

Wimbledon Park  
Residents' Association

# Christmas 2009



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2009  
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Iain Simpson on 020 8947 1301 email: [iainsimpson@imi-consulting.com](mailto:iainsimpson@imi-consulting.com)  
[www.wimbledonpark.com](http://www.wimbledonpark.com)**

**Chairman's Report**  
**Presented to the AGM on October 22nd 2009**

**Dear Residents**

**Overall, we seem to have had a very busy and successful year. In some areas we have progressed well – in others not so well. As usual there is 'good' news and 'bad' news. I will cover both, generally in chronological order.**

**9 – 21 Haslemere Avenue**

**Last year you may remember a vigorous campaign by residents, Councillors and our local MP was successful in having the planning application for the redevelopment of 9-21 Haslemere Avenue, for affordable housing, turned down.**

**What was surprising at the time was that the decision by the Planning Committee was 8 – 1 in our favour. We thought at the time that such a conclusive rejection would result in the developers (Wandsworth Housing Association) going back to the drawing board and producing a redesign. However, developers lodged an appeal and were successful in having their appeal upheld. In general the Planning Inspector did not consider any of the points of rejection to be sufficiently material. Work has to commence on the development within three years of the appeal decision. In the circumstances, this decision was a surprise and a great disappointment. But we have learnt that, when it comes to planning decisions, life is full of surprises!**

**The Fair 2009**

**A decision was made in January this year to hold another Fair in June. A huge amount of personal time and effort goes into organising something of this scale. DeNica Fairman, who has co-ordinated our efforts for the last two years, will be giving us a brief report shortly. However, I hope you will have had a chance to read her very comprehensive report in the latest newsletter. I also made some comments in my report in the newsletter and so I will not repeat myself other than to say a huge thank you to DeNica and all the committee members and volunteers who organised the day, and a big thank you to all of you who attended and made it a great success.**

**Wimbledon Park Guide**

**Earlier in the year, in conjunction with Richard Jones of the Tennis Gallery in Arthur Road, we produced the very first Wimbledon Park Guide. We were greatly assisted by Stephen Chaplin, a local artist, who contributed the wonderful artwork, and also Richard Oxborrow from the AELTC.**

**I indicated in the letter which accompanied the guide, distributed to each household in the area, that the idea was born out of the recognition that so many people arrive in WP throughout the year, usually emerging from the Tube Station, and look for directions to the Park or the AELTC and Museum. We also want WP to be a thriving business and residential community. We hope the guide will help alert visitors to the shops, cafes and restaurants which are available in the area. Also, during Wimbledon Fortnight, more and more people are using WP as the stepping off point for the tennis. This represents a solid opportunity for business in WP. We hope that between now and 2012, when AELTC will be the Olympic venue for the Tennis, we can work with the AELTC to improve the profile and benefits of WP as a Tennis arrival and departure point.**

Some of you may be aware that The Merton Chamber of Commerce is heading up an initiative called 'Wimbledon going for Gold' in conjunction with the Council and other sponsors. This is aimed at giving a higher profile to Wimbledon in the lead up to the Olympics. A number of ideas are being considered and one which already has the green light is an upgrading of the frontage of Wimbledon Station. This will be great for Wimbledon Town Centre and the Village but will do nothing for us here in WP. We are on our own!

### Wimbledon Park Village Business Group

We do not have a local Chamber of Commerce but recently a local business group has been formed called the Wimbledon Park Village Business Group. This group consists of a small number of local businesses and is the embryo of what we hope will become an effective body to represent the interests of the business community in the local area. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Aaron Abraham or Nicky Davies of Edward Jones in Arthur Road (our sponsors tonight).

### The Wandle Project

An exciting idea was brought to the committee earlier this year by Cécile Bridgens. The aim of the Wandle project is to create (if at all possible) a more direct access to the River from WP and in particular create a more direct link between the Park itself and the Wandle Valley Regional Park. The present access is via Weir Road which is not very convenient or attractive. This might be accomplished through Durnsford recreation ground or possibly the Haslemere industrial estate. Some of you may be aware of the Wandle Valley Regional Park project which is being led by a combination of organisations including LBM, Groundwork and the South London Partnership. This project which is backed by the Mayor and LDA envisages a park running all the way from Croydon to the River Thames at Wandsworth.

The sub committee group, led by Cécile Bridgens, which is going to run with this project, are hoping to engage with Groundwork and others to lobby support and maybe even some funding. However, a key issue to be tackled will be rights of way. If anyone is interested in joining this group, they should contact Cécile Bridgens.

### The South London Waste Plan

The consultation period for this plan expired on the 16<sup>th</sup> October. A few of us attended a workshop at the Civic Centre and then arranged a meeting in WP with the project manager and lead planning officer. Although only a small number of residents attended, it was a very useful meeting and helped us all understand and appreciate some of the key issues. The WPRA did not submit a response but was happy to facilitate the meeting, which resulted in a number of residents writing letters and responding to the on-line questionnaire. We will try to give this matter some coverage on the website.

