



A REASON TO CELEBRATE THE MUSEUM

As the Museum prepares to celebrate its centenary with a special exhibition opening on 16 January, **CASSANDRA TAYLOR**, chairman of the Museum Committee, explains how the Museum came into being and the people who made it happen

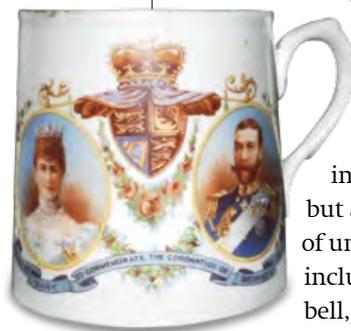
THE MUSEUM was officially opened on 19 October 1916 during the closing days of the terrible Battle of the Somme for which soldiers had only recently been training on the Common (see page 6). That a group of philanthropic burghers should have decided to pool their private collections and form a museum at such a time is less incongruous than it might appear to us during this present WWI commemorative period. In fact the idea of a museum had first been mooted in 1904, when a sub-committee of The John Evelyn Club (later The Wimbledon Society) chaired by Richardson Evans



Founding father: Dr Francis Bather (above, courtesy of the Royal Society) ran the Museum from 1916 to 1934; his secretary and later Museum curator Margaret Grant (above left); a 1911 Coronation mug (below) donated by Miss Bather to the Museum

appeared for pictures, prints and objects of antiquarian value.

The response was excellent though the results were mixed. It produced an eclectic trove of watercolours, maps, portraits and interesting artefacts but also a miscellany of unsuitable items including a falcon's bell, a wooden ear



trumpet and the official coat of the Wimbledon beadle plus, frankly, a load of old rubbish. There was, however, enough suitable material to create the bare bones of a museum.

In the previous century Joseph Toynbee, the distinguished anaesthetist and a founder of The Village Club, had been keen to develop "not the exhibition of rare and so-called curious objects, but to develop and foster in the minds of all classes of people an interest in the common objects of Nature which surround them". He even produced a small book called *Hints for the Formation of a Local Museum* but unfortunately died in 1866 before plans had reached the drawing board.

The collection of items deemed suitable for display were examined on 3 March 1916 by Colonel Plunkett, Dr Francis Bather and W Druce and subsequently displayed in the Reading Room of the Club. Because of wartime shortages there was no money available for fixtures and fittings. The collection could be viewed by anyone let in by the Club's caretaker, whose lack of supervision meant that some items 'walked' out with the odd visitor. **(continued on p3)**

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Chairman's report

WE ARE approaching a milestone in the affairs of the Society. It was at our AGM in May 2014 that members present gave approval to the Executive Committee to investigate changing the status of the Society from an unincorporated body to that of a company limited by guarantee. A group of EC members looked into this proposal with care, and recommended to the AGM earlier this year that we should proceed with the change – the recommendation was accepted nem con. After much work by the EC group, with pro bono legal advice and consultation with our accountants, we have reached the stage of incorporating a new limited company. Our name does not change and we are still The Wimbledon Society. The Charity Commission has accepted our application for registration. We now have a new company registration number and a new charity number. The final stage will entail the transfer of assets to the new company, and we plan to complete the process by 31 December 2015. This is indeed a major step for the Society and will put us on a firm footing to face the future with confidence.

The public consultation process for Crossrail 2 is now in progress. If it does go ahead, the impact on Wimbledon will be hugely significant, and much of the current townscape in the central area will be transformed. We have been following the proposals with great interest, and you will see an explanatory article on page 4, where we set out the Society's view. It is worth looking at the Crossrail website – www.crossrail2.co.uk, to find out more. We would encourage all members to send replies/comments by email to crossrail2@tfl.gov.uk or by post to Freeport, Crossrail 2 Consultations.

In the last Newsletter, we mentioned our search for new members for the Executive Committee of the Society. There was a strong response and we are in discussion with some very promising candidates. The door is still open, and we are inviting expressions of interest for this key role. If you would like to join us in ensuring that the Society is properly run, we are keen to hear from you. Please have a look at the note on the back page.

ASIF MALIK

The Great History Throw Down

MONICA ELLISON on the renewed search for Wimbledon historians

THE RICHARD MILWARD Essay Award will be made in Autumn 2016. Small stirrings have been noted and we can assure anyone toying with a



Inspiration: Richard Milward, who taught history at Wimbledon College for 40 years

topic or even an idea for one, that the competition will take place next year. This biennial award is for an original article (between 1,000 and 2,000 words) on a local history subject submitted by 19 October 2016.

