



Wimbledon after Lockdown

JOHN MAYS canvasses local opinions on how Wimbledon has fared under lockdown, and how the future looks.

ADRIAN MILLS

Chairman of the Wimbledon Village Business Association
“The atmosphere in the Village is more confident, and as we gradually return to some sort of normality it is a pleasure to see long-absent faces back on the High Street.

We hope to see an increase in local shopping, a view obviously shared by new arrivals in the area. Recently opened, or preparing to open, are several new delicatessens, a fitness studio, hairdressers, a family treatment centre and an eyewear establishment. Some high-profile individuals are considering a prestigious new restaurant in the Village.

The vibrant atmosphere is slowly returning, partly due to the success of the Sunday farmers’ market which has encouraged people to venture out in an open environment. Footfall is vital to all high streets and the welcome addition of a well-run market only adds to the Village ambience. Cafés have been providing a constant supply of coffee to walkers on the



Locals flocking to the Common as Lockdown eases

Common, local residents have made use of restaurants’ delivery services, and advance bookings are being made.

So stay safe, stay local and be thankful for what we have here in SW19.

See you in the Village.”

HELEN CLARK BELL

CEO of Love Wimbledon
“Town Centre businesses are returning safely and securely, while consumer confidence seems strong, footfall is on a par with 2019. We have lost some businesses, including some where the decision has just been accelerated by lockdown.

Centre Court has new owners, and we are working with them to reinvigorate the area. Offices are re-opening,

some with re-purposed areas to embrace new working practices. Many employees are anxious to return to escape digital fatigue, boost their mental health and meet with colleagues again in person.

There is high demand for retail and office space, and we anticipate that, when the uncertainty dissipates, we will be welcoming many new businesses. We are confident that Wimbledon Town Centre will recover well, and encourage you to Shop Local and Be Local, as businesses look forward to welcoming you back.”

IAN HEWITT *Chairman of the All England Lawn Tennis Club*
“We are excited that Wimbledon will be back this

summer. While it will be different from Wimbledon as we know it, we are enthusiastically committed to our return following last year’s cancellation.”

JOHNNY PERKINS, adds:
“The AELTC is delighted to announce plans for this year’s Championships from 28 June to 11 July.

Current plans anticipate a spectator capacity around 25%, with flexibility to scale up should restrictions be relaxed. Players and officials will have to use official accommodation and the famous Queue will be absent. Ticket sales will be exclusively online and details will be announced soon, sign up to myWimbledon for instant information.

Looking to 2022, plans were announced to make the middle Sunday – previously a rest/spare day – a permanent part of the schedule. We intend to spread the singles 4th Rounds over two days and open up tennis to more diverse audiences. The aim is to make it a day for the local community and discussions will be held with residents and community groups about this.

In the longer term, public consultation is **(contd p3)**

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Chairman's view

I SHOULD START by paying tribute to Cassandra Taylor, who very sadly passed away at the end of March. As her obituary herein explains, she gave very many years of service to the Society, latterly as a Trustee, and we were fortunate indeed to have a person of such calibre to lead our Museum. We all miss her.

Cassandra would have been thrilled at the progress being made with refurbishment of the Museum. As Jacqueline Laurence our Museum Director explains, with the aid of donations large and small we have reached our initial target for funding the project, and work is proceeding apace to develop the museum's new design. Thanks are due to all those members who responded to the survey, which will help us to ensure that the refurbished museum fulfils their aspirations.

The All England Club's plans for the Wimbledon Park golf course have interested both our Planning and Environment Committee and also our Local History Group. As we explain in these pages, the golf course comprises historic, listed parkland originally landscaped by 'Capability' Brown. The Society is naturally apprehensive about the way in which the AELTC's proposals for 39 tennis courts on the land will impact on the parkland. The Club have averred their wish to respect the park's history, and we will be looking very carefully at their planning application once this is submitted.

In the meantime, we are delighted that competitive tennis is due to return to Wimbledon this summer. The Covid pandemic and 'lockdown' have blighted our community over the past 15 months. It is good to read that Wimbledon is emerging from lockdown in reasonable shape. We have become all too used to meeting via Zoom and yearn for a return to 'face to face' meetings (and a drink with colleagues).

We hope that (Covid restrictions permitting) we will be able to meet many of you in person at the Society's AGM. This will take place on Saturday 18 September starting at 5pm in Wimbledon Park Hall. Diane Neil Mills, newly re-elected Chair of the Commons' Conservators, has kindly agreed to attend as our guest speaker. Please make a note of this in your diary.

JEREMY HUDSON

BookFest returns to the Common this Summer

THE WIMBLEDON Bookfest, one of the few festivals to appear live in 2020, is giving us two 5-day Festivals in 2021. The first, called “Sunrise”, will run from 9-13 June, and the second, “Sunset”, from 15-19 September.

Like last year, these Festivals will be held in open-sided marquees on the Common, socially-distanced and with advance booking only.

The wide-ranging, exciting programme for “Sunrise” will comprise 40 talks, readings,

discussions, etc., spanning an enormous range of subjects, and including events for young people and schools. Well known names appearing include **Alastair Campbell**, **Ed Miliband**, broadcaster **James O’Brien** and **Reverend Richard Coles**.