### Merton's Draft Core Strategy Consultation

This consultation ran from the 7<sup>th</sup> September to the 16<sup>th</sup> October. The 'core strategy' is central to the preparation of the Local Development Framework, which will replace the UDP. I am afraid that we do not have the resources or time to tackle a consultation of this nature. However, we are members of the Wimbledon Society, which has a very effective Planning Committee, and the Society has submitted a response to both that consultation and the South London Waste Plan. For those of you who are interested, these documents will appear on the Society's website shortly.

## Christmas Lights on Arthur Road

The Christmas lights that you see every year on Arthur Road are funded jointly by the Residents, WPRA and local businesses. Douglas Dallimer has always organised this with the Council for which we are all very grateful. This year the Council advised Douglas that the existing lights were no longer fit for purpose and new ones would be needed.

The Council will be providing lights in the main town centres but nowhere else. So we will have to continue to provide our own. The Council has organised a sponsoring project and has invited residents and businesses to pay for lights on the basis of £300 for each light for three years. The Council will take responsibility for supplying the lights, putting them up, taking them down and storing them. I am happy to tell you that the Residents are sponsoring three lights, the WPRA three lights and local businesses three lights. \*\*\*\* Therefore we can look forward to Arthur Road looking suitably festive again this year. Particular thanks are due to Douglas for not only organising the Christmas Lights but also for his very successful efforts in going round local businesses collecting sponsorship.

We would also like to thank Veronica Sarkhel, our new social secretary, for the innovative and generous idea of inviting different roads to a series of neighbour's evenings at Dalchini, to sample her delicious food. Veronica is donating £1 of every meal sold to the Christmas Lights.

\*\*\*\* Since this report the sponsorship of lights has changed. There will now be ten lights and many more lights have been sponsored by local businesses.



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## Wimbledon Park Hall

Meetings were arranged late last year between the developer, Mr Hussein, his architect, LBM estates department and myself to discuss the static position of the project. The extremely difficult economic and financial environment which developed late last year has meant banks were withdrawing from financing commitments made earlier. The extreme delays to the Hall project, have been caused, in our view, by the sheer lack of proper attention by LBM, resulting in a doubling of the project costs, Bankers unwilling to provide finance and of course considerably lower property prices. We suggested that LBM might consider injecting some \$106 monies into the project to cover the increased cost of the community centre which was estimated at £400k. This suggestion was investigated by Howard Joy and his colleagues but was flatly rejected.

I subsequently wrote to the Leader of the Council complaining about, what the WPRAs viewed as, a dilatory performance by the Council in the handling of this project and suggested that we might meet to discuss the Council's obligations to the residents of WP and undertakings that were given to the community at the time the Hall was sold for redevelopment. I am afraid I have to report to you that the Leader of the Council, David Williams, categorically denied in his replies that the Council had any obligation or responsibility to the Residents of WP in this matter and the contract between the Council and the developer was a 'private sector matter' and not any responsibility of the Council. From this exchange it appeared that the Council is entirely disinterested in the problems of the residents of WP despite the fact that they have received over £1mn for the Hall site and all we have is a pile of rubble.

Subsequent to this exchange, meetings took place between the WPRAs Hall sub group and two of our Councillors, Tariq Ahmad and Oonagh Moulton, both of whom had been copied in with the correspondence and were concerned about the response from their Leader.

We advised Tariq and Oonagh that it was clear to us from the minutes of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and subsequent Cabinet meeting in July 2004, together with accompanying reports relating to prior discussions, that the money received from the sale of Wimbledon Park Hall was to be spent on a replacement facility in Wimbledon Park.

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**We also advised them that, given the time that has elapsed with this project and the incredibly negative response from David Williams, we were, unless they could organise a meeting with their colleagues to try and resolve this situation, minded to seek Counsel's opinion regarding the 'performance' of the Council and also file a complaint to Local Government Ombudsman about the dilatory manner in which this whole affair has been dealt with by the Council.**

**I am glad to report that Tariq and Oonagh worked very hard to arrange a meeting which took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> September with a range of officers and Cllr Diane Neil Mills, Cabinet member for Finance and Regeneration. Tariq chaired the meeting and a number of issues were discussed. Clarification was required on a number of points which resulted in Officers being asked to investigate a number of key issues and report back within ten days.**

**As a result we now have received, from Cllr Diane Neil Mills, a copy of the report, prepared by Howard Joy, Property Management and Review Manager for LBM. Regrettably the report is unsatisfactory in a number of ways and does not give us the reassurance which we are looking for on the issue of the money received by the Council for the sale of the Hall. In fact it would appear that the money has been spent on paying off Council debt.**

**Our committee had already discussed the matter of the cost of going to Counsel for an opinion and has sanctioned that expenditure up to an agreed level. Subject to any intervention on behalf of the Council, we will proceed with our earlier stated intention of seeking Counsel's opinion on the matter of the Specific Performance and the filing of a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Looking ahead, what's on our agenda for next year?**

