

# Wandsworth Society

Newsletter Autumn 2021

50

1971 - 2021 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

# What is a museum if not to provide A FUTURE FOR OUR PAST

I offer a deeply felt view on the 'buried' museum of Wandsworth which I know is shared by many. Whilst there seems to be clear understanding of the practical, educational role of a local museum, whether located in a 'proper' museum or mobile in various ways, there is not much more than lip service from the council on its critical role in the community.

Wandsworth, as we are all aware, is a locality with a particularly rich heritage from Saxons exploring the Thames to the industrialists who used the Wandle to power the local industrial revolution, and shaped the borough into its profile today. Using such a richly featured history to create a sense of place, community identity and inspiration for all, especially younger generations must surely be a priority and rare opportunity that must not be missed. Not to find a publicly accessible, permanent and appropriate location would be shameful for a local authority that has reaped millions from the billions invested in Wandsworth town centre in recent years and as a borough is, in some ways, ahead of the curve.

To add context it is worth noting that the opening of the Merton Priory Chapter House, which, when its 'public facilities' are plumbed in, will, after years of official procrastination, become

a major heritage landmark in south London thanks to its prime mover John Hawks and the support of the Wandle Valley Forum.

Sure, on the Ram Brewery site Wandsworth can boast a beam engine next door to Sambrook's new brewery and bar. But it is a one-horse feature, albeit highly valued. Wandsworth's history and continued growth warrants a broader presentation of our heritage that reflects the context and identity of all groups in our community beyond just the production of alcohol, such as London's first black mayor and refugee arrivals from the Huguenots to the Afghans.

A few years ago I noted a poster outside a museum in Malta, with the memorable phrase *providing a future for our past*. Who are we without a past to act as a foundation for our identity, sense of belonging and community – something that is important not only to long standing residents but even more so to new arrivals and new generations. Without a proper museum for Wandsworth its authority is diminished along with its civic pride and perceived values. And it needs to be a 'proper' museum of which we can all feel proud.

Bruce St Julien-Bown

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This is the Newsletter of The Wandsworth Society, a registered charity no 263737. The Society is concerned with the quality of life and the environment in Wandsworth town centre, Wandsworth Common and adjacent areas.

If you are not already a member and would like to join please contact the Membership Secretary Gill Gray, details opposite.

Please address, any comments, or, even better, contributions to [newsletter@wandsworthsociety.org](mailto:newsletter@wandsworthsociety.org)

# Wandsworth Society

Newsletter  
Autumn 2021



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## Greetings

The present

By the time you read this autumn may well have properly arrived. The usual harbingers have occurred, swallows have left, leaves have begun to fall, advertisers have become keen to remind us that Christmas is imminent, but we have also had some unseasonably warm days of late, a welcome lull in proceedings as winter approaches. Not forgetting that winter can have its pleasures too, even if that is no more than the satisfaction of not having to go out when going out looks like it will mean getting both cold and wet, and then of course there's Christmas ...

The past

As many will recall before it became the Wandsworth Town Library the Old Court House on Garratt Lane was the Wandsworth Museum. The museum was moved to the East Hill Library, and when that closed the collection was stored in the basement of the former library, where it remains. The Society has joined with seven other local organisations who are keen to work with the council to develop proposals for how best to use this valuable resource. The Wandsworth Town Library is soon to be moved to the new development alongside the Old Burial Ground, the Old Court House will then become vacant. It housed the museum once - it could again?

The future

It is difficult to escape from the knowledge that the natural environment faces great challenges. In the face of a great challenge it is easy to feel ineffective, that one's individual efforts will make only a marginal difference. However, the adage that every little helps could never be more apt. We are reasonably confident that Society members are aware of the issues, and doing their bit as they see fit; and the Society is keen to do its bit, be that no more than encourage and inform.

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## Cover

It's a golden anniversary, and we're going green

# A greener shade ... ?

There is a growing awareness of environmental issues which has prompted a debate within the Society as to whether, and how, we, as a group, should respond to this increasingly high-profile aspect of our lives.

Such a change is not perhaps as big as it may seem, after all we already take on issues that overlap with environmental topics in planning, transport and open spaces. So, what is the new 'agenda' that has been thrust upon us in our 50th year that we should now consider for the first time the need to develop our structure?

For example, we have heard much in the media about: air quality / extreme heat, drought and flooding events (much of Wandsworth is after all in a flood plain) / the impact of global warming on food sources / growing environmental movements like Extinction Rebellion (XR) / the imminent COP26 Conference and the realisation amongst those that follow the science that it will affect our way of life and certainly that of our children.

