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Crossrail 2 and the seven-year glitch

The Society's PLANNING COMMITTEE views CR2 as a huge opportunity for Wimbledon but the current plans need to be refined

CROSSRAIL 2 represents the biggest development to affect Wimbledon since the building of the railway in the 19th century. Transport for London (TfL), the body responsible for the new railway, recently held a consultation for the public to contribute comments and ideas on the current plans. This consultation finished on 8 January 2016.

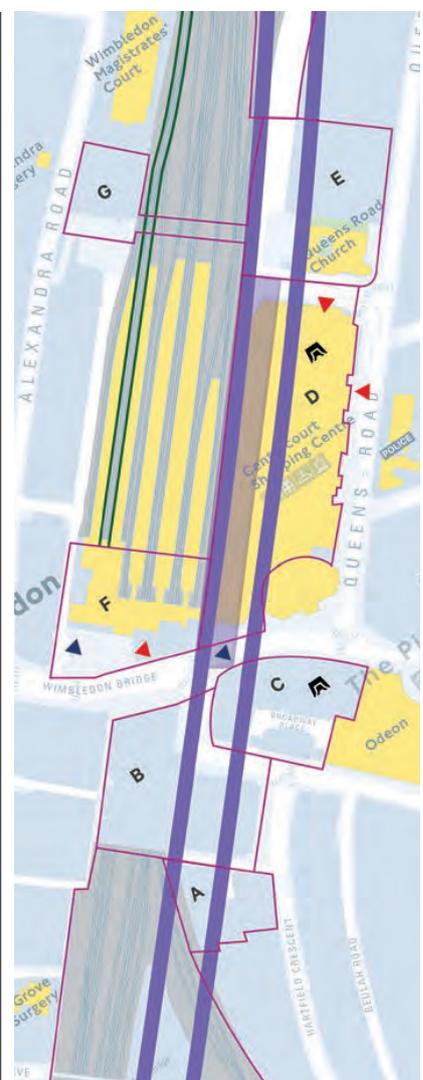
The Wimbledon Society has submitted comments on two occasions and Crossrail 2/TfL will take these into consideration. However there are apparently 19,000 submissions from stakeholders (not only Wimbledon but also other concerned areas) which have to be reviewed. TfL have stated they will issue a report (after digesting the comments) in the Spring.

After that it is assumed a revised plan will be issued and there will be a further period of consultation. Going on further if the start date

for construction is to be 2020 a Bill will have to be submitted to Parliament by early 2018 at the latest. Judging by the experience of Crossrail 1 it will take about 18 months for the Bill to be enacted.

The construction period will be about seven years (2020 to 2027). Clearly this could be longer – construction of this magnitude can be subject to delays. The new railway is scheduled to come into operation in 2030, three years after construction is completed, presumably to allow for final detailed work.

The Wimbledon Society's view is that CR2 presents huge opportunities for our area but the present plans are not appropriate. An important part of the centre of the town would be completely destroyed as a commercial and residential entity for at least seven years and the danger is that it would struggle to recover from such a long period of inactivity. Additionally there are wider aspects, for instance the impact on Gap (continued on p3)



Town and out: this diagram shows the proposed worksites (outlined in pink) for Crossrail 2 in Wimbledon town centre. The area will be "destroyed as a commercial and residential entity for seven years"

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Chairman's report

FROM MANY observations we receive from Society members, we know that our quarterly Newsletter is highly regarded. We are told that it is full of interest and variety, and a valuable means of raising awareness of Society activities and important local issues. The style of our quarterly Newsletter has changed dramatically over the last year with the fresh approach of our new editorial team, John Stern and Nigel Davies. Many favourable comments have been received not only from Society members but also from other contacts who are regular readers. We are now giving consideration to another change – the introduction of sponsorship. This will have many benefits, including closer engagement with the community by contact with potential sponsors and a positive contribution to Society funds by helping to fund the cost of producing the Newsletter.

Production of the Newsletter is one of the major expenses incurred by the Society and if sponsorship funding can contribute to the cost, this will be most welcome. We will take particular care to ensure we approach reputable sponsors who support the work of the Society and share its values. Initial design considerations indicate that the back page will be entirely taken up with sponsors' display panels. We have opened up an encouraging dialogue with some potential sponsors, and will aim to put this arrangement in place for the June Newsletter.

A quick update on our incorporated status. In the last Newsletter, we explained that we were in the final stages of our conversion to becoming a limited company. The process has now been completed, and we are now fully registered as a company limited by guarantee. We retain our charitable status, and have a new charity number.

