

Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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

Annual Review 2022





Our Summer Community on the Green event was more popular than ever

2022 was another eventful year for us. The highlights were undoubtedly our community focused events – Community on the Green in July, Mitcham Heritage Day in September, and an impromptu celebration of the 200th anniversary of Mitcham's obelisk on Cricket Green. With rumours of many small watercourses in the area, what better way to commemorate the reputed rising of a spring to end a drought than to try dowsing. Advertised at short notice, upwards of 30 people came along to try their hand.

It was lovely to see Bellamy Copse recognised as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation following many years of volunteer work on its upkeep by our close ally Friends of the Canons, and to help Friends of the Canons with the creation of a new wildlife area at The Canons. And we must thank Colliers Wood based Spin Us A Yarn for the delightful cricket themed postbox topper that suddenly appeared in August to the delight of those passing by.

A key focus for us throughout the year has been making input to Merton Council's new Local Plan – including participating in a number of hearings in the Spring and Autumn on key issues. Read more on that elsewhere in this Annual Review, as well as learning about our other work on planning matters, including plans for tower blocks on Mitcham Gasworks site. It seems the development pressure on our area is getting ever more intense. As ever our aim is not to block all development, but to work to keep it appropriate in scale and high quality in design.

None of our achievements would be possible without the hard work of our volunteers and trustees, and the support of everyone who joins us. My personal thanks to you all.

John Strover
Chair
Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage



Continued success at London in Bloom with an Outstanding award

It is inevitable when reviewing the local environment to concentrate on the weather. In February we hunkered down to survive Storm Eunice with the loss of large trees. Thankfully there were fewer casualties here than were suffered in other boroughs.

After a pleasing spring highlighting abundant blossom, the summer drought with extreme temperatures caused many problems. Regular volunteer sessions to ferry water to our trees – not just newly planted whips but also

established trees in exposed beds – were essential. These were necessary at The Canons, Three Kings Piece, Mitcham Common's newly established Janet Morris Memorial Copse and even for the ultra-hardy, and usually immune, privet hedge around the cricket boundary.

The strange weather extended into autumn which, because the drought had caused premature partial leaf-drop from many trees, lasted until December. However, this icy month put paid to the long period of colour explosion. Despite these weather vagaries it was an excellent year for fruiting trees and fungi.

There was further success at the 2022 London in Bloom competition, even better this year for being live rather than virtual. For Cricket Green it was a top "Level 5 – Outstanding" award for our Conservation Area. However, it came with a word of advice from our judge that covering such a large area would fall outside the limits of "It's Our Neighbourhood" category in future. The recommendation was to register individually each notable area, or to upgrade to "Small Village". This was taken on board for 2023.

Along with MCGC&H, Tree Wardens Merton made comments to the framework of Merton Borough's Tree Strategy part 1, dealing with trees on council land. No mention of hedges, of shrubs or of meadows. Results not due until 2023, along with Part 2, covering trees in private ownership.

Success was achieved in saving trees from unnecessary felling for a Tesco Express planning application at Sandham House (Boundary Business Court, Church Road). The hearing was postponed after our objections pointed out anomalies and incorrect conclusions surrounding existing trees. A new June 2022

tree survey concluded that all existing trees should remain and be properly protected during any structural work.



How delightful to see the floral abundance on Three Kings Piece, though the “no mow” regime was not a complete success when meadows were mown!

Friends of the Canons (FroC)

This year we lost a founder member of FroC, a member of MCGC&H and the major force behind tree planting advice in our Conservation Area – Dave Lofthouse died following a relatively short illness. His legacy survives, and we hope our efforts to get the Dave Lofthouse Memorial Tree Walk up and running will ensure he will never be forgotten.

The wild flower meadows were a disaster due to being mown. One plus point was the creation of a new patch to replace the removed children’s playground. Two flushes, predominantly of daisies, were welcome. FroC supported the campaign for “No Mow May” with moderate success. Margins and lawns benefitted having meadow grasses looking splendid and teeming with insects. Mowers destroyed them all on May 31st!

