

# CARNEGIE NPFA PLAYING FIELD: THE SIR JOSEPH HOOD MEMORIAL PLAYING FIELDS, MERTON, LONDON



## Site details

Location: Marina Avenue, Motspur Park, West Barnes, KT3 6NE  
Landowner: London Borough of Merton  
Size: 31 acres

## History

The Wimbledon Playing Field Association, in co-operation with sports clubs and associations of Wimbledon, Merton and Morden, decided to acquire a playing field to be dedicated for permanent preservation for public recreation, as a memorial to the late Sir Joseph Hood. Sir Joseph, who has been Mayor of Wimbledon, was a lifelong helper and generous benefactor of the Playing Fields movement, and was the donor of several valuable recreation grounds. He was President of the Wimbledon Playing Fields Association and a member of the Executive of the National Association.

Sir Joseph Hood assisted financially a total of 97 Clubs and Associations and of these he was President or Vice-President of 32. It was therefore felt that the acquisition and layout of a playing field was the most appropriate form of memorial to a person who did so much to encourage open-air games of all kinds.

The site consisted of flat meadow land having a total area of approximately 31 acres. Along one side was a broad belt of woodland, which was retained. About 26 acres was made available for the playing of games:

- Four adult and one junior cricket pitches
- Four full-sized association and one rugby pitches
- Two junior rugby pitches
- Hockey pitch
- Bowling green
- Six hard and six grass tennis courts
- Space reserved for soft ball games

Another interesting feature of the scheme was a running track (four laps to the mile). The total cost of the scheme was £15,000. Merton and Morden UDC agreed to contribute half the purchase price.

## Grant awards were agreed in 1932

Carnegie UK Trust grant	£1,600.00
NPFA grant	£400.00

## Protection status

The Ground was conveyed to Merton and Morden Urban District Council (successor in title is the London Borough of Merton), and subject to certain arrangements with regard to its use by clubs and members of the public. The conveyance from 1935 (NPFA do not currently hold a copy) is subject to a number of covenants, the most important being “the Council will maintain the property as a playing field and recreation ground”.

The site is designated as Metropolitan Open Land. Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is quoted as “being an important feature of the overall Merton Open Space network and has an essential and individual role in meeting the Council’s wider strategic objectives. Merton’s Community and Business Plans articulate the key social, environmental and economic themes around which Merton Council are trying to improve the quality of life for residents”.

Whilst some historical context is given on the Council’s website, there is no mention of the Carnegie UK Trust or NPFA’s involvement in the 1935 acquisition and lay-out of the site, this pilot project has enabled us to make that connection.

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## Facilities and Activities

The park provides for a variety of active and passive leisure activities and organised sports. Facilities at the site are of good quality and are promoted to the wider community through Merton's Sport and Leisure Development Team.

- Nine sports pitches
  - Three 'Little League' football pitches;
  - Three full size football pitches
  - Three pitches that can be used for either Adult or little league football
- Playground and Paddling Pool
- Four tennis courts
- Multisports area (to include basketball)
- Pavilion
- Café in Summer
- Woodlands and Meadow
- 1 km trim trail around the perimeter of the park

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is one of the London Borough of Merton's 13 Elite Sports Grounds. The 31 acres recreation ground provides mainly for organised sports and games. The Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Wood, located in the open space, has Grade II importance for nature conservation. The playing fields are an important community and biodiversity asset and form part of the wider structural open space network of Greater London. The site has obtained the Green Flag award which recognises the best green spaces in England.

In 2006 the Friends Group were awarded £30,000 from London Marathon Charitable Trust to upgrade the tennis courts with match-funding from Merton Council. Two courts are designated for multi-sports use including basketball. In 2007 new basketball goals were introduced and the London Marathon Charitable Trust granted £25,000 for the installation of new heavy duty fencing around the basketball facility.

There is a grassed and fenced children's playground situated in the north-western corner of the site. The play area provides a variety of play equipment for 0 – 14 year olds. The single storey pavilion was built in the 1930s, and include a main hall with capacity for up to 60 people. The building also has 4 changing rooms, showers, ladies and men's toilets and a kitchen adjoining the main hall. An additional small kitchen annex is used for a café during the summer. With an active voluntary Friends group ([www.friendsofsjh.org](http://www.friendsofsjh.org)), the site is an excellent example of a community park.

The London Borough of Merton's Management plan 2005-2010 states the vision for Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is "to encourage healthier lifestyles, strong inclusive communities and an appreciation of nature through the provision of an attractive, high quality space with facilities that are modern, safe, clean, sustainable and accessible to all"

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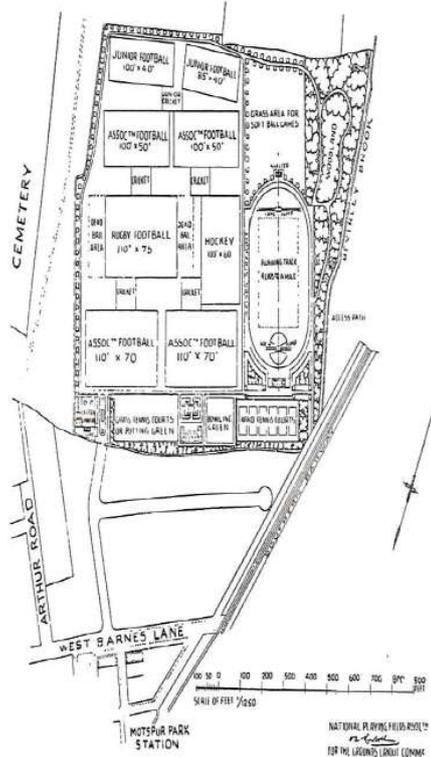
## Location



The plan below, prepared under the advice of the Grounds and lay-out Committee of the NPFA, shows the lay-out of the playing field in 1932. The direction of North compass point on this plan differs to the birds eye view shown below.

Birds eye view. The area outlined in red is Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields

**SIR JOSEPH HOOD MEMORIAL  
DESIGN FOR LAYING OUT OF PROPOSED  
PLAYING FIELD AT MOTSPUR PARK.**



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Photos 2014

