



# What a swell party

**JEREMY HUDSON reports on the Society's Dinner Dance**

THE MAYOR OF MERTON, Councillor Janice Howard was guest of honour at our Autumn Dinner Dance on Saturday 19th October. We were especially pleased that she and her husband Andrew joined us for the event since it happened to be their Wedding Anniversary! We presented the Mayor with a fine bouquet to celebrate the occasion.

The event took place at the Wimbledon Club in Church Road. This proved to be an excellent venue, and the staff there could not have done more to make us feel welcome. We numbered about 100 all-told. The Lounge was beautifully decorated with yellow roses on the tables.

A prosecco reception was followed by a delicious dinner menu comprising salmon roulade, chicken supreme with mustard sauce and petit fours for dessert. As soon as dinner was over, John Mays encouraged the whole company to take part in a game of 'heads and tails' and presented a bottle of champagne to the winner. A disco followed, with an enjoyable string of mainly 60s hits, to remind us of our youth!



(Top): Mayor, Councillor Janice Howard with Jeremy Hudson; (above): Society members enjoying dinner

The object of the evening was two-fold. First and foremost, the aim was to have a good time – a rare opportunity to socialise with fellow-members of the Society. Secondly, we planned to raise money for the Society's twin projects: the long-awaited refurbishment of the Museum and the design of a new website to replace the Society's and Museum's outdated websites. The latter project is now well-advanced,

with tenders being sought, but is dependent on funding.

Happily, both objects were achieved. It was a very convivial evening (there is even talk of doing it again soon!) and we managed to raise £4,000 by means of a silent auction, as well as a raffle. Members of the Society and the local business community were extremely generous with their donations of auction lots and raffle prizes. Our MP Stephen Hammond offered to host drinks for two at the House of Commons. Baroness Hooper offered tea and a tour of the House of Lords. The All England Club donated a tennis ball used at this year's Men's Singles Final, and signed by the Champion, Novak Djokovic. Other donations included meals at the Hotel du Vin, San Lorenzo and the Giggling Squid, a stay at the Rose & Crown, and tickets to Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club.

We are immensely grateful to Robert Holmes & Company for sponsoring our event, and to everyone who helped us raise this excellent total through their donations, or by buying auction lots and raffle-tickets. Finally, thanks are due to the Dinner Dance committee for all their work planning this event, and especially to Luz Patterson who inspired the event and drove the project with so much energy and enthusiasm.

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## Chairman's view

IT WAS GOOD to meet so many Wimbledon Society members at the Commons' Day Fair on a fine late Summer's day in early September. The event gets bigger, and more popular, every year, yet it still manages to retain the atmosphere of a country village fête! Another local event which seems to be absolutely thriving is the Wimbledon Bookfest, with its galaxy of household names lined up as speakers. By the time you read this the Wimbledon International Music Festival will have come and gone and provided our local community with many hours of first-class entertainment. I congratulate Bookfest's Director Fiona Razvi and the Music Festival's Director Anthony Wilkinson on these successes.

Another notable event this Autumn has been the Society's Dinner Dance, about which I have written a detailed account elsewhere in these pages. Apart from being a hugely enjoyable and memorable occasion, it has helped us raise significant funds towards our two major projects – the long-overdue refurbishment of our Museum, and the re-design of the Society's and Museum's respective websites. A Refurbishment Committee has been set up to plan the former, and our Communications Group is making quite rapid progress with the latter. A detailed brief for the new combined website has been drawn up, and tenders are being sought. Necessarily, however, the project is dependent upon the funds being available. We anticipate seeking Lottery help with this.

Last, but by no means least, I must congratulate Jacqueline Laurence's Museum team, and particularly Pamela Greenwood, on the success of our "Hidden Treasures" art exhibition this Autumn. This was an opportunity for us to display works of art normally hidden from view in the Museum's archive. Over 50 pictures were on show, the work of over 30 artists, of views all over Wimbledon. The exhibition was accompanied by a very handy Trail Map, with information about, and pinpointing the location of, those views. It is hoped that, subject to resolving any copyright issues, the best of these pictures may in due course feature in greetings cards on sale through the Society.

May I end by wishing all our members a Merry Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year!

**JEREMY HUDSON**

# Record numbers for Hidden Treasures Exhibition

RECORD NUMBERS went to see the Museum exhibition “Hidden Treasures: Art & Artists in Wimbledon” on its opening weekend in October. The guests at the private view on 10th October, including the Mayor, seemed delighted with the Exhibition and the Gallery. They enjoyed two special temporary displays in the Museum to accompany the Exhibition, featuring objects from the Collections which had never been on show before.