The Bookfest embraces many art forms, and nurtures new and local talent alongside high-profile personalities. Local resident, and this year’s Costa Book of the Year winner, **Monique Roffey**, together

with local writers **Ingrid Persaud** and **Leone Ross** will present British and Caribbean literary voices.

Wimbledon anticipates the return of London’s leading literary festival to help us enjoy normality and real human contact again. For those unable to attend in person events are being filmed so as to be available to wider audiences.

Full details are on the website: www.wimbledonbookfest.org



Some of the stars at “Sunrise”

Continued from page 1

under way on proposals for the Wimbledon Park Project which, in collaboration with Merton Council and the Wimbledon Club, aims to create a beautiful venue recognising the landscape’s heritage and providing significant local benefit, while enabling The Championships to thrive. The main elements are 38 grass courts, an 8,000 seat show court, restoring the heritage landscape to remove its Historic England At Risk status and providing year-round community benefit.” All details at Wimbledon.com

STEPHEN BOUND

CEO of Wimbledon and Putney Commons
“The landscape of the Commons has changed significantly over the last year. New paths have sprung up, existing paths are wider and many grassy areas have been denuded of anything green. However, the flora and fauna are resilient and with time, and a little help from us, will recover.

Litter remains a big issue, exacerbated by large gatherings on Rushmere

and around Bluegate Pond. Additional bins on Rushmere have been well-used, although these create extra expense for the charity. We will be erecting signs asking visitors to take their litter home, and perhaps to offer donations towards the additional costs. We are indebted to the army of local litter pickers whose help in the last year has been invaluable.

The Conservators have appointed a new staff member to deal with litter, hoping to ease the pressure on our Maintenance Team, allowing them to focus on conservation work.

Golf has returned and riders from the Village Stables can ride in larger groups. Weekend football has returned to the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields, though rugby is yet to start.

We look forward to welcoming visitors to the Commons over the coming months.”

REV. MICHAEL BURNS

Vicar of Christ Church, West Wimbledon
“On 17 March 2020 all places of worship were closed –

which has not happened since 1213! Although our buildings were shut, Christ Church, like most churches, managed to carry on in new ways – keeping in touch by phone or email and creating regular worship opportunities online.

But life has been difficult. Baptisms, marriages and funerals have been affected, many either cancelled or severely restricted. Pastoral visiting has been almost impossible; schools and residential homes have been off limits; social and community outreach events (such as our toddler group) have been suspended. Our newly renovated church hall has remained silent and empty.

Even when we have been permitted back in church for worship, we have to keep socially distanced, wear face coverings and are not permitted to sing. Christmas and Easter services, normally packed, were significantly curtailed. Church members have missed meeting face-to-face and the sense of isolation made life hard for many. Some have lost jobs and our young people have been particularly affected.

On the plus side, we

have opened our church every Wednesday for quiet and prayer which has been appreciated. Many residents have been supported by neighbours they hadn’t previously met and support from many in the local community was significant. Now with the amazing rollout of the vaccine and the prospect of lockdown relaxation, there is cautious optimism and hope that life will return to a sense of balance, although it will take time for real confidence to return.”

It is a great boost to morale that this kind of optimism and excitement exist in so many aspects of our area. We need to forge ahead with new ideas and approaches, some of which may well have existed pre-pandemic, but have been accelerated by necessity in the last year. In an uncertain world one thing is sure, everyone in Wimbledon, young, old, resident, visitor, active or onlooker, has an important part to play in re-building lives, businesses and infrastructure.

JOHN MAYS

CHARLES TOASE unveils the romantic entanglements of Viscount Melville, and explains how the popularity of Queen Alexandra has impacted on Wimbledon.

The liaisons of Henry Dundas



Elizabeth Rennie (Rannie)



Lady Anne Lindsay



Lady Jane Hope

HENRY DUNDAS, Viscount Melville, who was recently reviled by protestors for his part in delaying the abolition of the slave trade, was always a controversial figure. He was involved with several women, although whether smitten by love or political and financial advantage is open to question. In 1765, the 24-year-old Scottish lawyer married an heiress, Elizabeth Rennie (Rannie), who brought him her jointure of £100,000 and the Melville estate. She was only fifteen at the time, and bore Dundas four children in their twelve years of marriage. By then Dundas' political career was in the ascendant as an ally of William Pitt, and Elizabeth eloped with an army captain. Divorce followed, and the children were entrusted to the care of his mother, Lady Arniston. (Elizabeth never saw them again, but it later emerged that Dundas paid her a small annuity for life).

Dundas came to Warren House (Cannizaro) in 1785, and in 1787 Lady Anne Lindsay and her sister Margaret moved into Gothic

Lodge. He had known them both in Edinburgh, where Lady Anne (the author of "Auld Robin Gray", a well-known ballad) was part of the literary circle. He grew attached to her, but he had a rival in fellow politician

Dundas returned to Scotland, and proposed to Lady Jane Hope, under the influence, it was maliciously said, of two *extra* bottles of claret.

William Windham, who was charming, handsome, and the same age as Lady Anne. Dundas decided to take the plunge.

