

# Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

For the benefit of Mitcham Cricket Green  
Conservation Area and its environs

## Annual Review 2016



Throughout 2016 we continued to care for Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and its environs.

The summer was filled with opportunities to meet with people through a number of events. We took a stall at the Mitcham Carnival in June, and hosted a guided walk for Civic Day the following week.

In July we ran our Community on the Green event. Now in its third year this has become an established part of the community calendar, offering interested local people and organisations an opportunity to spend a pleasant summer evening on Cricket Green meeting new and old friends, enjoying a guided walk, and partaking of refreshments. We were pleased to be joined once again by the Mayor of Merton.

September saw our second Mitcham Heritage Day. We coordinate this Saturday in September when local organisations open up buildings and offer a range of free events and activities that celebrate the heritage of our area. This year we were delighted to see a significant increase in the number of participating organisations and many more people attended.

Our thanks go to all of the following for making Mitcham Heritage Day a continuing success: Wandle Industrial Museum, Cricket Green School, St Peter & Paul Roman Catholic Church, The Canons house & Dovecote, Mitcham Parish Church, Mitcham Cricket Club and Merton Heritage and Local Studies Centre. We also ran our own guided walk, and we were delighted that Mitcham Parish Church topped the day off with a choral concert by the excellent Wessex Consort.

Our Bulletin continues to grow. We are grateful to local company M3 for the financial support which enables us to publish 4,000 copies three times a year, and I would like to extend my personal thanks to the army of volunteers engaged in its production and door to door distribution.

The saga of the Burn Bullock continues. Last year I wrote about a change of ownership for the Burn, its car parks and the cricket pavilion. A public exhibition in November revealed the first concrete proposals for the site. These include four storeys of flats on the car parks, conversion of the Burn to flats and a restaurant, and retention of the pavilion. No planning application has yet appeared.

We will continue to support Mitcham Cricket Club in its efforts to achieve a secure future for the cricket pavilion as well as play our part in ensuring the much loved and prominent Grade II listed pub gets the treatment it deserves.

We also worked hard on many other planning issues. Our area is coming under increasing pressures in this regard. One of many positive results this year was to secure a better outcome from the Cricketers development than was initially proposed. However the go-ahead was given to several blocks of flats whose design and scale we feel to be detrimental to the Conservation Area.

We spent a great deal of time as part of a consortium of organisations (Friends of the Canons, Mitcham Society and Merton Council) working to develop a Lottery bid for The Canons house and surrounding green spaces. The result of all the energy expended will be known in the middle of 2017. If successful we will see an injection of more than £5million into the area. We will be kept busy on this project alone for many years into the future.

It was with great sadness that we said goodbye to a longstanding friend in the latter part of the year. Eric Montague was an honorary life member of MCGC&H. He was well known locally for his encyclopaedic knowledge of local history. The 14 volumes of Mitcham Histories are the definitive source of historical information for Mitcham.

You will find much more detail about our work in the remainder of this Annual Review, to which each of our Trustees has contributed a section covering their main area of responsibility. My thanks to them and to every member of MCGC&H. While we do not expect every member to volunteer their time to help us, it is remarkable how many members give time in one way or another to our organisation. Whether you volunteer your time or not, your membership is vital. Thank you everyone.

John Stover  
Trustee & Chair, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

---

## **Trees & local natural environment**

---



A WORRYING FORMULA : E – T = D

A natural environment stripped of trees creates desert.

Although not as catastrophic as tree loss in the tropics, we can see the local climatic problems created when mature trees are prematurely removed.

Nowhere is this better portrayed than in the insidious acts of concreting front gardens. Removing mature trees has been proven to increase air pollution, increase ground-level temperatures and decrease the diversity of natural predators that feed on "pest" insects.

Trees during summer draw incredible volumes of water to feed their leaves. Soil and grass in gardens absorb most rain, thus balancing the water table. Hard surfaces fail to hold rain water, putting an extra burden on drains. With climate change bringing more frequent heavy downpours, this burden in turn leads to flash floods. Result - further dilution of the natural environment.

