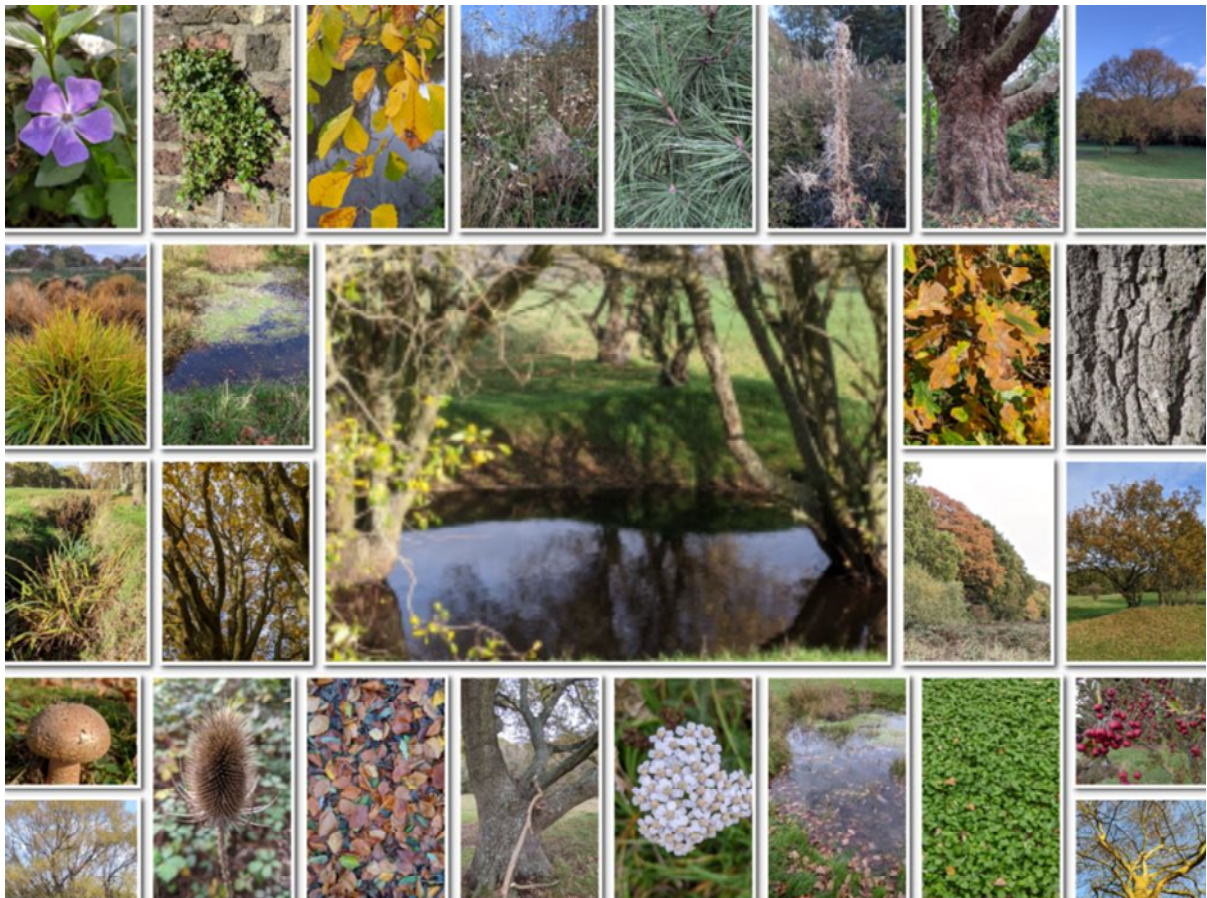


# Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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

## Annual Review 2020



We celebrated beauty and nature in and around Mitcham Cricket Green  
in a daily tweet during both lockdowns.  
More images throughout this Annual Review.



*Beauty and nature at Mitcham Cricket Green*

We spent most of 2020 in the grip of a virus that killed millions around the world. In the UK, as in other countries, reducing the spread of the virus meant periods of zero or minimal personal contact. Social and other public events were not allowed, and numerous businesses had to close for many weeks. It was a challenging year in our personal lives, and Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage, like so many other organisations, also felt the effects.