The Exhibition title (“Hidden Treasures”) referred to the lives of the artists, and of their subjects. Some of the artists chosen were famous, many were women, and one or two were children. There were paintings by a refugee and by a disabled artist. There were civilian views of war and a foreigner’s view of the English rural idyll which is Wimbledon Common. The accompanying Treasure Map showed

a trail round buildings and places featured in the Exhibition. The title also referred to the pictures themselves, some of which had not been on display since the year they were painted.

## Mapping Merton

A new exhibition subtitled “Where do you think you are” scheduled for mid January will showcase some of the wonderful maps in our collections. Many of the maps are works of art in their own right, and they will also



be accompanied and illustrated by paintings and drawings from the Museum’s art collection. We hope the Exhibition will be instructive as well as beautiful!

We have a map which illustrates plans for a 10mph speed limit zone in 1909, a map which shows where the bombs fell in the WWII, maps which illustrate the arrival of the railways, and everything that came with them. We hope to trace a history of the Borough of Merton through the maps, showing what happened, and, in some cases, what didn’t. We have some stories to tell about wonderful plans which were never realised.

These are the first of a rolling programme of Exhibitions, which we hope will eventually bring all the Museum’s treasures out for their moment in the light.

**JACQUELINE LAURENCE**

## Record Times

THIS HAS BEEN a remarkable year for the donation of unusual records to the Museum. Those concerning living people will have some restrictions for a while due to GDPR. Paul Featherstone of Ridgway Builders, which closed in 2017, has kindly deposited their archives and some objects, including a cast iron lavatory cistern emblazoned ‘G. C. Wood & Sons 120 Kingston Road Wimbledon SW19’ from his great-grandfather’s business. Such Burlington cisterns, according to a relative, were



© Museum of Wimbledon

2s 6d plain and 5 shillings with lettering in the earlier 20th century.

On a smaller scale, but no less interesting, are two Air Raid Precaution (ARP) wardens’ diaries, one covering ‘The Battle of London’ 18 August 1940 – 10 May 1941 and the other 15 August 1940 – 15 September 1943, both mostly about Wimbledon. They were compiled by Lawrence Greener, born Lorenz in 1896 in Wales, one of the six children of Franz Joseph, a German watchmaker and jeweller from Baden. The family was naturalized in 1905. Lawrence, a former Customs & Excise officer, lived at 38 Richmond Road, Wimbledon during WWII. He retired to Bexhill in Sussex where his diaries were discovered after his death in 1985. Lawrence mentions his wife Bernadette and mother-in-law Mary. The diaries nicely complement a scrapbook compiled by Kenneth Warner, and donated by his cousin in 1991, which

contains annotated newspaper cuttings about bombs dropped on Wimbledon.

Another gift, ‘Tribute to Councillor Lady Roney J.P.’ is a book presented to Lady Emily Roney (née Jones) (1872-1957), a Liberal councillor (1922-1935) and the first woman to become Mayor of Wimbledon (1933-1935). She was particularly interested in helping the unemployed and refugees during WWII. Emily Roney was among the first wave of Liberal women to become leaders in local government. The album was found in Putney.

The diaries and the tribute book were discovered during building work and donated by Ivan Doyle and Denis & Anita Bradford respectively. Thanks are also due to Adrian & Sheila Hall of Battle Museum, Sussex for suggesting the gift of the diaries to a fellow Accredited Museum.

**PAMELA GREENWOOD**



# Conversation pieces

CHARLES TOASE offers three intriguing cameos from local history

## Where was Merton Hall?

IN THE September Newsletter I wrote about the footpaths that go down the hill to Merton. Parts of these paths have now become roads, and Merton Hall Road is one of them. But where did it get its name? Where was Merton Hall?

It was, in fact, a farm of over 100 acres, stretching from what is now Dundonald Road down to Kingston Road. The last farmer there was WH Dover, who by the early 1880s had only 74 acres, with five farmhands. The estate was broken

up in 1882; an advertisement in *The Times* claimed “A more eligible building estate it would be impossible to find”. The first developers were a local builder, George Palmer, who built ten houses on the east side between Dundonald and Henfield Roads and then went bankrupt, and Charles Tustin, who developed the west side. They both used reputable architects, and the houses on the east side (odd numbers) have survived.

However, not all the land was built on. In particular, 27 acres between The Chase and Kingston Road were purchased by Quintin

Hogg in 1888 as a sports ground for the Regent Street Polytechnic; in 1899 the Poly sold the land, and a number of residential roads (known as the Polytechnic Estate) were built, with one of the roads being named Quintin Road.