During 2016 we drew the attention of Merton Council Officers to a number of breaches where, despite properties being within the Conservation Area, no planning consent had been sought before stripping the vegetation, including trees, and laying concrete.

We were encouraged that LBM's tree officers enforced replanting where offences of tree removal were proven, but the "illegal" desertification of front gardens went unpunished due to insufficient planning enforcement officers. Use of porous materials rather than concrete should be in all planning applications, and setting aside some portion of the space for natural draining of rainwater should also be a prerequisite before granting planning approval. A campaign to tax gardens that have no vegetation is needed before front gardens are lost forever, and illegal paving should be reversed by law.

One matter, however, fell outside the jurisdiction of the council – the Brook House redevelopment. Throughout 2016 we were concerned at the disregard the contractors had for the landscape around the site. Utility boxes sprung up on green spaces, as did search lights. Trees were felled and damaged whilst removing ivy. Trenches were dug on Cricket Green land leaving tree roots exposed to the air and branches of established trees were broken by machinery. Worst of all, swathes of grass were demolished by tyres of heavy vehicles.

Because of UK law changes, this development did not require local planning permission to convert the vacant office space into flats. Each transgression that fell outside the actual building was pointed out by us to the Council through photographs, emails and verbally at planning meetings where retrospective changes to the build were put forward. Local ward councillor, Ian Munn, was able to push his colleagues into action, prompting a visit by LBM Enforcement. This elicited promises to return the grass to its proper state once the build was completed. We shall be vigilant in seeing this promise is fulfilled during 2017.

Friends of the Canons' year was again dominated the Lottery Stage 2 bid to unlock the balance of £4m granted in 2014. FroC, MCGC&H, Mitcham Society, LBM, and Southern Green (the appointed chartered landscape architects and design team) furthered the framework of projected repairs and renovation. Our efforts were considerably hindered by the resignation of both appointed project officers, thus setting back the bid submission until early 2017.

Workdays centred around Bellamy Copse, and the walled garden in The Canons, as well as at Three Kings Piece fruit hedge and ivy clearance from Cold Blows.

Removal of invasive pennywort from the carp pond was a particularly well attended event, and the end result most satisfying. Regular litter-picking around The Canons continued to be necessary because of erratic bin clearances.

Friends of the Canons meets once a month for a workday – on the 3rd Sunday of each month – at 10.00, usually by Canons house. Check the monthly MCGC&H notes for updates, or join the group for free and help safeguard this Mitcham treasure.

John Davis  
Trustee & Vice Chair, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage  
Chair, Friends of the Canons

---

## **Landscape & townscape**

---



The Merton Heritage Forum meeting on 16 February 2016 included an item recommending that local groups should undertake basic care of local monuments as a means to fostering their appreciation and deterring vandalism. It was gratifying to be able to point out that MCGC&H had already adopted such a programme by conserving the Queen Victoria Golden Jubilee drinking trough, a local milestone and the Tom Ruff memorial stone, an exercise which had earned a Civic Voice commendation award.

The year saw a continuation of our work in gaining overdue planning recognition of the Conservation Area's two landmark war memorials, in the context of the Centenary of World War I. In this, we had the ongoing support of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the War Memorials Trust, and Historic England. The initial stage involved attaining their inclusion in the London Borough of Merton's Local List.

The 'Cross of Sacrifice' memorial in the Parish churchyard, (together with the attendant graves), was judged by Historic England to be a local application of a national brand, and hence appropriate for attention in the Local Listing category, whereas the Civic War Memorial on Lower Green West was deemed to be suitable for possible further upgrading to the Grade II category, a status now being pursued.

Due to the extensive work being undertaken in the remodelling of Fair Green, including the relocation of the Clocktower, the annual Remembrancetide service was transferred to Lower Green West with a focus on this memorial, resulting in a fresh appreciation of its significance.

Another entrant in the Local List as a result of MCGC&H's recommendation was the ramped access 'dip' at Three Kings Pond, a legacy of the area's agricultural and transportation history.

