



The Heath & Hampstead Society **NEWSLETTER**

January 2006

Vol 37 No. 1



Plans to refurbish the Vale of Health Children's Playground

Chairman's Report

by Tony Hillier

I should like to begin this report by wishing all members a happy, prosperous and peaceful New Year.

The Society Christmas Party

The party at Burgh House was much enjoyed by those who were able to apply promptly. I should like to apologise that the Society was not able to accommodate all those who wanted to come. The problem is a dearth of suitable local venues which are large enough for our increasing membership and affordable. This year we are looking at the possibility of using Rosslyn Hill Chapel.

Street Trees - a new Policy Group

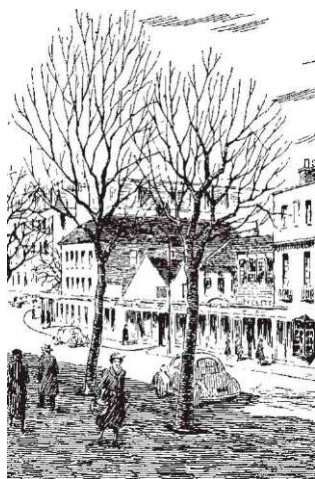
Few topics rouse greater passions among members and local residents than the felling or unsuitable pollarding of favourite street trees. I am therefore delighted to report that a Tree Policy Group has been formed by your Town Sub-Committee. It is chaired by Bruce Kohler

and has two active members in Jo Konrad and Jeremy Wright: they combine technical knowledge of tree management with a fierce commitment to maintaining the leafiness of the NW3 streetscape.

The Group has had an encouraging first meeting with the senior management of the Open

Spaces and Leisure Section of Camden's newly reorganised Culture and Environment Department. Camden's Tree Strategy 2003-6 sets out current policies for the management of the 10,000-odd trees belonging to and growing in Camden's streets. These are inspected on a three-yearly cycle for fungal disease thought likely to weaken the root and buttress systems and so constitute a danger to the public from the risk of falling. Householders may assert that street trees are causing subsidence. Trees found from either source to have dangerous external symptoms are put into a felling programme. Felling notices under the current programme are posted on condemned trees with only 10 days' warning. All felled trees are replaced, unless under-pavement utility lines make this too expensive an option. The Society aims to obtain for members and their street associations a significantly longer warning period and the opportunity to share more technical information to give time to consider additional (and more costly) tree diagnostic tools, possibly leading to methods of tree management other than felling in very special cases.

We hope that by creating a protocol for a more timely dialogue with Camden and an improved exchange of largely technical information, there will be less drama involved in keeping Hampstead well stocked with disease-free trees. Members will be reassured, although still sad, to know that the ancient horse chestnut in Well Road was in fact found to be seriously diseased and therefore dangerous, and properly felled. Members will be as alarmed and sad, as we are, to learn that at least four substantial planes in Fitzjohns Avenue are diseased and may have to come down before long. It was news of this threat that led to our setting up the Tree Policy Group and taking action, with the support of



Old Hampstead from a set of drawings by J. Montgomery in the Society's archives

Chairman's report (cont)

our Councillors, to obtain a stay of execution and a second opinion.

Witanhurst

Together with the Highgate Society we are on high alert following recent notice that this extraordinary 127 bedroom house with extensive grounds overlooking the west side of Hampstead Heath is coming on the market. Our last Newsletter gave a brief history of the events surrounding the last attempt to redevelop this site which longer-standing members will recall. A Witanhurst Working Group was formed in 1975, and raised funds by public appeal to oppose development. There were three Public Enquiries and almost 19,000 people signed a petition against the proposals. Key issues included the effect on the views from Hampstead Heath with loss of trees, and the effect on Highgate village. After a hard fought and long drawn out battle, a modest scheme of houses was permitted, but only on the lower slopes.

We have pressed Camden for a Planning Brief to be prepared, because of the sensitivity of this site, and because a Planning Brief has worked so well for controlling the proposed re-development of Athlone House. Camden has so far resisted this suggestion. Their grounds are that existing regulations are sufficient to protect against any steps being taken, by new or existing owners of this site, which could be harmful to Highgate or to views from the Heath. While earlier experience makes us sceptical, we welcome such a tough statement of intent on the part of the planners.

Licensing

The Society has continued to be successful in working with teams of local residents to persuade the Camden licensing panels, and in

some cases the magistrates, to place severe restrictions on the many attempts by pub, off-licence and bar owners and managers to extend their hours into anti-social times. Since my last report we have dealt with well over twenty applications to convert and vary licenses, new applications and in some cases appeals against previous decisions by Camden. At the time of writing four important cases remain to be heard. As soon as this work is complete towards the end of January, our Licensing Team will prepare and circulate a detailed brief suggesting how residents can best monitor and protect themselves against future public nuisance from licensed premises near where they live. An important principle has been accepted by the licensing authorities, that even well-behaved customers outside pubs after normal sleeping hours can and often do constitute a public nuisance.

Fund raising for local projects

Two Society initiatives

The Society is currently engaged in two projects to enhance the amenities and the fabric of Hampstead.

Catherine Boyd gives details on the opposite page of the project to refurbish the Vale of Health Playground and on page 7 there are details of the plans to repaint the railings of the Parish Church in Church Row. Both these projects will require quite substantial sums and we hope members will respond as generously as you have to such projects in the past.

St. Stephen's Church

We commend to you also the project to restore St. Stephen's Church, Pond Street, which the Society has supported since its inception. This important local landmark needs our help.