**In summary I see these as our main priorities:**

- Continue to work with the developer and Council to keep the Hall project on track**
- Continue to build the financial reserves of the association**
- Consider holding another Fair in 2010**
- Consider becoming a Registered Charity**
- Increase the membership**
- Improve the website**
- Continue to support other local organisations**
- Keep working for a better Wimbledon Park**

**Finally, a huge thank you to the officers and committee members for their tremendous commitment and enthusiasm throughout the year.**

**Iain Simpson**

**Chairman**

**A very happy Christmas to everyone**



## Win a £10 book voucher!

*All correct entries submitted by the 20th December will be put into a draw and the winner will receive a £10 book token.*

*Only children under 14 eligible.*

*Send entries to Simpson at 56 Home Park Road SW19 7HN*

**Devinettes de Noel ( riddles : “ What is it ? ” )**

Elle est ronde. Elle est accrochée dans le sapin. C'est la .....

Elle est blanche et très froide. Elle tombe en flacons. C'est la .....

Il est entouré d'un joli papier pour l'offrir. C'est le .....

Il a des aiguilles et on le décore pour Noel. C'est le .....

Il a des bois sur la tête et il tire le traineau. C'est le .....

Il a un grand manteau rouge et un sac sur le dos. C'est le .....

Ce gâteau a la forme d'un morceau de bois. C'est la .....

On se couche très tard pour fêter Noel. C'est le .....

Les petits enfants les demandent au Père Noel. Ce sont les .....

Elle brille dans le ciel ou sur le sapin de Noel. C'est l' .....

### Match the French and English words

|                   |                               |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>GUIRLANDES</b> | <b>CRIB</b>                   |
| <b>HOUX</b>       | <b>TURKEY</b>                 |
| <b>DONNER</b>     | <b>TO SHINE</b>               |
| <b>ECHARPE</b>    | <b>CANDLES</b>                |
| <b>DINDE</b>      | <b>SCARF</b>                  |
| <b>BRILLER</b>    | <b>XMAS DECO-<br/>RATIONS</b> |
| <b>CRECHE</b>     | <b>HOLLY</b>                  |
| <b>BOUGIES</b>    | <b>TO GIVE</b>                |

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## St Nicholas versus Father Christmas

by

Bernadette Hoste-Mackowski

In my country of origin, Belgium, the children are lucky enough to receive presents twice in December!

On December the 6th, the children get up, all excited, to find the gifts brought by St Nicholas.

Since the 12th century, the legend says that St Nicholas went from house to house during the night of the 5th of December to ask the children if they had been good. If they had, they received sweets and gifts from St Nicholas but if they had been naughty, " Le Père Fouettard " (French for *The whipping Father* ) would take care of this !

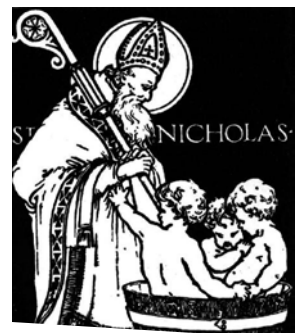
St Nicholas, bishop of Myre (south of current Turkey) was a very generous and benevolent man. He came to the aid of sailors in storms and to hungry people. He protected widows, children and weak people. He defended victims wrongly accused. With the passing of time he became the Patron of the children, sailors, merchants, travellers, bakers, lawyers, and many others ...

There is a legend we used to be told when we were kids :

*Three little children got lost after a walk in the fields. They finally found a house all lit up. Attracted by the light, they knocked on the door.*

*This was, unknown to them, the house of a horrible butcher !  
He let them in and killed them within seconds. He used his big knife to cut them in small pieces and put them in a big tub filled with salt to make nice salted meat !*

*A bit later, St Nicholas arrived with his donkey, he knocked on the door and asked the butcher if he has any nice salt beef for*



**dinner. He asked to come in and have a look at the meat then he put his hand above it and in so doing , woke the three children !**

**What happened to the butcher ? St Nicholas kept him with him to punish him. He became the “ Le Père Fouettard “, St Nicholas’s nasty companion in charge of reprimanding the children who haven’t been good. He is all dressed in black, wears a balaclava and has a thick black beard. The complete opposite to St Nicholas who always wears brightly coloured clothes, has a beautiful white beard, and always gives the picture of a lovely, benevolent person.**

**What a horrible kid’s story, heh !**

**So, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December at night, the children place their shoes in front of the fireplace before going to bed. Next to their shoes they sometimes put a carrot for the donkey and a glass of wine for St Nicholas.**

**St Nicholas is probably one of the ancestors of Father Christmas.**



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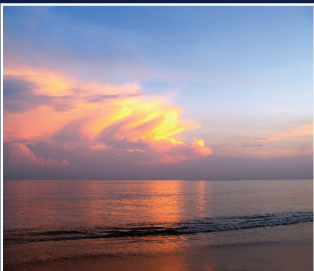
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# St Luke's Church Celebrates 100 years since opening

Dear Friends,



Last month we celebrated 100 years exactly since the building of St Luke's Wimbledon Park was opened, with a special Thanksgiving Service and Lunch.