He invited her to a formal family dinner, intending her to meet his daughters. She told him she was about to leave for Paris. He took alarm, knowing that Windham was in Paris, went down on his knees and offered her his heart, declaring that he had only delayed doing so because of

a promise to his daughters that he would not re-marry until they were wed. Anne promised to give him an answer after her return from Paris, although Dundas seems to have taken this as a rejection. Lady Anne met Windham, and told him of the proposal, but Windham, merely said coldly, "Then I can only resign you". This was too much for Lady Anne who exclaimed bitterly "Had you better not say that you do not love me?", and hastened back to England. She seems to have hoped that Dundas would renew his proposal, but he clearly felt her initial response to be final. She later married Andrew Barnard.

Dundas returned to Scotland, and proposed to Lady Jane Hope, under the influence, it was maliciously said, of two *extra* bottles of claret. She was a good catch, (her father, the Earl of Hopetoun, was one of the wealthiest noblemen in Scotland), and before the spring was out he had married her. However, they were not temperamentally

compatible, and, as with many hasty marriages where acquisition of wealth is the main consideration, it cannot be said that they lived happily ever after. Yet Lady Jane took an interest in her Wimbledon estate, and one of the woods at Cannizaro bears her name.

Denmark in Wimbledon

FOLLOWING AN enquiry about the name of the King of Denmark pub, it seems that the answer lies in the popularity of Queen Alexandra. A Danish princess, she married the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) in 1863, when she was 16 and he was 21. Many London streets, buildings and pubs were named after her and by 1867 Wimbledon had its Denmark Road and Denmark Terrace; Alexandra Road is listed in 1878.

The Prince of Wales pub was built about 1866, and the King of Denmark on the Ridgway in the same year. It was ten years before the pub named after the Princess herself, The Alexandra, was opened in 1876 on the corner of St. Mark's Place.

In addition to the roads and pubs, we have a major institution in Wimbledon – Queen Alexandra's Court. A home originally for widows and daughters of officers of the armed services, it was opened in July 1905 by King Edward and Queen Alexandra. It has since been extended to all ranks and is called the Royal Homes.

Notes from around the table

MICHAEL NORMAN-SMITH, Chairman of the Local History Group, summarises some of the Group's recent discussions and researches.

Anyone for Table Tennis?

A SHORT PLAY, *Atalanta in Wimbledon*, written in 1928, had been discovered by the Chairman, who described it to the meeting. It is a skit, by Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron Dunsany, (1878-1957), set in a villa called 'The Elms' and the cast includes Marjorie Dawk, her father, Constable Spelkins and Mr Jinks. The heroine, a very modern Marjorie, who smokes and drinks, is found reading William Morris. She has placed an ad in the Morning Post for a husband in which she challenges suitors to a game of ping-pong. The winner gains the lady, but should the applicant lose, he dies by the sword.

Edward Plunkett's family seat was Dunsany Castle, Co. Meath, though he also lived in family properties in London and Kent. His mother's maiden name was Ernle Elizabeth Louisa Maria

Grosvenor-Ernle-Erle-Drax. Names of some of our local roads reflect the complicated family link to John Samuel Sawbridge-Erle-Drax MP, owner of the Wimbledon demesne including the area known as Caesar's Camp when its 'ramparts' were levelled in 1875.

Many of Plunkett's works were written at Dunsany. Because he was a major donor to the Abbey Theatre, and a supporter of the Irish Literary Revival, he is often considered to be an Irish writer. His novels, however, were not based on Celtic myth but set in fantasy worlds which influenced later writers such as Ursula Le Guin.

The angel of Spencer Hill

AN 'ANGEL' was found in the garden of a house on Spencer Hill. David Hurst told us that the stone memorial was dedicated to five army chaplains of the Society of Jesus who died in France and Italy during the Great War.

The statue, which has a broken arm, is a Graeco-Roman style figure of a seated youth. It had previously stood in the Holy Souls Chapel of Sacred Heart Church but, perhaps when damaged, was relocated to the Spencer Hill house by the Editor of the *Messenger* magazine who had once lived there.

The five fathers commemorated were Robert Monteith, Dennis Doyle, Walter Montagu, Timothy Carey and Cuthbert McGinity – all brave and inspirational men. It is fitting that their lives are marked with a tribute, and remembered on Armistice Day.



The angel of Spencer Hill

Whereas Anglican regimental chaplains had been given orders "to remain behind with the transport ... the Roman Catholic chaplains were not only permitted but definitely enjoined to be wherever fighting was, so they could administer extreme unction to the dying."

The loss of so many Jesuit chaplains in WWI aroused further interest and the following account given by Robert Graves in *Goodbye to All That* may go some way to explain the loss. Whereas Anglican regimental chaplains had been given orders "to remain behind with the transport which meant that they were less in touch with their troops ... the Roman Catholic chaplains were not only permitted to visit posts of danger but definitely enjoined to

be wherever fighting was, so they could administer extreme unction to the dying."

Francis Grove Home for Friendless Girls

CLIVE WHICHELOW queried the story behind the Home, at 7 & 8 Francis Grove. Sheila Dunman followed this up and told us that up to 18 girls aged 6 to 15 could be accommodated, and each had to have a sponsor, pay a fee of £15 and have a medical certificate.