The Vale of Health Playground

A project to honour Peggy Jay *by Catherine Boyd*

It is wonderful news that the plan to refurbish the Vale of Health playground (sometimes known as the Enclosure) is finally coming together. It is a happy choice of project to honour Peggy. The Society and the City have put in £7,500 between them and the remaining funds required (approx £11,000) will we hope be raised by local people, schools and anyone else who uses the playground or who would like to support this much-needed project for the benefit of local families and children.

We all know how successful (too successful on a summer's day?) the Willow Road playground has been and it has long been clear that the Vale of Health enclosure was in great need of some love and attention. A consultation meeting was held in October and local associations and residents were able to see the plans and give their views on various aspects of it. The project will provide equipment similar to that in Willow Road but for a slightly older age group and it is hoped that it will be ready in the late spring. It is intended that the equipment will be painted in more muted colours than in Willow Road, more suited to its exceptionally rural location

Fund raising has got off to a flying start with £1000 already raised from the Gayton Road Association and the Willoughby Road Association and some private donations. Can you help us raise the rest? Flyers will be available in the New Year for street and other distribution, and, we hope ready for inclusion in this Newsletter.

We are very encouraged by the support the project has received already and look forward to raising the rest in time for a late spring opening.



*Anyone wishing to donate can
send donations to*

Georgina Hennessy
Hampstead Heath Office,
Heathfield House
432, Archway Road
London N6 4JH.

Cheques should be made payable to:
Hampstead Heath Registered Charity,
Vale of Health



Heath Report

by Tony Ghilchik

Where is the old pound?

I was recently asked 'where was the old pound?' It used to be seen nestling in a hollow when looking towards the Vale of Health from the pavement by Gangmoor, opposite Whitestone Pond. It is still there and kept clear of encroaching bramble and saplings but now only visible when looking uphill from the Vale of Health as trees now hide it from the road. It is hard to imagine that not so long ago the now wooded slope was largely grass. Here is yet another example of how much work is needed to maintain the 'wild and natural state' of the Heath and it highlights our concern that the recent financial restrictions have, indeed, had a significant impact on the work done to these 'natural' areas. This autumn, therefore, we have been paying special attention to the Corporation's Annual Work Plans, both in monitoring what has been achieved over the past year and what has been included for next.

Last year, the time it took to get spares to fix a broken bailer prevented some of the annual cuts being done on schedule, but the dry end to the year has enabled much of that work to be caught up - though in some areas the cutting is being left until spring so seeds remain available



*The Pound in 1911
from an original drawing
by A.R. Quinton in Barratt's
Annals of Hampstead*

to birds over the winter months. For the coming year we suggested a few extra tasks and arranged for the Work Plan to specify, as its priority, those tasks aimed to prevent loss of both grasslands and ancient trees by

*cutting back brambles growing into grasslands;
removal of saplings from both grasslands and
the woodland edge scrub;*

*releasing ancient trees from their surroundings
where they are endangered.*

A new 5-year Strategic Plan

Looking further ahead, the Corporation have asked a number of local groups, including ourselves, to help them develop a new Strategic Plan for the next 5-years. It is envisaged that the plan will have three sections: a Strategic Issues

section setting a clear long-term Vision for the Heath (rather like an expanded version of our own Heath Vision); this will lead into a group of broad Topic Papers (probably seven in all, with a varying number of sub-topics) which will evaluate in more detail the constraints, policies and actions needed to achieve the Vision, and finally a section based on geographical areas giving the medium-term action plans (which will, themselves, feed into the annual work plans). The timetable is tight with the Strategic Issues section needed by Easter and the Topics section by the end of the year.

The Topic Papers as currently envisaged will cover: Natural Landscape; Public Use; Landscape Assessment; Access & Education; Historical Features; Policy & Legal, and Built Environment. The working groups for these are currently being established and I have gone into some detail to give a flavour of the work and an opportunity for any member of the Society to become involved. Please give me a phone call if you wish to know more.

A project to honour Life President, Peggy Jay

As those of you who were at the Christmas party will know, the proposal to re-equip the children's play area by the Vale of Health in honour of our Life President, Peggy Jay, is progressing fast. A plan went on display in the play area last October for local residents to give their views and the feedback was a wish for the area to cater for a slightly wider age range - up to age 10 not just to 8. The equipment now proposed will cover this wider age range at a cost approaching £20,500. We and the Corporation have started off the fundraising appeal with a promise of £7,500 between us. The leaflet with this Newsletter gives fuller details - but don't be alarmed by the colours,

the equipment will be in the natural tones used in the Heath Extension's play area - and I hope you will join us in making this area a suitable celebration of Peggy's lifelong contribution to preserving the rural qualities of the Heath.

News from Kenwood

Over in Kenwood, work will be starting in January to strengthen the dam between Wood and Thousand Pound Ponds. Full details of the work, which includes sheet piling alongside the dam, are now on display in Mansion Cottage. All will be finished before the concert season starts.

Other work in this winter includes some on the rhododendrons in the Flower Garden. The two rhododendron clumps at the western end of the Flower Garden that are in historic positions require sensitive pruning. The intention is to break the rhododendron canopy and allow light down to stimulate low growth. This work is necessary in order to conserve the plants' longer term survival. They have become overgrown and every second or third shrub will be coppiced - it will be a couple of years before the display starts to recover.

The Springett Lecture

Those of you who were at Burgh House on 14th October for the tenth in our annual Springett Lectures heard

Dr Su Gough of the British Trust for Ornithology talk about some of the most important results from their London

Bird Project which she conducted from 2002-2004. "We have included in this Newsletter an outline of Su's talk about 'Birds in London's Public Green Spaces'.