## Brigade of Guards Polo Club

We had an enquiry asking for the location of the Brigade of Guards Polo Club. Their main ground was at Hurlingham, but they started using Wimbledon as an overflow in 1896. The Club took over Lake Farm, using farm buildings as stables for the polo ponies. This was between Wimbledon Park Road on the west (just opposite what is now the All England Lawn Tennis Club) and the District Railway on the east. The area is now part of the public park,

**It is said he brought a fleet of Rolls Royces to carry his five wives and consorts, by whom he had an “estimated” 88 children.**

just over the Wimbledon boundary, and is actually in the borough of Wandsworth.

There are stories of a polo-playing maharajah visiting the Wimbledon ground, bringing his polo ponies with him. This would probably have been Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, thought to be the first man in India to own both a Rolls Royce and an aeroplane. It is said that he brought a fleet of Rolls Royces to carry his five wives and his consorts, by whom he had an “estimated” 88 children.



Map from 1865 showing Mertonhall Farm on the Kingston Road. Lower Worple (top) is now Dundonald Road.

There were regular reports in *The Times* of polo matches played in Wimbledon, mostly against polo teams from other regiments, until everything stopped after 1939. The club left both Hurlingham and Wimbledon, and was later reformed in Windsor.

## Fire station clock

In the last issue of the Newsletter there was a note about the lightning strike on the old fire station in the High Street. The date on the clock, 1890, was the year the fire station was built for the Wimbledon Local Board, but the clock itself is much older.

Originally, the clock was on the Eagle House stables which were at the beginning of Lancaster Road (pictured right). In 1829 the Rev. Thomas Lancaster, whose

‘School for Young Noblemen and Gentlemen’ was at Eagle House, gave the clock to the parish, which paid a Mr Casswell for its winding and maintenance. It stayed where it was until 1890, when the clock and turret were moved to the new fire station at the expense of John Townsend, the chairman of the Wimbledon Local Board. Mr Halfhide, jeweller and clock maker

of 22 High Street (who later moved to 21 Wimbledon Hill where the business finally closed in January 2018 after 150 years) was paid to put it up and add a third face.

The age of the clock may be indicated by an inscription on the bell – ‘Thos. Janaway 1758’. Janaway had a bell foundry in Chelsea which later became part of the well-known Whitechapel Bell Foundry.



Lancaster Road today

© Nigel Davies

## ■ NOTES FROM AROUND THE TABLE ■

### A ‘Marmite’ topic

Street numbering of houses is a subject frequently raised by members of the Society and visitors to the Museum. Numbering is usually standard, there are however many bizarre variations in our area to vex the visitor.

In The Grange, for example, from Southside to Ridgway, numbers run in sequence 1 to 12 on one side of the road, continuing on the opposite side with the teen numbers. Disconcertingly, roads are on occasions renumbered, as happened when Ridgway Place was extended down the hill. One road surely beats the

rest for eccentricity. It has no odd numbers at all and starts at No.14, going up to No. 50. Those familiar with Merton’s Nelson Estate will know the location. It is Trafalgar Road which runs parallel with Quicks Road.

Other anomalies include Pepys Road which continues across Worple Road to Skew Arch. Worple Road originally stopped at Arterberry Road where there were once fields. The border between Ridgway and Copse Hill is in an unexpected place, again possibly related to the old boundaries of farmland.

If you find interesting oddities other than those

listed, let us know, or better still, drop in to the next first Friday of the month meeting.

### Merton Film Studios

Clive Whichelow gave us insider information on his new book. (See p11). This concerned local places once used as sets for films made at Merton. To his delight Norman Plastow produced drawings of plans of the original site of the Studios.

### WT Stead

The many biographies of legendary journalist WT Stead, notably *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and*

*Times of WT Stead*, have been of continuing interest to the Group. The most recent of these, and in stark contrast, is *WT Stead: Nonconformist and Newspaper Prophet* by Stewart J Brown (26 September 2019).

Rosemary Evans, whose special interest is Methodism and Non-conformism in Wimbledon, pursued the colourful story of Stead to his seaside retreat on Hayling Island. Rosemary’s pictures showed a blue plaque marking his house, Hollybush, where he stayed from 1895 until his death on the Titanic in 1912.

# Another Heathrow Consultation

IN SEPTEMBER the Society responded to the latest Heathrow Consultation exercise, this time on their expansion plans.

Our basic position is that Heathrow should not be extended and there should be no third runway.

As London's principal airport, Heathrow is in the wrong place, causing overflying of dense urban areas. There should be a long-term plan to close Heathrow entirely and to develop a major new airport in the south-east, away from high population areas, to grow in tandem with the winding-down of Heathrow. The site of Heathrow could then be developed as a new West London counterpoint to East London's Canary Wharf.

