



History Nugget for May 2019: King George VI Avenue

An avenue of 36 purple-leaved plum on one side and 36 tulip trees on the other, the '36' signified the year that George became king in 1936, although the coronation wasn't until the following year.

The then Duchess of York suggested a nationwide scheme of tree planting as a permanent memorial for of the coronation. The Mitcham Borough Council was approached by a resident, Mr Athel Russell Harwood, who offered to contribute to the cost.

The Council decided on an avenue of trees to be planted from the Blue House Bridge to the gates of the Wilson Hospital and on 7th April 1937 the Town Clerk reported that Messrs. John Waterers, Son and Crisp, Ltd. of Bagshot, were carrying out the scheme in accordance with the arrangements approved by Mr A. R. Harwood, who contributed £50 towards the cost, around £3,000 in today's values.

The line taken by the avenue was that of the drive that approached the entrance of Cranmer House, where the hospital is now. This drive was originally lined with tall elm trees.

A full list of the trees planted was later published in the Royal Record, a copy of which is available on the Surrey Tree Wardens website.

Mr Athel Russell Harwood was born in January 1863 and died in 1943. He built two houses on the glebe lands, opposite the post office (which became the telephone exchange) and called them Athelstan and Thrushcross. He sold Athelstan and lived in Thrushcross until his death. He worked as a collector for the gas company and was captain of the fire brigade. He gave £100 to the local Horticultural Society and another £100 to the Mitcham Cricket Club. He was the first annual subscriber to the Wilson Hospital.

Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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