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Town Report

by Gordon Maclean

The Society's concern with all the usual long-running issues over protection of our Conservation Areas has continued, in some cases with increasing urgency, but there is little doubt what the 'hot' issue of the moment is: trees.

Street Trees

The beauty and character of Hampstead is tied closely to our urban trees. The distinguished appearance of many of our streets depends on trees, ancient and modern, and it is easy for us to become complacent about their existence and health; they seem to have been there for ever. Are we not 'Leafy Hampstead'? and this not only because of our proximity to the Heath. There are many hundreds of street trees, owned and maintained by Camden, and probably thousands of trees in private gardens. They are all important.

The fact is, however, that many of our best-loved trees were planted in the late 19th. Century and are coming to the end of their normal lives. Decay and disease take their toll, and renewal is not always undertaken early enough to mask the scars.

The subject has become an Issue very recently because of the well-publicised loss of the lovely chestnut tree in Well Road, and current threats to trees in Wedderburn Road and Fitzjohns Avenue. The most serious of these is Camden's intention to fell five of the largest plane trees in Fitzjohns Avenue - the gateway to Hampstead. They are said to be suffering from a disease which could lead to their being a public danger.

A new Tree Group

We have now formed a Tree Group, whose job is to identify trees at risk (and this has to be done pretty rapidly, since notice of felling is short), assess the facts - by no means a

straightforward matter - and try to avert or delay action that would be damaging. Plainly, we are not going to be able to save every tree threatened, especially if public safety really is involved, but we hope to prevent precipitate action. Our Group is very well qualified to provide a professional opinion - see the Chairman's report for more detail.

The Group will also be able to look at other tree issues, such as pollarding, and will not confine their work to public trees.

Planning and Conservation

Planning applications continue to flow in, requiring our scrutiny and comment. The most worrying proposal currently is for a very large and conspicuous house on the edge of the pond in the Vale of Health, which the Planners intend to approve. We will continue our efforts to oppose it, as a direct threat to the integrity of the Heath. We are adamant that the Heath, designated as Metropolitan Open Land, is a no-go area for development. The Planners appear to disagree.

Other Matters

Discussions on the future of the Police Station in Rosslyn Hill continue. There seems little doubt that changes will have to occur, but there is still hope that a Police presence will remain in the building.

We continue our efforts to ensure that repair work will eventually be carried out on the Tollhouse in Spaniards Road, to galvanise Tesco to redesign their Heath Street shopfront, and to give assistance to the proper replacement of our tiled street nameplates when they become damaged or go missing. We continue to contribute to the various committees and consultations on subjects such as the School Run and Parking.

The refurbishment of the Parish Church railings

This, the second of the Society's major projects for 2006, will also need your help with fund-raising

A connection with Handel

Early pictures of the Parish Church show it, with its surrounding churchyard, unfenced. The elegant railings and gates which surround it today were, according to Thomas Barratt, the Hampstead Historian, bought at auction in 1747. He tells us that the railings cost 14s 6d and the gates 15s 6d per cwt; there were 56 cwt. in all. 'Besides being good examples of the Swedish ironwork of the period, they possess interesting associations, having originally been erected at Canons, the Duke of Chandos's seat near Edgware, where Handel officiated regularly. Thus the gates through which the worshippers pass today must often have been passed through by the great composer himself.' A fitting connection for a church which maintains a distinguished musical tradition.

The railings are now badly in need of repainting and repair. They were never intended to be grey - that was only an undercoat which was intended to be finished in black but was never completed.

The Parochial Church Council have set up a small working party to organise the fund-raising. However first they will have to negotiate the colour with English Heritage, who, we understand, have suggested they should be finished in dark green.

There is also a separate Lottery Bid being submitted by Camden for funds to carry out work to improve the churchyard with particular regard to the flora. This will complement the work already done by the Society in placing descriptive plaques there as it will improve the visibility of the graves and generally facilitate access.

The Society is working with the PCC and has promised to donate half the cost of the repainting. Further details of the fundraising drive to raise the rest of the required sum, will be sent out in due course.



*An Illustration by Moy Keightly
showing some of the wrought iron work.
From The Book of Hampstead by Mavis & Ian Norrie, 1960*

Good News For St Stephen's

But it still needs one final effort from the local community
Michael Taylor reports

In the last few years the St Stephen's Restoration and Preservation Trust has raised over half a million pounds from donations and £400,000 from English Heritage.

With this money the first phase of construction work has already been completed. The Trust has repaired ground floor windows and foundations and constructed a new safe floor structure for the ground floor, retaining the original boards and restoring the wonderful Minton encaustic floor tiles.

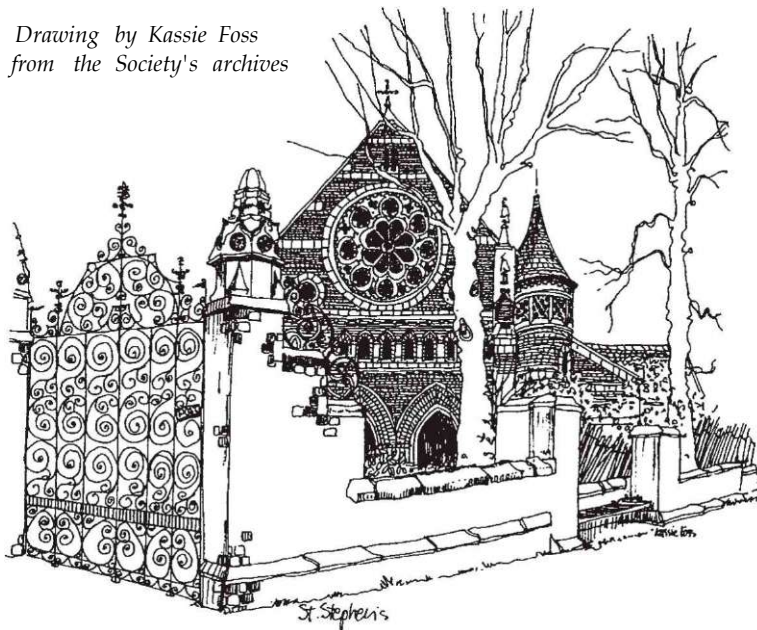
It will cost another £3,100,000 to complete the project and open St Stephen's to the community. The Trust now has Stage 1 approval for a grant of £2.45 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund but must show match funding of £640,000 to receive the grant - it has already

raised £400,000 of this from other grant-aid bodies, plus £80,000 from fund-raising activities this year.