And now for something completely different. It was with great interest that we read a recent article in the *Evening Standard*. Mensa celebrates its 70th anniversary this year by announcing that some 3,400 of its members live in Greater London. As Mensa members are in the top two percent of IQs in the population, this shows that many of the brightest people in the country live in London. The postcode with the highest count is SW19 with 51 'geniuses'. You might say 'No surprise there'.

ASIF MALIK



Crossrail 2 (continued from p1)

Road and destruction of valued buildings.

We believe, however, that it will be possible to devise alternate plans which would obviate, at least partially, the construction period problems. The ‘phasing’ of construction work can help. TfL have a so-called ‘Option D’ proposal which was not widely advertised during the consultation. It is a more expensive option which involves tunnelling the new railway under the centre of Wimbledon and the construction of underground platforms at Wimbledon Station. It may be that this is the preferred design approach as far as we are concerned and there is reason to believe others concur with our opinion.

We have had and will continue to have discussions with Stephen Hammond MP, BID, Love Wimbledon, the Merton Chamber of Commerce and other interested parties to press for a more appropriate overall design.

It is believed that there is an 80 per cent chance of Crossrail 2 being built and it is vital that Wimbledonians lend their best endeavours to secure a viable option. We should not be content with accepting the present TfL scheme and the Wimbledon Society will continue working to this end.

“Deeply flawed”

The *PLANNING COMMITTEE* submitted a detailed letter for the Crossrail Authority/TfL in early January – here are the edited highlights and conclusion

IN ORDER for there to be a rational public discussion of the various options, it is suggested that the next stage of public consultation should be informed by technical studies taking into account the following. The current design assumes a ‘take it or leave it’ approach, and without other schemes for comparison does not allow evaluation: this is not an adequate basis for consultation.

There are five key questions to answer:

1. Where should the ‘box’ [the CR2 tracks and platform] be located?
2. Where should the working sites be?
3. Where should the tracks enter the tunnel?
4. Where should the turning, train stabling, repair depot, be?
5. What are the implications/proposals for the Raynes Park Station and its attendant tracks and the Rainbow site? And for the properties beside the railway between Raynes Park and Wimbledon?

Conclusion

This important scheme of public works should be progressed in a more positive way, with the public playing

an important and creative part in its evolution. Whilst this discussion of an initial layout is to be welcomed, the current proposal appears deeply flawed, and is not seen as a clear option for the future.

To progress this important public works project, it is suggested that we need to see:

- A well designed modern transport hub incorporating all the public transport facilities, at the heart of the town centre, dispensing with the present out-dated Station;
- A number of alternative design/layout options, evaluated and compared so that the public can be an informed part of the process;
- A scheme that will minimise damage to the town centre’s economy and environment over the ten-year build period, and maintain good rail services throughout;
- A process for evolving the CR2 scheme that brings the public (as well as the Council and other public bodies) into the creative design process, not only via formalised “consultations”.

The letter can be read in full on www.wimbledon.org.uk



Futura: this could be your town centre in four years’ time

Wimbledon Stadium development still has problems to resolve

THE MERTON Council's Planning Applications Committee approved the application by AFC Wimbledon and Galliard Homes to build a 20,000-seater stadium and approximately 600 dwellings on the Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium site.

We objected to this scheme on a number of grounds but the PAC agreed with conditions. We will continue to watch this development and to discuss with the Council's

Planning Department various unresolved problems including the so-called Section 106 payment and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). We were due to meet the Planning Department in February.

We remain concerned that this development is on a flood plain. There is also considerable doubt as to how this area of Wimbledon can cope with large crowds attending football matches and other events once the new stadium is built.



All at sea: residents take to a rowing boat to counter the flooding in Plough Lane in, it is believed, 1958. The risk of flooding is one of the many concerns the Society has regarding the proposed Wimbledon Stadium development

Wimbledon and Putney Commons

MEMBERS may remember the difficulties the Conservators have encountered over the Putney Hospital Site (the sale of the 'easement' to the local Council) and the public meeting in December at which these problems were discussed with some degree of acrimony.

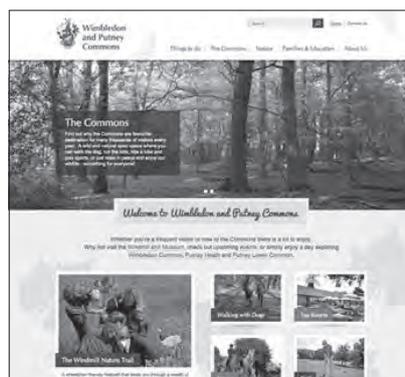
The Conservators' chief executive, Simon Lee, issued a press release in January which dealt with this issue and three others.

The nub of the message was that the Conservators have appointed lawyers to propose how the Trustees/Conservators should be guided in implementing the Action Plan imposed by the Charity Commission. They will also increase the Levy for the financial year 2016-17 by 2.5% and they will not hold a by-election to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of one of the Conservators. The last point concerned the Windmill – an application is being made to the Heritage Lottery Fund to enable essential work to be undertaken on the structure.