In the short term, we recognise that Heathrow will continue to operate for many years. But we suggest that the environmental effects can be mitigated by progressively ramped-up regulations on permitted future noise and pollution. In particular, we advocate the setting of progressively more onerous noise standards, perhaps every five years. The measuring of noise should be done by an independent body, with 'fines' or cost penalties paid by the airport. The airport would have the role of collecting fines from individual airlines if it so wished.

We also advocate that the Government should define the maximum number of flights per year (as now), plus times when no aircraft movements are permitted, to ensure that night-time flights are banned. Any emergency flights

should result in a significant 'fine' for the airport, as above.

The 'fines' or cost penalties that accumulate would go to an independently administered public fund, and used to sound-proof existing housing, build local community facilities etc.

Should the third runway be approved, all necessary works, including construction of the new runway, deviation of the M25, compensation of those affected by compulsory purchase etc, need to be borne by the airport owners, not the public purse. However, should any public funding be required, it should be on the basis of acquiring the freehold of parts of the Heathrow site. This would be vested in a public body and would be of value when redevelopment occurs.

The full text of this response can be viewed on the Society's website.

## The Rose Cottage saga continues

ROSE COTTAGE was an early 19th c. house built in the grounds of Lord Nelson's Estate in what became Hamilton Road. We opposed its demolition a couple of years ago, believing that the building could have a future as a community asset. Sadly, that battle was lost and Rose Cottage is no more.

We have now seen plans to develop the site into 13 flats. We objected to this as an overdevelopment: seven of the flats would have had only a single aspect, some bedrooms faced each other across a narrow light well and three ground floor flats had no private open space. There was no provision for social housing.

The Council agreed that this was overdevelopment that failed to respect the Hamilton Road street scene and refused to grant planning permission.

## Farewell to Joyce Pountain

JOYCE IS A LONG-TIME Wimbledon resident and member of the Society who served as a member of the Planning Committee for many years.

More recently she has been a highly effective chair of "Green Coffee", the monthly group that co-ordinates environmental and green issues around the Borough.

As a result she was nominated, though unsuccessfully, for this year's Mayor of London's Volunteering Award.

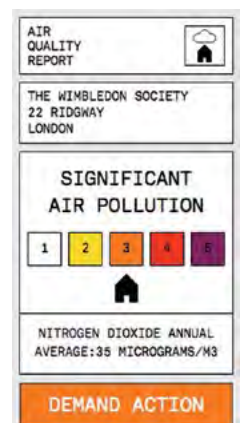
Joyce is moving back to her native Scotland at the end of the year and we wish her well with the move and her new home there.

## How to check if you are in a pollution hotspot

SCIENTISTS AT King's College London have launched a website – [www.addresspollution.org](http://www.addresspollution.org) – where Londoners can discover the level of nitrogen dioxide for their postcode. This is a toxic gas released when diesel, petrol and gas are burnt.

The legal limit is 40 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide per cubic metre of air (mcg/m<sup>3</sup>). The highest reported levels are more than 60 mcg/m<sup>3</sup> in parts of central London whilst areas on London's green fringes can be as low as 22.5 mcg/m<sup>3</sup>.

With consumers becoming increasingly more environmentally aware, it is thought that areas with high mcg/m<sup>3</sup> levels will suffer consequential falls in property values: and that this may become a driver to encourage more effective action to stay within the legal limit.





## 50 new water fountains for London

IN ORDER TO HELP reduce the number of single-use plastic bottles, the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, announced in the summer the locations of fifty new water fountains. To increase public awareness, they will be in a bold design that will be easily visible. Each one is fitted with a device to measure the amount of water dispensed to demonstrate the equivalent number of single-use plastic bottles saved.

Four of the new fountains are in Merton – at Raynes Park Station, Morden Underground Station, Colliers Wood Underground Station and Mitcham Town Centre.



© Nigel Davies

The Wimbledon Society has plans for the water fountain on Parkside to be restored with running water

## Concrete batching plant appeal result

THE PLANNING INSPECTOR has upheld Merton’s refusal to allow this development in Waterside Way, which the Society had opposed on environmental grounds.

## 5G or not 5G – that is the question

THE PROGRESS of mobile technology delivers a generational advance roughly every 10 years, and it is becoming increasingly sophisticated and ‘smarter’.

The rollout of 5G in the UK is already in progress with 5G networks operating in parts of London and other cities. Although 5G is not yet fully developed, early standards were agreed in 2019. It’s intended to deliver ultrafast, reliable, mobile connectivity, supporting more and speedier data. New applications might include autonomous vehicles, traffic controls, advanced manufacturing, augmented reality, and smart homes.