Now the Trust needs only £160,000 to be able to start work on completing St Stephen's and at last opening it to the community. The need is urgent as although the Heritage Lottery Fund have so far been helpful and co-operative they may well lose interest if it all takes too long.

The Trust is raising funds in a variety of ways and one of the most important, at this crucial stage, is donations from the community which will ultimately use St Stephen's. The Trust has opened St Stephen's to visitors twenty times during 2005 and there is now a growing perception of the importance of this building and why English Heritage have listed it Grade 1.

*Drawing by Kassie Foss
from the Society's archives*



Those of you who do not realise how magnificent the interior of St Stephen's is may see from the cover of the enclosed brochure how much progress has already been made by the Trust even though there is still a great deal to do. Open days for visitors will commence again in February 2006.

In less than two years from when the remaining match funding is raised, St Stephen's could be operational and open to the community for concerts, theatre, private functions, exhibitions, conferences, civil weddings and a Lifelong Learning Centre offering a wide range of courses for all age groups.

St. Stephen's: from the archives

Compiled from Society Newsletters and from Thomas Barratt's Annals of Hampstead

At the junction of Rosslyn Hill and Pond Street, St Stephen's is on a landmark site, at a crossing of many ways, but the neglect of so many years has left it in a sad condition. Support for St Stephen's now would ensure the restoration of this glorious building and its return to use by the community.

The role of the Society

The Society has been monitoring the situation at St. Stephen's Church in these pages for many years. Former Town Sub-Committee Chairman David Christie was particularly active in campaigning for its restoration and preservation. The following historical notes have been compiled from his, and other, Newsletter reports.

An architectural masterpiece

Lonely and unloved, neglected and vandalised, Samuel Sanders Teulon's magnificent church - 'my mighty church', as he called St. Stephen's - sits brooding at the top of Pond Street, its condition rapidly deteriorating, its future uncertain. Fifteen years after closure, its fabric has been vandalised and most of its fine stained glass stolen. Yet even in its mutilated condition, on the English Heritage 'at risk' register for some time, it retains its Grade I listed status,



interior following recent restoration work

ranking it among the nation's most significant architectural masterpieces.

Opinions vary on the architectural merits of St. Stephen's with its steep roofs and massive tower. But like it or hate it, no-one can deny its visual importance on its prominent and steeply sloping site. It is considered to be his masterpiece: the new edition of Pevsner described it as 'one of S.S. Teulon's most

St Stephen's: from the Archives (cont)

mature and powerful works'. Its chief glory is its remarkable, splendid French Gothic interior, containing a wealth of interesting and even eccentric detail, including sculptural and mosaic decoration of enormous variety, a large number of stone carvings and statues, and stained glass by several contemporary manufacturers including Clayton & Bell.

The history of the building

St. Stephen's was built in 1869 on part of the triangular piece of manorial wasteland called Hampstead Green. The ground was riddled with streams, a difficulty Teulon overcame by building the church on arches. Teulon himself lived in a house on Hampstead Green from 1846 until his death in 1873. His other work in Hampstead, the Gate House for Branch Hill Lodge, dating from this period too. The church he viewed across the trees was the climax of his life's work and is - or should be - a fitting memorial to a brilliant architect.

Apart from slight settlement at the turn of the century, swiftly dealt with at the time, the church has proved to be remarkably well built. Claims in the 1960s that the church was in danger of collapse and beyond repair at reasonable cost, were considered exaggerated and disputed by expert advice. Following its closure, as various unsuitable proposals for use such as those for a hypermarket and riding stables, offices, and restaurants, came and went, its fabric deteriorated. The GLC intervened in 1985 to repair the roof at a cost of £100,000 saving it from further damage.

A century of religious worship

By the beginning of the 20th century Hampstead parish had been divided into nineteen ecclesiastical districts. St. Stephen's was constituted in 1870. Its first vicar came from St. John's Downshire Hill and it was anticipated that his congregation would follow him. In the 1880s over 1300 people attended a Sunday service there although by 1902 attendance was down to 540. Barratt tells us that it had a fine peal of bells and the Belfry served for the bell-chamber scene between Trotty Veck and the spirits in Charles Green's illustrations for Dickens's *The Chimes*.

As a result of pastoral reorganisation by the ecclesiastical authorities in the 1960s, the church was declared redundant in 1977 and the parish merged with that of All Hallows, Gospel Oak.

A new lease of life:

The Society has kept an anxious watch on the building. In the early 1990s, as a result of pressure from David Christie, representing the Society, English Heritage agreed to set up a working party to seek possible new uses for the church and investigate ways of raising funds. In 1994 our Newsletter reported on and welcomed the formation of a Friends of St. Stephen's Association and has since supported the work of the St Stephen's Restoration and Preservation Trust on various occasions.

Your help needed

We urge members to respond generously to this appeal in the hope the church will now at last be given a new lease of life.