Currently the issues can be broken into two:

- Long term: Global warming caused by greenhouse gasses. Although there are natural sources of CO<sub>2</sub>, in the main they arise from our profligate use of fossil fuel energy, farming techniques, inefficient home heating and general level of consumption. Population levels may also be a factor.
- Short Term: The poor quality of the air we breathe in the urban environment has already caused the death of tens of thousands of people in London and is especially damaging to children. Air is laden with PM2.5 particulates, as well as CO<sub>2</sub>, and other toxic gases.

Internationally there is the United Nations, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, many others and of course the inspirational Greta Thunberg. Locally we have the Wandsworth Environmental Forum (WEF) which is a body of concerned volunteers set up by the council to

respond and contribute to its green initiatives like the recent Air Quality report.

The WEF is a broad church made up of representatives of local societies, and local residents who together with councillors reflect a wide spectrum of views, and this may be its strength. What they have in common is a greater awareness of the risks posed by global warming which are becoming more apparent as extreme weather events increase in frequency in the UK and globally.

The WEF gave a robust reception to the recently presented draft Air Quality report. This is a work in progress and problems were pointed out to council officers. We are still waiting to hear about the final report and the influence the WEF had on its content. In 2020 there was a reduction in toxic emissions especially in Putney (until recently a black spot for air quality). This may in part be attributable to new electric buses (Route C3) and more electric vehicles and possibly some of the controversial, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. However, the biggest reduction must have come from lockdown related lower traffic levels. This balance is difficult to extract from the emission data collected from the much improved network of roadside monitors.

How effective is it? It does provide feedback to the council but frankly it is not clear to what extent it responds to community consultation. Or whether indeed the current structure is up to growing pressures in spite of the sterling efforts of its very hard-pressed chair, Judith Chegwiddden. But as currently it is the only 'official' channel to raise or respond to green issues with the local authority it should be used and perhaps tasked with its own evolution?

Although there is no tangible link with the COVID pandemic it has perhaps put our vulnerability into focus amplified by media coverage of extreme weather events such as flooding, extreme heat events, sea temperature and sea level rises, the movement of fish stock from traditional grounds and drought induced crop failures – that's only

the tip of the iceberg - if we still have any. It also contributes to the disruption of critical supply chains.

Should a group of local people who by definition of their Society membership care about the local built environment and open space, such as our own broaden their focus from protecting humane townscape and open spaces from the predations of developers and traffic planners to a broader inclusion of environmental issues and CO<sub>2</sub> reduction in particular?

Could our community be more aware of the impending threat to the lifestyle and routines that we take for granted. Or perhaps should we provide more of a voice for the many members who are already on the case and have been seeking ways of reducing their energy consumption - or should we leave it to others?

The Society is consulting on the broadening of our remit and consequential need to revise our constitution. However, the last thing we should attempt is to lecture people on the lifestyle we should follow. But our key role might be to act as a focus of information and summarise the latest thinking at a domestic level. This might apply for example to the environmental impact of grocery delivery services

and certain food types, electric vehicle infrastructure and home heating options – or lack of them etc.

New ideas are also important at domestic and national levels. For instance, the recent news of a new regulation in Australia for new buildings to have white coloured roofing to help reduce temperatures in urban areas. Add that to the blue-green initiatives of managing urban water run-off in urban areas may benefit by a couple of degrees cooling in extreme heat events. Ideas such as that could be passed on to the council directly or via the WEF to become part of the regulation on home energy efficiency aspects of planning and building regulations.

We are aware that this subject is huge and even if we continue with this trial of a “Green Group” we can only ever cover certain strands within it. But that doesn’t mean it is not worth considering as our lifestyle adjusts to skating on ever thinner ice.

Bruce St Julien Bown

Your views will be welcome. Please email to: [newsletter@wandsworthsociety.org](mailto:newsletter@wandsworthsociety.org)

## A bit of a do for Paschal

What a wonderfully happy, moving and enjoyable ‘do’ it was. The nave of St Anne’s Church was packed with an audience of well over two hundred, together with a host of singers, musicians and readers. And after the performance refreshments were served and conversation and the sharing of memories flowed .....

The ‘do’ was a celebration of the musical life of Paschal, described in the Irish Times obituary as ‘one of Ireland’s best singers’. After his marriage to Sheila and move to London he joined the Royal Opera House company and sang in a variety of roles.