Those with a good memory may ask: But did you not celebrate 100 years last year, in 2008? Yes, but that was of the creation of the fellowship of the church (the people); this time it was of the building.

The people of God met in a tent first and then the church hall while the main building was being constructed.



1909 seems a very long time ago – the area of Wimbledon Park has changed enormously since then, in its population and busyness, including the sheer volume of traffic.

But in other senses, a hundred years, is just a blink. For this month we celebrate something that Christians have been doing for twenty times that: 2,000 years, We celebrate the

birth of Jesus Christ, God's Son, born at Bethlehem, born to be our Saviour.

It is good to know that Christianity is not a novelty or a fashion, like so many things we experience today. It depends on a historical figure who was born, who died and for whom there is good evidence that he rose again. And there is a great continuity of witness and worship down the centuries.

**So much of what passes today is just the ideas and philosophies of the moment. We see that in education, in politics, in fashion. What we need is, in the words of the outgoing Bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ali, is 'thicker values', values which will sustain us and strengthen us through bad times as well as good, and ultimately into eternity. Those values are found in Jesus Christ.**

**I hope very much that you may be able to come and join us this Christmas**

**as we celebrate 'the reason for the season', whether you are a well seasoned worshipper, or just beginning to find out.**

**With all good wishes,**

**The Rev. James Paice**

**St Luke's Wimbledon Park**



**Southfields Underground Station is in the process of having major refurbishment, including a lift for disabled access.**

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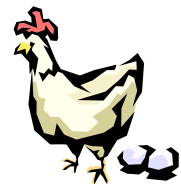


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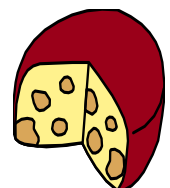
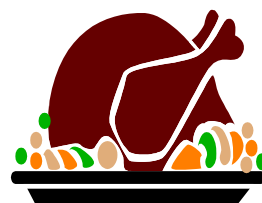
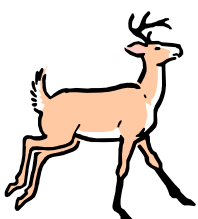
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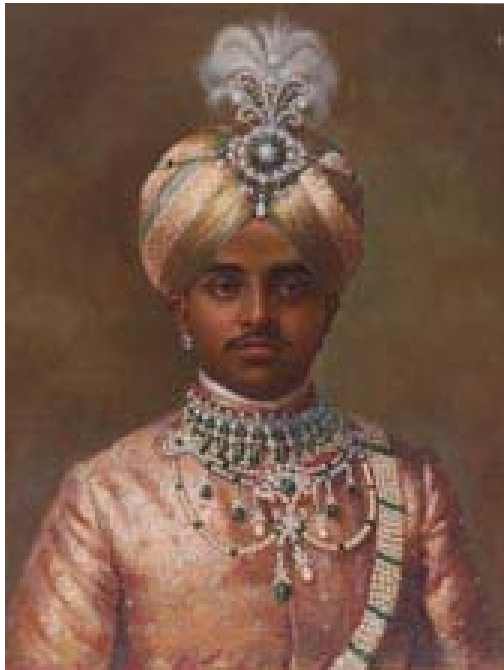




# Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts

10 October 2009 – 17 January 2010

The V&A's autumn exhibition, Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts,



Maharaja Sir Sri Krishnaraja Wodiyar IV Bahadur of Mysore, 1906 K Keshavayya. ©V&A Images

is the first to comprehensively explore the world of the maharajas and their extraordinarily rich culture. It brings together over 250 magnificent objects, many on loan to the UK for the first time from India's royal collections. The exhibition includes three thrones, a silver gilt howdah, gem-encrusted weapons, court paintings, photographs, a Rolls Royce, Indian turban jewels and jewellery commissioned from Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels in the 20th century.

The exhibition covers the period from the 18th century when the great era of the maharajas began to the end of British rule in 1947. It shows the changing role of the maharajas in an historical and social context and looks at how their patronage of the arts both in India and Europe resulted in splendid and beautiful commissions designed to enhance royal status and identity.

Many of the objects have never before been seen in the UK. The royal collections of Udaipur and Jodhpur have lent several spectacular paintings and objects.

The V&A have reunited four portraits from the 1930s by Bernard Boutet de Monvel depicting the elegant Maharaja and Maharani of Indore. One pair depicts them in Maratha dress and the other in modern Western dress. They are shown together on public display for the first time.

Another object on show in the UK for the first time is the Patiala Necklace, part of the largest single commission that Cartier has ever executed. Completed in 1928 and restored in 2002, this piece of ceremonial jewellery originally contained 2,930 diamonds and weighed almost a thousand carats.



Maharani Sanyogita Devi of Indore in Western Dress, c.1935-1938  
Bernard Boutet De Monvel. Courtesy of Maharani Usha Devi of Indore  
©David Dunning/DACS London 2009



**The Patiala Necklace, 1928**  
Cartier Paris  
Photograph by N. Welsh  
©Cartier

The exhibition begins with a recreation of an Indian royal procession with a lifesized model elephant adorned with animal jewellery, textiles and trappings and surmounted with a silver howdah.

