sutton staff with some expertise bought in to assess financial and legal matters. Horticultural matters will be evaluated by Council staff.

The contracts for parks are believed to be for 24 years. Merton states "The contract once awarded will be managed by Merton and Sutton in their own areas. Each park will be owned and managed by the Council in future in exactly the same way as it has been managed in the past". The borough's heritage is rich in open spaces, trees and staff who understand their needs for special management.

Supervision of performance of contractors will require detailed knowledge of the sites if their character is to be saved for future generations.

On waste contracts, a lead council will manage the whole contract. It is unclear whether, on parks, if one party to the

## Changes to the Council's Management of Parks

agreement will be able to withdraw unilaterally if they are dissatisfied with performance. Key to success of the scheme will be the specifications and by whom they are prepared and managed. So far, it appears that break points will be after 10 and 17 years, although an alternative of 10-year contracts are being explored for grounds' maintenance and parks.

Friends Groups make an enormous contribution in both physical work and successful support in preparation of bids for charitable funds. If volunteers are to remain engaged,

it will be necessary to establish a formal working relationship involving Friends' interface with both the Councils and contractors. Councillor Andrew Judge is arranging a series of meetings with Friends Groups, when it is hoped their future role will be addressed and the special needs of each park discussed.

The scheduled programme is for contracts to be awarded by September 2016 and become operational in April 2017. Kingston and Croydon may decide to join later.

## Rainbow proposal unsuitable

A planning application was submitted for the Rainbow Industrial Estate, a triangle of land to the south of Raynes Park Station for redevelopment as a largely residential scheme. The site is identified in Merton's Sites and Policies Plan as a Locally Significant Industrial Area and was formerly used for bus parking, workshops and light industrial activities.

The Council's approved policies clearly state its objectives of retaining existing employment land and floor space and improvement of such spaces to ensure they contribute towards business, industrial storage and distribution functions. The application fails to accord with these.

The 2.16 hectare site is surrounded by railway lines and sole access is along an

and sole access is along an unattractive narrow entrance with no alternative for emergencies. There is no provision for alternative walking or cycle routes out of the site to schools or shops.

The scheme offers 229 residential units housed in one/two/three bedroom flats and houses with flats rising to five to seven storeys. Ground floors of the flats are raised with parking beneath and the resulting podium appears to preclude significant planting.

Within the area, schools and doctors' surgeries are over subscribed and quality of life within the development would be poor. The design and layout of the site does not relate well to the local character and the case for going against the Council's approved policies is not made.

## Why planning controls should not be relaxed

Over recent years the Government has relaxed planning control over a number of types of development. For example, property owners no longer need planning permission to convert offices into housing.

Changing the use of an existing building in this way now requires only a form of local authority permission known as Prior Approval. The significance of the change is that the scope for objection is now very limited.

This has created difficulties for our Planning Committee, as the sort of issues that are generally of concern to us do not come within the new limited grounds of objection.

The most serious problem that arises, however, is that useful office space, especially that occupied by small companies and organisations, is at risk because freeholders see the chance to get a greater return from conversion to housing.

This means the diversity of

uses - an important feature of our town centres in particular - is put at risk. If full planning permission were required the Society could object, if it is only a case of Prior Approval we cannot.

We wrote to MP Stephen Hammond asking him to bring our concerns to the attention of Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. We instanced a couple of recent cases and asked for comments on the damaging loss of useful office space. We also drew attention to the fact that government ministers have often made statements, including one to the House of Commons, which refer to relaxation of control as applying only to empty offices. This is not the case.

**Mr Pickles' response was far from satisfactory and we have written to Stephen Hammond again pursuing the issue.**

### Might this be a future listed building?

A very modern house has been proposed for a site in Home Park Road immediately beside the golf course.

Being built into the sloping site, this is one of the relatively few Code 6 projects, where the sustainability level meets the highest standards. These are measured against a wide range of criteria, but are primarily about energy efficiency and water use.

Its low height means it will not present a 'wall' when seen from the open space unlike some other recent

developments. Its modern design may also be seen as a welcome antidote to the pastiche approach so widely seen in Wimbledon.

### No need for panic

Local press reports of a critical housing shortage in Merton were based on a report by a developer.

We wrote to the papers explaining that housing targets were a matter for the London Mayor and Assembly. Merton had provision in its Local Plan for what was required,

Since we wrote our **original** letter, the Commons Communities and Local Government Committee has pointed out the potential damage to local economies caused by the policy change and called for a review. A Government response is awaited.

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### Copse Hill telecoms mast

Introduction of the 4G system requires new masts and equipment to be installed. There has been Council consultation on a proposed 25m (82 feet) mast on the pavement close to the bus turnaround in the Copse Hill conservation area.