The full text of the release is available on the Conservators' website (www.wpcc.org.uk).

At a meeting of the Stakeholder Group on 11 February at which the Society was represented, a number of issues were discussed, the main one being the state of the Conservators' finances and the necessity to seek legal advice. In addition there was the infestation of the Oak Processionary moth which is causing real anxiety in many commons and parks throughout London and the South East.

The website has been refurbished and the chief executive and his staff are keen that people visit the site and sign up to the Newsletter.



POSITIONS VACANT

Planning Committee Chairperson

THE PLANNING COMMITTEE is seeking a volunteer to take over the position of Chair of the Planning Committee as John Mays, who has fulfilled this role for the last five years, will be relinquishing the post at the AGM in May.

The duties, apart from chairing the PC's meetings, involve general supervision of its wide-ranging activities including representations to the Merton Planning Department, arranging meetings with planners and other bodies, attending meetings of representational groups and dealing with a variety of telephone and email queries. There is also a PR element involving the press and general public.

Meetings take place monthly on Mondays in the Wimbledon Museum at 7.15pm and are pre-booked for the year.

Those interested in the post can contact John Mays on 020 8946 2198 or 07850 69 77 23 or by email at john@themayses.co.uk

An enjoyable night at the museum

CASSANDRA TAYLOR reports on the opening of the Wimbledon Museum centenary exhibition

THE MUSEUM'S centenary exhibition was opened officially on 14 January 2016 by Sir Nicholas Jackson, grandson of the distinguished architect Sir Thomas Jackson of Eagle House, Wimbledon. Sir Nicholas himself is a renowned organist, harpsichordist and composer and plays regularly on the international concert circuit.

He spoke interestingly of his grandfather's achievements and love of Eagle House and told of being taken to tea there, aged three, at the invitation of the then owner to whom Sir Thomas had sold it. Apparently she wanted to show him where he might have been brought up but, alas, he had no recollection of the incident.

Another visitor to the exhibition was Karin Bather, granddaughter of Francis Bather who was one of the founding fathers of the Museum. Miss Bather was tracked down by Wimbledon Society member, John Farago, who now lives in Deal, but had spotted notice of the exhibition in the Newsletter. He told us she lives locally so we got in touch with her and she was delighted to join us at the opening (she is pictured looking at a photograph of her grandfather).

The exhibition in the Norman Plastow Gallery is a storyboard display of the history of the Museum from the days when it was a gleam in the eyes of the founding fathers to today where you can visit it for yourself. It is currently showing some items not normally on display for the duration of the exhibition. One particularly fine example is the painting of the Girdlers' carpet



Official opening: Nicholas Jackson cuts the ribbon to open the Centenary exhibition (above left); Francis Bather's granddaughter Karin Bather (below)



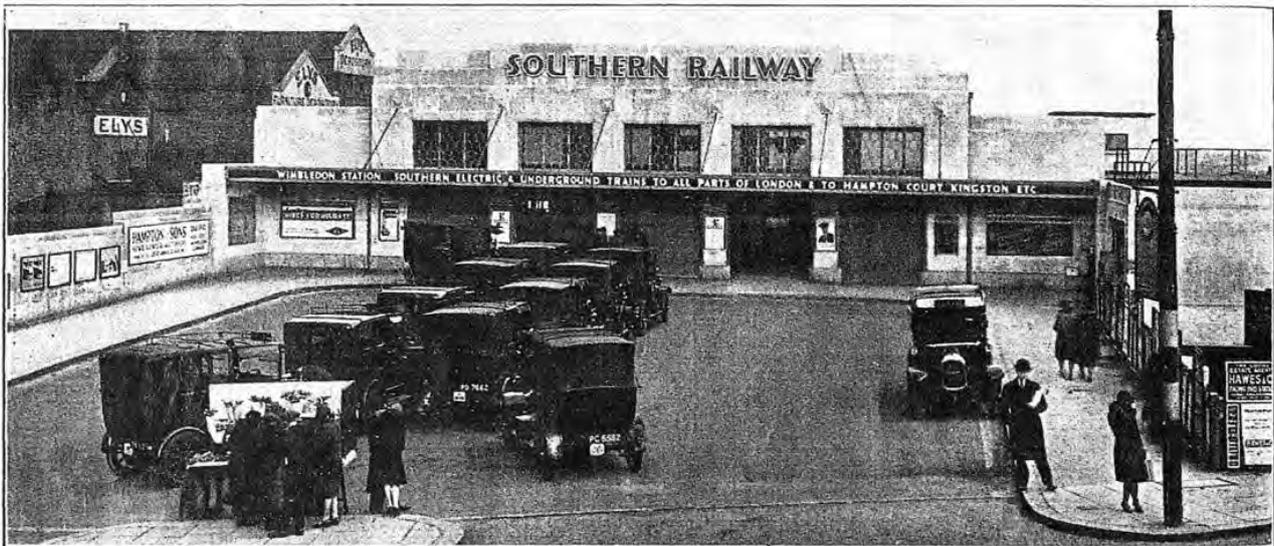
which was specially commissioned by Robert Bell, the builder of Eagle House, and has an interesting story attached to it.