The initial displays explore ideas of kingship in India and the role of the maharaja as religious leader, military and political ruler and artistic patron.

Symbols of kingship will include a gaddi (throne) from Udaipur, elaborate turban jewels, ceremonial swords and a gold ankus (elephant goad) set with diamonds.

A palanquin from Jodhpur used to carry the Maharaja's wife provides a rare glimpse into the lives of ladies at the royal court. The interior of the palanquin contains original framed prints and cushions.

The next section of the exhibition focuses on the shifts of power and taste in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The disintegration of the Mughal Empire led to a period of political change in which rival Indian kings laid claim to territory. On display is the golden throne of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who united the warring factions of the Punjab into a powerful Sikh state, as well as weapons and armour owned by Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the Maratha ruler Yeshwant Rao Holkar of Indore.

This period also witnessed the rapid expansion of the territorial interests of the English East India Company. This led to a new hybrid Anglo-Indian style which are seen in objects such as a Spode dinner service and an Egyptian-revival style chair designed for the Nawab of Awadh.

The exhibition then looks at the grand imperial durbars of the Raj through large-scale paintings and rare archive film footage. This section includes a carpet of pearls, rubies, emeralds and diamonds made for the Maharaja of Baroda, and exhibited at the durbar of 1903.

The final section explores the role of the 'modern' maharajas during the Raj and the increasing European influence on their lives. The exhibition shows how they were portrayed in both Indian and European style through portraits of the maharajas and their wives by photographers and artists including Man Ray, Cecil Beaton and Raja Ravi Varma.

The maharajas' patronage of European firms resulted in luxurious commissions. On display are saris designed by leading French couture houses, a costume by Madeleine Vionnet, a diamond and emerald necklace designed by Van Cleef & Arpels, a Rolls Royce and a Louis Vuitton travelling case.

The maharajas were also patrons of the emerging European avant-garde. The exhibition includes modernist furniture commissioned by the Maharaja of Indore for his palace in the 1930s and architectural designs for the Umaid Bhawan palace, an Art Deco style residence commissioned by the Maharaja of Jodhpur.



Watson Turban Jewels,  
Mid 18th Century  
©V&A Images



Sir Yadavindra Singh, Maharajah of Patiala, wears a diamond and platinum parade necklace created by Cartier in 1928 for his father Sir Bhupindar Singh.  
Cartier Paris

Mark Jones,

Director of the V&A, said:

*“There has never been an exhibition like this before, showing the spectacular treasures of the courts of the maharajas. Many of the objects are leaving India for the first time to come to the V&A. This exhibition shows that India’s rulers were significant patrons of the arts, in India and the West, and tells the fascinating story of the changing role of the maharaja from the early 18th century to the final days of the Raj.”*



Rani Sita Devi of Kapurthala  
c.1940. Cecil Beaton Private Collection

**Tickets: £11 (concessions available).**

**For advance telephone and online bookings (booking fee applies) call 0870 906 3883 or visit [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)**

*Thanks to Nigel Israel*

# **Why should I support the Residents' Association?**

**There has been a Residents' Association in Wimbledon Park since 1906. It provides a forum for discussing important local issues and a platform for action.**

**Since its inception, the Residents' Association has helped hundreds, probably thousands of local residents, irrespective of religion, race or creed, who have turned to the committee for guidance and support.**

**We check the planning applications of all local buildings and have been very successful in opposing unsuitable developments. We promote planting and improvements in local parks and green areas. We work with the local police to help you to fight crime in your street by participating in the local Ward Community Safety Panel.**

**We have led the initiative to redevelop Wimbledon Park Hall – so that once again we can have our own community centre. We have put on fairs and shows and supported numerous local campaigns, individuals and families faced with tragedy.**

**The Residents' Association has given the Wimbledon Park community a solid and respected voice when dealing with Merton Council. An individual can achieve only so much, but as a team we can and do achieve so much more.**

**This area is growing and improving all the time. Your Residents' Association is more active than ever and we are happy to put in time and effort on your behalf. But we cannot function without funds. We did extremely well financially from the Centenary Fair this year but that money has been put aside for the running of the new Park Hall – delayed yet again due to the current Global Recession.**

**We need you to support your local Residents' Association ideally for 3 years, which is only £12. Twelve pounds for a 3 year period will help us pay for printing and stationery to publish this newsletter, computer and IT software to run the website, materials and equipment to organise the next Fair and keep the flowerboxes blooming in Arthur Rd.**

**Please take a moment to fill in the very brief form opposite or join online at [www.wimbledonpark.com](http://www.wimbledonpark.com) via PayPal. Click 'About Us' then 'How to join'.**

**If you are already a member but are not sure of your current status, email to [wpsecretary@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:wpsecretary@blueyonder.co.uk) and we will check for you.**

**Thanks in advance for your support. It is hugely appreciated.**

**DeNica Fairman  
Membership Secretary**

# To Join the Wimbledon Park Residents' Association

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You are welcome to drop your subscription through the door of the Membership Secretary, DeNica Fairman at 3 Strathmore Rd, or of our Chairman, Iain Simpson at 56 Home Park Rd.

