

# Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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

## Annual Review 2024



**Celebrating the replacement of commemorative  
swords at Mitcham War Memorial**

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## Our 2024 Annual Review

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The year was dominated by the sudden death in February of our Chairman, John Strover. His loss left a void in our group's officers, as our Vice Chair John Davis stepped up to replace John Strover, and no candidate came forward at our AGM to fill the vacated Vice Chair post.

In April the area suffered a major loss when the Burn Bullock went up in flames. The cause is still subject to police investigation. We are still of the opinion that any listed building lost through suspect causes should be returned to its listed state, so the outcome of the investigation is eagerly awaited. We formed a fighting fund to enable us to press for the return of the "Burnt Bullock" to its former Grade II listing. We will also need to work closely with Mitcham Cricket Club: it is important to both groups to present a united front when dealing with the Burn Bullock fallout, as the Burn freeholder still has ownership of the pavilion site.

You will hear from our Secretary Tony Burton about setbacks suffered in dealing with contentious planning applications. The impact on the local environment from such builds as Mitcham Gasworks, Raleigh Gardens and the Canons former nursery will be huge and far-reaching. The Clarion redevelopment of Majestic Way, which we expect to seek planning permission in 2025, could add to the perception that Merton is bowing to local and central government pressures to build upward as seen in Wandsworth, Croydon and Sutton. So much for respecting the Mitcham Village environment.

One of the ambitions of our Cricket Green Charter is to have more places to meet, including coffee shops, and we were delighted when Pawelek opened their cafe at The Canons on 27<sup>th</sup> May. It proved an immediate success and the summer lease was followed by an agreed longer tenure.

Our anniversary marking 20 years since our formation was held over until this year, with a 'coming-of-age' dinner-dance and cabaret held at Mitcham Golf Club, a society celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> year.

My appreciation goes to everyone who contributed to our work throughout the year.

John Davis

Vice Chair to February 2024, acting Chair February to April 2024, Chair from April 2024

Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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## **Burn Bullock fire – a turning point?**

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**MCGC&H**

On April 19, 2024, a devastating fire tore through the Burn Bullock, a Grade II listed former pub that has stood as a cornerstone of Cricket Green for centuries.

The blaze, which destroyed the roof and severely damaged all three floors, underscores the vulnerability of our heritage and the urgent need to safeguard it.

The Burn Bullock, with parts of the structure dating back to the 16th century, is more than just a building: it is a symbol of our community's identity and history.

The pub was named after Burnett "Burn" Bullock, a former first class cricketer who was secretary of Mitcham Cricket Club and became licensee for the pub when it was known as the King's Head.



Its relationship to the world's oldest continuously used cricket green and its role as a coaching inn serving travellers for generations are central to our neighbourhood story.

Yet years of neglect by its owners had left it derelict and abused and it has been included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register since 2014. The fire, while still under investigation, was a grim culmination of this neglect.

We are determined that the fire marks a turning point in the recent sad history of this treasured building.

We've called on Merton Council to use its powers to demand the building is repaired and to pursue compulsory purchase to ensure its restoration. This should include the transfer of Mitcham cricket pavilion into community hands.





*No Mow May had an astonishing effect  
on the Parish Churchyard*

The splendid initiative instigated by Merton Council's Civic Fund to mass-plant bulbs in the village centre had an impact on our Conservation Area too. Bags of bulbs were handed out by volunteers and some of these were planted in the Jubilee Corner bed, the cricket boundary corner vacated by the old scoreboard and within The Canons.

This Canons exercise was much enjoyed by students of Cricket Green School who plunged the bulbs into show pots and the Community Gardens beds. Sadly, the latter were trashed by people trampling on the beds. Holborn Way centre reservation was cleared of weeds and litter, then refreshed. Volunteers helped schoolchildren replant adjoining beds at Sibthorpe Road car park.

London in Bloom saw further successes boost Mitcham's environmental standing. Seven entries were submitted following our success in 2023: Mitcham Garden Village, Cricket Green Conservation Area greens, Glebe Court, Mitcham Community Orchard, Mitcham Village Fair Green, Three Kings Piece and The Canons.