It was run by the Wimbledon, Merton & Merton Abbey branch of the Ladies' Association, an organisation founded in 1883 under the auspices of the Church of England. An American women's campaigner, Ellice Hopkins, (co-founder of the White Cross Army) was the leading light of the mother organisation. She established the aims of Moral Education, the campaign through Parliament to raise the age of consent from 13 to 16 for girls, providing training for domestic service particularly for those considered at risk, and fourthly the Workhouse Magdalene Branch for single young mothers to encourage them into employment.

Mrs Eleanor Boyle, widow of Cecil, living at Broghill, St Mary's Road in 1901, was Vice-president locally, while Mrs Dagleish was President.

(Broghill was demolished, making way for Queen Alexandra's Court, catering for widows and unmarried daughters of servicemen killed in action which opened in 1905 – see 'Denmark in Wimbledon', p4.)



The Hartfield Walk Controversy

HARTFIELD WALK is the new name given to the alleyway off the Broadway between Blacks and Robert Dyas leading to Morrison's car park.

Love Wimbledon (the operating name of the town centre's Business Improvement District) has sponsored improvements to Hartfield Walk. This provides four fast food kiosks plus seats, planters and games for children marked out on the paving stones.

In principle we think that this is a good idea and improves the alleyway. However, we have two main concerns.

First, Love Wimbledon has proceeded with the works before planning permission was given, and even before the expiry of the period allowed for comments on the application. This is unfortunate and not what we would have expected.

Our second concern is that the scheme is ill-conceived in detail. Litter around fast-food outlets is a perennial problem, but there is only one litter bin. The planters and seats around the existing

trees look pretty but they do not seem to have been designed to let water and air reach the trees' roots, with the risk that they may die over time. Also, the children's games on the pavement, if widely used, would be an encumbrance to pedestrians and wheelchair users.

Several other local groups, including Friends of Wimbledon Town Centre, the Borough Tree Warden and the Police, have expressed serious concerns about the design.

We have expressed our views to the Council Planning Department. We believe that the Council should refuse this retrospective application and encourage Love Wimbledon to submit revised plans that take into account the criticisms made by various bodies.



A seat/planter in Hartfield Walk



Progress in restoring the Sunnyside transformer

THE WIMBLEDON Society has for a long time supported the restoration of the early 20th century electricity transformer at the end of Sunnyside. It is a rare, Grade II listed survivor from an age when the functional could also be decorative; there is a similar restored one at Amberley Museum in West Sussex.

The owner – UK Power Networks Ltd – has now submitted an application for Listed Building Consent to repair and restore the structure. Based on expert advice, they consider that restoration cannot be done in situ and propose to remove the transformer to a specialist metal restorer's workshop. The parts of the metalwork that are in a poor state would be strengthened and the whole structure would be repainted, probably in black.

The restored transformer would be returned to its original site but rotated 180 degrees so that its maker's plaque would be visible.

We fully support this application. Once restored, we hope that Merton Council could replace the concrete bollards with something more sympathetic to the cast-iron structure.

Centre Court sold

THE SHOPPING MALL in Wimbledon Town Centre has been acquired by Romulus, a SW London based property and investment group, who are developing plans for its revitalisation. We shall keep an eye out for any planning application.

Too small to recycle

SOME ITEMS that are nominally recyclable will not be if they are too small. Big Yellow, who provide storage facilities for the Society, advise that bottle caps and small pieces of paper can clog up recycling processing machines. So, if it's smaller than a credit card, it shouldn't be recycled.

Similarly, if you are discarding papers do not tear them into tiny pieces but leave them whole – after removing or obliterating any sensitive details.



Going to pot?

A RECENT SURVEY reported by the local paper of potholes in Greater London found that Merton came 8th out of the 23 London Boroughs that responded. There were 2,015 reported potholes in 2018-2020.

While this is bad enough, neighbouring Sutton was 2nd, having 7,675 reported potholes in the same period.



"No I don't actually know what they want to build, but they said it met the government's new planning rules, so it doesn't matter what the public is saying, we've just had to rubber stamp everything and give them permission"

Merton Council's Climate plans

MERTON COUNCIL'S Climate Action Group was launched on 27 January at a zoom meeting attended by 63 people, including three members of the Wimbledon Society Planning & Environment Committee (PEC).

Cllr Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency) opened with an introductory speech explaining that the focus of the first year is to set firm foundations, but achieving the goals is dependent upon the actions of others. Dominique Hill, one of Merton's Climate Change Officers, confirmed that Merton only have direct control over 2% of emissions; they have some control over one-third and no control over the remaining two-thirds. She also said that residential and commercial buildings are crucial as they account for 81% of Merton's measurable emissions. The initial focus will be on the retrofit of existing (mainly residential) buildings; a huge undertaking since only 25% of properties in Merton are EPC rated A-C. All new buildings must be carbon-neutral from now

on. So the work of the PEC in this area assumes considerable importance.

The Climate Action Group will depend on the work of volunteers who are asked to participate in one or more of four sub-groups covering Green Economy, Transport, Greening Merton and Buildings and Energy. Another group, dealing with Engagement and Funding, overarches these four-sub groups.