The entry of the Conservation Area in the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' category of London in Bloom resulted in an 'Outstanding' category award for the second year running. The judge was taken on a tour of Jubilee Corner, the Tate Almshouse frontage, The Canons, Park Place, the adjacent copse and playing field areas and Three Kings Pond. Every effort was made to encourage local entries in the London Borough of Merton's own 'Merton in Bloom' competition, in which the Mitcham entries gained many awards, including 'Highly Commended' for the Parish Centre garden.

In the context of the Wandle Valley Regional Park, our suggestion that the next phase of evolution of the Park should include recognition of important views and vistas along and across the Wandle Basin as a whole, including tributary valleys, was accepted. Such views include local views across Cricket Green and Three Kings Piece from the upper floors of the Mitcham Cricket Club pavilion and the Sea Cadet Headquarters.

The renovation and enhancement of the relief model of the Wandle Basin displayed in the Wandle Industrial Museum has enabled us to appreciate Cricket Green and Mitcham as a whole in their wider setting: Cricket Green is located on a terrace of the Wandle hence its level surface and free-draining quality.

Pending the outcome of our Stage II Lottery application for The Canons, our work continues to concentrate upon the appreciation of existing amenities, the conservation and extension of existing woodland and hedgerows, the understanding of local architecture from all periods and the limitation of problems arising from the fact that the area now contains a number of empty buildings (including some which are listed) awaiting renovation or conversion and vacant sites awaiting redevelopment, all within close proximity to the area's historic open spaces. The area is vulnerable to an unprecedented extent in the

light of ever increasing pressures for housing development and the speculative land market. We need to prove that 'conservation' does not mean 'stagnation' but 'rejuvenation'.

Joyce Bellamy  
Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

---

## Planning, policy & projects

---



It was a watershed year for developments in and around Cricket Green. The trend for new flats finally reached the area with the go ahead for developments on the former Cricketers and Kwik Fit sites. Our efforts meant the Cricketers scheme is the least worst of the many that have been proposed over many years. We applauded Merton's Planning Applications Committee for supporting us in seeking the best scheme. On the other hand, the poor design of the Kwik Fit scheme means we asked Merton Council to remove it from the Conservation Area. Brook House is also being converted to flats and more are planned for the former Queens Head pub site.

We worked closely with Mitcham Cricket Club to influence plans for the Burn Bullock and Mitcham Cricket Pavilion but their future hangs in the balance. Some works have been done to make the listed Burn Bullock watertight but it remains on the national Heritage at Risk register and further action by Merton Council is needed. The difficult owners means there is an uncertain future for the cricket pavilion which in turn puts at risk the long tradition of cricket being played on the green. Problematic plans for yet more flats on the Burn Bullock car park and behind the cricket pavilion remain unresolved.

We were pleased by Merton Council's response to our call for a clean up at the La Sporta building on Church Road. This has fallen into neglect and was blighting the area. A watchful eye is still needed to ensure it isn't used illegally. Church Road also saw an intrusive wall in front of the former Bull being refused permission, and we believe not all of the conversion of this building to flats has been authorised.

The Local List is an important way to recognise and protect the things we value. We asked Merton Council to add a number of features, including Bramcote Court and Parade, the running track at The Canons and the distinctive gas lamp post opposite the White Hart pub. We also asked Historic England to put the Lower Green war memorial on the national list. We celebrated Merton's favourite tree -

the foxglove tree in London Road Playing Fields - being announced during the year.

Enforcement of planning and other controls by Merton Council remains elusive. Breaches include the conversion of houses to flats, retention of an illegal shelter erected without permission and then refused retrospective planning consent at Date Valley School, and paving over numerous front gardens.

We were shocked when Merton Council tarmacked significant parts of Cranmer Green and Three Kings Piece for bus stops and pavements. These are protected town greens and this was confirmed by the Open Spaces Society when it backed our efforts to have Merton Council acknowledge its error. We believe the Council has acted illegally and its high handed behaviour leaves a worrying sense of threat and uncertainty over Mitcham's special network of protected green spaces. These are areas which Merton Council owns and is expected to protect.