VIA website/PayPal - [www.wimbledonpark.com](http://www.wimbledonpark.com)

**Email\*\*\* If you would like to be included on an e-mail list for crime alerts, WPRA updates and information on other important local issues**

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## *The Holly.....*

I have always found the carol 'The Holly and the Ivy' rather puzzling. Where is Ivy after the first line? And the refrain is a bit bizarre in the Nativity context. So I looked to the past for some clues.

Long before Christianity, the winter Solstice was widely celebrated. Understandably: for people starving in cold huts in forests in the dead of winter, the first longer days foretold spring, warmth, bird singing, new crops, and good deer hunts. What better excuse to throw a good party? So the Celts celebrated Yule (*'the wheel'*) round December 21<sup>st</sup>. Their Druids used holly, ivy and mistletoe, evergreens with luscious berries, symbols of Spring, fertility and immortality, for rituals around the Winter Solstice and the rising of the God Sun.

Later on, all roads leading to Rome, holly and ivy were paired in the Saturnalia Winter Festival where Holly figured prominently as sacred to the God Saturn. The Romans were feasting, decking their halls, temples and deities with evergreens, and exchanging holly boughs as symbols of kindness and friendship. During the winter Bacchanals, ivy garlands were worn by Bacchus, the God of Booze, and by his retinue of goats and uninhibited dancers. It was also used by mortals to stave off drunkenness, and ivy berries were taken before drinking or steeped in wine, to prevent drunkenness (*Don't try this at home !*)

Year Zero : Here come the early Christians, not overwhelmingly popular. Cunningly, they imitate the Romans' evergreen decorations, perhaps to blend with the pagan celebrations, thus avoiding detection and tedious lions in the Coliseum. But as Christianity became the dominant religion, the early Church brought the birth of Christ to the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, thus highjacking a popular festivity date. But they banned evergreens from Christmas observance due to their Pagan connotations.

The ban wasn't lifted until the 1600's when Christians argued that holly really represented Jesus' crown of thorns and the red berries his blood. With a bit of a

## ....and the Ivy



semantic twist, the holly wood was even to be the holy wood of the cross. So winter evergreens decorations were back in favour.

With the wave of Puritan purge in the 17th century, it is most unusual for Such a carol as the Holly and the Ivy, closely associated with sex and revelry, to have survived, which testifies of its huge popularity among the people. They must have run this one past Cromwell pretty fast!

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, boys regarded ivy as a talisman against all evils including goblins, poisons, thunder and lightning, and girls. In Kent, at Christmas time, they would burn an effigy of an Ivy Girl (girls did the same to a Holly Boy). But then, presumably after puberty kicked in, a young man would put one of ten ivy leaves gathered on *All-Hallows-Even* (31st October) under his pillow to dream of his future bride.

For the two shrubs were also primitive gender symbols, the strong 'masculine' holly giving support to the pliant clinging 'feminine' ivy. An older song, 'The Contest of the Holly and the Ivy', pairs both plants in a battle of the sexes for domestic dominance, and according to an old English tradition, whichever plant was brought first indoors foretold who, of the master and the mistress of the house, would rule over the household in the coming year.

We all know that some of our Christmas traditions must be steeped in pagan rituals, like the Christmas garland of evergreens, nuts and berries inspired by the Wiccan wreath or Wheel of Year, circular representation of the life cycle, fertility and rebirth. Likewise, from Solstice festival to Christ's Nativity, the ancient carol of the Holly and the Ivy comes to us through the centuries as a wonderful example of crossover between Pagan and Christian festivities.

So according to your beliefs, you can happily celebrate the rising of the sun or the birth of sweet Jesus Christ.

Cécile Bridgens (*and Wikipedia*)