The Springett Lecture

Birds in London's Public Green Spaces

by Dr Su Gough of the British Trust for Ornithology. Report by John Hunt

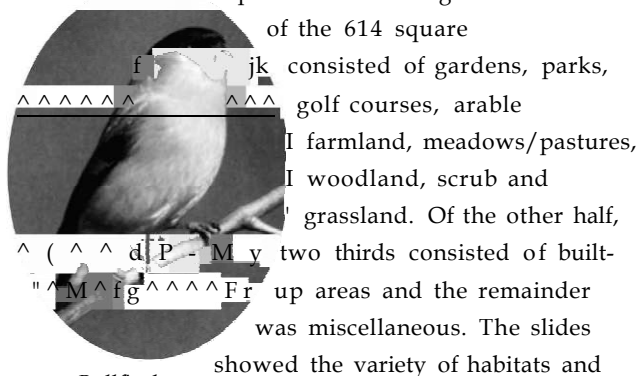
As on every other occasion of this popular annual event, the room was full and the audience was not disappointed: a more apposite speaker than Dr. Su Gough could not have been found.

BTO's London Bird Project

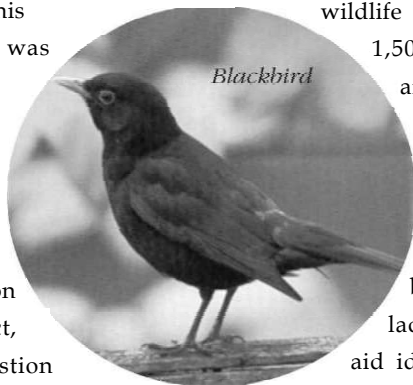
Dr Gough gave a vivid description of the BTO's London Bird Project, which sought to answer the question 'The Urban Environment: good for birds?'

Research for the Project was carried out between 2002 and 2004 and the work involved in gathering the information was impressive. London's 614 square miles were divided into sections of 80 hectares each, with over 300 survey sites. 2,640 visits were made by volunteers, resulting in over 52,000 lines of data.

With a population of 7.5 million people in an ever-expanding area, Dr Gough queried where, with this density, was there to be room for wildlife? One slide gave a strong clue. It was a



Bullfinch



Blackbird

wildlife that could be found; London has 1,500 species of flowering plants and 300 species of birds.

The volunteer observers had predetermined data to gather. For example they were asked not to record ducks and geese because they moulted and lacked the primary feathers which aid identification. Over half of the

sightings were in parks and many species of birds had their highest densities in areas with broad-leaved trees and deciduous bushes. Ninety species of birds were recorded including such rarities as waxwing, little owl, firecrest and lesser whitethroat as well as the relatively common coloured birds which sometimes lighten up a grey London landscape such as bullfinch, kingfisher, grey wagtail, green, great spotted and lesser spotted woodpeckers.

Dr Gough gave some facts and figures about our most favourite - or at least our most often seen - birds in London. The most widespread around the year were: blackbird

96%; wood pigeon 93%; carrion crow 90%; blue tit 89%; magpie 86% and robin 85%. She then concentrated on the three most talked about species even if they were not all at the top of the list.



Blue tit

The Springett Lecture (com)

Three special cases

Ring Necked Parakeet

The first was the Ring Necked Parakeet which is coming to the attention of researchers and public alike due to its incredibly rapid habituation to this country. No one knows how they first established themselves here, though

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there are various stories such as originating from escapees on a film set, flights over the English Channel and escaped pets. Their original home is in the Himalayas so our winters are not a problem to them.

In the 1968-1972 BTO Atlas Parakeets were found in only two of the 10km research sections (out of a total of 3000 10km squares). In the 1988-1991 BTO Atlas they were found in 63 of these squares, mostly in the south east of England. These sightings did not record actual numbers of birds but in the winter of 2003/04 there were up to 10,000 birds in Greater London with the numbers still rising. There is some concern as to whether Parakeets might cause our native birds difficulties due to their bold and sometimes aggressive behaviour and the fact that they might also be occupying nest holes that our native birds would otherwise occupy. Although there is so far no concrete evidence of harm being caused, it is clear that

the situation does need to be monitored as populations increase.

The Blackcap

The next bird to come under the spotlight of the BTO was the Blackcap which used to be one of the early spring migrants of the warbler family singing its melodious warbling phrases as the weather warmed up. Dr Gough questioned whether the Blackcap was now only a summer migrant or in some cases was it a winter visitor as well. What the research data shows is that the breeding population nests in scrub in parks and large gardens and there is a totally separate population which arrives from Central Europe to over-winter in our cities, sustained by the warmer temperatures of the cities and food from our birdfeeders.



The House Sparrow

The formerly humble House Sparrow has now become a rarity in London and probably the most common birding question asked in



London is 'What has happened to our Sparrows?'. The BTO data shows that over the last 8 years

there have been cyclical peaks and troughs but that the main declines are in London and the South East. Although there has not been a big decline over the country as a whole research shows a definite and steady reduction of population which is continuing. The cause is not known but some theories are gathering more facts to support them. The main fact which the BTO has discovered from the data is the steep decline in the growth of shrubbery which affects not just the House Sparrow, but many of our other formerly common species such as the Song Thrush, Great Tit, Blackcap, Robin, Dunnock, Wren, Long-tailed Tit, Goldfinch, Blackbird and Greenfinch.

Several questions from the floor asked what we can do to enhance the right habitat. Dr Gough referred us to the BTO booklet which she handed out. The booklet emphasised the need for the urban landscape to preserve its valuable shrubbery and stated:

'Over the past couple of decades many parks have been cleared of bushes, in an attempt to open up sightlines and present a more welcoming aspect without the perceived threat of concealing undergrowth. As we have seen, however, this is the most important single habitat available for wildlife, in particular birds of high conservation concern. Put simply removing the bushes will remove essential habitat for these birds and there is a real risk that the species will be lost from a site.'