The Museum has survived two World Wars and during them

has had its contents packed up, carted around and stored in a number of places. That the bulk of the collection has survived this treatment and that much of it is still on display is a fine tribute to those who cared for it through those trying times.

Much of the display consists of photographs of original documents and while all the boards are at approximate eye level, many items are in small type so those who need reading glasses should bring them.

The exhibition runs until Sunday 10 April from 2.30pm on Saturdays and 11am to 5pm on Sundays. It will be open over the Easter weekend including the Bank Holiday Monday.



Horse cabs, taxis, and the Obelisk in The Broadway

CHARLES TOASE reports on the origins of taxis in Wimbledon

WHEN the railway came to Wimbledon in 1838, there were already two ‘fly proprietors’ in the village providing horse cabs, and they tended to be based at pubs because of the stables and yards for the horses. Down in the town, they used the Mansel Arms opposite the station and the Freemans Arms down the Broadway. However, as the numbers grew, the police established cab ranks and regulated the numbers, starting in 1870 allowing 12 ‘carriages’ outside the station and another 12 at the goods yard entrance (the Town Hall side).

The best place to be, though, was in the station yard itself, and Edward Kempe obtained the sole right to use it (his brother was the stationmaster). His cab business prospered there from about 1880, in spite of a strike by his drivers in 1896 (at which time he had 20 cabs). The Cabmen’s Union complained that the men often worked a 12-hour day, and kept 4s. in the £1 of their fares – they wanted 5s. The average earnings were £1.1s for

drivers of four-wheelers and £1.3s. a week for drivers of hansom cabs.

Kempe’s firm was one of the first in Wimbledon to realise that a telephone would help business – their number was Wimbledon 55. In 1895 Edward Kempe sold the business to his brother WSB Kempe who had then retired as stationmaster, and it thrived until the 1920s.

A cabmen’s shelter was built by the church in 1876 to “tend to the temporal and spiritual welfare of a class of men who are exposed to many discomforts and great temptations”. The men paid 4d. a week to use a sitting room and a kitchen. After it closed, the Council provided a replacement opposite the Town Hall in 1890, but in 1903 it was removed to make way for underground lavatories, and it was purchased by Tilling’s omnibuses for their drivers at the bus terminus on the corner of Lambton Road and Coombe Lane.

Motor cabs were first introduced in Wimbledon by Oates Brothers of the Wimbledon Motor Works, who set up the Putney, Roehampton and Wimbledon Motor Cab Co. Ltd.

in 1908 (although it closed down in 1911). Most horse cabs had been replaced by motor cabs by 1930, and many cab (and bus) drivers found themselves out of work. A charity concert was held at Wimbledon Park Hall in 1931 in aid of “old horse omnibus and cab drivers, having driven for a considerable number of years and now unable to drive motor vehicles”.

And what was the obelisk in The Broadway? The term ‘obelisk’ seems to have been used for something to drive round or avoid. Scotland Yard inspectors used “going round the obelisk” as a test for bus drivers. The photo shows a lamppost with a kerb round it that presumably served as an obelisk; it also shows the cabmen’s shelter.