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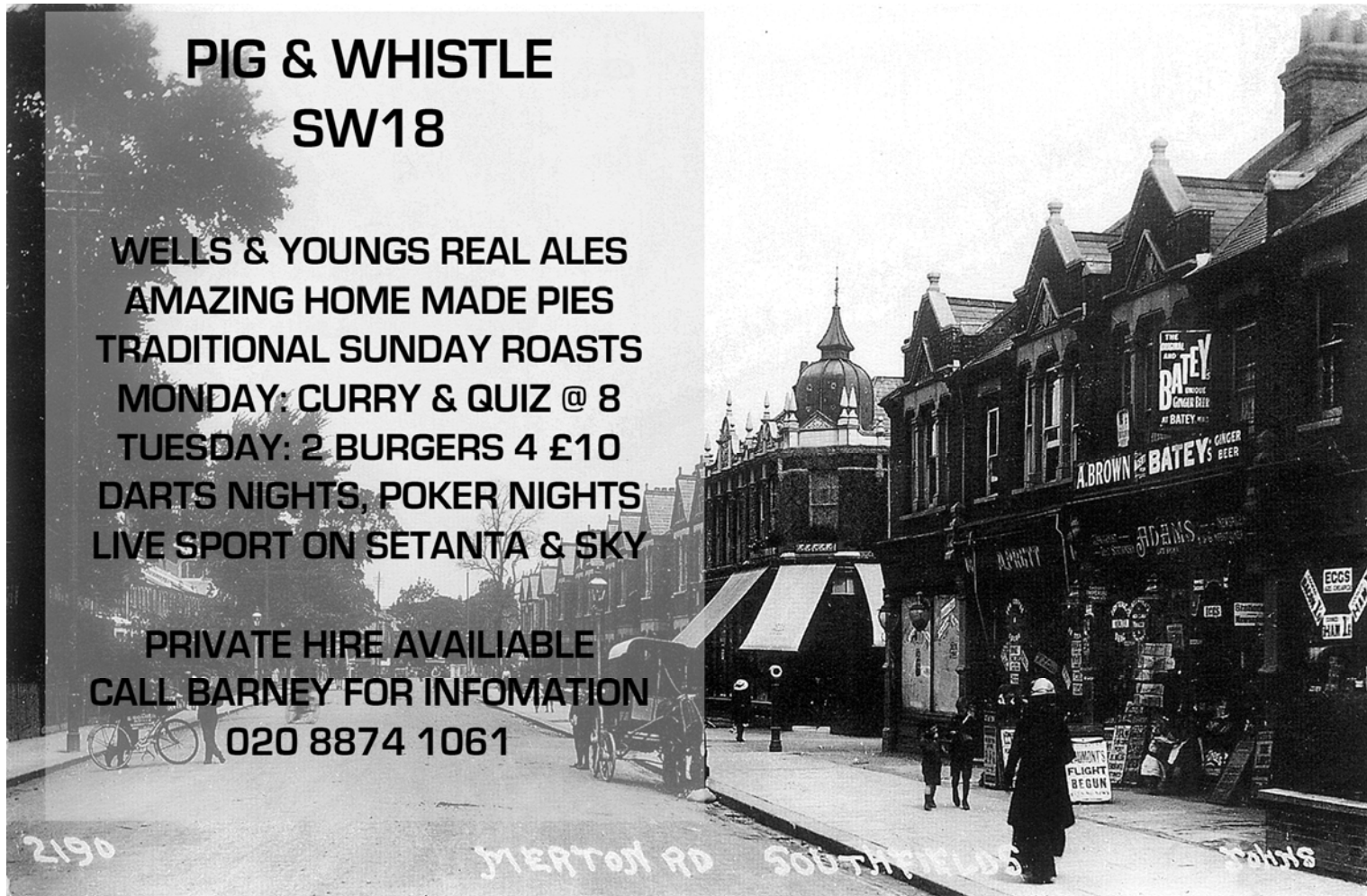
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# The Advent wreath

Advent is the period leading up to Christmas and includes the last four Sundays before Christmas starting with the Sunday nearest to the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle (this year the 29th November).

The actual origins of the Advent wreath are uncertain but there is evidence of pre-Christian Germanic peoples using wreaths with lit candles during the cold and dark December days as a sign of hope in the future warm and extended-sunlit days of Spring.

Christians kept these popular traditions alive, and by the Middle Ages Advent wreaths were part of the spiritual preparation for Christmas and could be found throughout the Christian world. By 1600, more formal practices surrounding the Advent wreath had been adopted.

Traditionally, the wreath includes four candles representing the four weeks of Advent and Christ, “the Light that came into the world” (John 3:19-21) in a circle of evergreens signifying continuous life.

The evergreens have a traditional meaning:

laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering;

pine, holly, and yew, immortality;

cedar, strength and healing

holly also has a special Christian symbolism, the prickly leaves signifies the crown of thorns.

The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolises eternity. Any pine cones, nuts, or seedpods used to decorate the wreath also symbolise life and resurrection.

One tradition is that each week represents one thousand years, the 4,000 years from Adam and Eve until the birth of Jesus. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolises the expectation and hope surrounding Christ’s coming into the world.

Three candles are purple and one is rose. The purple candles symbolise penance, sacrifice and good works. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, when the priest also wears rose vestments at Mass; Gaudete Sunday is the Sunday of rejoicing when preparations are more than half over and Christmas is close.

Another tradition is to replace the purple and rose candles with four white candles at Christmas, which will be lit daily throughout the Christmas season. A short prayer may accompany the lighting. The Advent Wreath is now an accepted tradition; enduring, clear, simple to use and to pass on to future generations.