Traveller incursions had been annoying at best, a health hazard at worst. On all occasions [Lower Green West & Canons] the perpetrators refused to use the lavatories in their expensive caravans and motor homes, choosing to use the greenspace instead. The incursion on to Canons land highlighted weaknesses in site security at two areas used – via Park Place and the MUGA/SUFA barriers, and through the beech whips by the obelisk – a potential target identified in writing both in 2020 and 2021 to the Canons Project Manager. The ‘mob’ exit at the obelisk caused major damage to some beech whips which have yet to be replaced.

Despite tasks still being restricted because of the Canons lottery-funded work on site, we did manage to tackle bramble and thistle removal from the Bellamy Copse pens, and create a new Nature Trail between Canons Lodge and the House.

Away from The Canons, we successfully removed ragwort from Cranmer Meadow allowing the annual cut to be used for stock fodder. We also undertook part one of the opening-up of the seasonal pond on Cranmer Meadow by cutting a swathe through the bramble, gave another healthy trim to the golden privet within the cricket boundary, and tidied the lime trees and grounds on Lower Green West

ahead of Remembrance Day. The additions to Three Kings Copse in January had been recognised as part of the Queen’s Green Canopy Jubilee initiative.

After years of negotiations with idverde, FroC had permission to remove and replant winter pansies – still in flower – from formal beds opposite the cricket pavilion. Removal allowed for summer begonia planting by idverde. Volunteers did sterling work resetting the pansies in an unused bed at Canons, created when installing a water pipe from Madeira Hall to the Community Gardens. Later in the year we did the same with begonias providing several weeks of colour till the frosts came.

At the year-end we were again successful in two bids, for spring bulbs and for whips. The bulbs arrived in December, quite late in the planting season, made even more tricky by the frozen earth during the month. At the first thaw we managed to plant the bulbs outside The Canons walled garden and in the shady southern bed of the Canons Community Garden.

As ever, we thank those volunteers who stuck with us during the year. Without them none of these good works could have been achieved.

John Davis

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

Landscape & townscape

MCGC&H



The choice of the “green canopy” for the platinum jubilee resonated with current and previous activity in our area

At this stage, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the exceptionally dry weather will have affected overall survival of vegetation, both ornamental planting and functional areas, especially bearing in mind the hose pipe ban.

The choice of the “Green Canopy” for the Platinum Jubilee reminded us of the contribution already made over the years by local organisations.

Mitcham Cricket Club when installing the memorial stone in 1963, also added the planting of Norway Maple trees and

native hedgerows to enhance its setting.

Also, the residents of Glebe Court, wishing to increase the shielding of their estates frontage to London Road already provided by the row of trees planted within the grass area added a flowering hedgerow next to the pavement boundary.

Along Church Road, the Mitcham Parish Churchyard also contributes to the landscape with its boundary hedges. Keeping a balance between tree and hedgerow planting, the maintenance of informal grassland for general recreation and the intensive cultivation of grassed areas for organised sport, notably cricket and bowls continue to be important.

The historic garden areas of The Canons benefit from volunteer activity. Individual householders in the area also undertake shrub planting in their gardens where possible. Sadly, but understandably, many front gardens, where size permits, have long since been converted to car parking space. Moreover, sustained theft of plants and containers in recent years has discouraged many householders from undertaking ornamental and environmental planting.

However, informal planting of bulbs in suitable areas within the Conservation Area, such as the crocus bulbs added by volunteers in the cricket memorial corner have survived for many seasons.

Cricket Green owes its particular value to the fact that it is intervisible with a number of listed historic buildings. To date, the fate of the coaching inns - the White Hart and Burn Bullock has been under pressure. The energy of MCGC&H in defending the buildings and spaces, together with the appreciation of local residents, both of social and private housing, of the quality of their unique environment, has been ongoing.

The eventual commencement of new building at the corner of Broadway Gardens and London Road, will provide a sharp contrast at the edge of the Conservation Area. Along Church Road, the conversion of long vacant small shops into cottage residences has provided a solution in scale with the overall character of this part of the common area.

Joyce Bellamy
Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage



A new cricket themed post box topper for all to enjoy



Demolition of the locally listed gasometer at Mitcham Gasworks – during a year when Merton Council unilaterally rewrote the site’s planning rules and there was minimal public engagement by tower blocks developer St William

2022 was a year when we dealt with multiple threats to the character of our neighbourhood while trying to secure policies and strategies to give it much better protection in the future.