The Society commented that the drawings showed no design relationship to the adjoining projected housing development and seemed irrelevant to the Conservation Area. Nor was it clear whether any obsolete equipment would be removed from the wider locality.

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### Village Stables to go?

**We objected to an application to demolish part of the stables behind the Dog & Fox and use the site for housing.**

**Stabling has been part of the Village life for centuries, with references in the 1841 Census for example to an ostler, and a harness maker in the 1776 map.**

**As a heritage asset, the stables are part of the Village character, provide variety and interest, and enable recreational use of the Common.**

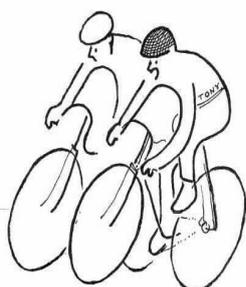
## LECTURES

Thursday March 19<sup>th</sup> at Emmanuel Church, 8pm "Merton Priory" with John Hawks

The 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Merton Priory was marked by last year's exhibition at the Museum. The Augustinian Priory was founded near the Wandle by Gilbert Norman, Sheriff of Surrey under Henry I, and dissolved after 400 years. The site has been the subject of archaeological investigation and the remains can be visited near Savacentre, Colliers Wood. John Hawks from Merton Historical Society will share the story of this important local religious foundation.

## Emmanuel to host all 2015-16 lectures

All four talks in the Society's 2015-16 season of lectures will take place at the Emmanuel Church in the Ridgway, next to the Museum.



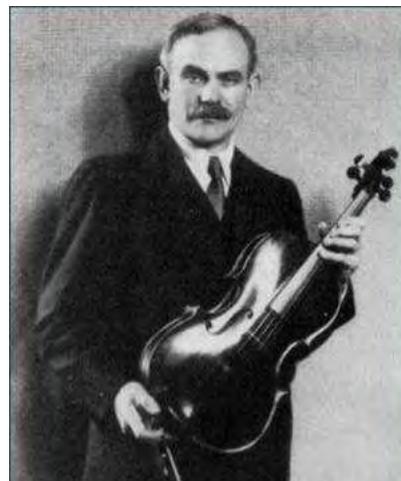
"When the Council gets all this new money for cycling, will it flatten some of these hills?"

## Blue plaque for Marryat Road's famous musician

Robert Lyons of 42 Marryat Road has triumphed in his campaign for a historic blue plaque outside his house, onetime home of the world's most distinguished viola player, Lionel Tertis (1876-1975), pictured right.

At a ceremony organised by English Heritage, the plaque will be unveiled on 14 May, with John Gilhooly, the director of Wigmore Hall, leading the event.

Lionel Tertis, who is said to have revolutionised the viola as a solo instrument and is commemorated by a triennial international music competition for young viola players, moved to Marryat Road with



his cellist wife Lillian in 1961 after a career that already lasted 66 years. He continued to perform in public until 1963 and then gave private recitals in the garden.

**The Museum needs two new Duty Officers** to join the existing team. Duties involve greeting visitors, helping them see round the Museum, dealing with any queries and selling Museum publications. Opening hours are 2.30 – 5 pm on Saturdays and Sundays (and occasional extra help at special exhibitions) and we ask you to do one duty a month. The ability to use a computer at basic level is essential for accessing the catalogue.

Full training is given and you will always work as a pair, at first with someone experienced. No knowledge of local history is required initially and any queries which cannot be dealt with on the spot can be referred to the relevant curator.

Contact Cassandra Taylor at [casskent@talktalk.net](mailto:casskent@talktalk.net) or on 8946 1544.

**An Operations Manager is required for the Museum.** The post involves acting on behalf of the Museum Committee in managing the premises, dealing with budgetary affairs, supervising production of publications and sales. A full job description is available from Cassandra Taylor (see above)

**The Museum also needs a Publications Officer** to oversee the website sales of publications, deal with the weekly sales taken during opening hours and manage the stock. More details of the post are available from Liz Courtney at [courtney28@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:courtney28@blueyonder.co.uk) or 020 8946 7960.

The Wimbledon Society was founded in 1903 and has had its present name since 1982. (Originally the John Evelyn Club, it was known as the John Evelyn Society from 1949-82.) A Registered Charity (No 269478), its main objectives are to preserve Wimbledon's amenities and natural beauty, study its history, and ascertain that urban development is sympathetic and orderly. Annual subscriptions are at the following rates: Individuals £10.00; Families £15.00; Organisations: Non-commercial £25, commercial £50. Please send membership applications to the Membership Secretary. The Museum and Bookshop (020 8296 9914), 22 Ridgway, near Lingfield Road, are open from 2.30 to 5.00pm Saturday and Sunday. Admission free.