The prize commemorates the work of Richard Milward (1924-2006), the brilliant master, lecturer, and prolific historian who, apart from his life as an undergraduate at Oxford, spent all his years in Wimbledon, many of them in the service of the Society.

Kirk Bannister, our winner in 2014, says: "If you have a love for our history here in Wimbledon this essay contest is for you. Whether it's an interest in some of the more notable past residents, or any aspect of Wimbledon's past, then writing an essay about it is incredibly

rewarding. Do not be daunted by the idea of research, I found that most of the resources I needed were available at the Museum of Wimbledon or Morden Library."

It is useful to bear in mind that with every year that passes, another drops into the history remit box, so that the story of more people, organisations, societies, schools, churches, houses, roads etc, become available as subjects for a great essay. Email milwardprize@wimbledonsociety.org.uk for advice.

Entry Forms and Terms & Conditions

are available from the Museum of Wimbledon, 22 Ridgway, Wimbledon SW19 4QN, or online at:

www.wimbledonsociety.org.uk and www.wimbledonmuseum.org.uk

The Museum (continued from p1)

A large audience attended a *conversazione* in the Lecture Hall where speeches were given by the President, Sir Thomas Jackson, the well-known architect who lived in Wimbledon, and Richardson Evans, a local philanthropist.

Just as the war ended, the Club building was requisitioned for military use and the collection was moved to Eagle House, apart from the stuffed birds which were sent to the Library.

The Museum did not reopen until 1920 when Margaret Grant, who was secretary to Dr Bather and Almoner at the Cottage Hospital, was appointed curator. At the request of the village Club in 1924 the Museum was moved from the Reading Room to the disused classrooms upstairs where it remains today.

It was closed during World War II after which attempts to rehouse the Museum in Eagle House or

develop it by the Council into a municipal Museum and Art Gallery fell through because the annual running cost of £1,650 was thought exorbitant.

Thanks to the hard work of successive Museum Committees the Museum is now established on a sound basis. A team of volunteers oversees visitors during the weekend opening times and under Dr Pamela Greenwood, Head of Collections, the curators of the various sections (archaeology, archives, books, manuscripts, maps, natural history, portraits and prints, watercolours and drawings) work on conserving and recording the items in their care.

The special exhibition 'The Museum of Wimbledon – a Centenary Celebration' will be open from 16 January to mid-April. In addition to the normal opening hours of 2.30–5pm on Saturdays and Sundays the Museum will also be open from 11am on Sundays.

SOCIETY NEWS

Society incorporation status

GOOD progress has been made since the AGM. The new company, called 'The Wimbledon Society', has been incorporated, and our application for registration with the Charity Commission has been accepted. This means we are on target to complete the process by the financial year end 31 December.

All members will receive a letter explaining the changes and setting out the details of the Society's new bank account with the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). The letter will ask you to cancel your existing standing order and set up a new one in favour of the new CAF account.

In order to facilitate the transfer of members to the new company, the existing Society will be kept in being for at least two years.

In due course, the company's articles and the rules will be published on the Society website.

Crossrail 2: dramatic effect on Wimbledon

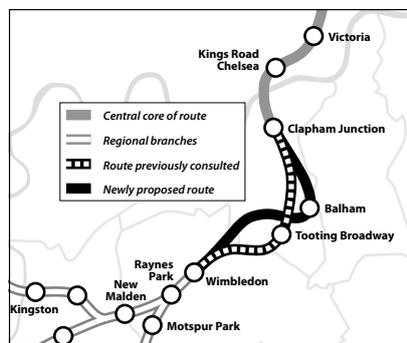
Crossrail 2 is up for consultation. This is the Planning Committee's view of the published plans

CROSSRAIL 2 is a proposed new rail line serving London and the South East, linking Surrey to Hertfordshire via Central London. A new station is proposed at Wimbledon, because it provides a good interchange with various National Rail services, the Underground District Line and the Tram.

Up to 30 additional trains per hour is the aim, reducing journey times and relieving pressure on central London rail termini, particularly Waterloo.

The current consultation shows two new lines being built beside the present four lines from Raynes Park. These then pass alongside the present Wimbledon station, occupying the site of the present day Centre Court shopping centre. The new station will be 250m long, and lower than the existing platforms.

Going towards London, the tracks then drop down and enter a pair of tunnels, the portals being at Gap Road. From that point, until the



tracks emerge in London's northern suburbs, the Crossrail 2 tracks will remain in tunnel.

In order to build a pair of tunnels of some 20 miles in length, large construction and working sites and shafts will be needed in the Wimbledon area for 10 years between 2020 and 2030, and along the whole length of the tunnels.