There have been some expressions of uncertainty concerning certain aspects but in essence there are four implications for 5G that may need to be addressed. These are technology, street clutter, health and privacy issues.

5G uses higher frequency waves which travel shorter distances but are more susceptible to urban blocking of signals. So 5G networks

will require more transmitters at closer intervals, closer to ground level. Coordination would be essential between the main operators to encourage mast sharing and so have fewer masts, or duplicated road works. Without cooperation unacceptable visual degradation of the environment would occur.

There would appear to be some prima facie evidence to question

the safety of this new technology. There are some opinions that insufficient testing has been carried out to determine health implications, but these matters are outside the scope of this short article.

The four operators would have a huge database relating to frequency of calls, live and exact location of callers, collection of metadata, information sharing and traffic analysis. These aspects would merit review under digital privacy legislation.

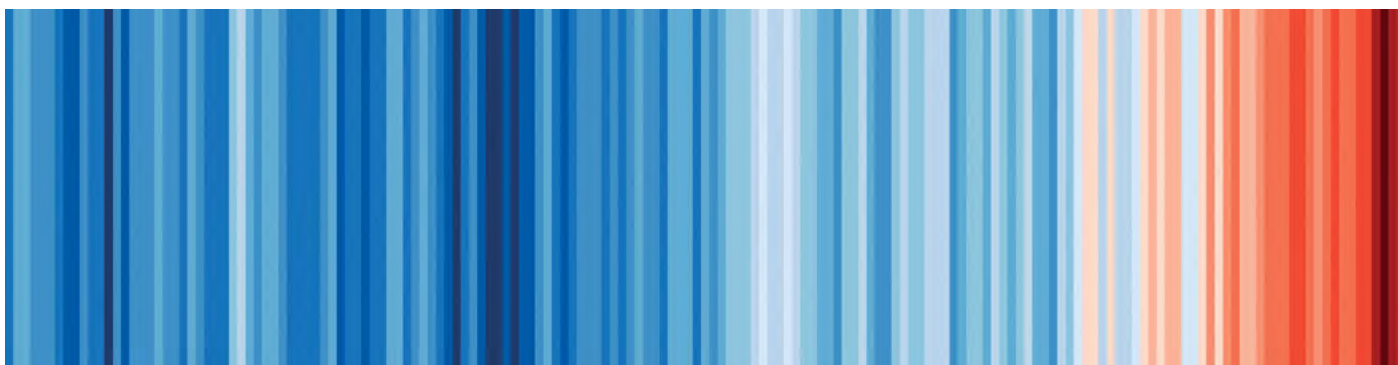
At present there is no publicly available ‘plan’ for these 5G installations in our borough. We do not believe the borough should be flooded by a myriad of applications with the council taking ad hoc decisions on each application.

Accordingly, we have asked the council to hold discussions with the four main operators to understand what their plans are for the rollout of 5G infrastructure, dealing with redundant equipment, and the sharing of facilities.

The Council should then make public the results of these meetings, and then produce a clear planning policy for dealing with 5G applications.

**There are four implications that may need to be addressed – technology, street clutter, health, and privacy issues.**





Data visualisation graphic produced by Ed Hawkins (scientist), University of Reading showing the difference in global temperature from 1850 to 2018 from a mean average taken between 1951 and 1980

## Climate emergency

**SUSANNA RIVIERE summarises some of the ways in which the Society plans to co-operate with Merton Council on this subject.**

IT SEEMS THAT Merton Council is starting to take meaningful action to tackle the climate emergency. In July, a cross-party motion was unanimously passed declaring a Climate Emergency and pledging to become a carbon neutral Council by 2030 and a carbon neutral Borough by 2050. This followed pressure from St Helier Ward resident and Green Party member Dr Pippa Maslin, who has several times publicly asked the Council to make the declaration and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Her fellow campaigners gathered over 2000 signatures for a Climate Emergency petition.

This follows the Mayor of London's commitment in his Environment Strategy to make London a zero carbon city by 2050, and the Prime Minister committing to the U.K. reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050 as recommended by the Committee on Climate Change.

To put this in context, the latest data from the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit shows that by acting now we can reduce carbon emissions within 12 years and hold

the increase in the global average temperature to below 2°C, which should avoid the worst effects of climate breakdown.

To achieve this LBM is:

- Setting up a Community Forum, chaired by Councillor Tobin Byers, consisting of about 12 members of the public, to meet monthly until December to consider specific areas. There will also be a list of people not on the Forum who will be kept in touch with its work.
- Holding a public Consultation which is available on the LBM web site (see below)
- Tendering for consultants to carry out an inventory of CO2 emissions in the Borough.
- Gathering data to create fact sheets which will be available on the LBM web site.
- Consulting internally.