Storms Henk, Isha and Bert caused damage nationwide, but our Conservation Area escaped relatively unharmed. There was better Council support for No Mow May which is designed to protect habitat for invertebrates in verges and meadows.

Tree Wardens Group Merton had objected to felling of the dead ancient ash tree at Cricket Green Methodist Church. Instead, the Group recommended reducing it to a monolith to protect invertebrates that need dead and decaying wood to survive. Sadly Merton Council ignored this and allowed felling. The tree was subject to a Tree Preservation Order, yet the church had not given detail of any replacement tree, as required by Merton Council in such circumstances.

The Canons East Lawn was returfed after contractors involved in the house renovation had allowed heavy machinery to destroy this once prime grassed area. Less satisfactory was the futile attempt to put right issues with the canopy over the newly created basement access door to The Canons House. Scraping

algae and repainting was predicted to be a short term fix, and so it proved with algae returning within six months and many other associated faults exposed.

Installing the Commonsides West shared track has led to loss of five wild cherry trees planted by Friends of the Canons. Protracted negotiations with Merton Council failed to find cherry replacements. The upside to this should be supply of nine semi-mature trees in lieu of loss. These would be planted as a memorial to Jane Plant, long-time tree warden and expert in Merton, who was hit by a car in November whilst on a pedestrian crossing, and died from her injuries within hours.

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

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## Friends of the Canons

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We continued to help Friends of Mitcham Common at the Janet Morris Memorial Copse on Mill Hill, assist regeneration of The Small Quarter, and gave the volunteer perspective at a The Canons Green Flag assessment walkabout.



*Clearance of thistle, bramble and nettle at  
The Canons pond plugged a gap in Merton  
Council's contractor work*

We completed an access path to the overgrown Cranmer Meadow / Nature Reserve Woodland Walk. The weirdest experience of the year came whilst clearing Cranmer Seasonal Pond with the discovery of a rifle.

The Canons Nature Trail path was edged with felled tree trunk logs from Cold Blows which also refreshed the bug hotels in this area. Spreading woodchip prior to signage being erected was carried out by Friends of the Canons and young pupils from Cricket Green School.

We created a new copse at The Canons entrance by Cold Blows / Commonsides West. Later in the year a group with caravans cut a rail here gaining access to The Canons field. The group was ejected but the rail was left unrepaired. The gap was filled by earth, which is a precursor to the plan to give this entrance area – including our copse – a facelift which will generate a less cluttered

entrance to The Canons while reducing opportunities for further incursions. This plan is yet to be finalised.

After two years of pestering Merton Council and idverde, the wildflower meadow areas around The Canons were resown with spectacular results. They were too inviting for some, with blooms plucked and people lying on flowers - neither of which are helpful to the meadow areas. An excellent grass display in Mitcham Parish Churchyard was the result of good observance of No Mow May, allowing hosts of butterflies, moths and bees to proliferate.



*September sunflowers at The Canons Community Garden*

Friends of the Canons was granted permission to oversee fruit beds in The Canons Community Garden, plus the side beds planted with seeds from the RHS by Cricket Green School children earlier in the year. The fruit area had been neglected since Amy Keen left her post at The Canons December 2023. Unfortunately uncontrolled ball kicking had destroyed several parts of the site and is an ongoing problem. Along with Sustainable Merton we looked for feasible remedies.

The Canons pond maintenance plan has not been adhered to. There has been no Autumn 2023 clearing with arisings removal.

Friends of the Canons strimmed and removed the thistle, bramble and nettle growth. We spotted golden carp in the pond, and three days later saw a heron stalking.

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. We also dealt with ivy that had crept up the Pagoda tree *Styphnolobium japonicum* in The Canons ex-nursery. This grand former Merton Tree of the Year is now under serious threat from contentious building.

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

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



*Recognising the importance of hedgerows locally, our community planted Golden Privet along the edge of the Cricket ground during the Conservation Area's Golden Anniversary, and gives it a yearly haircut*

The Greens and historic garden spaces within the Conservation Area continue to attract much public interest. The churchyard of Mitcham Parish Church contains a mixture of tombstones, War Graves and local burials. The area is flanked by a hedgerow.