**To make an Advent wreath you will need:**

**A shallow bowl or dish,**

- ◆ **Oasis cut into a circle (available from most florists) or a circle of oasis available from certain florists (Lansdale in Alexandra Road) or Covent Garden flower market.**
- ◆ **The oasis should be cut into the shape of a doughnut so water can be added to the centre to keep it moist.**
- ◆ **three purple candles and one pink candle (and four white candles if they are to be used at Christmas)**
- ◆ **evergreens, pine, cedar, laurel, holly, ivy etc**
- ◆ **pine cones, nuts, seeds etc to decorate and florist's wire to attach**

**Begin by soaking the oasis in warm water until it is completely saturated.**

**Fit it into the bowl, packing it in tightly so it will not move**

**Carve four holes in the oasis for the candles and put the candles in the holes. Stick greenery into the oasis to completely cover it (It's nice to have some trailing over the edges of the bowl) and closely packed around the candles to hide all the foam.**

**Use florist's wire to attach pine cones.**

**Keep the foam well watered, and try not to let the candles burn down so low that they scorch the greenery, and the wreath will last from the first Sunday of Advent until Epiphany.**

**Judith Centofanti**

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# The Winter Solstice



The Oak King of the Winter Solstice

In astronomy, the solstice is when the Sun is at its greatest distance from the celestial equator, the great circle on the celestial sphere that is on the same plane as the earth's equator. In the Northern Hemisphere, the winter solstice occurs either December 21 or 22, when the sun shines directly over the tropic of Capricorn; the summer solstice occurs either June 20 or 21, when the sun shines directly over the tropic of Cancer. In the Southern Hemisphere, the winter and summer solstices are reversed.

The seasonal significance of the winter solstice is the passing of the shortest day and the longest night. The word solstice is derived from Latin *sol*, meaning sun, and *sistere*, to make stand still. Winter Solstice is also known as Midwinter.

In the northern sky during Winter Solstice, the three stars that make up Orion's Belt (also known as the Three Kings or the Three Sisters) align with Sirius, the brightest star in the eastern sky. Beginning with the Summer Solstice, the Sun makes a decreasingly high arc across the sky from sunrise to sunset until the Winter Solstice.

Then, for three days, the Sun does not change its positioning on the horizon, hence the "stand still." The Solstice ends when the Sun begins its ascent into the northern sky and days grow increasingly longer. This natural phenomenon led many cultures to celebrate a sun reborn from Mother Earth and a return to light at this time of year.

The Pagan celebration of Winter Solstice (also known as Yule) is one of the oldest winter celebrations in the world. For ancient people the seasons and weather played an important part in their lives. The Norsemen of Northern Europe saw the sun as a wheel that changed the seasons. Their word for wheel, *houl*, is where the word yule is thought to have come. At midwinter the Norsemen lit bonfires, told stories and drank sweet ale.

The ancient Romans also held a festival to celebrate the rebirth of the year. Saturnalia ran for seven days from the 17th of December. It was a time when the ordinary rules were turned upside down. Men dressed as women and masters dressed as servants. The festival also involved decorating houses with greenery, lighting candles, holding processions and giving presents.

In Britain the Winter Solstice was celebrated in Britain long before the arrival of Christianity. The Druids (Celtic priests) would cut the mistletoe that grew on the oak tree and give it as a blessing. Oaks were seen as sacred and the winter fruit of the mistletoe was a symbol of life in the dark winter months.

**It was also the Druids who began the tradition of the yule log. The Celts thought that the sun stood still for twelve days in the middle of winter and during this time a log was lit to conquer the darkness, banish evil spirits and bring luck for the coming year.**

**Many of these customs are still followed today. They have been incorporated into the Christian and secular celebrations of Christmas.**

**Cultures all over the world mark this planetary positioning with festivals, ceremonies, and feasts, bringing light and merriment to the darkest period of the season.**

**The true beauty of Winter Solstice is that no matter what your religious beliefs are, everyone can witness the planetary movement and appreciate the passing of the shortest day of the year.**

**Many families celebrate old traditions around the Winter Solstice that originate all the way back to those begun in the cradle of civilization or beyond, including:**

**Adorning homes with brightly coloured paper lanterns and red candles**

**Decorating tables and walls with winter foliage like evergreen boughs, holly, bay, oak, laurel, and mistletoe**

**Walking outside in nature to witness the Solstice itself**

**Sharing a feast with family and friends**

**Letting go of old resentments, and resolving to make positive changes**

**Burning candles**

**Lighting fires**

**In modern secular cultures these gatherings are still valued for emotional comfort, having something to look forward to at the darkest time of the year.**

**Insufficient sunlight in the short winter days increases the secretion of melatonin in the body. This upsets the bodies' natural (circadian) rhythms resulting in lethargy and requiring longer sleep.**

**To reinvigorate the body from its seasonal lull and relieve winter blues you need to decrease melatonin secretions by increasing serotonin levels. This can be done by exercise, light therapy, increased exposure to negative ions (which can be attained from plants and well ventilated flames, burning wood or beeswax) which will temporarily create a more even sleeping pattern.**

**In the mayhem of the modern world, it is easy to miss the sun as it rises and sets as part of the cycle of nature. Taking time to witness the phenomenon of Winter Solstice can be a way for all people to collectively tune in to the natural world from which we come, and honour the cycles that undeniably affect us all.**

**Judith Centofanti**

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