Members of the PEC intend to be involved in all four sub-groups and to date have attended:

– **The Green Economy sub-group on 24 February** at which a presentation was given by Hubbub, a charity engaged by Merton Council to address waste and recycling, aiming particularly to develop systems and behavioural changes to promote recycling-on-the-go. The outcome of this inaugural meeting of the sub-group was not noteworthy, but these are early days.

The idea is to encourage the greening of gardens in whatever way works for individual houses, to benefit air quality, biodiversity and the environment.

– **The Greening Merton Sub-group on 31 March** which launched the **Merton Garden Streets** project (see below), and there were discussions about locations for new Parklets as well as the **Urban Releaf** project which aims to identify suitable local land for greening and to work with the landowners to facilitate this.

Meetings of the remaining sub-groups are scheduled for April, May and June with an overall progress report at the end of June.

Climate Pledges

As mentioned in the March Newsletter, to help deliver the Climate Action Plan and make Merton carbon neutral, the Council is encouraging everyone to take steps to reduce their daily carbon footprint and to make a pledge to do so. Each month focusses on a different theme and the website provides details of each theme, with

information and support for making changes. (www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/sustainability-and-climate-change)

Merton Garden Streets project aims to copy the successful **Green the Grid** project in Southfields and roll it out gradually across the Borough. (www.frontgardenfriendly.uk)

The idea is to encourage the greening of gardens in whatever way works for individual houses, to benefit air quality, biodiversity and the environment generally.

The plan is for Merton residents and businesses to adopt and plant areas under street trees, de-pave and plant front gardens, put living roofs on bin/bike sheds and be creative with window boxes or hanging baskets. The aim for this year is to get 20-50 streets, with 10-20 households per street across the Borough signed up to the scheme, extending to 100 streets in three years. It will be run as a street-scale competition with judging in August and a street-party for the winning street (if funding permits). Anyone wishing to support the project should email cag.greeningmerton@gmail.com



Merton Garden Streets initiatives include depaving front gardens, planting under street trees and putting living roofs on bin and bike sheds



CASSANDRA CLARISSA TAYLOR

June 1943 – 30 March 2021

THE SOCIETY was deeply saddened to learn of the recent death of Cassandra Taylor.

Our front page article of two years ago, *Changes at the Museum* (March 2019) described in some detail Cassandra's retirement from her position as our Museum Chairman. It outlined her twenty years as a stalwart of the Museum Committee, serving first as Books Curator, then for a brief period as Editor of the Newsletter, becoming Vice-Chairman of the Museum Committee before finally taking over as its Chairman 2014-18.

The tribute went on to describe many other aspects of Cassandra's notable career, as an associate editor of *Good Housekeeping* magazine and as a Director of the Good Housekeeping Institute for whom she worked for many years. Under that prestigious label she produced several books on consumer, household

and money management. She often said that this had a downside, as people expected the Taylor home to be picture perfect – which, with a young family was then far from reality.

Listing the number of positions Cassandra held with public bodies, on committees – from the press office of the Family Planning Association to the Funeral Ombudsman Scheme's Committee, the Wine Standard Board to quangos such as The Electricity Consumers Committee, committees in the Ministry of Agriculture plus the governorships of two schools, one might be forgiven for assuming that here was a lady whose life revolved around meetings. Nothing could be further from the truth as Cassandra was no 'committee collector' – but one always able to bring to the table a wealth of experience, along with a sense of humour and an invaluable contacts book.

Members of our own Activities Committee can vouch for that, as Cassandra could always be relied on to

come up with an idea for a town visit or talk when other ideas were proving difficult to bring to fruition. She was a member of our society for over forty years. During that time her skills of management and experience in 'human resources' enabled her and her team of loyal volunteers to keep the doors to the museum open, often in difficult times.

Cassandra was educated at Roedean School. She married Michael Taylor in 1969 and the couple moved to Wimbledon in 1975, escaping to their Dorset cottage from time to time for a little R & R. The Taylors greatly enjoyed travel and for some years made annual and often lengthy visits to Egypt, as Cassandra had developed a passion for Egyptology in which she completed a diploma course at Birkbeck College.

We believe that a service in celebration of Cassandra's life will be held later in the year. Our sincere condolences go to Michael, Damian and Flavia.

MONICA ELLISON

New Acquisitions – Kezia & Alfred Peache portraits

EARLY THIS YEAR the Museum received two fine oil paintings, of Kezia Peache and Reverend Alfred Peache, from St John's College, Nottingham, which had closed after 156 years. Our thanks go to Dr Christina Baxter and Dr Alan Munden for the gift, and for some relevant books.

Kezia (1820–1899) and Alfred Peache (1818 – 1900) were born to James Courthope Peache, a timber merchant and barge-builder, and his wife Alice, of 59 Belvedere Road, Lambeth, a house demolished in 1949. The Peaches maintained connections with the area – the family tomb is at St John The Evangelist, Waterloo.

James Courthope Peache bought 42 Church Road, Wimbledon after Sir William Beaumaris Rush's death in 1833, moving his family there. Then named 'Belvedere House' after the Lambeth address, the mansion, built c.1720 by Sir Theodore Janssen, was demolished in 1900 following Kezia's death. Reminders of the former Belvedere Estate are Clement Road, Courthope Road and Belvedere Avenue, Drive, Grove and Square.