Hedgerows continue to form a key element of the Conservation Area, as do the statutory footpath Rights of Way, which are designated as such by law.

Sadly, the Ordnance Survey Benchmark located at the corner of Lower Green West and London Road has faded into obscurity.

The Conservation Area contains traffic flows which, over the years, have necessitated management measures to avoid the repetition of vehicle accidents involving drivers unfamiliar with the area's road management schemes.

Incidents this year included jackknife overturning of an articulated lorry, a vehicle mounting the pavement and side-swiping a house, and a vehicle hitting the corner of the flats near the Broadway Gardens / London Road junction. The damaged corner of the block of flats has since been repaired and is now protected by strong bollards painted white.

Various shops in local parades have closed. A parade of shop fronts along Church Road is at risk of disappearing completely and being replaced by an unsympathetic block of flats.

A positive gain has been the revival of the Vestry Hall. This was once Mitcham Town Hall, back in the time when Mitcham was a local government unit within Surrey. Vestry Hall has been redecorated and is a local landmark that attracts the use of community groups.

Sadly, the two Grade II Listed coaching inns at the heart of the Conservation Area, which are today known as the Burn Bullock and the White Hart, both closed a few years ago. This year the Burn Bullock was devastated by fire, with as yet no resolution on its future.



It should be remembered that historically Mitcham was never a quiet rural community. It was a staging point along a major transport route from London to the coast - hence the name given to London Road. The advent of railways and the coming of public transport to the wider area has reinforced Mitcham's commuter role, enhanced by its spaces derived from local historic green Common Land and from local former private gardens.

Joyce Bellamy

Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage

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## Planning, policy & projects

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*We secured Asset of Community Value status for the Windmill pub*

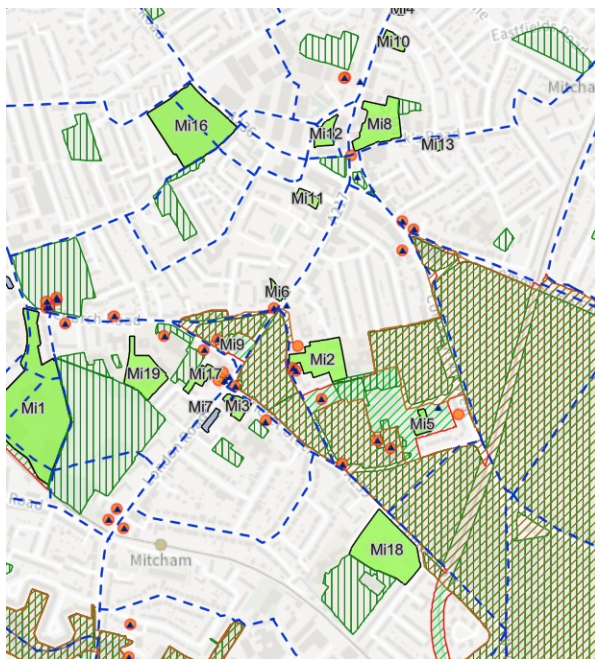
We secured some important and lasting benefits for Cricket Green in 2024. Our commitment to the world-beating tradition of cricket on the historic Green was confirmed with the renewal of the cricket pavilion's "asset of community value" status.

Our application to secure the same protection for The Windmill was also successful in protecting one of the last working pubs in the neighbourhood. This was supported by a petition raised by the locals.

Our efforts over more than a decade to secure £5m investment in The Canons started to bear fruit as The Canons House hosted more events and activities, the area was enlivened with murals and interpretation, and Pawelek established its café as a major new community asset.

A highlight of the year was the restoration of Mitcham War Memorial in time for Remembrance Sunday following the theft of three bronze swords in 2022. We collaborated with Merton Council on the project, securing the Listed Building Consent needed for work on this Grade II listed monument. The work was undertaken by Stonewest who we teamed up with on our "Local Landmarks" project that cleaned up and protected the horse trough, milestone and Tom Ruff memorial stone on the cricket ground some years ago. This was the first restoration work on the war memorial since 1962. The swords have been replaced by replicas and the remaining original bronze sword will be put on display locally.