The following working sites are being suggested for Wimbledon – their existing buildings would need to be demolished:

- Centre Court shopping centre, but not the listed Town Hall building.
- The 'Fridge on the Bridge' building opposite the station, being shops, car park and offices.
- The conservation area between

The Broadway and Hartfield Road including the Prince of Wales pub, shops, businesses etc.

- The flats beside the 'Fridge' and fronting Hartfield Crescent.
- The Queen's Road Church and adjacent property.
- A site beside the Magistrates Court on Alexandra Road.
- Dundonald Road depot which is a current railway facility.
- Weir Road, currently in industrial/commercial use plus Homebase, eventually being used as a rail depot for 'stabling' trains.
- Gap Road, being the entrance to the twin tunnels.
- The present station entrance remains.

Redevelopment of these vacated sites within the town centre would not be until completion in 2030. A new vehicular bridge is proposed between Alexandra Road and Queen's Road.

Although not programmed to start until c.2020, the **important decisions** on the basic design of the whole project, and how it affects Wimbledon, **need to be taken now**.

This project has very major > p5

Planning applications 2015

The Planning Committee has reviewed 150 applications this year and sent off more than 50 objection letters. In addition, letters concerning affordable housing, council funding and general policy matters have gone to Government both local and central. Here is a selection of our comments on recent applications:

■ The former King of Denmark pub at **83 Ridgway**: the Co-op wants to open a store on the ground floor of

the new building. The Society has the following concerns: parking in the area is restricted to a few meters and all surrounding roads are in CPZs; we recommend the Council introduces 20-minute free parking. The local Jenkins shop will be affected and may have to close. We do not want another licensee in the Village area and the associated noise and disruption from deliveries and rubbish disposal.

■ **5 Oldfield Road**: this application refers to the erection of a part single, part two-storey rear extension, a rear roof extension and a new bay window to the front of the house. This house

is locally listed and may date from about 1820. The Council's Character Assessment says it could be considered for statutory listing. The proposal would be detrimental to the property and the entire row of cottages in which it is set. We have encouraged the Council to approach English Heritage to list this historic terrace.

■ **Waitrose, Alexandra Road**: an application was made for a café in the supermarket when the original planning permission had conditions to protect local shops and cafés. The Society is concerned that this would affect businesses in Leopold Road. > p5

implications for Wimbledon town centre and its hinterland, which is why the present round of consultation is so important. For example, there is the increased accessibility which would stimulate new businesses and investment, increasing the potential hinterland of the town centre, but may create significant redevelopment pressures.

Also, there are the implications of the actual construction process, how the major engineering works will impact on the town and local people, how the loss and demolition of currently important sites will affect local life and the town's economic base.

In its response to the consultation the Society has taken the view that this project **cannot be seen as merely a 'rail project'**, which is very much how it now comes across. Instead, it needs to be **fully integrated into the Town's long-term planning future.**

Demolition of substantial sites such as Centre Court will have a major impact on the town's 'offer', and its local shops and businesses.

We feel that such disruptive proposals should not be the starting point for a new town plan, and **alternative alignments and**

working sites need now to be explored.

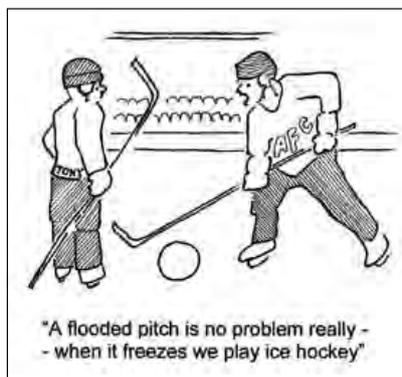
Other points include:

- The need for a **brand new station complex** with all the public transport lines and buses, and better access, creating a new design character in the town's heart. Retaining the present outdated station seems bizarre.
 - **Building in foundations** for a major new development above the tracks.
 - Returning a **civic presence** to the Town, lost in 1985.
 - **Limiting the height of new development.**
 - Establishing a **covered pedestrian route through from Alexandra Road to the Town Hall**, and then to a pedestrianised Broadway.
 - **Redesigning the outdated Raynes Park station**, with a large ground level concourse opening out and linking the two halves of the shopping centre.
 - Delivery and removal of the very large volumes of machinery and excavated spoil etc, **all to be via the rail network**, to protect the local road system and environment.
- Details can be found on the TfL website. A copy of the Society's letter is on the Society website.

