

Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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

Annual Review 2023



**Mitcham won an impressive
haul of awards at
London in Bloom this year**

Welcome to our 2023 Annual Review – the tenth that we have published.

It is not possible to encapsulate all the work we do in a calendar year in one short document. What you will see in these pages are highlights, including community projects, some of the things we have campaigned on including planning applications, and some of our broader involvement in the local community.

At the heart of all the many things we do both large and small, is our desire to stand up for Mitcham Cricket Green and its environs. The pressures on our area become greater with every passing year. New development threatens to go higher, and be of poor quality. The management of our many greens and open spaces can be somewhat random at times. Even apparently small changes to our area can have a large effect when considered cumulatively. Our work covers all this and more.

As well as caring for our area, we celebrate it, and enjoy bringing people together to do the same. In June we held our first ever quiz night as well as continuing the July tradition of Community on the Green, and holding Mitcham Heritage Day in September – on a day when the temperature in Mitcham broke the 30 degree barrier.

Happily, cricket continues to be played, 2023 being the 339th continuous year – longer than anywhere else in the world. Our support for Mitcham Cricket Club’s aim to secure the pavilion under community ownership continues. Mitcham’s many and varied open spaces remain a haven of peace and tranquillity, and long may this continue. Encroachment needs to be guarded against.

We continue to fight for Mitcham Cricket Green and its environs because it is special. This fight and our role in bringing people together go hand in hand. You will see this as you read this Annual Report. We hope you find it interesting.

One controversial project dominated the year- an announcement from Trees for Cities (TfC), and Merton Council that a new woodland would be created on Cranmer Green.

This was to be a memorial woodland for the late Dave Lofthouse, Arboricultural Manager at the London Borough of Merton.

Sadly this was problematic from the start. We were not informed of the project: an on-site meeting with Merton Council Greenspaces representatives laid the blame at the foot of TfC for not using contact information they'd been given.

At this on-site meeting we pointed out the area was like a bog before frost came and left iced stretches. This frost had penetrated the ground, making it hard to plant whips. The community planting was delayed by one month. No list of whip species for the main planting was provided. We were told final choices would be "advised to us before delivery", but we received no information.



*Mulch waiting to be spread
at the Dave Lofthouse Memorial Woodland
at Cranmer Green*

Trees for Cities boasted "We helped plant a community woodland on Cranmer Green with Merton Council, which saw a total 6,000 young whip trees planted, 12 standard trees and a variety of woodland bulbs and wildflower meadows."

By our calculations only around 3,500 whips were planted. Insufficient mulch was laid, as it ran out on the community planting day.

Three later workdays took place, featuring community service workers under supervision. We were not informed, and so unable to be involved. Late summer mulching via heavy vehicles was too late to have much lasting effect, and storing vehicles overnight in idverde's yard caused major damage to The Canons west lawn which has never recovered.

TfC's responsibility for the whips ended in September. Friends of the Canons will carry out an independent check on surviving whips in spring 2024.

We were pleased that Merton Council's Tree Strategy Part 1 (covering trees owned by the Council) acknowledged and incorporated elements from public consultation.

A number of areas within our Conservation Area environs entered London In Bloom 2023, and all won awards. Mitcham Garden Village, Cranmer & Cricket Green's greens, Mitcham Community Orchard, The Canons, Three Kings Piece & Pond, Glebe Court and Fair Green generated a bundle of certificates from the ceremony. Helpful advisory comments from the judge would be taken on board for 2024 entries.

There was a lack of Council support for No Mow May, which is designed to protect habitat for invertebrates in verges and meadows. Having left all grass within the Conservation Area unmown for nine days of May, the machines rolled in after a particularly wet night and destroyed what had become a very picturesque scene, leaving heaps of sodden grass and major tyre ruts. In the very hot days of summer some of these heaps combusted, yet nothing changed the mowing regime.

Mitcham Park, which is within the Conservation Area, had three mature street Plane trees felled without notice. Although frequently pollarded, they were a splendid statement within the avenue of mature street trees. There was noted heartwood rotting, but we asked Merton Council why such drastic action was taken and when replacements would be planted. We were only given verbal responses – nothing concrete.