The data regarding the loss of shrubbery as an invaluable habitat struck a chord with the audience as most were only too aware of the problem of shrub removal on the Heath.

Dr Gough concluded by summarising the data as follows:

Before the London Bird Project, studies of the urban bird populations were relatively neglected.

We now have a baseline on which to compare future conservation work.

We begin to know how the birds are using habitats throughout the year

We are getting a good picture of what is good/bad/indifferent for some species.



Kingfisher

For more information

The BTO booklet *Managing habitat for birds and other wildlife in urban green spaces* can be obtained from:

Dr Su Gough,
BTO, The Nunnery,
Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU,
Tel: 01842 750050
or email her at su.gough@bto.org.

The Sun House by Edwin Maxwell (Max) Fry

by Joseph Rykwert

A passion for modern architecture

A brave man commissioned Maxwell Fry to design him a house in Frognal Way, but apart from that reckless act not much seems to be known about P.H. Goodbrook except that he was a tailor by profession, specializing in sports clothes and outfits, with a shop in Hanover

Square and an Italian wife who delighted in entertaining. But he also had a passion for modern architecture. He knew exactly what he wanted and provided Fry with a long typewritten programme, and then gave him a free hand. One thing he was clear about - he wanted a house which was architecturally innovative, yet both modest and sociable.

Fry's circle

Fry was by then established and interestingly connected in London. He had arrived as a fresh graduate from Liverpool in 1924, and soon gravitated to Chelsea Bohemia for company. He made friends with several artists - Ben Nicholson and Henry Moore among them - as well as some of the rising young architects: Wells Coates - journalist, engineer, furniture designer, ideologue - was perhaps the most exhilarating of them.

It was Coates, returning to London in 1929 from a stint in Paris as the Daily Express correspondent, who brought first-hand accounts of Le Corbusier's work; he was then asked by Jack Pritchard, an entrepreneur who produced the first really well-designed plywood furniture in Britain, to design the Lawn Road flats. Pritchard, and Tom Heron (the manufacturer of the equally innovative Cresta silks and father of the painter Patrick), were indefatigable advocates of modern design and modern art generally.

Fry had in the meantime worked his way through a number of offices into a partnership, and also become involved in the welter of bodies which



advocated the reform of British attitudes to design and architecture, of which the most influential was the DIA (the Design and Industries Association) - though it was the MARS (Modern Architectural Research) Group which he helped found which claimed his greatest loyalty. In spite of all this activity, the reforms these groups advocated penetrated British attitudes very slowly, and those of local government offices not at all.

Frognal Way

Frognal Way was (and has mostly remained) a winding unpaved pedestrian lane, with one or two goodish mostly neo-Georgian houses opening off it. Those on the north and west side have gardens that look over the churchyard and up to the Parish church. Adrian Scott, brother and associate of the more famous Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (designer, when still in his teens, of the Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool and many other public buildings later) had built his Frognal house almost next door. Though quite big, it was low-slung, with brick walls of unassuming London stock, sash windows and a tiled roof. Its modest virtues have unfortunately been marred by the recent addition of an inappropriate and (to my eyes) very ill-proportioned porch.

The Sun House interior

The owner of the Sun House must have realized that he risked the displeasure of neighbours and the local authority, though he



does not seem to have provoked quite the saga which accompanied the later building of nearby - but much more prominent - 66 Frognal. Yet it was quite as radical, both in structure and in appearance, with a concrete frame structure, walls of infill concrete panels, the floors and roof cast as reinforced concrete slabs, while the balconies have tubular steel supports. The insulation of pressed cork was shuttered into the finishing screed on the walls and on the underside of the roof, while the roof itself and

The Sun House (com)

balconies were asphalted and tiled over the asphalt. The main floor with its 15 by 40 foot living-dining area was certainly intended for entertaining.

A painting by Hans Feibusch

The fireplace wall carried a mythological painting by a gently Expressionist German artist Hans Feibusch, who had recently arrived from Germany, and with whom Fry was very taken (Goodbrook did not interfere with the choice). He was to die, just short of his century, in 1998. He had a long and successful career as an illustrator and as a decorator of public buildings, especially churches. By the time he died, his highly accomplished manner was quite out of fashion, though the books he illustrated continue to attract collectors. I cannot tell the readers of Heath & Hampstead Society what happened to the painting as I was not allowed access to the interior of the Sun House.

Architectural influences

The whiteness of the house, which has lasted well, was part of its startling presence, though what we think of as 'white' architecture was not as white as all that. Gropius may have shied away from tinting his walls, but Corbusier was a full-blooded colourist: chocolate brown and pale blue, greens, yellow, reds - he had a bright palette for his buildings. However because colour reproduction was still relatively expensive, his British admirers (who had not seen the buildings 'in the flesh') only knew them from black-and-white photographs. Walter Gropius's mind-set and design approach were much closer to Fry's in any case, and in the course of the next year they became partners when Gropius was constrained to leave Germany about the time the Sun House was going up; they remained so until Gropius was

tempted away to Harvard to run its department of architecture - which he did until he retired. Their most memorable collaboration was Impington Village College in Cambridgeshire and a house for that most formidable of theatrical couples, Ben Levy and Constance Cummings, in Old Church Street, Chelsea.