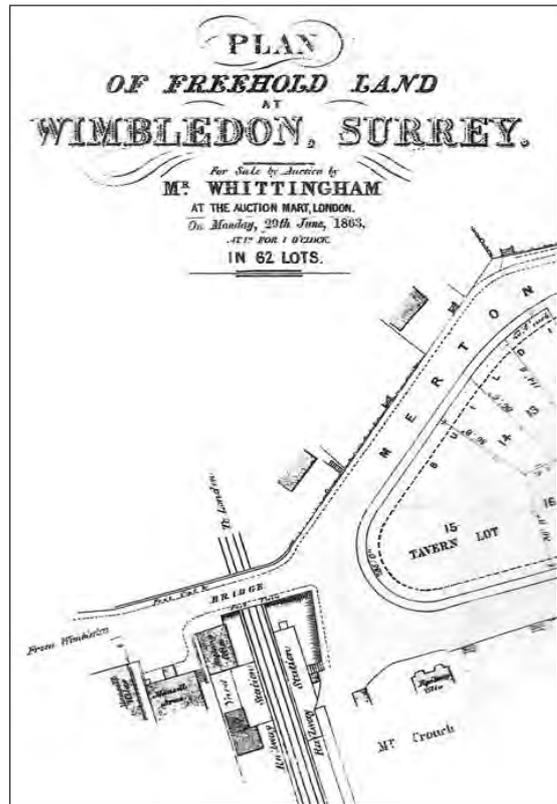


Mythical and spurious pub histories

IN JANUARY many newspapers, both local and national, carried stories about the potential effect of Crossrail 2 on Wimbledon. In particular, they featured the Prince of Wales pub, quoting the history that the pub has on its website. Unfortunately, that history is entirely fictitious, stating as it does that it was a coaching inn in the 18th century, was rebuilt in 1870, and was not named Prince of Wales until after 1891. A glance at the 1865 Ordnance Survey map would show that there were no buildings there at that date, and we have an advertisement for the land in 1863 offering it for sale as a good potential site for a tavern. James Crouch

built the pub three years later, and it is listed as the Prince of Wales in a directory of 1867.

Other false assertions include the Rose & Crown's claim that Swinburne and Leigh Hunt "often met here" – unlikely as Hunt died in 1858 and Swinburne (who walked across the Common from Putney to Wimbledon) didn't move to Putney until 1879. Anyway, at the time Hunt was in Wimbledon, Swinburne was only 10. And, of course, the name change of the Castle in Church Road to the Fire Stables was based on the misapprehension that it had supplied the horses for the fire station when in fact they came from the Dog & Fox stables opposite.



Fit for a prince: a map from June 1863 showing vacant lots in Wimbledon up for auction, one of which is the current site of the Prince of Wales (lot 15)

North Wimbledon Harriers

AMONG the groups who indulged in running across Wimbledon Common as a sport were the North Wimbledon Harriers. They ran across the Common to the Robin Hood pub, crossing the Beverley Brook on the way back and running up Camp Lane and past Rushmere to the Welcome temperance coffee house in the High Street, their headquarters. Both the Museum and the Merton

Local Studies Centre have for some time had copies of a set of undated sketches of the North Wimbledon Harriers which appear to have been illustrations for an article in a magazine. We have at last identified the source as a paper called the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* published in 1891. It is interesting in showing Caesar's Camp with high ramparts, some 15 years after Drax partly demolished them.



An unhealthy hospital

Research among early reports of the Medical Officer of Health for Wimbledon found an echo of recent news of the inadequate control of infection in hospitals.

A report on the Wimbledon Infectious Diseases Hospital in Durnsford Road showed that, in 1897, smallpox and scarlet fever were out of control among the patients.

The building was next to the sewage works, and liquid sewage was found in the cellars. The hospital was closed, and a new Isolation Hospital built in Gap Road, opening in 1900.

Taken over by the National Health Service in 1948, it closed in 1950, and a housing estate was built there (Poplar Court).

CHARLES TOASE

War hero returns the compliment

MONICA ELLISON reports on how a remarkable act of bravery led to France's ultimate accolade

HUNDREDS of people lined the streets of Carantec in Brittany late last year to pay tribute to the bravery of 93-year-old George Wood, who received France's highest honour, the Légion d'honneur, 73 years after his remarkable war-time bravery.

In 1943 during an attack on the German air-field at Morlaix, Flt/Sgt Wood was shot down in flames. The dreaded telegram "missing believed killed in action" was duly delivered to 7 Thornton Road, Wimbledon, shattering the life of his parents. A brief war-time obituary appeared in the *Wimbledon News* headed "Popular Footballer Killed in Action". But 'Lucky George' miraculously survived the anti-aircraft attack, tumbling clear of wreckage to tear the rip cord of his parachute for the first time in his life.

Spotted by both a German gunner and Lucien Marzin, a member of the French Resistance, he floated down landing in a tree. The chase was on and George evaded immediate capture by legging it across a minefield, a feat which his pursuers declined to attempt, though later 900 German soldiers and the Gestapo were involved in the intensive manhunt.

George lived up to his nickname, as he had the good fortune to take shelter on a farm owned by a family trusted by the Resistants. From that moment on his life was in local French hands, notably Doctor Le Duc and then the Sibiril brothers, boat builders with whom he sailed for England some five weeks later. After 30 miserable hours in heavy seas they reached the Eddystone lighthouse and were



Young and old: George with his granddaughter, Meryem, outside the café where the Resistants planned their operations
Photo courtesy Bruce Jacob

picked up on radar and towed into Plymouth.

But George had another hurdle to overcome – fierce interrogation – as his false identity papers were good and he was believed to be dead. An immigration officer from Southfields was found to question him but George confounded all doubts by reeling off the names of the local pubs and those of the jolliest barmaids. He went on to fly 60 more missions.