Tree surveys were undertaken with Ravensbury Ward Councillor Caroline Charles following last year's plantings at Mitcham Bridge, Ravensbury Park and Baron Field (also known as London Road Playing Fields). All needed immediate maintenance. It was agreed that some trees at all sites were beyond saving, so replacements were demanded.

A welcome surprise came in the planting of ten standard-sized Liriodendrons (Tulip Trees) to fill gaps in the King George VI Avenue.

Locally, a number of street trees had been reported with stake ties strangling the tree. Despite reporting this to Merton Council, in the end Tree Wardens did the work.



Ten Tulip Trees were planted to fill in gaps along King George VI Avenue

A broad sweep of herbicide was sprayed on kerbs and in tree pits. Instant whitening of anything hit by this was alarming, especially in light of Cllr Natasha Irons (the responsible Cabinet member) announcement that Merton Council was outlawing use of glyphosate, the most lethal application. Return of the "Yellow Peril" to The Canons around seating was reported to Merton Council, but no explanation received. Further spraying around The Canons gave the appearance of a run-down park, not a multi-million pound invested premier project.

Weird summer and autumn weather led to the delayed display of colour change in leaves and a longer than average period of deciduous trees in leaf.

It was also an excellent year for fungi with a carpet of fly agaric on Mitcham Golf Club. There was plentiful birch bolete, shaggy parasol, wood blewit and common field mushroom, plus sightings of many other species.

John Davis

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

Friends of the Canons



We had a very successful year around Mitcham's greenspaces and continued to help Friends of Mitcham Common at the Janet Morris Memorial Copse on Mill Hill.

We completed an access path to the seasonal pond on Cranmer Meadow/Nature Reserve, and had an initial day there clearing bramble and cutting some of the reeds that were in danger of taking over the whole pond.

The weirdest experience of the year came whilst pulling thistle from The Canons carp pond margins. We were sidetracked by news of an incident two days prior when a group of hooded youths were seen tossing "stuff" into the pond. We spotted many wooden trophy stands floating, so decided to use grappling rakes to retrieve these. Dredging the depths pulled six silver plated trophies as well as these bases. Some trophies bore the crest of Coombe Hill Golf Club. Contact made with the club told us that an evening burglary had taken place with over 50 trophies stolen – value exceeding £90k.

Annual workdays at Lower Green West removed lime tree sprouts and cleared litter before Remembrance Day, and trimmed the privet hedge around the cricket boundary, removing the unwanted competing growth. Removing ragwort from Cranmer Meadow this year was easy as the weed was not abundant.

Cinnabar moth re-emerged this year, caterpillars on the ragwort flowers having been absent for several years.

Planting donated tulip bulbs on the Lower Green West triangle "gateway" bed for spring flowering took place as an extra workday.



FroC relocated begonias from the circular beds opposite Mitcham Cricket Club pavilion to The Canons Well Walk

Also extra was the removing and replanting of the begonias from the circular beds opposite Mitcham Cricket Club pavilion. These were used on The Canons Well Walk, with the excess given to Vestry Hall, Wandle Industrial Museum, Age UK, Portland Road gardeners, and some enthusiastic individuals. All gave late autumn colour splashes until first frosts. Volunteers agreed this was a very rewarding exercise.

Complete replanting of The Canons Walled Garden took place, but with insufficient notice to muster volunteers for an impromptu workday. A deal of pruning had taken place, transforming the side wall beds. Wall wires were still to be affixed for vine and wisteria, with other outstanding snagging issues to be addressed. Central urn yet to be cleaned and painted in situ, but at least this featured on a schedule.

In view of above workday problems, tasks were switched to removing thistles, nettles and cleavers from around the pond railings where all had invaded the path. We also dealt with ivy that had crept up the Pagoda tree *Styphnolobium japaonicum* in The Canons ex-nursery, and rogue bramble by the track at Bellamy Copse.

At Lower Green West we successfully removed tangled bramble from the two beds near Church Road, trimming dead growth and border shrubs.



A splendid wildflower display at Three Kings Piece sadly not replicated at The Canons due to indiscriminate and poorly timed mowing

After years of us emphasising to The Canons management its importance, a protective fence was erected behind the embryo beech hedge by the obelisk. Replacement whips to fill gaps caused by traveller incursion and lazy pedestrians compacting soil and breaking stems were not delivered.