Reverend Alfred Peache, a curate at Heckfield, Hampshire in 1854, parish priest at St James, Mangotsfield (1859–1875) and first vicar of Downend near Bristol (1875–1877), amassed a considerable fortune, mainly inherited, to become one of the wealthiest



Portrait of Kezia Peache in 1872 by J. Edgar Williams

clergymen in England. In 1877 he retired to Cambridge Park, Twickenham where he died in 1900. His influence even reached Canada in 1885, as Chancellor of the Western Division of Ontario and a benefactor of Huron College, Toronto. His eldest son James Courthope Peache (1852-1931) was a leading inventor and engineer, noted for the Paxman 'Peache Patent' Steam Engines for generating electricity.

As well as giving funds to the Wimbledon Village Club in 1879 for

classrooms and central heating, Kezia Peache was a major benefactor of the Wimbledon Cottage Improvement Society that provided better low-cost housing for the working classes. From 1867-1872 she commissioned Bertram Cottages and the cottages in Belvedere Square and Courthope Villas. Bertram Cottages were designed and built by local architect and civil engineer Henry Charles Forde, famous for undersea cable systems.

Alfred and Kezia were considerable benefactors of the Church of England, funding some 20 or 30 English vicarages and churches, missionary work and £21,400 towards the London College of Divinity, an evangelical Christian college, initially for training men lacking the educational requirements for university

who wished to become clergymen. Founded in 1863 in St John's Wood, then relocated to various places in and around London, it moved in 1970 to Bramcote, near Nottingham, becoming St John's College with links to Nottingham University.

Kezia and Alfred owned and restored Layer Marney Tower from 1869 to 1899, an impressive Tudor property near Colchester. Alfred became Lord of the Manor of Layer Marney.

PAMELA GREENWOOD

The Museum Project

THE REALLY good news is that our fundraising is being hugely successful. With the help of significant sums from many generous donors, and the wonderful success of the Crowdfunding page, we have now reached our initial target of £150,000. We are continuing to fundraise in the hope of being able to have conservation grade cases for some of our greatest treasures, and also some audio visual displays. The Crowdfunding page is still open. If you have not yet made a donation and

would like to do so, here is the link: <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/museumofwimbledon>

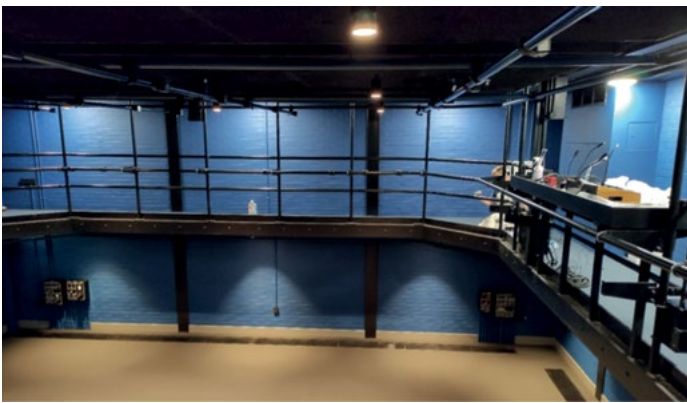
The Project is proceeding to plan, and we are working closely with the Design Team, who have visited the site several times. Among other things, they must work out how to get things in and out of the building with the minimum disturbance to everyone else! You can keep track of progress on the website: <https://wimbledonsociety.org.uk/museum/>

The Commons Trail

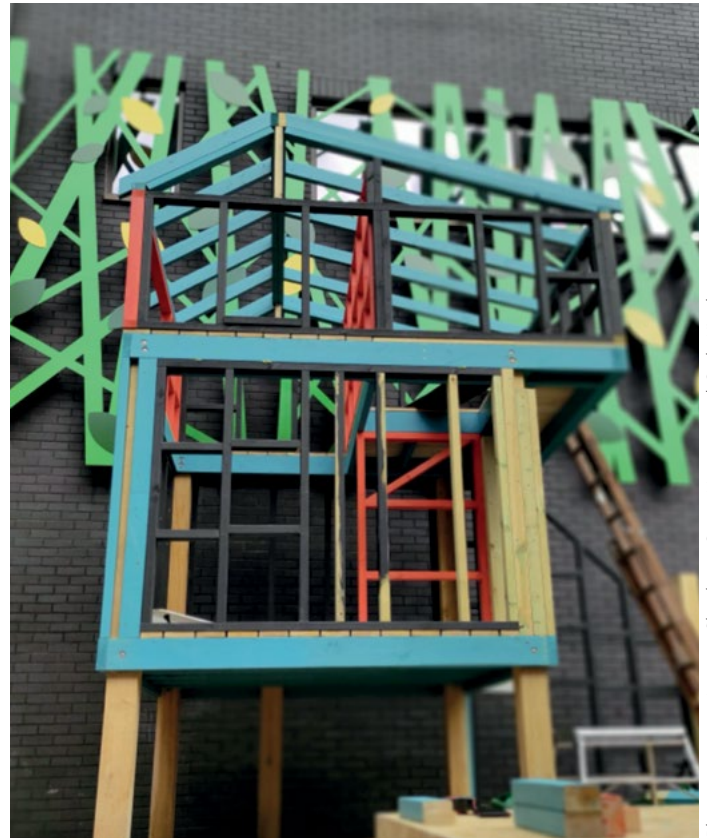
AS PART OF the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act, 1871, we aim to introduce the Museum Trail around the Commons in July. This will highlight places on the Commons with links to objects in the Museum's collections, and will be downloadable from the Museum's website with hard copies also available. Covid restrictions permitting, we hope to be able to run special guided versions of the Trail, with expert leaders.