George, a retired vicar who now lives in Rustington in Sussex, was accompanied on his return to Carantec, by among others, two of five daughters, Ruth and Clare. Clare, a Southfields resident of ten years, is a former British tennis No.1 and has been director of The Wimbledon Club since 2013. "The whole trip was an amazing experience – he was treated like a hero," said Clare, who contacted the Society after recently seeing a story about her father from a 2006 Newsletter.

The day after receiving the Légion d'honneur, there was a further ceremony at which George, surrounded by the descendants of those who had helped him, presented the medal to the Musée Maritime de Carantec, as a show of gratitude to those who had risked their lives to shelter and save him.

Capability Brown's 300th anniversary

THE LANDSCAPE architect Capability Brown, who created Wimbledon Park, was born 300 years ago this August. The Friends of Wimbledon Park (FOWP) have organised a series of events to mark this important milestone.

Over the weekend of 13 and 14 February, around 100 volunteers turned out to plant 1,000 trees to restore and extend Horse Close Wood and help screen the Wimbledon Park Road car park from view. The trees – all native species, including Dog Rose, Wild Cherry and Blackthorn – were funded by a £3,000 grant from the London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme which FOWP secured last year.

FOWP Chairman Nick Steiner said: "The event was a chance for local people to celebrate Capability Brown's tercentenary, and play a part in enhancing this wonderful piece of local heritage."

Plans are now also well under way for the main celebration on Saturday 13 August. There will be a walk round the 4km Heritage Trail to unveil a series of commemorative plaques, followed by tea and cakes. FOWP are inviting local dignitaries and MPs to take part, and hope that local people will also want to join in. So please save the date.

Christmas hamper voucher winners

The lucky winners of the competition in the December Newsletter were Wimbledon Park residents Heather and Ken Ball, pictured below with Market manager Nicky Hartopp (far left)





JANET KOSS

23 June 1947 – 29 October 2015

The untimely death of our colleague and friend Janet Koss was a shock to all who knew her. The burial service took place in Putney Vale cemetery on 1 December 2015 conducted by the Revd Chris Palmer, Rector of Holy Trinity Church, The Broadway. Janet's sister, Christina Koss-Gilliham has made the tributes available and extracts from her words along with those of Janet's colleagues are contained in the following account. Full texts of the five tributes are available in the Museum.

BORN a Londoner in June 1947, Janet was educated at Grey Coat Hospital, Westminster, and St Aidan's College, Durham University, where she read French and Spanish. She became a librarian, whose working life was mainly spent in the famous round Reading Room of the British Museum (now the British Library). She joined in 1970 as a research assistant in the Philatelic Collections, was soon transferred to the Department of Printed Books' bibliographic service and in the mid-1980s was promoted to a senior post on the Enquiry Service Team.

Thanks to her extensive knowledge of the Library's collections and catalogues and of general reference sources, she established a rigorous training

programme for both new members of the team and specialist curators who served as 'stand-bys'.

From mid-1994 to mid-1997 when she took early retirement, Janet was Head of the Service Development Unit which focused on the provision of outreach service to postgraduate students. At the same time she was involved in creating material for the British Library's first website launched in 1995 – known then as Portico.

Janet had many other interests apart from books including music, crossword puzzles and walks in Wales. She was a long-standing member of the British Museum and British Library Singers and was its chairman during the 1980s and '90s. Even after retirement, she organised the choir's performance of Handel's Messiah held as a farewell to the famous Reading Room which had been the Library's home for 140 years.

Janet was a founder member of the Madden Society which takes its name from Sir Frederick Madden, Keeper of Manuscripts (1837-1866), whose members research the life and history of the British Museum and its Library.

Chairman of our Local History Group, Charles Toase, recalled how Janet became as knowledgeable about the history of the Wimbledon Society as she was about the British Museum. As Chairman of our Museum Committee, he appointed her Honorary Curator of the Museum and Society archives, enjoying friendly rivalry over discoveries and provenances. Janet provided much of the material for Richard Milward's History of the Society and was researching the history of the Museum itself in preparation for the current centenary exhibition when she died.

Monica Ellison told of Janet's contribution to Society Activities,

encouraging innovations such as Wimbledon's first book events, Literary Walks and the 2014 Milward Local History Essay Prize when she proved to be a staunch supporter and an invaluable proof-reader.

Museum Chairman, Cassandra Taylor described her initiation into Museum procedures by Janet and it was Cassandra who finally managed to contact her when all others failed. Their last conversation – Janet teasing about the efficacy of "perfumed veganin" – remained a happy memory despite the trauma and sadness that followed.