Members of the Wimbledon Society's Planning & Environment Committee (PEC) met Katie Halter, Merton's Climate Change Officer, who is spearheading this work, in early September to discuss how the expertise of PEC members can best be used to assist LBM in putting together the Action Plan and achieving its goals.

We agreed a variety of ways of achieving this. First, the PEC will respond through the Consultation,

and will receive Community Forum papers in advance of meetings, so it can produce a committee response. Also, PEC members with specific expertise are giving Katie Halter direct input on these subjects. The PEC has produced, and sent to Katie Halter, a short paper summarising its initial suggestions, in the hope of prompting some immediate action. We also encourage Wimbledon Society members to take part in the public consultation, which **closes on 9th December**. The link is given below.

We hope that the Wimbledon Society, through the PEC, can play a significant part in this initiative, helping to achieve the ultimate aim of making Wimbledon a healthier and more pleasant place to live.

**FOOTNOTE:** Things are moving quite rapidly in this area and may have changed since this article went to press. For up to date information visit the LBM website at [www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/sustainability-and-climate-change](http://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/sustainability-and-climate-change) The public consultation is available at: <https://consult.merton.gov.uk/kms/elab.aspx?noip=1&CampaignId=740> or go to [www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk) and follow these links: **Council and local democracy > Get involved > Take part in consultations > Climate Emergency resident's survey 2019**



# Tree planting

“People who will not sustain trees will soon live in a world that will not sustain people.” (Bryce Nelson) **TONY MICHAEL** agrees, and proposes local action.



© Adobe Stock Photos

TREES PLAY a vital part in our well-being and environment. There are some 7 million trees in London, and nearly a quarter of a million in Merton. Roughly 23,000 are in our streets, 70,000 in public spaces, and perhaps 140,000 in private spaces and gardens.

However, it is estimated that today more trees are lost than are planted. Trees in streets and verges are damaged by vehicles, dogs, services trenching, diseases and poor maintenance. Many trees on private land can be removed without needing approval. In new developments, simply replacing big lost trees with young stock on a ‘one-for-one’ basis is utterly inadequate.

The London Plan policy (8.7.2) aims for a 10% increase in all Boroughs’ tree stocks by 2050. Taking likely losses into account, this means planting some 24,000 new trees in Merton over the next 30 years.

This needs a proper tree planting strategy, something that the Council agreed to in 2012, but which seemingly has not yet been done. The Council’s arboriculturalists need to be given the resources, so that they can work with local groups and achieve this aim.

Whether a net increase of 800 trees each year would be sufficient to meet the Climate Emergency plans is not yet clear. But what is

certain is that we need to radically re-think our whole approach.

As a start we need to adopt a planning policy on development sites that “**replacement trees need to match the combined ages of any trees that have been lost**” (the Society has been pressing the Council to agree this since 2014 without success: see the design guide on the Society website).

Also, significant new tree planting needs to be encouraged in both public and private lands, and the street tree planting programme very much increased.

So – can you suggest which of our ‘bare’ streets would benefit from new trees?

# Return of the native

**DAVE DAWSON** recounts the discovery of a rare native plant in central Wimbledon

JERSEY CUDWEED has always been uncommon on the mainland of Britain. It was first noticed in 1690, but had gone extinct in Breckland by 1930. Then a few were found 20 years ago on the north Norfolk coast and on coastal shingle at Dungeness. Because of this rarity, it is given special protection in schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Unsurprisingly, it was not found in the last comprehensive survey of London’s flora, published in 1983. So I was surprised last summer to find a few plants amongst derelict crazy paving on the Ashburton Estate, Putney Heath.

It’s a white woolly biennial with heads of chaffy flowers: a relative of

the florists’ “Pearly Everlasting”. I knew the plant already, as pukatea, growing in the sand flats of the Waimakariri estuary north of Christchurch, New Zealand, in my youth. I had heard of its discovery, ten years back, in London Docklands by a local botanist, John Swindells, but never expected to see it in Wimbledon.

This summer, as I helped with some work at Wimbledon Guild’s Drake House, there in the paving in front of the building was a flourishing population of pukatea. A specially protected species in the heart of urban Wimbledon!



Pukatea is one of a number of species of coasts and river shingle plants now finding suitable growing conditions in neglected urban pavements and similar inhospitable places. It is tough enough to withstand extremes of drought and temperature, so is well adapted to the changes we expect from the climate crisis.