Inexplicable strimming of the only flowering wild-seed meadow left in The Canons had been queried as to who was responsible. We continued to press for reseeded of all areas sown under the Lottery Stage 2 successful bid. Four around The Canons track that were meadows, but had at least been left unmown for five months were not only cut, but cut when wet, and all arisings left to fester in situ. A fifth had half its width removed and a sixth was mown in with the rest of the grassed area. Meadows must be cleared of all cuttings to enable wild seeds to germinate and flourish, a fact obviously lost on mowing operatives. Supposed investigation ongoing.

We thank those volunteers who stuck with us during the year. Without them none of our good works could have been achieved.

John Davis

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

Landscape & townscape



The value of our accumulated green heritage was underlined when recent visitors from Cornwall expressed envy when exploring Mitcham.

They admired the extent and variety of Mitcham's green spaces and residential estate grounds. The survival of Mitcham's greens accompanied the preservation of Mitcham Common, although responsibility for the management of the greens has rested with the Local Authority, whereas the Common is administered by a Board of Conservators.

Cricket Green's attraction owes much to the historic role of Mitcham Cricket Club. In landscape terms, this is down to the club's ongoing maintenance of the cricket pitch and outfield. The Cricket Club also created the club memorial in memory of past members.

This memorial consists of a corner of the green in which Norway Maple trees were planted, bordered on the corner roadside edges by hedges consisting of native hawthorn shrubs. Crocus bulbs have been planted to celebrate the coming of spring in recent years.



*Jubilee Corner with the former
White Hart pub beyond*

A few of the earlier Golden Jubilee rose bushes have continued to flower at Jubilee Corner flower beds with regular weeding and deadheading undertaken by volunteers, although the rose bushes are declining with age.

The late Queen Elizabeth II final celebratory Jubilee included not only tree planting, but also a happy innovation that recommended the planting of hedgerows.

The Cricket Club's existing hedgerows and our own planting and ongoing care of a golden privet extension of hedging to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Conservation Area's designation happily fulfil this target.

It is vital that Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area should not be viewed in total isolation from the wider landscape of Mitcham greens, such as the progress of conserving and enhancing Figges Marsh now being undertaken (which owes much to the initiative of the friends group), and the complex task of integrating Fair Green in the ongoing attempt to regenerate Mitcham central area.

The recent redecoration of Mitcham's historic Vestry Hall and its use by local organisations has served to revive the importance of Lower Green West.

Two matters are of importance: the need to sustain public awareness of the ongoing value of Cricket Green and other greens, and the need to publicise an important need for adequate watering systems for all new planting, sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in weather in any season and to prevent the unnecessary death of new public planting schemes, whether undertaken in a Local Authority or community project programme.

Joyce Bellamy

Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

2023 saw us involved in some of the largest building proposals ever seen in Mitcham and Cricket Green and we secured some important planning decisions to protect the Conservation Area and our green space.



Proposed development for Mitcham Gasworks was universally condemned

Monstrous plans for multiple nine storey tower blocks on Mitcham Gasworks were universally condemned.

We supported the local community with a door to door street audit that revealed more than 99% of residents living within 100m rejected the plans.

Serious reservations were expressed by ward councillors and the strength of community opposition was plain to see in

public meetings and the volume of objections submitted to Merton Council.

A major rethink is needed for a site where we would welcome the development of 400 homes rising to no more than six storeys and with more houses (rather than flats) and streets to respect the character of Mitcham Village.

We also handled plans for vast industrial sheds on a site in Willow Lane more than twice the size of Mitcham Gasworks. These could set a precedent for how Willow Lane Industrial Estate develops in the future and we highlighted a series of major design flaws.

The future of other industrial land at Benedict Wharf was confirmed when SUEZ dropped its controversial plans for 10 storey tower blocks given permission by the Mayor of London after we persuaded Merton Council to reject them.



Suez dropped plans for 10 storey tower blocks at Benedict Wharf, and will retain waste management operations at the site

SUEZ intends to retain its waste management operations and we called for a public meeting to deal with multiple problems including smells, heavy lorries, and fires that have been unresolved despite more than a decade of complaints.