Government legislation meant we had to cancel our monthly open meetings throughout the year. We hoped our July Community on the Green event might be able to take place. Sadly this was not to be but we managed an Open Picnic in August. We were luckier with September's Mitcham Heritage Day, which fell during a period when outdoor activities were allowed in a Covid-aware way.

While our public facing activities were curtailed other work continued. During the year we fought against two monstrous planning applications for Mitcham on The Canons former nursery site and at Raleigh Gardens car park. These were brought forward not by a private developer but by Merton Council's own development company, Merantun. When these applications were given permission by the Council's Planning Applications Committee we were dismayed. Merantun was wound up by the Council at the end of the year without having built a single home, but these sites could now be sold with planning permission and we feel our work here is not yet done.

We also fought numerous other planning battles including trying to protect Metropolitan Open Land at Imperial Fields from an entirely unsuitable development of flats, and continuing to fight against the over-intensification of Benedict Wharf. The Mayor of London intervened in both applications and sadly decided to allow them, to the detriment of the local scene and open spaces. We are not against development in Mitcham, but remain hugely concerned about the potential for over-intensification and insensitive, inappropriate schemes.

These examples are only the tip of the iceberg of our activity through the year. When we launched a fundraising campaign to help pay for the production of an

external report as part of our fight against the Benedict Wharf proposals we were overwhelmed by people's generosity. The number and value of donations received proved to us that people feel a real connection to our area, and want to support us in our work to care for it.

My appreciation goes to everyone who has contributed to our work as a member, trustee, recipient of our Cricket Green Update, visitor to Mitcham Heritage Day, reader of our web site or tweets, or donator to our campaign. Thank you all.

John Strover  
Chair  
Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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## Trees, nature & Friends of the Canons

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*Beauty and nature at Mitcham Cricket Green*

Every cloud has a silver lining. For the local vegetation, the cloud of Covid, making its appearance early in 2020, led to an abundance of growth not seen for decades.

Wild flowers and grasses gave such a natural relaxing feel. This unfettered surge led to an increase in invertebrates, particularly on Cranmer Green and Baron Fields (London Road Playing Fields).

Bizarrely, a petition started in 2018 for "NO MOW MAY", in a bid to protect grass verges from the ravages of council mowers, found an ally in the pandemic. Furloughed workers = fewer mowers, so this natural feel continued into the summer. As we moved towards 2021 we worked hard to have the rigid mowing regimes amended to further protect this fragile environment.

However, more bizarre weather patterns caused considerable strife to newly planted greenery. The summer drought seemed interminable. The answer to calls for volunteer watering of trees was particularly successful in our area, helping keep alive both new street trees, the copse of whips planted pre-lockdown, and semi-mature whitebeams on Three Kings Piece. Even the golden

privet hedge on the cricket ground boundary needed watery help to survive. Thanks to those who gave of their time, the success rate was most heartening.

Another plus point was the amazing improvement of air quality during the first months of lockdown. Although the return to relative normality led to a return of pre-Covid levels of traffic, those early months showed us all that restriction measures do work to improve air quality.

Continuing pressures from flagrant breaking of planning rules and vagaries caused by climate change brought a shuddering reality to show how at risk the future of natural environment in general, and mature trees in particular, were.

Planning decisions were even harder to comprehend given the “pledges” by those with the power to protect. Mitcham Bridge [loss of mature trees], The Canons [loss of mature trees for cosmetic effect and building threats to the Merton 2019 tree-of-the-year], Raleigh Gardens [another scandalous Merantun manipulation of the democratic planning process that threatened trees within the boundary of Glebe Court], Preshaw Crescent [illegal felling that Merton Council’s Enforcement failed to penalise], Benedict Wharf, London Road car wash and KwikFit [all planning disproportionate builds without adequate provision for proper landscaping] – the list was endless.

Yet there were successes during the year. London in Bloom was held virtually, being judged on photos including those of private gardens. For Cricket Green Age UK’s splendid show, Jubilee Corner’s alpine trough and its seasonal planted beds, plus the thriving privet hedge led to us winning a special commendation for our Conservation Area.