The ‘bit of a do’ was organised by Sheila, with the support and participation of many

talented friends. One of the highlights was the recordings of songs sung by Paschal on video.

Many thanks, Sheila, other organisers, and of course the many performers, for such a moving and enjoyable evening. It concluded with refreshments, lively conversation and happy reminiscences.

David Kirk

Sheila is very grateful for the donations already made to the Royal Trinity Hospice and Alzheimer’s Society. Further donations would of course be welcomed and can be made on the charities’ easily accessible websites.

# An Accidental Archivist

Tony Jones has been Librarian and - as he called himself when he spoke to us on 23rd September - Accidental Archivist at Emanuel School for some 20 years.

The building originally known as the Royal Victoria Patriotic Asylum for Boys was built to provide a school for boys orphaned in the Crimean War. Emanuel School, established in 1594, moved into the building in 1883. (The building now known as the Royal Victoria Patriotic Building some 300 yards away originally provided a similar facility for girls.)

The archive has grown in a gradual way over time, and covers most aspects of school life from uniforms to sports achievements, war service to documents and of course photographs and records of famous old boys. The archive provides opportunities for current pupils to create more of the archive. The School has found or made space – and financial support too – for a most interesting collection, not just for Old Boys but to the local community and no doubt a wider audience.

Much of the documentation has now been digitised making it far more friendly as a research tool. With digital photos there are usually so many, all of which have to be chosen and annotated. Much information came from old copies of *The Portcullis*, the school magazine – but it was largely concerned with sporting achievements and not a lot to do with other matters!

Some highlights of the collection are the George Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross donated by the families of Old Boys, a photo of Tony with the reclusive Tim Berners Lee (he of world wide web fame), correspondence with playwright N F Simpson (both OEs). On a sombre note, there is a picture of a rugby team showing on the reverse how many of them had been killed in action.



We saw a photo of an early dormitory with far more beds than would be the case today. Only by looking at the window structure can it be decided where in the building the large dormitory was.

A modern quandary: the current house names are the last link with the old school dormitories which were named after military leaders associated with the Royal Patriotic Orphanage. The names were retained by the head master (killed in WW1). Should they be changed so possible associations with slavery, colonialism or sexism are eradicated? Or should old traditions prevail?

Tony would like anything that relates to Emanuel: photos, uniforms, reports, press cuttings etc in order to expand further the archive. So if any members of the Wandsworth Society have anything connected with Emanuel, let Tony know.

This was the first 'in person' talk since about Feb 2020, so it was a pleasure to be there and to see friendly faces and to talk to people. The technology in the hall is impressive and there was a Zoom element too with those watching at home able to ask questions via 'chat'. Thanks are due to John Crossland and West Side for making it all happen so efficiently!

Jenny Massey

# Quietly flows the Wandle

The current status of the Wandle Valley Regional Park is somewhat depressing especially to me as the Wandsworth Society representative and flag carrier on a small steering group, the Wandle Forum, (forerunner of the Wandle Valley Forum) that established the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust in partnership with the four riparian councils: Sutton, Croydon, Merton, Wandsworth, together with Kingston University and the inspirational project consultant and interim CEO, Peter Wilkinson, who lived just long enough to see it briefly flourish.

The Society connection was initiated and encouraged by Mike Brook the far-sighted and one time head of Wandsworth's Economic Development Department. Working with the partners above we defined the shape and ethos of the park and its governance framework for this potential southwest London equivalent to northeast London's, lush, long and amenity laden, Lee Valley – but there are huge and critical differences. To put that in context that partially explains the Wandle Valley Regional Park's administration's stagnation as the riparian councils provided only about 5-10% of the mandatory contribution that all London local authorities had to contribute to Lee Valley (well over £100k per council and permanent through an Act of Parliament).

The current status of the Wandle Valley Regional Park is based on a summary by Tony Burton, who followed after my term as a WVRP Trustee and Chair of the umbrella group the Wandle Valley Forum. To be clear the Wandle Valley remains and benefits from several major Heritage Lottery Fund awards so it is much improved but like any territory it needs to be sustained and further enhanced which requires both staff and funds - both unavailable at the scale needed.