Other significant development plans included the demolition and rebuilding of Cumberland Care Home (access via Whitford Gardens) and East Lodge in Mitcham Park. Plans for a larger care home failed to provide the “healing design” needed by vulnerable residents and the East Lodge plans were rejected twice for their intrusive impact on the Conservation Area.

We warmly welcomed Merton Council turning down wrong-headed and poorly prepared proposals to build over the large area of green space behind the listed Mary Tate Almshouses. We have now secured the future of this land as protected open space in Merton’s new Local Plan and have called on the owners to tackle the decaying listed walls.

Other building plans at the former White Hart pub, London Road car wash, former fire station, Old Bank House and demolition of the Church Road parade moved forward slowly and we have been able to secure minor improvements in their designs.



We applied to designate The Windmill pub the protection afforded by being an Asset of Community Value

There were welcome signs of a more rigorous approach to planning enforcement including at the Burn Bullock where Merton Council took action against multiple unauthorised uses and demanded repairs to the listed building.

We stand ready to support further action which should also secure the future of Mitcham cricket pavilion, which is in the same ownership, in community hands. We applied to Merton Council to protect The Windmill pub as an “asset of community value” given the threats it faces in the same ownership as the Burn Bullock.

Other enforcement issues remain outstanding despite our efforts. These include a breeze block instead of brick shed built by Merton Council in The Canons in breach of its own planning permission and the failure to remove the former walk-in GP building at The Wilson where temporary planning permission ran out years ago.



This location opposite Cranmer Green is one of several proposed locations for telecommunications masts, rejected by Merton Council

We unearthed details of further delays over the future of The Wilson where the new medical hub is now set to be ready by 2027 when the original plans had building works beginning in 2015. The South West London Integrated Care Board, a relatively new body which now has responsibility for the Wilson, has gone to ground on the whole issue.

We campaigned strongly against a flurry of proposals for telecommunication masts - by Cranmer Green, on Fair Green and in Hollowfield Way, and we welcomed Merton Council's strong stand in rejecting them. We have proposed alternative less damaging locations.

It was disappointing to see permission given for development of the Kings Arms for "high end studio flats" which will take away a large part of the pub and the former café in Mitcham Village.

The future of Mitcham Village was once again on Merton Council's agenda. Our four point plan emphasised the need (1) to deliver what people said they wanted last time they were asked during "Rediscover Mitcham" - a flourishing market, public toilets and easier ways to cross all the roads; (2) to rethink the approach to Mitcham and recognise its role as a 21st century "village" not a town and complete registration of the protected Greens; (3) Merton Council to act as a major landowner (including of Sibthorpe Road and Raleigh Gardens car parks) that sets high standards and supports Mitcham's cultural and civic life as well as providing truly affordable homes and (4) to keep Mitcham low-rise, including on Mitcham Gasworks.

We also secured Listed Building Consent for work on the war memorial to replace the stolen bronze swords. Unfortunately Merton Council was unable to provide information requested to support a funding bid to complete the work in time for Remembrance Sunday.



Mitcham War Memorial bronze swords were not replaced in time for Remembrance Sunday

We sought to work with Merton Council on a number of projects to benefit the Conservation Area. We welcomed its support for our ideas for "London Road Boulevard" which would green up and make more pleasant the wide pavement between Pawelek café and Pawelek food store.

We have also tried hard to persuade Merton Council to finish the job on the new Mitcham Bridge over the Wandle. Promises to properly present the parish boundary marker, provide interpretation and complete the planting remain unresolved.

The Canons and some of the protected Greens also experienced incursions from travellers despite our best efforts to highlight gaps in the boundaries around them.

Despite written commitments to jointly run the project with the local community Merton Council unilaterally planted up part of Cranmer Green with hundreds of trees. Only time will tell how successful the project has been.



Worrying issues remain after the conclusion of the Lottery funded Canons project

The Lottery funded Canons project ended in December marking a watershed in an exhausting 12 years since we initiated it and played a critical role in securing over £4m funding. The capital investment in the house, obelisk, dovecote and track has been important but major questions remain over whether the legacy for the community will be a strong one.