*Beauty and nature at Mitcham Cricket Green*

### **Friends of the Canons (FroC)**

The year started disastrously with the felling of several mature trees as part of The Canons “facelift”. The work was carried out in a clandestine manner, ignoring some requests made during a walk-around with the landscape architects in November 2019.

The shockwaves caused by the devastation led FroC, in tandem with Tree Warden Group Merton, to attempt a halt to the felling by appealing to

Merton Council’s Cabinet Minister. This proved fruitless, flying in the face of Merton Council’s own climate emergency measures. The best pollinator, a bee-

tree growing in front of a basement blind window of Canons House, was felled. A promise to plant a replacement elsewhere on the site had not been fulfilled by the year end.

In the summer we agreed to a mature ash being felled to facilitate the pond drainage pipe work that culminated at the new "scrape". Set against this tree loss we achieved amendments to the original tree planting plans by substituting broad leaf species that would eventually increase canopy shading to the car park centre areas.

FroC workdays were inevitably hit by Covid-19 advice from both central and local governments. Our January session planted a further 70 saplings in the new copse at the southern end of Three Kings Piece. As noted above, these successfully survived the summer drought thanks to vigilant watering by volunteers.

We recommenced in August with a clearance of ragwort on Cranmer Green, in September with a first pruning of the cricket ground boundary privet hedge, and in October by tidying the lime trees on Lower Green West in preparation for the Remembrance services. Then the second lockdown hit, so workdays were suspended.

We were instrumental in having The Canons track "straight" incorporated into the restoration, although the inner steeplechase section was not included, thus remaining as a "ghost" line in the grass.

Having succeeded in obtaining a grant for a new hedge to protect the grass verges on Commonsides West, we were blocked by Merton Council's Greenspaces on health and safety concerns, so fly parking on this stretch continued. Merton Council obviously did not consider driving over kerbs and decanting people for kids' football to be hazardous.

So this mixed year ended. Bellamy Copse in The Canons had thrived, but had also been overtaken by invasives such as bramble. We looked forward to coronavirus rules relaxation in 2021 to enable maintenance of such areas to restart.

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



*Beauty and nature at Mitcham Cricket Green*

The townscape of Cricket Green Conservation Area remained in a state of flux due to the absence of redevelopment of the former filling station site and the failure of any suitable ongoing uses emerging for the Burn Bullock and White Hart inns.

These former coaching inns, used both by commercial stagecoach firms and by wealthy communities with their own carriages, were transformed when the mechanisation of transport eventually

led to the demolition of the stable yard buildings to make room for car parking. Alas in recent years, this decline of the public house industry has overtaken both inns, the closure of which has made the Grade II listed buildings even more vulnerable to ongoing deterioration.

Happily, the building which had accommodated the original administrative offices of the stage and coach firms, having undergone various changes of use over the centuries, was renovated into two cottages a quarter of a century ago. Further restoration work including replacement of decayed sliding sash windows in the garret floor roof windows, is ongoing.

It is worth mentioning that one speculative developer hovering round the area imagined that he could build houses on Cricket Green.

Other former public houses in the area are already converted into residential units and occupied as such. One public house, the former Cricketers, has been demolished and replaced by a tall block. It was not the original establishment of that name, which had been destroyed by fire and replaced by a relatively modern building. The newly occupied block carries the original inn name. The new block is flanked by grass and shrub landscaping which has become well established and adds a new green dimension to the appearance of Lower Green West.

Few people realise that the survival of our greens was enshrined by the Metropolitan Commons Supplemental Act, best known for preserving Mitcham Common but which also encompassed the greens, although they were later

transferred to the care of the local authority. The Act encompassed the greens within the now Conservation Area together with Figges Marsh and Fair Green.

Joyce Bellamy  
Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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## Planning, policy & projects

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MCGC&H



*Beauty and nature at Mitcham Cricket Green*

Despite all the upheavals in the world 2020 was a year of unprecedented pressure on Cricket Green, especially from plans for over 1000 flats across eight development sites within 10 minutes' walk of the cricket ground.

We welcomed support from our MP and ward councillors in persuading Merton Council to turn down SUEZ's inflated plans for 850 homes rising to 10 storeys on Benedict Wharf, only for the Mayor of London to support it following a letter from the Council Leader contradicting his own Planning Committee. We secured a brief intervention from Central Government that pushed permission into 2021.