An Indian connection

Nearly twenty years later Fry, with Jane Drew (whom he married in 1942), were asked in 1950/51 to design and plan Chandigarh, the new capital of Indian Punjab (Pakistan had received the old capital, Lahore, at Partition). With admirable humility, very unusual among architects, they had Corbusier invited to work with them to design its main public buildings.

It is therefore ironic that the Indian High Commission, which acquired the Sun House as a residence for the High Commissioner, has allowed the house to be compromised even more than the owners of the neighbouring Scott house or those of 66, Frognal (see Heath & Hampstead Society Newsletter, Vol.35 No 3, September 2004); by inserting what looks like a squatter shack into the first floor balcony: surely the extra 40 square feet or so could have been added to the house, a trifle more expensively perhaps, but without compromising its integrity? It is not too late to put the matter right.

On Mr Goodbrook and Fry's other earlier clients, see his letter to Lord Esher in an appendix to Architecture in A Crowded World by Lionel Brett, Viscount Esher, London 1971 p. 301. Mr Alan Powers has kindly pointed this reference out to me - though in fact, by the time he wrote to Lord Esher, Goodbrook's name had slipped his memory; see also (E.) Maxwell Fry, Autobiographical Sketches, London 1975, p. 147.

New End School celebrates its Centenary

by Brian Fitzpatrick

There is a rather stunning building which, due to its siting is not too visible from the rest of Hampstead village, but from it there is a splendid view over the rooftops of the village itself and beyond into London; to the North it overlooks the old New End hospital. The building is, of course, New End Primary School, and this year it is 100 years old.



Designed for the education of over 600 elementary school pupils in the early part of the 20th Century it certainly was 'state of the art' in its time and has remained so, both as a building and as an institution. The building has proved to be highly adaptable and as an institution it has been fortunate to have had a century of good care by all those who have been either elected, selected, placed, and/or have been prepared to care. At present it has about 450 pupils, including the nursery which is offsite, just across Streatley Place, a part of the old New End Hospital site.

Tracing the story of the School

We are seeking the story of the School from as many as possible of those (but not exclusively so) mentioned above. Not least are the pupils (whom we will call students), past and present. There are the teachers, past and present, and the ancillary workers of all kinds including those who have given their time voluntarily.

Among the latter are the School Governors, Managers as they used to be called in bygone days, who have exercised their many skills over those years for the institution and on behalf of the community. Furthermore, as Hampstead is such a wealthy place in terms of its characters, its professionals, etc., we would hope for a response from all those who, if able and willing, can give us a greater insight into the New End area and its county school. It may be there are politicians and administrators, or their descendants, able to add to the story and we would certainly welcome their views.

Plans for the Centenary include:

Music Past and Present: a concert to be held on April 1st at St. John's (Hampstead Parish Church)

A Reunion weekend is planned for mid-June.

A play, written by older children who are still students at the School, in conjunction with a local theatre company, will be performed at a local theatre.

An exhibition of children's work, and others, relating to the Centenary, is planned before the long summer break.

We hope other ideas will emerge as the year progresses and that many people will feel able to add to the centenary.

New End School (cont)

If you want to send information, or just want to keep up to date with events, please either write or email, (rather than telephone - the School is a busy working institution) to:

NESA (New End School Association) CENTENARY.
New End School
Stratley Place
London NW3 1HU

The community website is:
newend2006@yahoo.co.uk
password : CENTENARY

Please clearly mark mail Centenary.



New End School c. 1920, from 'Hampstead Past' by Christopher Wade, original photo in Camden Local Studies and Archive Centre

A new hook: Feathers and Eggshells

Members may remember reading in the Newsletter of January 2004 about Natalie



Lawrence, who, at the age of 14, won the Society's 2003 Kate Springett Art Competition.

We are delighted to report that Natalie has now produced a book entitled:

Feathers and Eggshells The Bird Journal of a Young London Girl, based on her journal of birds on Hampstead Heath. It is a beautiful book, with a wealth of Natalie's own photographs, drawings, poems and writings, strongly evoking the passion of a child's link with nature.

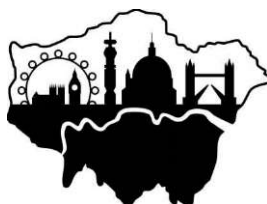
The original project on which the book was based made her runner up in the Young Birder of the Year Award in 2003, and also won the Kate Springett Award.

From the mating dance of the Great Crested Grebe to the delicacy of the Treecreeper's beak, Natalie reveals the beauty and diversity of local

Update on the London Forum

by Helen Marcus

The London Forum of Amenitiy and Civic Societies is the London-wide umbrella group for civic and amenity societies. It has over 120 member societies and provides an invaluable service to its members, of which our Society is one, by monitoring the activities of the Mayor of London, the GLA and Central Government initiatives which affect London, keeping us up to date on every aspect of London governance.



The Forum's membership is also open to individuals. For a small subscription you can be on the mailing and e-mail list to receive newsletters and information. There are also regular meetings with expert speakers on a wide range of subjects concerning the environment, open spaces, transport and so on.

Recent Initiatives

The Forum is currently monitoring the debate about future powers of London's Mayor. What

should be the future role of the Mayor and Assembly of the London Region?

Details can all be looked up on the web sites of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the GLA:
www.odpm.gov.uk
www.london.gov.uk

The Urban Forum also provides information:

www.urbanforum.org.uk

Further information on joining the London Forum

You can join the Forum either as a group - for civic and amenity societies - or as an individual subscriber. For more information contact:

The Chairman, Peter Eversden at
The London Forum
70 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6EJ Tel: 020 7250 0606
email: londonforum@wayahead.demon.co.uk
or contact Helen Marcus.

