

## **Wimbledon Park**

This ancient parkland has royal connections. There was a manor here from about 1280, which eventually passed into the ownership of Henry VIII. The manor house, on a north-facing hilltop at Vineyard Hill, was built by Sir Thomas Cecil in 1588.

By 1610 the grounds covered 400 acres and were famous as a deer park – James I hunted here. In 1630 Charles I bought the manor for his queen, Henrietta Maria, and new gardens were laid out.

The famous landscape designer Capability Brown was employed in 1764 by Earl Spencer. Over the next 20 years Brown transformed the formal Renaissance gardens into a more natural landscape, including building a dam across the valley to convert a marshy stream into an impressive 12-hectare lake.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the park has had many uses: it has played home to a polo ground, a piggery, and was turned over to allotments for vital food growing during the World War I. Generations of local people swam in the lake in summer and skated on it in winter.

Merton Council owns the public park and the lake. The All England Lawn Tennis Club owns the golf course land.

## **Wimbledon – All England Lawn Tennis Club**

Founded in 1868 and originally called the All England Croquet Club. It now has 55 courts over 42 acres and has recently received planning permission to build 39 new courts on 23 acres.

## **Wimbledon and Putney Commons**

Are a large open space 460 hectares (1,140 acres). There are three named areas: Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath, and Putney Lower Common, which together are managed under the name Wimbledon and Putney Commons. Putney Lower Common is separated from the rest of the Common by about 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometres) of built-up area of southwest Putney.

Wimbledon Common consists mainly of a plateau of acidic grassland, the most notable area being The Plain. Scarcely a crest breaks the smooth table and nowhere can you find a summit. Soils are impoverished gravels, ideal for heathland and bogs. The land falls away to the west down through the other main habitat, mature woodlands, to Beverley Brook, where the geology is predominantly London clay.

The golf course used by the two golf clubs is also a large feature of Wimbledon Common

## **The Windmill**

The Windmill has stood pride of place on Wimbledon Common since it was built in 1817 by Charles March to serve the local community. Its hollow construction mirrored that popular in Holland, rather than the traditional British structure. The grain-grinding, working mill only operated for almost half a century when, in 1864, the machinery was removed and replaced by residential accommodation. As well as its day-to-day role, the Windmill was also interestingly the vantage point of choice for watching the many duels that took place on Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Whilst the inner workings of the mill are no longer in place, the sails have been restored to working order and the residential accommodation converted into the much-loved museum, housing interactive exhibits on rural life and local history.

### **Queensmere Pond, Putney Vale**

Queensmere pond (or Queen's Mere) was built to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 and was once considered the jewel in the crown. It became known as a bathing and boating pond until a few decades ago. Nowadays it provides a popular walking destination for people who come to enjoy watching the birdlife.

Despite being located within the green and natural landscape of the Commons, this man-made pond with its concrete banks provides little in the way of ecological value but work is underway to rewild the pond.

### **Brasher-Chataway-Bannister Bridge on the Beverley Brook**

This wooden footbridge was restored and reopened in December 2022. It has been christened in honour of the three champion runners (Chris Brasher, Christopher Chataway and Roger Bannister who broke the 4-minute mile on 06/05/54), all of whom were members of the Thames Hare and Hounds, the world's oldest cross-country running club being founded in 1868.

### **The Fox and Grapes**

The pub dates back to 1865 and it has earned a place in football history for many reasons - from 1868-1888 it was used as the changing rooms by what later became Wimbledon Football Club. It lost its CAMRA Status a few years ago after being remodelled as a bistro hotel and restaurant but it still serves real ale and is walker friendly.

### **Cannizaro Park**

Is a public park in Wimbledon in the London Borough of Merton. Located towards the south-western edge of Wimbledon Common, it is known for its ornamental landscaped gardens with ponds and sculpture.

### **Rushmere Pond**

Situated close to Wimbledon Village in the centre of Rushmere Green, this is by far the most ancient pond on the Commons, with its origin probably going back to Medieval times.

Known as Rushmore in Tudor times, this pond, which even in severe drought conditions does not dry up, was a convenient and valuable source of rushes for thatching and a place where villagers could keep their domestic ducks. It was a popular amenity pond in the Victorian and Edwardian times and remains popular today with local residents and visitors alike.

Because of the numerous activities that take place around the pond, plus its acidity, wildlife is fairly limited. Surprisingly however, Rushmere has for several years supported a shoal of Japanese Koi carp, which had been released into the water by a member of the public. The rushes around the pond have been reduced to a few clumps but fortunately, in recent years growth has increased.

A lot of summer visiting birds, such as house-martins and swifts enjoy skimming low over the water snapping up insects and taking full advantage of the wide-open spaces surrounding the Rushmere to indulge in their aerial manoeuvres. In winter, flocks of mainly black-headed gulls rest on the water or fly aerobically around the margins.