JACQUELINE LAURENCE

Polka Theatre reopens this Summer



Polka on the Broadway (top); the new Adventure Theatre (above)



The redevelopment includes new free indoor and outdoor playspaces

Photos courtesy Lynette Shanbury, Gwen Hanauer and Carla Kingham

Polka, the first dedicated children’s theatre in the UK, was founded by Richard Gill, a Wimbledon Society member in 1979, paving the way for children’s access to live theatre. This summer it will reopen as a world class children’s venue after a major £8.5 million redevelopment.

THE NEWLY reopened Polka will be more than two exceptional theatres. Designed with children at its heart, the new free indoor and outdoor play-spaces will be open and accessible all year round, so families can escape the weather and enjoy time together without facing the steep fees of soft play centres. Families can also enjoy the brand new Adventure Theatre (seats 100), Sensory Garden, Rehearsal and Community Space, the Clore Learning Studio for our extensive schools programme, Sensory

Suite and much more! The redevelopment will mean that Polka can be more environmentally friendly, accessible and inclusive.

More than ever before, children need creativity in their lives.

Polka is also launching a new pop up venue in Centre Court Shopping Centre for our latest early years Production *Maanika and The Wolf*, a gentle captivating retelling of *Little Red Riding Hood* for 3-6 year olds, running Sat 31 July – Sun 29 August. To book visit polkatheatre.com

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19
It’s been a challenging year for everyone and since Covid hit last spring, Polka’s redevelopment has overcome

several hurdles, from sub-contractors on site getting Covid, to supply delays caused by travel restrictions. Thankfully, all staff recovered well but such disruptions caused weeks of additional delay. The local community and national funders have been exceptional supporters during this difficult time, meaning that despite the challenges, we now have just £55,000 left to raise so that we can reopen this summer.

NAME A SEAT

To raise that final sum, we are offering the opportunity to celebrate your family’s shared memories of Polka, mark a special birthday, or remember a loved one by *Naming a Seat* in the Main Theatre (seats 300). By sponsoring a seat – from as little as £25 per month for 40 months (or a £1000 one-off donation) – you

will inspire generations to come and help us take one step closer to realising Polka’s vision of what a theatre for children should and could be.

More than ever before, children need creativity in their lives. The pandemic has amplified inequalities and many families are experiencing financial hardship, emotional distress and isolation. Together we can reopen Polka and continue to reach those most in need, ensuring that cost or ability is never a barrier to having fun at Polka. We can’t wait to welcome you back!

LYNETTE ALSTON
Executive director

For more information about Name A Seat or other ways to support please contact **Gwen Hanauer**, Individual Giving Manager on gwen@polkatheatre.com or **020 8545 8368**.

Tennis, a show court and walkways

DAVE DAWSON outlines what we now know of the All England Lawn Tennis Club's proposals once golf ceases on Wimbledon Park Golf Course.

IN APRIL AELTC launched their second consultation on proposals for Wimbledon Park Golf Course when golf ceases. This deals mainly with the golf course, but also with LB Merton's lake, both of which, together with the rest of the public park, are Grade II* historic parkland, at risk because of harmful features and divided ownership. Planning applications are expected in July. So, what survives from Lancelot Brown's park and how might it fare in AELTC's project?

Brown's lake is intact, apart from the eastern arm and longer southern arm. The three feeder brooks survive, but are currently underground. The lake edge is rich in plants, with wet woodland and beds of reed, sedge and sweet flag. A good range of wildlife visits the area because of its habitats.

The parkland pasture survives, albeit managed for golf. There are 40 veteran English oaks, some more than 250 years old, predating Brown's landscaping, the Tudor Oak just west of the Wimbledon Club being the oldest. Nearby, two of Brown's tree clumps are still there, if depleted. A remnant of the ancient Ashen Grove Wood is

divided between the public park and golf course.

A rotunda by the eastern arm is long gone. Views from the carriage drive, now Church Road, are limited by the dense hedge of the Wimbledon Club, but glimpses remain. The main surviving view is from the lake promenade in Merton's park, another of Brown's carriageways.

The AELTC plans 38 new open grass courts to be dotted across the golf course with a dense network of new paths. The grassland in between will be managed

for nature, but much of it will be lost, together with an unknown number of trees. We are assured that no veteran oaks will go. The courts will be managed intensively and fenced to prevent damage by animals. These will be used for the Elimination Round and the Championships, but also through to September.

The surprise proposal is for a huge new Show Court in the golf course, opposite Court No.1, north of the Wimbledon Club. This will have a moving roof and accommodate 8,000

grounds-pass spectators. It is for "year round operations and to support enhanced community benefit". It will replace yet more natural grassland. It will also house a district heating facility serving the whole built establishment, most of which is across Church Road to the west.