Merton Council's wider support for Cricket Green in 2020 was equally mixed. Its Planning Committee made some shocking decisions, including for building on Metropolitan Open Land at Imperial Fields, and its probity was brought into question when we recorded councillors objecting to plans during meetings and then voting them through.

A number of the most damaging building plans came from the local authority itself. The poorly designed replacement for Mitcham Bridge was the least favoured option during consultation and needlessly removed mature trees and a historic wall offering protection to Ravensbury Park and nearby homes. Merton Council also gave itself planning permission for an expansion of Melrose School of inferior design.

Most controversial was Merton Council's proposals through its development company Merantun for a major development on Raleigh Gardens car park and in The Canons. These failed to meet its own planning policies for affordable homes,

deprived more than half of Glebe Court's flats overlooking the Raleigh Gardens scheme of minimum levels of daylight and contradicted the major investment in heritage and wildlife underway in The Canons. As the year ended Merton's development company Merantun folded and its development sites are left in limbo.

The £5m project at The Canons funded by the National Lottery finally got going in earnest in the latter part of the year. Unfortunately an early act was the unnecessary felling of mature trees in front of the house. The first outcomes from the project will become clear in 2021. Publication of a new Merton Heritage Strategy was undermined by Merton Council's undignified disbanding of the Merton Heritage Forum that brought together all the local organisations with an interest in heritage.

We negotiated improvements to plans for the old fire station and at the White Hart and saw plans for Justin Plaza that would have intruded on the cricket ground turned down. We also secured improvements to Church Road with new railings at Cricket Green School. We were encouraged by the refusal of permission for an 18m 5G telecommunications mast on Commonside West.

Less positive was the award of planning permission for poorly designed blocks of flats on the former Sparrowhawk yard and on a large garden behind Preshaw Crescent where enforcement officers had ignored the wilful destruction without permission of mature trees.

This was one reason behind our Stop the Chop campaign which highlighted 138 trees to be felled within 800m of the cricket ground and set out proposals for how trees could be better protected. It also helped our efforts to improve the way Merton's Design Review Panel operates. Merton Council agreed with many of our proposed reforms though progress has been slow.

We were pleased to secure local listing for Kellaway House, the last of the villas that used to line London Road between Fair Green and Cricket Green. We welcomed investment in the shopfronts of Bramcote Parade after we secured their local listing in 2017. The year ended with our making major representations on Merton's new Local Plan which will go to public inquiry in 2021.

Tony Burton  
Trustee and Secretary, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage





*Beauty and nature at Mitcham Cricket Green*

With much of 2020 spent under various grades of 'lockdown' opportunities for Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage members to meet each other were strictly limited. We were unable to hold our regular monthly meetings, which are so popular in bringing so many of our members together both for social contact and to play their part in informing how we proceed with day to day business such as commenting on planning applications.

We also had to cancel our AGM, usually held in April and another great opportunity for a social get-together. We also had to cancel what has in recent years become a regular summer fixture – our informal July gathering Community on the Green, to which we invite all local people and, indeed, anyone who wants to make a trip to Mitcham to gather on the Cricket Green. We were able to hold an informal evening picnic in August, with appropriate distancing and a 'bring your own chairs and food' approach, and this was enjoyed by those members who were able to attend.

We had better luck with Mitcham Heritage Day which we were able to hold on Saturday 12th September. We were extremely fortunate with the timing, as just two days later, on 14th September, indoor and outdoor gatherings of more than six people were again banned in England. The events and activities provided by participants, all outdoors and with Covid-19 aware approaches in place, were enjoyed by visitors, and I would like to thank Wandle Industrial Museum, Cricket Green School, Mitcham Parish Church, Mitcham Cricket Club and The Canons project for their energy and willingness to work towards an event that, even up to the 11th hour, could have been cancelled through a national policy announcement.

While Covid-19 meant we had to cancel most of our in-person events, our work continued, and to keep people informed we launched our monthly Cricket Green Update. This is hand-delivered or posted to those members not on email, and also shared with a wider audience of contacts and friends of our work. There has never been a shortage of news to report, and Cricket Green Update proved to be immensely popular. We will keep it up in the future.