Another such once rare species is the annual grass, Water bent, which turned up on London’s pavements around 15 years ago and is now an abundant weed throughout our area. It is believed to be an early introduction to Britain from southern Europe. Before its arrival locally, it was confined to rocky slopes on the south coast of England and the Channel Islands. Its spread is doubtless due to climate change.

© Dave Dawson



*Sudoku solver David, with Max*

## DAVID MORRIS

1935 – 2019

DAVID MORRIS, who died in August, was for many years a staunch supporter of both the Wimbledon Society and its Museum.

As a member of the Museum Committee he was the Portraits Curator, making orderly sense of the motley assembly of oils, watercolours, engravings and photographs which make up the collection. He also advised on

insurance, not just for the items displayed and stored, but also for when they went out for exhibitions (eg: in Eagle House) and on loan to other museums.

In recent years he prepared a detailed long-term forward planning document for the Society's Strategy Group. In this he outlined various ways to move the Society forward in the 21st century and to increase its membership and thus its influence. This is still the gold standard by which the Society is operating.

David's background was in accountancy where he was affectionately known in his firm as DEAM – the initials with which he signed himself (David Edward Alban) and to be on the DEAM team was regarded by colleagues and the junior staff he led as an important career step.

He took a first-class degree in PPE at University College, Oxford and in his accountancy exams came second in the whole country.

His energetic approach to life was to some degree hampered by a serious attack of tuberculosis while on National Service, which left him bedridden for some months and also meant withdrawing from the more energetic of sports. He was instructed to drink Guinness to aid his recovery, so at university he formed a Guinness-drinking group – a first example, perhaps, of his future team-building skills.

A great love was sailing and he kept a boat at Emsworth, near Chichester and delighted in developing skills and friendships aboard.

With his shock of white hair he was a familiar figure around Wimbledon, in Sainsbury's as well as the boardroom, and his friendly but firm approach to life will be missed by all who knew him.

The Society deeply regrets his passing and sends sympathy to his widow, Moira, and sons William and Richard.

## ■ ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS ■

### **VISIT on 16 January 2020**

Explore the untold story of the women of Pre-Raphaelite art. Lecture and Exhibition at the **National Portrait Gallery**. Booking form with this newsletter.

### **LECTURE on 30 January 2020**

An intimate glimpse behind the scenes of **New Wimbledon Theatre** with Sherrie Plant. Free lecture at Emmanuel Church, Ridgway.

### **VISIT on 24 March 2020**

A guided tour of the headquarters of the **Royal Institute of British Architects**, 66 Portland Place, with an overview of the history of the RIBA. Booking form with this newsletter.

### **LECTURE on 2 April 2020**

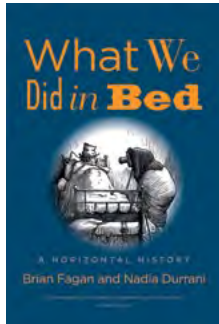
The changing seasons at the outstanding **garden of Fittleworth House**, presented by Mark Saunders, head gardener. Free lecture at Emmanuel Church, Ridgway.



# Christmas stocking fillers

## What we did in Bed: A Horizontal History

Brian Fagan & Nadia Durrani  
Publisher  
(Faber £20)



DESPITE ITS saucy title and playful jacket, this study by two archaeologists Brian Fagan and Nadia Durrani is a serious though immensely readable exploration of the bed as a social artefact. Nadia, co-author (and Wimbledon Society member) explains “In ten chapters we tell the history of the bed – and everything we did in it.”

The book opens with “deep archaeology” starting with the world’s oldest-known beds: 70,000 years old, high in a rock shelter in South Africa, through to the stone beds at Skara Brae in Orkney, to early beds found on Malta. The narrative then looks at the bed’s purpose. This was a place for sex, death, childbirth, storytelling, and sociability as well as sleeping, a place for dreams; beds as ‘cosmological platform’ linking the living with the dead and with ancestors. Further chapters are devoted to bedchambers as public spaces, (Louis XIV and Winston Churchill) as well as private refuges.

One of Nadia’s favourite chapters is ‘Strange Bedfellows’. Here the Great Bed of Ware illustrates that it was quite common when travelling to bed-share with complete strangers. In terms of local history, there is also a Wimbledon/Merton interest in so far as the book mentions the bed of William Morris in a discussion on the industrialisation of sleep.

The work covers huge time spans – from the bedtime habits of Tutankhamen to Trump. A reviewer, Paul Chrystal adds that the book “is so entertaining that it will keep you awake long into the night.” We agree.