Some of the building work has created new problems. The future of the community café and the quality of public access to The Canons house is uncertain and myriad snagging issues with the new planting and long term management remain. In many respects 2023 was just the end of the beginning for this historic site.

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

A key role for us is to bring people together throughout the year. We hold open meetings every month except December, to which anyone can come – not just members. Here we discuss the issues that matter to us, including asking local people for their views and input in campaigns we are running, and current planning applications. These meetings are well attended, and it is always great to see so many local people come along and support us so visibly.



Our inaugural quiz night was a great success

We also want to bring people together in a more social setting. To that end, we added a new community event to the calendar this year in the shape of a quiz night.

The July evening included a fish and chip supper and raffle, and was held at the Parish Hall.

Organisers and participants enjoyed the evening, and the organising team immediately decided more quiz nights would be planned.

Meanwhile our other two key community events seemed to be timed perfectly for us to experience the extremes of Mitcham weather.

Community on the Green in July was hit by some significant rain. While not as bad or prolonged as some we have encountered, it did make for a slightly soggy evening.

Our highest praise and thanks goes to the Mitcham Community Choir which found shelter under a tree and well-wielded umbrellas, braving the downpour to give us a choral concert.



Mitcham Community Choir at Community on the Green

On 10th September the UK experienced its hottest day of 2023, with temperatures officially hitting 33.5 degrees. The day before this was barely any cooler, and that was Mitcham Heritage Day.

This year we had an event centre on Mitcham Green, opposite the Police Station, where tea, cakes and music were served up by jazz singer, Cricket Green Councillor and Mayor of Merton Gill Manly.



*A cricket themed post box topper
for Mitcham Cricket Green*

The craft group Spin us a Yarn provided some exquisitely made adornments which were put in place early on the morning of Mitcham Heritage Day, and as they had not been pre-publicised they were a pleasant surprise for everyone.

The crafted decorations were a great accompaniment to the cricket themed post box topper which had been put in place at the top end of Bramcote Avenue opposite Mitcham Green.

Other participants this year, most of whom were volunteers giving their time to make the day a success, were Mitcham Community Choir, Mitcham Parish Church, Cricket Green School, Wandle Industrial Museum, Vestry Hall, Mitcham Cricket

Club, Mitcham Methodist Church, The Canons House and Grounds, Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church and The Small Quarter.

Huge thanks to all the volunteers and visitors who came along this year, and made it through the heat.

Sandra Vogel
Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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 31.12.23	Year ended 31.12.22
	£	£
INCOME		
Memberships – New	110	105
Subscriptions – Life	300	0
Subscriptions – Ordinary	630	620
Donations & one-off grants	2,127	310
Bank deposit interest received gross	515	66
Sales	350	350
Events	745	0
Social fund receipts	124	111
Total Income	<u>£4,901</u>	<u>£1,562</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Sundry expenses, meetings and secretarial	301	311
Linked organisations subscriptions	141	111
Group Insurance	157	157
Bank charges	0	0
Community-on-the-Green, Mitcham Heritage Day	1066	622
Gazebo replacement	0	562
Donations	0	0
Total Expenditure	<u>£1,665</u>	<u>£1,763</u>
OPERATING SURPLUS / DEFICIT	£3,236	-£201
Retained surplus brought forward	£11,121	£11,322
RETAINED SURPLUS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>£14,357</u>	<u>£11,121</u>
Total of current and deposit accounts	£19,662	£16,389
Grants brought forward	5,218	5,172
Grants received	550	550
Less grants expended	553	504
Restricted funds carried forward	<u>£5,215</u>	<u>£5,218</u>

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

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

Company registration no. 04659164 Charity registration no. 1106859





MITCHAM HERITAGE DAY



*Braving the heat to try dowsing
at the Obelisk
Mitcham Heritage Day
9 September 2023.*



*Two designs presented by developers for East Lodge,
Mitcham Park, currently occupied by the former lodge
of the lost Mitcham Hall estate and surrounded by
garden. We continue to work to secure the most
appropriate design and density for this historic site.*



*Parish Boundary Marker at the River Wandle
presently clamped to the side of the new
Mitcham Bridge and for which we
seek a better location and
informative interpretation.*