Since the departure of Sue Morgan, the last CEO who left in late 2018 and who worked

twice her contracted days, the Trust has been effectively been dormant. The last trustee meeting in November 2020 looked at options ranging from delivering on the recommendations of the Barker Langham (cultural consultants) report supported by Heritage Lottery's resilience funding, to winding things up. It was agreed that a range of future options would be reviewed funded by what would otherwise have been Sutton council's annual contribution. Sutton officers have led on this supported by a small steering group of trustees comprising Sutton's Deputy Leader, the National Trust and Tony Burton. This work, contracted to Countryside is due to report soon. The outcome remains uncertain depending on the reports findings and the response of the still engaged trustees. Under any scenario there will be a continuing interest in the shared things about the Wandle that are so important and need a champion - such as the Wandle Trail. It is moot whether the Wandle Valley Regional Park itself will continue to be one of these although it is embedded in planning policy and would be a loss. It is also apparent that the Wandle Valley Forum is now being approached to pick up issues that might otherwise have fallen to the WVRPT. This demand may grow if the WVRPT is wound up.

Yet walking the Wandle is still one of the delightful urban secrets less well known to the rambling fraternity. Its rewards from kingfishers to eels, mills to museums must remain part of the cultural heritage of Wandsworth and all the riparian councils. The bizarre funding arrangements even with one or two helpful creative innovations remains a millstone round the Wandle's future (a sadly apt metaphor), and will inhibit the nurturing it deserves and the pleasure it gives its communities unless a new and heartfelt commitment is made by ALL stakeholders, national, regional, local, voluntary and regulatory.

Bruce St Julien Bown

# Cyclist turned pedestrian through a fault of his own writes on Wandsworth by foot, and bus, and train ...

Having abandoned my faithful, 29-year old Brompton, in my son's garage in Hull by accident, no – forgetfulness I confess, I have as a result spent most of July and all of August getting about in Wandsworth on foot – lots – and on buses and trains, and a few times on the Northern Line. Over that time, masking habits have begun to falter but social wariness by the travelling public on public transport does seem to persist, especially by those more vulnerable to the virus, such as the elderly.

What is clear in my travels is how fortunate we are with the level of service we enjoy with buses and the tube especially. However, whilst the South Western Railway trains seem as regular as ever on the Putney line, the same cannot be said of Southern train services through Wandsworth Common Station where services declined to two an hour during summer from the normal six.

Another observation includes my awarding top marks to Network Rail (soon to be renamed 'Great British Railway'!) for clearing the broad passenger bridge at Clapham Junction of fast-food outlets, which had quickly been installed following the major improvements to the bridge a few years ago and which had narrowed the bridge concourse causing congestion outside the steps and lifts from platforms 17 to 11 in particular. The bridge now operates very well and is congestion free, a very 'good thing', compliments to Network Rail.

On an up-to-date note, I have noticed whilst waiting for the 219 at the Trinity Road/Bellevue Road crossroads, is the quite dramatic fall in traffic this week (26 September) once the fuel crisis started. For example, Trinity Road going north from Tooting Bec was almost empty of vehicles, as was the top end of Burntwood Lane. Consequently, traffic flowed freely.

Southbound Trinity Road from the County Arms seemed to remain quite busy along the common stretch but not as horrendous as usual to the pub, and all day. I puzzle over the change, as clearly the 'crisis' has shown that not all journeys, especially by cars which were noticeably absent in the traffic, are necessary. In which case, perhaps their absence could be longer term, as alternative means of getting about are used: car sharing, cycling, walking, public transport?

It is the Society's intention for the Roads and Transport group to begin meeting again this autumn. Matters are in hand and new arrangements will be circulated shortly to Society members, who if they wish are able to attend sub-committee meeting.

John Dawson



There is no mention of a horse as a substitute for the trusty Brompton in John's travels. Indeed it has been some time since we have seen a Youngs dray in Wandsworth. The extremely well-turned out horses made a welcome return 4 September for Sambrooks open day in the Ram Quarter. Probably best not to ask what caused the damp patch.



AFC Wimbledon – a success story.

## Back to Plough Lane

What a shame that our Past President, Shirley Passmore, an ardent supporter of AFC Wimbledon, did not live to see the new footie stadium in Plough Lane. After waiting until October due to COVID concerns, and to avoid missing two important family do's in

neighbouring industrial shed roofs, but otherwise with slum like facilities. The extraordinary efforts made by such a young, fan-owned club to climb to the first division from the bottom of the FA pyramid and to build such a fine new stadium has to be applauded.