Postscript: Sleep researcher Jim Horne, cautioning against the theories of Freud and Jung maintained that dreams are nothing more than ‘B’ movies that deserve to be forgotten; “a surreal pastiche of what we have recently encountered and thought about during wakefulness”. The author of our second Christmas book might have a comment to make about that.

## Lights, Camera, Merton: The Films of Merton Park Studios

Clive Whichelow  
(Enigma Publishing £9.99)



IN THE EARLY days of cinema ‘going to the pictures’ was an event. Not a mad dash to catch the Oscar nominee, but a leisurely evening of entertainment which comprised along with the big picture, a newsreel and a second feature. Keen-eyed filmgoers might have noticed that many of these ‘B’ movies were made at Merton Park

**Despite creaky technology, the acting and plots are no worse and in some cases are superior to those of ‘unmissable’ TV offerings today**

Studios which were opened in 1929 at Long Lodge in Kingston Road.

Clive Whichelow, a member of our Local History Group recently published *Lights, Camera, Merton!* a record of the days when small studios were in full swing producing large numbers of low-budget films. Clive makes a case for the poorly rated ‘B’ movie, notably Merton’s, which he says in his Introduction “were better than they needed to be” suggesting that the reason for much of the disparagement is ignorance since “people do not know what was produced here, or by whom”.

J. Arthur Rank, no less, began his brilliant career in Merton Park Studios. “Not many people know that”, to use the catchphrase attributed to Michael Caine by Peter Sellers, two huge international stars who both worked at MPS. Nor are people aware of the many others who plied their trade here such as Richard Attenborough, Diana Dors, Petula Clark, Stanley Baker to name a few from Clive’s starry list, along with household names like John Thaw, Joan Littlewood, Barbara Windsor and Spike Milligan, who also appeared in Merton’s films.

The Studios specialised in crime series and are remembered for their *Edgar Wallace, Scotland Yard*, and *Scales of Justice* thrillers, occasionally repeated on TV or found as DVDs. Despite creaky technology, the acting and plots are no worse and in some cases are superior to those of ‘unmissable’ TV offerings today.

Clive’s book should prove indispensable for quizzers. Example in the film category:

What was Stalin’s favourite film?

The Museum of Wimbledon holds the answer.

**MONICA ELLISON**





Get some space in your life.

# Greenwatch

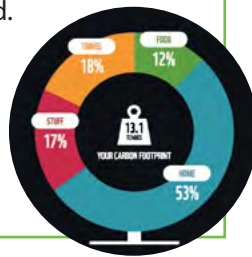
Following on from her article on p8, *SUSANNA RIVIERE* suggests how we can all start checking our personal carbon footprint.

## The carbon cost of living

Many people feel helpless and anxious in the face of the mounting evidence of climate emergency. However, there is plenty that individuals can do.

The first step is to measure our carbon footprint precisely. This can be done with a carbon footprint calculator, and many of these are available on the internet. Two of the simplest to use are one at [www.carbonindependent.org](http://www.carbonindependent.org) and one from the Worldwide Fund For Nature at [footprint.wwf.org.uk](http://footprint.wwf.org.uk). The WWF site also shows details of the results and suggests ways in which your footprint can be reduced.

The information obtained from doing these easy and interesting calculations gives a starting point for reducing our carbon footprints in an informed and realistic way.



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## Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

*SIMON LEE* and the Conservators are delighted to announce the launch of the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons.

### Who are the Friends?

The Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons brings together all of those who are connected by a passion for the Commons, for the purposes of collective celebration and fund raising.

### Why Support Us?

Every path, heathland, bog, stream, pond and woodland has an incalculable value that requires ongoing investment. Without skilled conservation officers, mounted keepers and the other members of our very committed staff, our unique Commons would not be as they are today: safe, clean and preserved. That is why every contribution you make, large or small, counts.

By becoming a Friend of Wimbledon and Putney Commons, you will be playing a crucial role in preserving, protecting and maintaining this unique and special place.

As a Friend, you will be invited to attend special events that will provide a unique experience of the Commons.

Three annual membership options are available:

- **Friend** (Individual) £30 per annum
- **Friend** (Household – two adults and two children) £40 per annum
- **Benefactor** £250 per annum

For any questions, please contact us by email at [friends@wpcc.org.uk](mailto:friends@wpcc.org.uk) or by phone at 020 8788 7655. Alternatively, visit us at The Ranger's Office, Manor Cottage, Windmill Road, Wimbledon SW19 5NR.

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**The Wimbledon Society** was founded in 1903. It is a Registered Charity (No 1164261), and a company limited by guarantee (No 9818707). **Annual subscription rates:** Individual £15; Couple/family £20; Affiliated: £25. Membership application forms can be downloaded from the Society website or collected from the Museum. **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.

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