■ **21 Herbert Road:** an application for a new modern house as an end-of-terrace extension to an existing Victorian building, out of character in this road of period dwellings. Although a revised application was submitted to the Council following refusal of the original plans, no material change had been made.

■ **Railway embankment opposite 2-4 Pepys Road, Raynes Park:** an application for three blocks of 2x3 storey semi-detached houses to be built on this land. This development – right up to the back edge of the pavement with no setting back, inadequate

amenity space, poor outlook, ground vibration problems from rail traffic, loss of green areas and a change to the scale of a small street – is of poor quality.



David Merritt – New Secretary for the Planning Committee

JENNIFER NEWMAN relinquished her role as Secretary of the Planning Committee after a number of years of successful and efficient tenure, to take up another position within the Society.

David Merritt, with a background in Government and commerce, has now taken over the reins and is using his skills to great effect. David is originally from Yorkshire and moved to Wimbledon recently. He says he is enjoying the work of the Committee and looks forward to future involvement in PC activities.

POSITIONS VACANT

Volunteer Planning Committee Members

THE PLANNING COMMITTEE is looking for additional members.

The Committee meets monthly on pre-planned Mondays between 7.15 and 9.30pm at the Wimbledon Museum (22 Ridgway SW19).

We examine the applications submitted to the Merton Council Planning Department and deal with a number of other matters concerning the wellbeing of Wimbledon. Examples are affordable housing, Local and Central Government issues and War Memorials. On applications there is a rota system whereby members take one week's applications and look for aspects which may be inappropriate.

Experience is not required – there will be a period of induction and 'shadowing' during which a new member follows the work of a more experienced colleague. All the Committee's work is via the internet so access to a computer and some IT literacy is necessary.

Interested applicants should contact the Committee's Chairman, John Mays – john@themayses.co.uk or on 07850 69 77 23.

Preparation for war on the Common

CHARLES TOASE reveals new material about the WWI camps

IN 1915 the War Office started planning large camps where soldiers could be trained and kitted out before being sent to France. One of the largest was on Wimbledon Common, which had a history of military gatherings dating back to the 18th century reviews of troops by George III and the annual meetings of the National Rifle Association in the 19th century. We have in the Museum a number of photographs of the camp in 1918, and some new material has now come to light that fills in the details.

In October 1915 the War Office issued a specification for buildings for “a camp of infantry at Wimbledon Common”. There were to be 192 “barrack blocks” plus eight for officers, together with a lot of ancillaries such as cook houses, 43 blocks of ablutions and latrines, and a rifle range for four battalions (which suggests there were several thousand men being trained at a time). Horses were essential then, and 64 stalls were provided for them, necessitating eight dung-pits. The main part of the camp was along Robin Hood Road near Caesar’s Well. Judging by the photos, the training seems to have included bayonet practice and digging trenches.

The first huts were built in October and November 1915 but do not seem to have been occupied until the following year.

The King’s Royal Rifle Corps moved there in April 1916; they were sent to the front in May for the Battle of the Somme; we have the diary of one of them, Ernest Gooderidge, who describes his time in Wimbledon, with



night operations, and meeting Wimbledon girls (particularly Dolly Candy). He arrived at the camp on 24 April and left 24 May, marching through Wimbledon watched by local people “showering packets of cigarettes upon us”. He was killed on the Somme on 4 October, just one of the third of a million who died there. Today there is a memorial on the Common to those who were at the KRRC camp.

After the war ended, Wimbledon became the first of 20 “dispersal camps”. It was capable of handling 2,000 men every 24 hours, and most men went through it in four hours. Each man was given a medical check, his arms were collected, and he was offered either 52s 6d or being measured for a suit; he was given two new £1 banknotes, a railway voucher to his home, unemployment pay for up to 24 weeks until he got a job, £1 for his greatcoat (he could keep his uniform for a month, by which time he would have received his new suit, or bought one with his 52s 6d).

The camp remained on the Common beyond 1918 for another five years, in spite of constant



The camps: barrack blocks and trenches (top) and bayonet practice (above). Further images from the camp can be found under ‘Collections’ on the Museum of Wimbledon’s website, www.wimbledonmuseum.org.uk

complaints from Wimbledon people. In 1920 Wimbledon’s MP Sir Joseph Hood was asking questions of the War Office, and in 1921 some of the huts were removed, but in that year there were still 3,787 people in the camp, according to the census. It took another two years before it was cleared completely in March 1923.

However, some of it had gone before then; in 1920 Hawes held an auction at the camp of “domestic and office equipment” from the Royal Army Ordnance Corps depot there, including 40 marquees, 40 beds, a billiard table, and 1,000 “tables various”.