*We identified more than ten sites suitable for high quality development for Merton's new Local Plan which was adopted in November*

As in previous years we invested considerable time and effort seeking to influence planning decisions on new development.

Merton's new Local Plan was adopted in November. It includes special protections for Bellamy's Copse in The Canons and the green space behind Mary Tate Almshouses as a result of our efforts over the previous seven years.

We identified more than ten sites suitable for high quality development demonstrating our support for new building where it enhances the local area and meets local needs.

We were faced by multiple planning applications during the year. Our efforts secured significant improvements to plans to redevelop the car wash site on London Road that reduced its height and require commercial use of the ground floor. Insensitive infill on Langdale Avenue was rejected and we reduced the impact of plans to demolish and then build over most of the garden at East Lodge in Mitcham Park.

Desultory plans for the redevelopment of Cumberland Care Home were given permission despite the opportunities for an exciting "healing design" more suited to its role. We also fed in views on plans for a "shepherds hut" to house a new scoreboard on the cricket ground. The year ended with uncertainty over the future of the former parade in Church Road and plans to add extra storeys to Drive House along London Road.

The character of Mitcham Village is at a turning point. The future of Majestic Way and the old Morrisons site and multi-storey car park is now in the hands of Clarion and a damaging precedent has been set with Merton Council giving the green light to massive overdevelopment of the former Mitcham Gasworks.

The Gasworks permission followed behind closed doors negotiations with developers and the result flew in the face of the proposals for a six storey development set out in Merton Council's original Local Plan - which we supported. We fear the same is now happening with Clarion with tall building planned on a site where it is not permitted in the Local Plan, and a secretive

approach to Council / Clarion discussion which contrasts poorly with Merton Council's welcome efforts to inject life in the Village centre with more events and activities. We welcomed proposals to return a bandstand to Fair Green to provide an outdoor venue.

The single largest development proposal during the year was on Willow Lane where vast new distribution warehouses offer a sign of how things might change in the future. We are still calling on Merton Council to use this opportunity to improve the southern end of Tramway Path where a line of trees is currently trapped between two boundary fences.

The Willow Lane plans require changes to the dangerous Goat Road junction where our support for a roundabout was rejected for an inferior signalled junction. The scheme involves the loss of some Mitcham Common land and the mystery over where an equivalent area is to be provided in compensation is unsolved.



*We highlighted priorities for action at The Canons, including remediation required for the poorly designed shelter to the new side entrance to The Canons House*

The Canons also faces significant issues despite the recent investment and we submitted a 16 point plan highlighting priorities for action.

The poor quality of work on some of The Canons House became clear when the listed building was damaged by water running off a poorly designed door shelter. We are aware of more significant issues inside the house. Much of the promised planting has still to appear and the historic pond is already showing signs of poor management.

Merton Council has dragged its heels on enforcing against the plant room built with breeze blocks instead of bricks and on providing quality public access to the 500 year old dovecote. It is also pressing ahead with poorly designed building plans on the former nursery which threaten the magnificent Pagoda Tree, a former Merton Tree of the Year. It was disappointing to see plans to convert Madeira Hall into a soft play centre resurrected given the impact on its other community uses and the location in the heart of this tranquil heritage site.

There were positive signs of a more active approach from Merton Council in taking action against breaches of planning control. Enforcement action at the White Hart and Burn Bullock car park followed our interventions and we called for the same at La Sporta opposite the Parish Church. We also saw some

reduction in illegal advertising and banners. Working with SS Peter & Paul Catholic Primary School we secured action requiring the decaying listed wall around Mary Tate Almshouses to be repaired when Merton Council issued dangerous structures and urgent works notices.

We saw off a series of damaging proposals for telecommunication masts on both Fair Green and by Cranmer Green and welcomed the strong stance being taken by Merton Council against such ill-judged plans. We sought to work with Willow Lane Business Improvement District to find alternative locations.