We challenged the Boundary Commission proposals to split Mitcham in two by putting both Lower and Upper Mitcham, and Three Kings Pond and Three Kings Piece into different Parliamentary Constituencies.

With support from Friends of the Earth we tested the air quality around Lower Green and found it breached accepted standards. We will be working more on this issue with Mitcham Society and others across the borough. We also teamed up with other Merton Groups to support the new Independent Merton Green Spaces Forum and to encourage Merton Council to complete its important character studies.

The year ended with uncertainty hanging over the future of the Wilson Hospital with the health centre's walk-in clinic and GP surgery set to close at the end of March 2017. We produced a community planning and design brief to guide future development of the site and have had to work hard to persuade the Clinical Commissioning Group to involve the community in future plans.

Tony Burton  
Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

---

## **The Canons Lottery bid**

---



We spent a vast amount of time in 2016 working with Friends of the Canons and Mitcham Society to develop a £5m bid to the Lottery for The Canons. The bid

was submitted by Merton Council in early 2017. We benefited from having experienced landscape architects, building historians, ecologists and archaeologists supporting the bid. As a result the project has already generated new research and information on The Canons, including a Conservation Management Plan that will guide the future regardless of the success with the funding. We worked hard to persuade Merton Council to engage local people in the plans, including supporting an Open Day, guiding walks and opening up The Canons for Mitcham Heritage Day. The project included archaeological investigations of the east lawn where local enthusiasts uncovered the possible remains of the former priory.

A successful bid will transform The Canons as a place to meet and learn about the local area. As well as restoring the house and opening up the surrounding grounds it will include a new café, toilets, and an exciting program of events. The house will be let out for offices with the basement used by the community and providing a range of displays. There will be important work undertaken on the pond and a new opening provided at the obelisk. The historic running track - a training ground for Olympic medal winning athletes - will be restored. Trails and walks will be developed and there will be all sorts of opportunities for local people to volunteer and get involved.

Tony Burton  
Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

---

## **Communications & publicity**

---



Everything we do as an organisation is part of our wider communication effort as it is always a representation of our role, our work, and our aspirations for Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and its environs.

So whenever we participate in a forum or meeting, host an activity, contribute our thoughts on what is happening in our area of interest, or otherwise engage in any way, we are not only taking part in something very specific, but also promoting our organisation and its values.

In 2016 we have had plenty of opportunities on many fronts. Throughout the year we gave many hours of work as a key member of The Canons Partnership (along with Friends of the Canons, Mitcham Society and London Borough Of Merton) producing a Lottery bid which, if successful, will bring the better part of

£5 million to The Canons house and surrounding open spaces. We will know in the middle of 2017 if our efforts have been successful.

We continued to run our own events and keep people informed about what's happening locally. Participation in Merton Council's Heritage Discovery Day in May gave us the opportunity to reach out widely across the borough, and our stall and talk were very well received. Our own free walk on Civic Day in June, participation in the Mitcham Carnival in the same month, and our Community on the Green event at Cricket Green in July, which brought people together to celebrate our area and participate in one of the few 'community engagement' activities around the previously mentioned Lottery bid were all great successes.

We remain committed to Merton's Heritage Forum, which brings together organisations across the borough with an interest in promoting heritage. This year we were also instrumental in setting up the Independent Merton Green Spaces Forum which brings together Friends and other like-minded groups and individuals interested in our open spaces. Initially communicating with Merton Council as it began the process of contracting out the management of green spaces, the Forum will continue in the future to work with both Merton Council and with *idverde* the new contractor.

Closer to home, September's Mitcham Heritage Day goes from strength to strength. With six organisations joining us in 2016 to open buildings and provide guided walks, talks, exhibitions and more the day was enjoyed by more than 300 people. It was topped off with a delightful choral concert in the Parish Church. We are grateful to all the participants and volunteers who gave their time to make this day a success and we're proud to coordinate what has now become a fixture in the Mitcham calendar.