Janet was buried in the family grave in Putney Vale alongside her parents. Afterwards Christina and her husband received mourners at Cannizaro House – Hotel du Vin. There we met Janet's long-standing friends from Pandora, the drama group to which she belonged. Her witty mimicry and gleeful love of way-out comedy fell seamlessly into place in their anecdotes.

We learnt of Janet's input into many productions both amateur and professional from a staging of Therese Raquin in French to the recent film *Suffragette*. Ninette Finch, actress and film extra described how Janet's extensive knowledge of Womens' Suffrage was an invaluable guide to reproducing on set the behaviour of the early foot soldiers of the feminist movement.

Janet Koss was an enabler whose intellectual brilliance and generosity of spirit permitted others to shine. She was also a fiercely private person who had difficulty in permitting others to help her, disguising the extent of her ill health with a performance that fooled many. She is greatly missed.

Our sympathy goes to Christina and her husband in their loss.

MONICA ELLISON



Inspirational mentor who called the tune

DAVE DAWSON pays tribute to the great local ornithologist, Ron Kettle

BIRDING with Ron was always enlightening. His death last year, aged 90, is an occasion to celebrate his considerable contribution locally. He educated a generation of other naturalists, carried out scientific studies of our birds and advised on countless issues. For some 45 years, it was Ron people turned to for an authoritative view about birds in this part of London.

Others have written of Ron's early life. He was born in Acton in 1923 and enthused by natural history at school in the 1930s and '40s. He served in the Second World War and then studied part time at Birkbeck College to graduate with a BA in mathematics and English literature in 1952. He became active in the London Natural History Society. Here, his excellent writing and editorial skills were put to good

effect in their publications. Also, he contributed to the monitoring of the birds of Bookham Common, one of the most valuable long-term studies in the UK. He moved into our area in the late 1960s.

Ron's Adult Education classes on bird-studies began in 1968 and continued for the following 25 years. He was an inspiring teacher and the classes were popular. It was in one of these that he met his future wife, Irene. They were married in 1973. Ron gave classes in Merton, Wandsworth and Wallington. These resulted in him leading trips to birding sites around London and also to his running of the local Young Ornithologists Club. Through these activities, Ron trained two generations of bird enthusiasts, some of whom consequently took up a career in biology or ecology and many more of whom acquired a lifelong enthusiasm for birds.

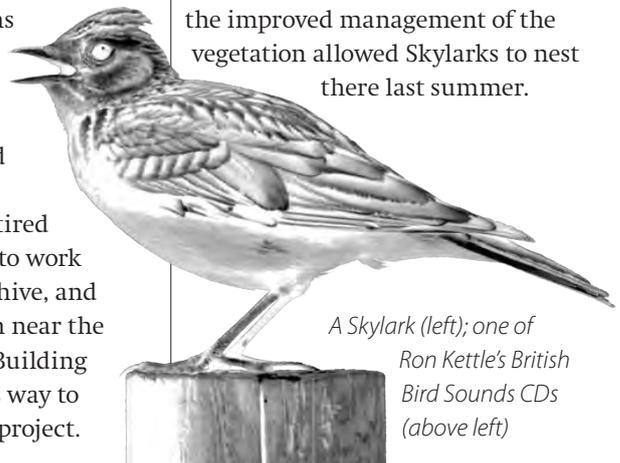
In 1972, he abandoned a job in insurance to take up the new post of Curator of the Wildlife Section of British Institute of Recorded Sound,

which became part of the British Library Sound Archive. In the 1980s Ron pioneered the production of bird, amphibian and insect sounds on tape, a precedent soon followed widely

elsewhere. Even now three of his bird compilations are still available on CDs. He launched the new journal *Bioacoustics* in 1988 and was its first managing editor. Although he retired in 1988, he continued to work voluntarily for the archive, and he would often be seen near the new National Library Building enthusiastically on his way to help with yet another project.

Ron began studying the birds of Wimbledon Common-Putney Heath in the early '70s. In the 1990s he co-ordinated observations from many others in an annual Bird Report on the area. He also published two papers on the birds of the area in the London Bird Report. He wrote the chapter on birds in the book on the natural history of the Commons. These works not only provide an excellent description of the avifauna, but also a baseline from which to measure future trends. With this in mind, Ron joined with the late Pete Guest in 1995 to organise monthly standard walk counts in four parts of the commons: a study that continues today and gives excellent information on bird population trends there. Ron counted there last when he was in his late 80s.

Ron's skills were considerable. I still remember him spotting the last Bullfinch to be seen in Horse Close Wood in 2008 after I'd spent five years seeing none. He also found Redpolls there ten years after my last sighting. He was always forthright in his views. He hated invasive alien species and could see no virtues in Canada Geese, nor Ring-necked Parakeets. Eight years ago, he urged the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators to stop harming bird habitat on the Meadow beside Windmill Road. It's a fitting tribute to Ron that the improved management of the vegetation allowed Skylarks to nest there last summer.