Throughout the lockdown periods, while we were encouraged to take exercise locally we also tweeted a daily image, and all of the photographs in this Annual Review have been taken from our twitter feed. We know from feedback received that this daily connection was enjoyed and appreciated by many.

Sandra Vogel  
Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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## Mitcham Cricket Club

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MCGC&H



*Beauty and nature at Mitcham Cricket Green*

For Mitcham Cricket Club, like everyone else, it was an unprecedented year.

At one point it didn't look like we would get any cricket, but in the end we had a lively if shortened season. Senior league cricket, as we know it, was scrapped for the 2020 season with no promotion or relegation. Our seniors entered a couple of challenge tournaments and had some Sunday friendlies.

We managed to offer cricket to our junior section with the All Stars programme for a small group of 5-8 year olds and regular training and some matches for our older juniors. The Ladies Section was suspended in 2020, however the junior girls kept the Mitcham Sapphires flag flying. We managed to maintain our 335-year record of continuous play on our historic Green, even if the cricket was socially distanced and peppered with sanitizer breaks!

The tenure of the pavilion remained unresolved and a continued frustration. The freeholder had been considering plans for a care home on the back carpark. We tried without success to purchase the freehold of the pavilion or secure a lease for the club with the current freeholder. We continued to work closely with Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage in all of this and remained grateful for their support.

Given all of the issues relating to the pandemic our fundraising opportunities this year were seriously curtailed. We were grateful to contributors to our Covid appeal, which reached nearly £1,000. In addition, we received a grant from the

Wimbledon Foundation for Junior Equipment and Coaching plus a grant from the ECB "Return to Cricket" fund as a contribution to replacing our score box which we hope to complete in 2021. As ever the club was kept running by our volunteers and we are indebted to all of them for their help to keep the club alive.

The outlook remained a challenge with uncertainty over the pavilion and over the lifting of Covid restrictions. But the number of juniors registering to play in 2021 was high with the All Stars and the new Dynamos (8-11 year olds) schemes sold out. Three junior teams and four senior teams played regularly and performances on the pitch are improving thanks to a new structured approach to training and the onboarding of a number of new coaches and new equipment.

We look forward to working with MCGC&H as cricket continues for a 336th year on the Green.

David Bell  
MCGC&H Liaison, Mitcham Cricket Club



*Beauty and nature at Mitcham Cricket Green*

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Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage is the civic society for the Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and its environs. We are part of the wider civic movement through membership of the national charity Civic Voice.

Membership costs £10 a year.

More information about us is at [www.mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk](http://www.mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk)

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## Summary of accounts

MCGC&H

	Year ended 31.12.20 £	Year ended 31.12.19 £
<b>INCOME</b>		
Memberships – New	70	120
Subscriptions – Life	0	0
Subscriptions – Ordinary	430	610
Donations & one-off grants	150	54
Bank deposit interest received gross	17	27
Sales	300	300
Social fund receipts	0	237
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>£967</u></b>	<b><u>£1,348</u></b>
<b>LESS: EXPENDITURE</b>		
Sundry expenses + Meetings and secretarial expenses	61	660
Linked organisations subscriptions	90	145
Group Insurance	204	204
Bank charges	0	0
Community-on-the-Green & Mitcham Heritage Day	0	26
Donations	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b><u>£355</u></b>	<b><u>£1,035</u></b>
<b>OPERATING SURPLUS</b>	<b>£612</b>	<b>£313</b>
Retained surplus brought forward	<b>£7,826</b>	<b>£7,513</b>
<b>RETAINED SURPLUS C/FWD</b>	<b><u>£8,438</u></b>	<b><u>£7,826</u></b>
Grants brought forward	<b>£6,562</b>	<b>£2,973</b>
Grants received	<b>£200</b>	<b>£6,848</b>
Less grants expended	<b>£1,078</b>	<b>£3,259</b>
<b>Restricted funds available</b>	<b><u>£5,684</u></b>	<b><u>£6,562</u></b>
<b>Deposit Account</b>	<b>£6,734</b>	<b>£6,717</b>

Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage  
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Member of