Access to the tennis is to be sustainable, with walking, cycling and shuttle buses. Local car parking is greatly reduced and Church Road will be closed during the Championships, requiring a radical re-routing of the 493 bus.

Extensive reedbeds are proposed for the lake, and two of the three tributary brooks are to flow above ground again. The lost southern arm of the lake will be restored, but not the eastern arm.

The existing legal requirement for a lakeside walkway once golf ceases gets no mention. A shorter boardwalk is proposed to go largely over open water, through the new reed beds. This takes two short-cuts across the arms of the lake, preventing public access beyond.

The water vole is to be introduced, but there is no mention of pollution control, the fish stock, the national priority wet woodland or the ancient Ashen Grove Wood.

The consultation, and the alternative vision of the Capability Brown Society, are both available online.



An aerial view of Wimbledon Park with the proposed grass courts in green and Show Court in red, and the walkways in orange. Courtesy of Neil Thomson

Greenwatch

SUSANNA RIVIERE explains why Merton's drivers need to be planning to 'go electric'

WHY ELECTRIC?

Merton's Climate Emergency Action Plan commits us to becoming a Net Zero Carbon Borough by 2050. The use of petrol and diesel vehicles makes up 19% of measurable emissions in the Borough. One easy way to tackle this is to switch to an electric car.

CHOICE

There is a variety of tried and tested models available now, some with ranges well in excess of 200 miles. Popular ones which rate well in surveys are the Nissan Leaf, the BMWi, the Hyundai Kona and the Renault Zoe.

BUYING

Electric cars are still slightly more expensive to buy than non-electric equivalents, but a Government Plug-In grant up to a maximum of £2,500 is available and the running costs are much lower (according to Buyacar.co.uk). Advice seems to be to buy on finance rather than outright as the technology is moving so fast.

CHARGING

The ideal arrangement is to have a home charging point. You can get up to £350 off the cost of installing a charger at home through the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme.

Those who do not have off-road parking may be tempted to re-charge their vehicles by trailing a cable over the pavement. Even if covered with a cable protector, this presents a trip hazard to the elderly, wheelchair and pushchair users, and

those with impaired vision, and could lead to claims for damages if tripped over. Where possible, use an on-street charging point.

You can find locations at www.zap-map.com/live/

It is claimed that all motorway service stations now have charging points and many include fast chargers. The Government's recently-published 10 Point Plan contains a commitment to an extensive network of more than 2,500 fast charge points by 2030. In the time it takes to have a cup of coffee you can charge your car sufficiently to travel over 100 miles. However, the charging network is still in need of rationalisation.

RUNNING COSTS


The fuel cost per mile for electric cars is in the range of 4p per mile compared to 9p or more for petrol/diesel. There is no road tax to pay and total running costs are lower as well. If you have solar panels powering your home electricity supply you can effectively drive for free.

MORE INFORMATION

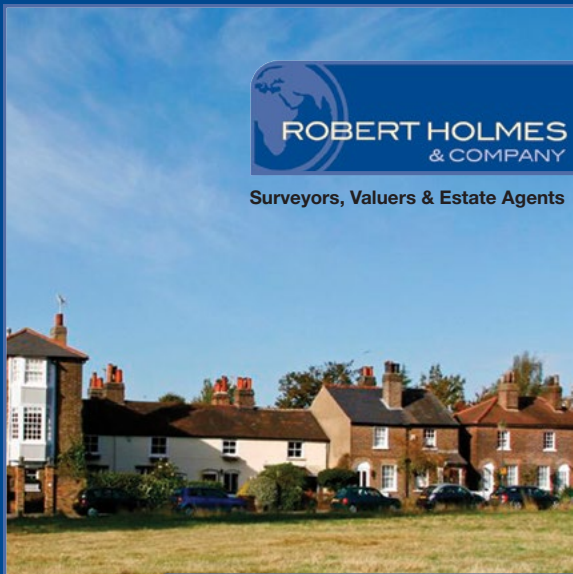
Sustainable Merton looks at electric car ownership in Merton on its website and interviews three Merton residents who have electric cars. Also, two members of the Planning & Environment Committee are willing to discuss their experience of electric car ownership. For more details email susanna.riviere@wimbledonociety.org.uk



Roadside vehicle recharging points on Ernle Road



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The Wimbledon Society was founded in 1903. It is a Registered Charity (No 1164261), and a company limited by guarantee (No 9818707). **Annual subscription rates:** Individual £15; Couple/family £20; Affiliated: £25. Membership application forms can be downloaded from the Society website or collected from the Museum. **The Museum and Bookshop** (020 8296 9914), 22 Ridgway, near Lingfield Road, are open from 2.30 to 5.00pm Saturday and Sunday. Admission free. **Data Protection.** The Wimbledon Society is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office for Data Protection Purposes as a data controller under the Data Protection Act 1998, reg no: ZA244625. All personal information supplied to the Society by members will be used solely for communication with them concerning the Society's Membership, Governance, Events, and only matters concerning the Society. It will not be shared with any other organisation, except where there is a Statutory obligation to do so. Full details of our Privacy Policy are published on our website.