A Skylark (left); one of Ron Kettle's British Bird Sounds CDs (above left)

Our own piece of Centre Court

JAMES LEEK reports on the latest from the War Memorial Gardens

A Brief History

Readers will recall that in September 2012, as a result of budgetary cuts, a group of local residents offered to take over from Merton Council the maintenance of the grass and litter picking. The ‘One Man Went to Mow’ team was formed, under the sponsorship of the Wimbledon Society. In addition to maintaining the grass, in November 2014 they organised the new floodlighting, and in April 2015 created four new flower beds and more extensive planting under the wonderful flowering cherry tree. Financial support for all this has generously come from a wide range of neighbours and community bodies including Merton Council, The Wimbledon Society, The Parkside Residents Association and the AELTC Community Fund.

Planting set for further growth!

Having won a Merton in Bloom award last autumn for the initial planting scheme, the small planting team have their sights on future growth. The bulbs under the Cherry tree have been added to and are beginning to show signs of life. Last summer’s planting in the four new flowerbeds included Cosmos, Osteospermum, Scabious, Nicotiana, Sedum, Hebe, Lithodora, Geranium, Alchemilla Mollis and Lavender and hopefully this year will be an even more colourful display.

In addition, the Wimbledon Village Business Association is donating a large wooden planter (similar to those already in the Village) which will be placed at the southern end of the War Memorial



Before and after: how the War Memorial Gardens have bloomed

Gardens and will be planted with appropriate seasonal plants to enhance the area.

How green is our grass?

The previous uprooting and replanting of the grass and poor drainage has left a subsoil and infrastructure which is not going to give us the greenest grass in Wimbledon. The result was a somewhat mottled and slow-growing carpet which is more attractive to weeds and moss than to grass. However, welcome help has appeared from a most knowledgeable local source and things are destined to improve. When the AELTC supported the

funding for our new flowerbeds, they mentioned that if we ever needed help with the grass, give us a call. We did ... and the result was a very helpful visit from Grant Cantin, deputy head groundsman at the AELTC, who has already done a winter weed and moss treatment and will be following up with a spring and summer programme including scarifying and fertilising. We are not guaranteed that the grass will soon be looking like Centre Court prior to the first day of play, but we are immensely grateful to the AELTC and also to Grant for the professional work they are doing to help improve our grass area.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Mr. Christopher Elliott of South Park Road writes:

I was interested to read about Nova Pilbeam and the Tennyson connection in the December 2015 Newsletter.

Interestingly, I mentioned Penrose 'Pen' Tennyson several times in my book, *Little Chapters in the Making* of 2005. The enclosed two pages from a broken copy throw light on the brothers' link with Suffolk, Julian, the author, being best known to me. With all good wishes,
Christopher Elliott

Monica Ellison responds:

The extracts [from the two pages referred to in the letter above] describe the memorial window in St Edmund's Church, Southwold, dedicated by Sir Charles Tennyson (son of Alfred Lord Tennyson) to his wife Ivy (1858-1880), and their two sons killed during WW2, Penrose (1912-1941) and Julian who was killed in Burma (1915-1945).

Pen and Julian had been close companions enjoying walks and trips on the river Alde, which Julian described in Suffolk Scenes. The following lines initialled by Pen were found amongst his papers: "The advent of death is like the coming of a great wind: no man knows whence it is nor where it goes. Its visitation is often without reason and its action without intent the understanding may perceive."

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 **Board of Directors**. This Board 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 Board 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



MAKING HISTORY

The Richard Milward Local History Prize

Submissions

A minimum of 1,000 and a maximum of 2,000 words in length on a local history subject should be received by **19 October 2016**

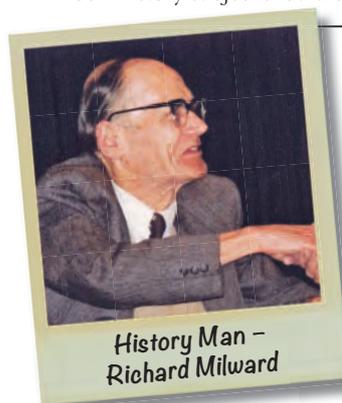
Awards December 2016

First prize

£250 + Publication of the essay by the Wimbledon Society + Membership of the Society (2 years)

Second prize

£75 + Publication of the essay by the Wimbledon Society + Membership of the Society (1 year)



Terms & Conditions and Entry Forms can be downloaded from www.wimbledonociety.org.uk or www.wimbledonmuseum.org.uk

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.