I am mentioning this outing to the ground because concern has been regularly voiced about the impact of the new stadium, with a current capacity of 9,200, by those who were fearful of its arrival in a particularly congested area, it having been built with almost no parking provision for either cars or coaches other than for visiting teams; concerns exacerbated by the prospect of ground capacity possibly rising to 20,000 in the future.

the Midlands, I ventured there on Saturday 4 October for the Burton Albion match. It was uplifting to see, after a gap of some 20 years or so, Plough Lane alive with large groups of chatting, bustling supporters making their way to the ground; frankly it was heart-warming to see, and be part of, the crowd.

To enter the stadium's main stand was breathtaking. I walked onto the generous first floor access concourse running the length of the stand and, for the first time, saw, through the entrances to the seats, the sparkling new ground with brightly coloured blue and yellow seats flanking the grass-green pitch vibrant in floodlights on a dismal, wet day.

Watching the match, I was reminded of the earlier Plough Lane ground, with a standing capacity of 12,000, plus spectators on the

I can report that signs have been erected in Wandsworth's roads close to the ground warning that on 'events days' parking is restricted, where permissible, to one hour only from between 9.30am to 9.30 pm, which precludes fans from parking. Indeed, at the end of the match, fans made their orderly way from the ground in all directions, including along my route home through Aboyne Gardens and up Burntwood Lane, on foot and not to their cars.

The return of the club to Plough Lane is a winner for Merton and Wandsworth as, once again, it beds itself down into the two communities.

John Dawson

*Alas - the match was a draw!*

The photograph is from Johnlp, via Wikimedia Commons

# Planning News

## Autumn 2021

What a difference a day makes - on Wednesday 15 September, another new minister for housing, housed within a new department, the new Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

A report published by the Institute for Government in an Insight Paper published in January 2020 states that since 2010 there have been eight housing ministers and since 1997 there have been 18!!! Since 2015 the average Secretary of State (if there is one!!) has remained in post for 18 months.

With this turnover, is there hope of any administration pursuing a coherent housing policy which is aimed at providing for all?

The proposed changes in the planning system which received extensive resource from the civil service last year, only potentially, to fall foul of implementation in whole or part as a result of a bye election, really does not do justice to the democratic principles of this country.

As members will be aware, the writer has been most critical of the changes proposed in the new Planning Bill, as it appeared to wrest control of the development process from people or groups interested in their locality, to a more centralised system which imposed targets for Local Authorities to achieve by zoning areas rather than considering individual applications on their merits within the context of the application.

We will have to see what changes are proposed to the existing system but with approximately one million (1m) unimplemented housing units consented throughout the country, it does not seem to have occurred to Government that development in the private sector will only occur if profitable. If the public sector (Government) cannot fund that element of the housing market then little or no "levelling up" will occur.

### **Now to local issues:**

Since my last report there has been little new activity but a short update may be of interest.

**Wandle Delta Masterplan.** The Masterplan was approved by the Council on 28 September. This SPG (Supplementary Planning Guidance) will now form part of the new Local Plan which is currently under review.

Once the council has finished preparing and consulting on the local plan it will be submitted to the Secretary of State who will appoint an Inspector to carry out an independent examination when the content of the Masterplan as a whole will be considered rather than individual sites within the area.

The leader and one of the members of the planning group were invited to meet the development managers of the gas holder site in late September when the outlines of the proposed redevelopment of the parts of the Masterplan site, which the joint venture developers control, were explained to us. Much more pre-application work needs to be undertaken but a 'hybrid' application is expected later in the year. The term hybrid is relatively new (to us!) but means that parts of the scheme are set out in detail, with an outline application for other parts of the same overall development..