We continue to publish our Bulletin three times a year, and when it comes back from the printer a small army of MCGC&H members set to work delivering 4,000 copies to homes throughout the Cricket Green Area. 2016 was the first of three years of financial support for the printing of our Bulletin from Mitcham firm M3 (based in the old Three Kings pub opposite Three Kings Pond). We are very grateful for their support.

Our web site ([mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk](http://mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk)) continues to be our other key way of keeping people up to date with our work as well as housing the Bulletin archive. We added a new regular item – History Nuggets – to the web site during the year. Meanwhile on Twitter, where we are @MitchamCrktGrn, we are able to pursue matters which are important to us with great immediacy, both to 'get things done' and to keep people informed about our work.

Sandra Vogel  
Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

For Mitcham Cricket Club 2016 was another year where the hard work of its volunteers and the excellent performances of its cricketers were overshadowed by the ongoing issue of the future of our historic cricket Pavilion.

On the pitch we again had a reasonable season. The 1st XI finished fourth when their early season form had promised much, winning seven of their eighteen games.

The 2nd XI enjoyed a brilliant season and were crowned champions winning thirteen of their eighteen games, having secured promotion in the early part of August. They will play next year in the 2nd XI Premiership of the Fullers County League, just one step away from a return to the Surrey Championship.

The 3rd XI, who were promoted in 2015, adjusted well to life at a higher level finishing sixth with eight wins.

Our Colts section continues to grow, providing Sunday morning training from the end of April to early September for kids aged 7 to 16 from across the borough and beyond. For the fourth time we were able to enter three junior teams into the Surrey leagues. Although they struggled to meet the heights of their 2015 performances, many of our better colts are now playing regularly in the senior teams and are developing into fine cricketers. We put forward five young players for consideration by Surrey CCC.

We also had a Sunday friendly side in 2016 who enjoyed their season winning many of their fixtures fairly convincingly.

The club has still had no reply to its many communications with Phoenix Investment Grp Ltd (owners of the Burn Bullock and the Pavilion). The plans which Phoenix unveiled for the development of the land offer no guarantee that the club will receive a long-term lease. Without this guarantee the club's plans for its future, the long term growth of its colts section and the development of the pavilion to improve its facilities and accessibility and to allow year-round community use remain impossible. 2017 could be a watershed year as we look to resolve the situation.

In spite of that a committed team of volunteers continues to drive the club forward. Our new club website ([www.pitchero.com/clubs/mitchamcricketclub](http://www.pitchero.com/clubs/mitchamcricketclub)) is a vast step forward on what we have ever had before and will help the club to attract and to ensure their payments to the club are managed throughout the

year. Our end of season awards night goes from strength to strength. This year it was generously supported by MCGC&H Trustee Joyce Bellamy.

The Colts 6-a-side Festival Day continues to bring families down to the cricket green. This year's will move to Bank Holiday Monday – May 29th.

Our cricket green and its facilities have been included in a recently published book - Remarkable Cricket Grounds of the World by sports writer Brian Levison. This contains a description of some 78 of the most remarkable grounds around the world – acknowledging yet again the important place that the Mitcham Cricket Green has in the history of the game.

New captains have been appointed for the senior teams and recruitment is underway to further strengthen the playing side.

The Colts section is looking healthy after strong winter nets. In addition, we will be piloting at Mitcham a new national initiative called All Stars Cricket, aimed at getting 5-8 year olds and their parents into cricket.

Fundraising remains a major challenge for the club. The support, generosity and hard work of MCGC&H to support those efforts is much appreciated by everyone associated with the club.

David Bell  
MCGC&H Liaison, Mitcham Cricket Club



**Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage**  
General enquiries: [info@mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk](mailto:info@mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk)  
Web site: [www.mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk](http://www.mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk)  
Twitter: [@MitchamCrktGrn](https://twitter.com/MitchamCrktGrn)

Registered Office c/o MVSC, Vestry Hall, 336/338 London Road, Mitcham Surrey, CR4 3UD

Company registration no. 04659164 Charity registration no. 1106859