Our efforts secured new safeguards for green space at Mary Tate Almshouses and for Bellamy Copse. We helped rewrite planning policies to require all developers to look after newly planted trees for the long term and we exposed flaws in Merton Council’s Design Review Panel that resulted in a major overhaul.

We also persuaded Merton Council to refuse permission to develop on the green space at the heart of Mary Tate Almshouses and to reject plans for telecom masts in the Conservation Area, including by Mitcham Cricket Ground.

We worked hard to improve multiple building proposals, including where permission has been given. Vertical extensions of Drive House and Justin Plaza 2, works on the Old Fire Station and former Kwik Fit site and new proposals for the car wash site were all influenced.

At the end of the year we faced up to the largest development ever proposed in Mitcham Village when plans for nearly 600 flats in tower blocks rising to over 9 storeys were revealed on Mitcham Gasworks. We exposed the way Merton Council rewrote its own planning policies for the site to support taller buildings, tearing up three years of public consultation on the Local Plan it had already submitted to the Government for independent review. We supported local residents demanding better for Mitcham Village.

Our research found nearly 30 unresolved planning enforcement cases in Cricket Green, including breaches by Merton Council itself in The Canons and by the health authority at The Wilson. The year ended with signs of a more robust approach to tackling planning breaches as investigations began at the Burn Bullock. We ran a year-long campaign that resulted in Willow Lane being cleared of just one of the three major flytips on Mitcham Common.

We challenged both Merton Council and Mitcham Common Conservators to be bolder in their strategies for trees and for management of Mitcham Common. We also secured a commitment from Merton Council to complete the registration of new protected greens around Fair Green by August. This commitment was first made in 2013 but the year ended with the promise still unfulfilled.

After another rethink by the health authority The Wilson was once again confirmed as the preferred location for major new investment. Despite promises we have been unable to meet with NHS Properties to discuss how the site might best be developed.

It was the last full year of The Canons project, which we initiated in 2011 and where we have helped secure nearly £5m investment in the landscape and historic buildings. Delivery has been far from smooth and we are concerned the project will not leave as positive a legacy as it should for the local community. It has massively overspent and the future of both the house and new community café remain uncertain. We welcomed removal of the historic dovecote from the national "heritage at risk" register and organised a celebration of the 200th anniversary of the obelisk, complete with an introduction to dowsing which was enjoyed by all.



The Parish boundary marker in its original location (right) and temporary location on the new Mitcham bridge (left)

We put forward plans for additions to Merton's "local list" of protected buildings and structures and pressed for the return of the parish marker to Mitcham Bridge. It was an ignominious return which confirmed too little thought had been given to how it would fit in with the new design. Merton Council agreed it could only be a temporary solution.

We were horrified at the theft of three bronze swords from the listed Mitcham War Memorial over the summer and led efforts to design and fund replacements. We have secured listed building consent for the work and await information from Merton Council allowing the work to be completed.

Looking ahead we know 2023 will be a critical year with the 15-year Local Plan being finalised, decisions on Mitcham Gasworks setting the tone for future of Mitcham Village and progress expected on The Wilson, Burn Bullock and The Canons among other sites.

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



It was a pleasure to welcome Black Swan Border Morris to Community on the Green again this year

We ran a strong programme of events across the year. Community on the Green took place on a sunny evening, and was very well attended. We were delighted to be joined for the second time by the Black Swan Border Morris group, who put on an impressive show and added a lot of colour to proceedings.

There was some discussion about cancelling Mitcham Heritage Day, scheduled for Saturday 10th September, following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth on the 8th September.

In the end we decided to give participating organisations the final say, and almost all went ahead with their event as planned. Mitcham Cricket Club's juniors paid their own tribute before their exhibition match, and participating organisations and visitors were mindful of the occasion.