### **Calor and former gas works site, Armoury**

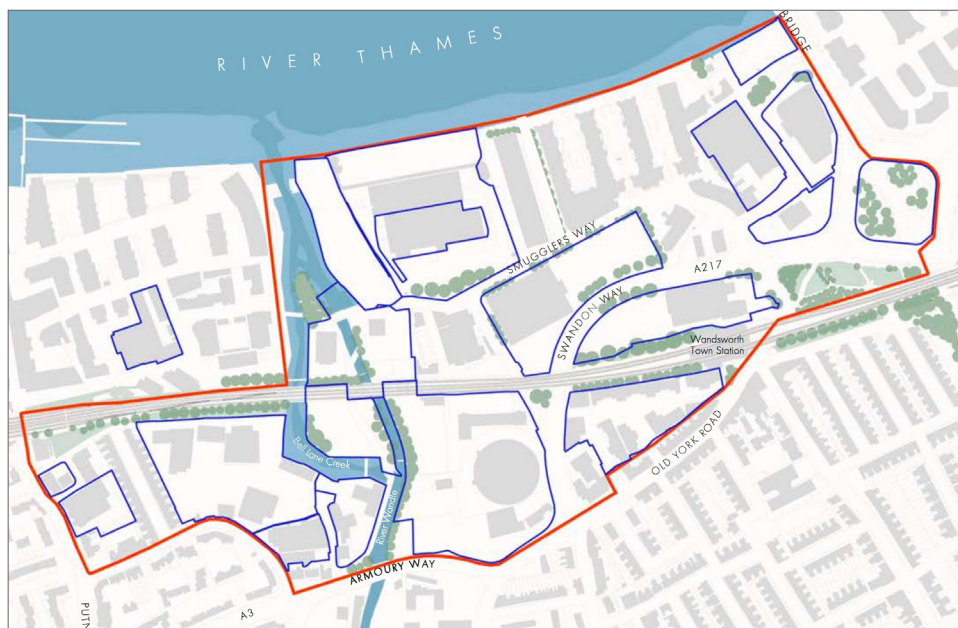
**Way.** An Environmental Impact Assessment was submitted to the Council in May, seeking clarification of issues which would need to be addressed in any planning application. The Council responded, the comments are available on the web site. We hope to be able to provide further information on progress shortly.

**Old York Road pedestrianisation.** The planning group has received no comments from members of their impressions on whether the proposals are viewed as successful and wish the Council to implement the proposals or variations thereof as a more permanent basis for the area. Do let us know if you have any thoughts.

### **19 Melrose Road (Application No 2021/1438)**

This application was refused as it was considered

## Map of the Delta Masterplan area



that the application would cause harm to the character and appearance of the application property and the wider Conservation Area. In addition a lower ground floor flat with a single aspect being subterranean and North facing would have limited access to natural light.

### **41c Wandle Road (Application No 2021/1171).**

This application was permitted after a change of mind of the planning department's Conservation and Design team in that the proposals did not substantially affect the conservation area.

### **Riverside Business Centre, Bendon**

**Valley(Application No 201/3601).** This is a current application to increase the number of residential units by 31 providing a total of 433. The height of none of the blocks has increased, nor have the plans reduced the content of the commercial space on the site. We do not consider these variations require an objection.

### **AND finally Wimbledon Park Golf Course.**

This is an application to both Wandsworth B C and Merton B C by the All England Lawn Tennis Club. Both are planning authorities for the site (Wandsworth having part of the northerly section). For Wandsworth the Application No 2021/3609, for Merton 21/P2900. The site is Metropolitan Open Space and is a Grade II\* listed Heritage Asset, at risk.

Briefly the proposals are for the construction of an 8,000 person show court close to Church

Road, which from the drawings provided will have a roof level about the same as the current show courts on the main AELTC site. There are proposed 38 new grass courts arranged throughout the park together with a maintenance hub reaching to 25m above finished floor level close to Home Park Road, 2 no player facilities within the Park.

It is proposed to remove many of the existing mature trees and landscape much of the park. Was Capability Brown not good enough! Many new trees will be planted but inevitably will take years before they provide as attractive a landscape as at present.

The lake will be dredged and provided with a board-walk around the edge.

The Society has submitted comments to both Wandsworth and Merton and wish to support comments made by the Wimbledon Society in response to the Environmental Impact Assessment submitted earlier in the year.

The Planning Group is always open to suggestions from members to make comment on any aspect of planning in the area of the Borough which we cover. Get in touch with us by email or telephone in the first instance.

Philip Whyte  
Leader Planning Group.

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Our November meeting

# 50 years of the Wandsworth Society

Thursday 11 November

8:00 at the West Side Church

This year is our fiftieth anniversary and this event is a review of the half-century of our activities, successes - and our most frustrating moments

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## The Together on Climate Change Festival Monday 8 to Saturday 13 November 2021

Wandsworth council have arranged a festival from to bring together residents, businesses, community groups and key stakeholders from across the borough

- to raise awareness of climate change issues.
- to share information, tips and advice so that we can all make the changes needed to help us to achieve our climate change targets in line with the Wandsworth Environment and Sustainability Strategy (WESS), and reduce borough-wide emissions.

The festival will be about learning about climate change, what everyone can do to

reduce carbon emissions and showcase the good work already happening across the borough on climate change



Details can be found on the council website <https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk> search for Together on Climate Change Festival