We turned up the heat on SUEZ over the management of its Benedict Wharf waste site where conflicts over lorries, smells, gulls and vermin persist. After much effort SUEZ set up a hotline which should be called to report issues (0208 685 6420), in addition to reporting to the Environment Agency on 0800 807 060.



*At a public meeting in 2017 the reopening of the Wilson was promised for June 2020. This has steadily been put back, now standing at November 2027.*

We also kept asking for a progress report on the long promised new health and well-being centre at The Wilson but only received yet another delay in the opening date of November 2027.

We were promised an opening in 2020 when the plans were first put forward in 2017. The Integrated Care Board continues to ignore all efforts to collaborate on the site's future.

At the end of the year we proposed two priority projects to ward councillors to be supported by the new "Legacy Fund" – restoring the commemorative avenue and a renaming as "King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II Avenue" in memory of the late Queen and significant townscape investment in the nearly 200 year old shopping parades around Fair Green to enhance the character of Mitcham Village and boost confidence in its future.

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



It has become important to us to take our monthly open meetings to different parts of Mitcham. This allows us to connect with other local organisations, and to provide people with a taster of what they offer where that can be arranged.



*There was an opportunity to try bowling at our August open meeting thanks to Mitcham Bowling Club*

For example people had an opportunity to try their hand at bowls before our meeting at Mitcham Bowling Club this year.

Two new organisations were added to open meeting venues this year. Regular venues Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Mitcham Parish Church and Mitcham Bowling Club were joined by Mitcham Fire Station and the British Legion.

Our monthly Cricket Green Update is sent to a mailing list of hundreds of local people, and the feedback we get tells us it is an important and much respected source of news. Combining this with our use of social media helps us reach large numbers of local people to share information and get valuable feedback on our work.

We held our second annual quiz night in June, and as with the first were delighted with the large turnout, which filled Mitcham Parish Centre. Participants enjoyed socialising, quizzing, wine tasting, a raffle, and the fish and chip supper provided by Morden-based Superfish – which arrived at the right time for people to get a reprieve from the formal questions and focus on table top quizzes to be completed at their leisure.

Questions ranging from scrambled tube station names through entertainment and, inevitably, local interest were enough to test the mind while also providing plenty of entertainment.

We continued a longstanding tradition of our informal get-together for the whole community with Community on the Green in July. This year's event benefited from warm sunshine, and we saw a very large turnout of local people who enjoyed socialising, listening to Mitcham Community Choir, watching – and joining in with – Black Swan Border Morris, and participating in a guided walk around very local points of interest.

Last but not least, our 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary celebration celebrated a major birthday in the lovely setting of Mitcham Golf Club. Those who came along enjoyed live entertainment, good food and good company.

Sandra Vogel

Trustee, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage



*Happy 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary to us! Our birthday celebration at Mitcham Golf Club*

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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 31.12.24	Year ended 31.12.23
	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>		
Memberships – New	40	110
Subscriptions – Life	0	300
Subscriptions – Ordinary	600	630
Donations & one-off grants	183	2,127
Burn Bullock fighting fund	913	0
Bank deposit interest received gross	528	515
Sales	0	350
Events	2,306	745
Social fund receipts	136	124
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>£4,706</u></b>	<b><u>£4,901</u></b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Sundry expenses, meetings and secretarial	532	301
Linked organisations subscriptions	160	141
Group Insurance	157	157
Bank charges	0	0
Events	2,493	1,066
Donations	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b><u>£3,342</u></b>	<b><u>£1,665</u></b>
<b>OPERATING SURPLUS</b>	<b>£1,364</b>	<b>£3,236</b>
<b>Retained surplus brought forward</b>	<b>£14,357</b>	<b>£11,121</b>
<b>RETAINED SURPLUS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b><u>£15,721</u></b>	<b><u>£14,357</u></b>
Grants brought forward	<b>5,215</b>	5,218
Grants received	<b>913</b>	550
Less grants expended	<b>1,535</b>	553
<b>Restricted funds carried forward</b>	<b><u>£4,593</u></b>	<b><u>£5,215</u></b>

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