Feathers and Eggshells (cont)

bird life. The book will appeal to all who can relate to a childhood passion, especially those who love birds in a natural setting, and is a remarkable achievement for someone so young. It would make an ideal gift for children to encourage them to take more interest in the subject.

The book is published by Brambley Books, a specialist nature and arts publisher. It is available in hardback for £15.50 from www.bramblebybooks.com, and from www.amazon.co.uk.



Letter to the Editor

The threat to Heath trees from the spread of ivy

From Mr. Skip Murphy

Dear Editor,

The matter of ivy infestation on trees has recently featured in these pages. It is hoped that this Society will give the matter further thought, as the spread of ivy up Heath trees has greatly increased these past ten years. It now is climbing the splendid group of chestnut trees on the boundary of the Ladies swimming pond. That is its latest advance. No doubt by failing to check the plant the Heath managers save on maintenance costs.

The silhouettes of the winter season will offer a chance for members to see where ivy has spread into the canopy of mature trees, previously free of it. The claim that only dead or dying trees are thus affected is challenged. For were this the case, then we must fear for the future of the treescape.

As can be seen on Cohen's field boundary for example, the leaders, if unchecked, will form an interlacing corset around the trunk and this will retain in some trees leaf mould and rainwater, which will affect the tree adversely. Rough-bark such as Oak and Firs, will eventually have the bark lifted.



In his book: *For Love of Trees*, Ristead Mulcahy* offers a reasoned discussion on the subject of ivy, and suggests that there has never been a proper scientific investigation on the theme. His empiric approach avoids the polemic of the pro- or anti-ivy brigade.

Yes, ivy looks 'nice' but only when controlled! Thankfully past managers of the Heath

controlled the stuff; if they had not, many trees indeed would now be vast stands of ivy. We often take trees for granted, forgetting that they are living organisms, many of which require care and management. I suggest this Society would be neglecting its remit to protect the Heath were it to allow the present threat to trees to continue, without discovering just what effect the long-term infestation of ivy has on our trees.

**Prof. Mulcahy is a retired cardiologist in Ireland and owner of his own woodland in Co. Wicklow. For those who might wish to track it down his book is: ISBN O 9527198 2 7*

News Brief

An English Heritage Blue Plaque for John McCormack

A Blue Plaque was unveiled to the great Irish tenor, John McCormack, in August last year. It was placed at 24 Ferncroft Avenue where McCormack lived from 1908 to 1913

Bulletin Board

Date for your Diary

*Wines to celebrate
the arrival of Spring*

A Wine tasting for members

*Burgh House
Friday 17 March 2006
7.30 to 9.30 pm*

Wine tasting and canapes

Tickets £9.50

See enclosed leaflet and booking form



Burgh House
Information about
Burgh House Museum
Buttery and Bookstall
can be obtained from

Burgh House
New End Square NW3
Tel: 7431 0144

*Open Wed - Fri, & Sun, 12 - 5.00pm
(Saturdays by appointment)*

Hampstead and Highgate Festival

Another attractive and varied programme will
take place from

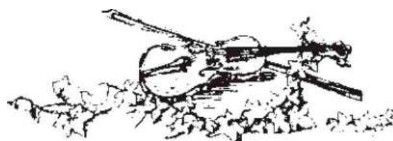
May 11 to May 20

*Music, literature, childrens events, film,
jazz and much more*

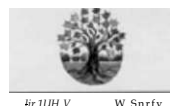
Brochures giving details of the programme
will be sent to Members of the Society
in the spring

**Could you help with
fundraising or publicity?**

If you would be interested to get involved
with the work of the Festival please contact
Helen Marcus on 020 7722 1414



The Hampstead Card List of Traders



*is enclosed separately with this
Newsletter*

Heath Walks

Walks are arranged on the first Sunday of every month EXCEPT January. They are arranged by Michael Welbank who can be contacted on 020 7431 6789 or by e-mail at mwelbank@aol.com.

Starting point: Burgh House, New End Square, Hampstead. There are two exceptions:

7 May 2006 10.30am which will start from the entrance gates to Golders Hill Park, North End Road

4 March 2007 2.30pm which will start from the entrance gate to the Kitchen Garden, Kenwood House, Hampstead Lane

Start time: 2.30 p.m. unless shown as 10.30 am in list below.

Donations, suggested as ± 2 per adult, will be collected on each walk and will be used in furtherance of the objects of the Society.

The Society does not organise any walks specially for children, but they are always welcome provided that they are accompanied by an adult who takes full responsibility for them, and that they can walk reasonable distances. Walks last approximately two hours and do not always follow paths, so stout footwear is advised.

2006

5 February 10.30am Ancient Trees of the Heath led by Jeremy Wright

5 March 2.30pm Hidden Heath led by Michael Hammerson (starting from the Kitchen Garden Kenwood House)

2 April 10.30am Birds of the Heath in Spring led by Alix Mullineaux

7 May 2.30pm Hill Gardens, led by Peter Tausig (starting from the entrance to Golders Hill Park)

4 June 2.30pm A Painter's Perspective, led by Janis Hardiman

2 July 2.30pm A Spider Foray, led by Edward Milner

6 August 2.30pm Ecology of the Heath, led by Corporation of London Ecologist

3 September 2.30pm Plants of the Heath, led by Sir Charles Willink

1 October 10.30am Birds of the Heath in Autumn, led by Alix Mullineaux

5 November 10.30am A Fungus Foray, led by Jo Weightman

3 December 10.30am Active Conservation, led by Rupert Sheldrake



January: No Walk

4 February 10.30am Artefacts of East Heath, led by Michael Welbank

4 March 2.30pm Hidden Heath, led by Michael Hammerson (starting from the Kitchen Garden, Kenwood House)