We were delighted to welcome some new participants to Mitcham Heritage Day this year. Mitcham Community Choir gave several pop-up performances throughout the day, book conservator Katarina Kelsey presented a fascinating insight into book conservation from a base we organised at Wandle Industrial Museum, and the Small Quarter opened their doors for us. These newcomers joined Mitcham Parish Church, Cricket Green School, Wandle Industrial Museum, Mitcham Cricket Club, Mitcham Methodist Church, Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church, The Canons and Melanie's Walk as well as our own organised walk for a day that proved popular and more vibrant than ever.

We added a one-off special event later in September when on the 25th we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the obelisk on the corner of Cricket Green and Madeira Road. The obelisk was reputedly put in place to celebrate the appearance of a spring which broke a drought. Rumours of multiple watercourses under the ground around the area were tested as everyone present tried their hand at dowsing, with some very interesting results.

On a more conventional note, our monthly emailed newsletter Cricket Green Update goes from strength to strength. Judging from the feedback and comments we get it is popular and informative to the many hundreds who

receive it. Started in lockdown when we had to stop all in-person activity, Cricket Green Update is now a key part of our communications offer to members and non-members alike.

Sandra Vogel
Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

Mitcham Cricket Club



MCC juniors show respect to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth two days after her passing on 8 September 2023, at the opening of their match on Mitcham Heritage Day

2022 was a return to normal league cricket after the two previous seasons had been impacted by the pandemic. The club was able to return to full use of the pavilion, although planning social events remained a challenge.

The world's oldest continually-used cricket green turned brown for a large part of July and August as we battled through the hottest summer on record. We are indebted to the work of our groundsman and key volunteers who maintained a ground for us to play on all season.

On the pitch, the club's 1st XI enjoyed a successful season. The team were in contention for a second successive promotion until the end of the season, finally finishing 4th only 9 points off the promotion places. The 2nd XI finished 7th in their league. But sadly the 3rd XI struggled and was unfortunately relegated, although they fought to stay up right to the last week of the season.

Our growing band of volunteer coaches enabled us to provide more cricket for our junior section. In 2022 we added an under 10 team to our three other junior teams. Sunday training was attended by well over 100 young people over the summer.

We added a summer camp for girls to our weekly Dynamos programme for 8-11 year olds. Both the Dynamos and our All Stars programme for 5-8 year olds were fully sold out again.

The Mitcham Sapphires entered a league, so July saw the first Mitcham Ladies team playing league cricket on the Green in its history!

The tenure of the pavilion remains unresolved and a continued frustration. We had no communication from the landlord during 2022. Talks with our MP and with councillors have continued.

The ongoing support of MCGC&H is very welcome to maintain our facilities, to support our fundraising efforts and to help us keep cricket in Cricket Green. 2023 will be the 339th year of cricket on the Green and we have a calendar of cricket activity to keep us busy through the summer. We hope MCGC&H members can join us!

David Bell
MCGC&H Liaison, Mitcham Cricket Club



One of the floral displays created by Friends of the Canons by relocating formal planting no longer required elsewhere



Our celebration of the 200th anniversary of Cricket Green's iconic obelisk – which included a chance for everyone to have a go at dowsing

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

Summary of accounts

MCGC&H

	Year ended 31.12.22	Year ended 31.12.21
	£	£
INCOME		
Memberships – New	105	90
Subscriptions – Life	0	0
Subscriptions – Ordinary	620	620
Donations & one-off grants	310	2557
Bank deposit interest received gross	66	1
Sales	350	300
Social fund receipts	111	45
Total Income	<u>£1,562</u>	<u>£3,613</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Sundry expenses, meetings and secretarial	311	397
Linked organisations subscriptions	111	128
Group Insurance	157	204
Bank charges	0	0
Community-on-the-Green, Mitcham Heritage Day	622	0
Gazebo replacement	562	0
Donations	0	0
Total Expenditure	<u>£1,763</u>	<u>£729</u>
OPERATING DEFICIT /SURPLUS	-£201	£2,884
Retained surplus brought forward	£11,322	£8,438
RETAINED SURPLUS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>£11,121</u>	<u>£11,322</u>
Total of current and deposit accounts	£16,389	£16,599
Grants brought forward	5,172	5,684
Grants received	550	200
Less grants expended	504	712
Restricted funds carried forward	<u>£5,218</u>	<u>£5,172</u>

Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage
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Member of