Photos courtesy London Borough of Merton

Wimbledon slave owners

WHEN SLAVERY was made illegal, largely through the efforts of William Wilberforce of Lauriston House in Southside, the government paid compensation to slave owners. Recent research by members of the Group has revealed that a number of Wimbledon people benefited in the 1830s, including the McEvoy family of The Keir in Westside, already known to us as major owners of slaves working in the sugar and rum industry in the West Indies. Also in Westside was William Blake of Chester House (awarded about £40,000), and the Drax family.

Joseph Marryat (pictured) of Wimbledon House, Parkside, an MP who had written pamphlets on the slave trade in which he recognised the moral issues but pointed out that the economy of Britain depended partly on it, turns out to have had a considerable investment; he died before the compensation, and his son, also Joseph, was awarded over £100,000 (at least £8.5 million in today's money), and his relations were also "compensated".



These people did not necessarily own slaves themselves; in some cases they inherited the claim from an ancestor who may simply have had an investment rather than ownership, at a time when it was thought of as perfectly respectable.

The real surprise, though, is that the name of William Wilberforce appears, with £1,263 9s awarded as "owner-in-fee" (ie: outright owner), but there are no details to establish whether this was the William Wilberforce.

Cicely Cardew

THE MUSEUM has some photos taken in 1913 by Cicely Cardew. Who was she? And is there a connection with the character of that name in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*? We have now identified her as a niece of Arthur Cardew, who lived at 4 North View. In 1913 she was staying with the Kitchin family at 8 North View (Arthur had married Alexandra Kitchin, who incidentally, as a child, was Lewis Carroll's favourite photographic subject). There is a family tradition that Oscar Wilde was staying with the Cardews when Cicely was born in 1893; he had already written the first draft of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, but later changed the names of all but one of the characters, and gave the name Cicely Cardew to one of the two girls.

There is another Wimbledon connection – Cicely's father Philip was a noted electrical engineer, and in 1898 went into partnership with Sir William Preece (of Gothic Lodge) as Preece and Cardew.



Photos courtesy London Borough of Merton

An obelisk in Wimbledon?

ONE OF our Local History Group members came across details of the horse cab ranks (left) outside the town hall in 1883 and 1903; one of them was "opposite the Fire Engine Station [by the old town hall, where Centre Court is now], south side of the Obelisk in the Broadway". What was the Obelisk? It is not shown on the large scale Ordnance Survey map of the 1890s, although other items such as a horse trough and a fire alarm post are shown.

CHARLES TOASE

All of the images on these pages can be found in the archives of the Museum of Wimbledon, and on the website www.wimbledonmuseum.org.uk. Digital versions for this publication supplied courtesy of the London Borough of Merton. More historic photographs of this area can be found at www.merton.gov.uk/memories. An A2 foldout map of the **Merton at War: Heritage Trail** is available now at the Wimbledon Museum and local libraries. Details of the trail can be found online at www.merton.gov.uk/carvedinstone.



Facebook makeover for the Society

KIRK BANNISTER explains how and why the Society is getting social

AS PART OF the Society's drive to expand its visibility on the internet and give local residents more ways to engage with the Society online we are in the process of updating our Facebook page. Facebook has millions of users and its popularity is well established. There are already a number of local Facebook pages for Wimbledon with thousands of members. Facebook allows people to keep in contact with their families and friends but also allows people to become members of groups and many of the most popular groups are local in nature. If you don't have a Facebook account it is well worth getting one for all of these reasons.

Signing up for Facebook is a very simple process; essentially all you need is an email account. If you visit www.facebook.com you will be able to sign up, and you can put in as much or as little information about yourself as you wish. You will receive an email confirming your details and password that you have chosen and that's really all there is to it. Once you log into your account you will be able to add friends and manage your privacy settings. To subscribe to The Wimbledon Society group all you have to do is search for The Wimbledon Society and follow us.

Our Facebook group will tell you about our events, information about upcoming exhibitions at the museum and relevant news about what the Society is doing within the community. We would also like people to interact with the page by commenting on our posts or telling us about information you think we would like to hear about and what other visitors of the page might be interested in learning about. We hope to see you there!

If you have any further questions about Facebook and how to use it there are many good guides online.

Excursions programme

LINDA DEFRIEZ on the two excursions remaining in the current programme. Application forms will be found with this newsletter

February: New Wimbledon Theatre

THIS GRADE II listed Edwardian theatre was the project of the theatre lover and entrepreneur, JB Mulholland. Built on the site of a large house with spacious grounds, the theatre opened on 26 December 1910 with the pantomime Jack and Jill.

The theatre retains its baroque and Adamesque internal features. The golden statue atop the dome is Laetitia, the Roman goddess of gaiety and was an original fixture back in 1910. The statue was removed in World War II as it was thought to be a direction finding device for German bombers, and replaced in 1991 after a campaign which involved the Wimbledon Society.

March: New Broadcasting House

YOUR GUIDE for this 90-minute tour will bring to life this brand new multimedia broadcasting centre. Among the things that should be included on the tour are a camera's eye view via the big screen into some of the studios broadcasting to the nation as well as hearing about the rich history of the building and the BBC. We will have a view over the state of the art newsroom and you will hear about how BBC radio drama is made.

If you wish to book either of these excursions, please do so using the form supplied.



Photo by Simon Joseph

Recommended independent excursion to the Sky Garden at the top of the 'Walkie-Talkie' building, 20 Fenchurch St. This free visit can be booked online at www.skygarden.london, up to four weeks ahead, subject to availability. You will need to specify the names of your group of up to 10 and expect airport-style security. There are stunning views of the City and beyond as the building stands on its own so has no other tall buildings blocking the view.

JANET KOSS

We were saddened to learn of the recent, sudden death of our friend and colleague Janet Koss. Janet was a member of both the Museum Committee and the Society's Executive Committee as well as a long-standing and learned supporter of the Local History Group. A tribute to her and her work will appear in the next edition of the newsletter.

Highs and lows of Hitch's girl

NOVA PILBEAM

19 November 1919 – 17 July 2015

ONCE BRITAIN'S leading child and teenage star of stage and screen, Nova Pilbeam, died on 17 July aged 95. Though her starry name sounds pure Hollywood, she was born in Wimbledon. Her parents, Arnold and Margery Pilbeam christened their only child Nova after her maternal grandmother, who came from Nova Scotia. Acting was in her blood, as her father had been an actor and was stage manager at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. Nova was educated privately in Wimbledon and Blackheath, which may account for her cut-glass accent, so typical of early film and radio.

She first appeared aged 12 at the Savoy Theatre as Marigold, in *Toad of Toad Hall*. While still only 14, she won the lead role in *Little Friend*, a Gaumont production directed by Robert Stevenson and written by Christopher Isherwood. The film broke records and hearts and won Nova a seven-year contract with Gaumont, along with a role in the



Nova Pilbeam, circa 1940 (above) courtesy Bob Thomas/Popperfoto/Getty Images; 29 Ridgway (below) by Simon Joseph



first version of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Hitchcock later claimed that this was the film that established him. It certainly established Nova who

found a further attraction on the set, one of 'Hitch's Boys' – assistant director, Penrose 'Pen' Tennyson, who was the great grandson of Alfred Lord Tennyson. The couple were married in 1939 when Nova was only 19.

Hitchcock was never fair or faithful to his leading ladies and though Nova had been led to believe that she would star in his film version of Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca*, he chose Joan Fontaine in her place. This blow followed by the bankruptcy of Gaumont meant that Pilbeam missed her moment of international stardom. Blow followed blow, as Pen, who had been called up to make films for the war effort, was killed in a plane crash in 1941. Though she went on filming during the war and later returned to the theatre, her ambition waned and she never reached the heights of the early days. In 1950 she married Alexander Whyte, a BBC journalist and her daughter Sara was born in 1952.

Nova lived at No.29 Ridgway before her first marriage. She will have her place on our walk Creative Wimbledon – Arts and Artistes.

MONICA ELLISON

Waspish but grateful

BRIAN SEWELL

15 June 1931 – 19 September 2015

MANY column inches covered the death of local resident Brian Sewell who died on 19 September 2015. The great renaissance art expert, waspish *Evening Standard* columnist and scourge of modern conceptual art was feared and revered in equal measure.

Some years ago Brian described

how returning home to his "Edwardian monstrosity" in Leopold Road, Wimbledon, he was the victim of a mugging which ended with him receiving attention in St George's Hospital, Tooting. In recognition of the care and sympathy he received from the hospital, he turned this "best forgotten incident" into a paean of thanks and praise for the NHS. The framed press cutting hung for many months on the wall of a visitors' waiting room in the Atkinson Morley Wing, a relief from the lurid medical charts.

Brian confessed to being a "man of

many faults". Ingratitude was not one of them.

The *Daily Telegraph* obituary recounted how after heart problems in 1994 Sewell confronted his condition with habitual steeliness: "We've got you down as an atheist," a Sister told him the night before an operation.

"No, no," Sewell protested, "I'm an agnostic. But if something goes wrong, you must call a Roman Catholic priest."

His plummy voice and outrageous views will be missed by many.

MONICA ELLISON

Fowl play from invasive species

DAVE DAWSON reports on the latest problems caused by geese and others

THE SECOND *Great Britain Invasive Non-native Species Strategy* was published this year and reveals that Britain has about 2,000 non-native plants and animals established in the wild, of which 200 or so have thrived, spread and caused problems. Some, like the Rabbit or Sweet Chestnut, have been here so long most people would be unaware they are aliens.

It is rare for a problem invader to be controlled successfully. By the time a problem is evident, it is often too late. The few exceptions include the Coypu, a large South American rodent, which caused serious problems in East Anglian wetlands following its introduction in the 1930s but was eradicated by 1989.

Small numbers of another American species, the Ruddy Duck, escaped from Slimbridge to breed in the wild in the 1960s, spreading across western Europe. Its interbreeding with an endangered European species, the White-Headed Duck, threatened the genetic integrity of the European. This species has a local dimension. It was first seen at Wimbledon Park Lake and Wimbledon Common in 1999. On the lake, numbers rose to an average of five birds by 2006, but then declined to zero by 2010, since when none have been seen. It seems that the eradication programme, which began in 1999, has been a local success.

The story is not so rosy for other invasive wetland birds. Canada Geese occur in large numbers at Wimbledon Park. I have drafted a policy paper on this goose for the

Friends of Wimbledon Park. This species escaped from captivity in the 17th century but the national increase began about 40 years ago and now appears to be over. Although the park is not an important breeding site for this goose, large numbers arrive there in July for the post-breeding moult, most of which stay on over the autumn and winter, when flocks of more than 100 geese occur.

The birds feed mainly on the short grassland of both the golf course and public park. Concerned about the large amount of droppings, the golf course management have been trying to deter them without success. A cull was carried out in July 2010 and other less drastic measures have been tried both before and since. The club proposes culling the birds again to alleviate the problem, even though the earlier cull was not successful. Official advice is that culling is advisable only where a problem is significant, and then only after all less drastic measures have proved ineffective and knowledge of the bird's movements shows that the reduction in numbers can be sustained.

Now, those Canadian aliens have been joined by two other invasive species, which cause similar nuisance: the Greylag and Egyptian Geese. Like the Canada Goose, the Egyptian escaped from a private collection in the 17th century, but it

has only recently begun to increase locally. It arrived on Wimbledon Common in 2002 and to breed at Wimbledon Park in 2003. Flocks of more than 20 birds can now be seen at the Park. The Greylag is a native species which had died out. It was reintroduced in the 1970s to the south of Britain. Stray birds were seen locally before it began breeding in 2000 on the Common and 2001 at Wimbledon Park. It has not established on the Common, but there has been a progressive increase at the Park, where flocks of 50 or more birds can now be seen.

Experience tells us that the regulation of trade is the best way of preventing the arrival of problem species, but despite this advice, trade considerations prevail, so we can expect more invaders soon. Attention tends to focus on new problems, the old ones becoming part of normality. Perhaps these recent invaders will simply become part of our familiar landscape.



Invaders: Canada Geese (above), Egyptian (top) and the native Greylag (above right).

Photo by Andreas Trepte, www.photo-natur.de

Photo by DAVID IUFF, License: CC-BY-SA, 3.0

Skylarks, sails and saplings

Commons chief executive **SIMON LEE** sums up a year in the life of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

AS THINGS start to slow down on the Commons, autumn is a time to look back and reflect on the highs and lows of our year.

Wildlife on the Commons flourishes and this year the hard work of our staff and volunteers over the last four years culminated in the triumphant return of Skylarks to the Plain, and the successful breeding of two juveniles. A special thanks to our dog-walkers for keeping dogs on a lead on the Plain during the bird nesting season.

In June the Natural History Museum, as part of our annual BioBlitz event, confirmed that a “globally scarce” False Click Beetle had been found on the Commons. Dr Max Barclay, who manages the



Sails appeal: the Windmill Trustees hope to raise funds to replace the sails

Museum’s 10 million strong beetle collection, said: “To find such a species on Wimbledon Common shows that the Conservators are taking good care of the site and managing it for wildlife.”

With the highs come, of course, the occasional low and this year that came in the most dramatic way in early August when a sail sheared off

our iconic Grade II* listed Windmill. Immediate repairs were carried out to the roof and the remaining three sails were removed, changing overnight the skyline of the Commons. Trustees are currently considering how best to fund the repairs and it may be that a fund-raising appeal will be launched to coincide with the Windmill’s 200th anniversary in 2017.

A volunteer programme was also launched earlier this year and, working with our Wildlife and Conservation Officer, groups are meeting regularly to help with scrub clearance on Putney Heath. The volunteers’ work is essential removing saplings allowing the heather, a rare habitat in London, to thrive.

We continue to improve our communication with levy-payers and visitors, producing monthly updates in the form of the *Commons News* which is sent out by e-mail. If you’d like to receive a copy, please e-mail rangersoffice@wpcc.org.uk

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Stakeholder Group

THE CONSERVATORS have established a Consultation Stakeholder Group of representatives from the various user groups who take advantage of the facilities of the Commons. Among those nominating representatives are The Wimbledon Society, The Putney Society, Local Resident’s Associations, ecological and sporting interests plus the disabled and educational sector. The first meeting of the Group took place on the 1 October.

The motivation is to enable the Conservators to have a better understanding of what users of the Commons want and how the community can engage in improving the facilities available. Simon Lee the Chief Executive of the Commons

brought the idea from his previous employment in Hampstead.

The Conservators want to spread knowledge, understanding and information of the Commons to all users. They will remain responsible from a legal point of view under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871; the Stakeholders will provide the general public’s perspective.

It is clear that the Conservators elected in February this year have enormous difficulties in running the administration, firstly in terms of finance in that there will almost certainly have to be an increase in the levy, and secondly in overcoming strong disagreements within their own ranks. The vexed issue surrounding Putney Hospital continues to bedevil

their debates to the extent that some meetings have had to be adjourned.

The difficulties are illustrated by the recent resignation of the Chairman, who although remaining as a Conservator, has decided that the discord within the ranks is something with which another should deal.

It is understood that the Conservators are seeking assistance from the Charity Commission to help solve the present impasse.

The Stakeholder group will be chaired by Simon Lee and will meet three times a year. The Wimbledon Society will nominate a representative.

We have welcomed this initiative and will continue to support it.

JOHN MAYS



Christmas cards for sale

£3 for pack of 10

Don't forget to pick up your special Wimbledon Society Christmas cards from the Museum of Wimbledon, depicting two wonderful winter scenes as captured by Simon Joseph.



Autumn reception

Our annual autumn reception was held on 19 November. An established event in our social calendar, this allowed us to meet supporters and friends, as well as thanking our many volunteers. The informal event was attended by some 65 people, including Deputy Mayor Pauline Cowper (pictured below with Cllr Daniel Holden and Chairman Asif Malik), MP Stephen Hammond and Councillors.



POSITIONS VACANT

Your Society needs you

We are looking for members to join us in managing the Society's affairs by becoming members of its **Executive Committee**. This Committee is responsible for ensuring that the Society is properly run, keeping an overview of its main activities through its principal committees – museum and planning. It also has a watching brief on other Society activities – newsletter, activities and excursions, and local history. The Committee meets six times a year in the Museum, usually on a Wednesday evening.

If this is of interest, please contact Asif Malik at asifamalik@aol.com or on 020 8946 6435



Help wanted at the Museum

Travelling Talks Team Leader. The post involves developing outlets for the talks, arranging engagements, ensuring suitable equipment is available or transporting the Museum's equipment and delivering some of the talks. The candidate should be a good organiser and enjoy public speaking. There are currently four talks available with scripts and slide shows which can be embellished by the speaker. The programme has lapsed during the past two years but was extremely successful when set up and can easily be revived by someone prepared to take the initiative. Training will be given.

If this position is of interest, please contact Cassandra Taylor at casskent37@gmail.com or on 020 8946 1544

WIMBLEDON PARK FARMERS' MARKET

45 Havana Road, SW19 8EJ

Free entry for Society members in draw for a delicious Christmas Hamper

Since the year 2000, the Saturday Farmers' Market has provided us with a *Countryfile* selection of free range and rare breed meats, fish and shellfish from the coast, award-winning cheeses from Bath, vegetables of every hue, fresh juices, as well as breads, cakes, pies of all shapes and size, flowers and plants. Many stall holders are Saturday regulars. Others make their journey to Wimbledon once a fortnight. Though now long established, it is surprising that not everyone has discovered the goodies on offer in the schoolyard of Wimbledon Park Primary School.



For entry into an exclusive free draw to win a hamper of seasonal market produce, bring this page to the Market Manager on either 5 December or 12 December, leaving your name and email address. Good Luck.

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; Families £15; 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.