



Est. 1897

The Heath & Hampstead Society

NEWSLETTER

February 2016

Vol 47 No 1

Athlone House – Saved!

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Dates for your Diary

Annual General Meeting
7:00pm Thursday 2 June 2016

Springett Lecture by Thomas Pakenham
7:30pm Thursday 6 October 2016

Cover photograph courtesy: John Weston

by Marc Hutchinson

May I wish all our members a very happy New Year, one which will see, by late summer, the end of the dams project works.

Membership and Gift Aid

I am very pleased to report that annual memberships are being renewed more promptly than in past years, and we have seen no evidence of resistance to the increased membership subscription fees. Moreover, many renewing members have, for the first time, signed Gift Aid declarations which will enable us materially to increase our annual Gift Aid recovery above our historic average of around £3,000. The declaration wording suggested by HMRC was revised last year and some of our members have signed the old form of declaration. Those declarations will be valid but I should notify those declarants, in accordance with the HMRC recommendation, that, if they in fact pay less income or capital gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed by the Society on all their donations in the relevant tax year, it is their legal responsibility to pay the difference.

In order to save the Society many hundreds of pounds in postage charges, we will be sending out the confirmations of renewed annual membership and the 2016/17 Hampstead Cards with the May Newsletter. Any renewing member who wants their confirmation before then should e-mail the Society at info@HeathandHampstead.org.uk.

Cycle Superhighway – Route 11

Transport for London and the Mayor are proposing to turn Avenue Road (the road that heads due south to Regent's Park from Swiss Cottage) into a cycleway with bus lanes. They have opened a consultation which closes on 20 March 2016:

Chair's Notes (cont)

<https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/cycling/a28a8a0>
5. The scheme, which consequentially affects vehicle access to many roads near Avenue Road, will lead to large traffic displacement, and the consultation calmly notes that there will be an increase in vehicle traffic in Hampstead (including South End Green) and Belsize Park, and a “particular...increase” on Hampstead High Street, Arkwright Road, Agincourt Road and Fleet Road. Anyone familiar with those roads will be aware of their regular traffic gridlock, not only during the rush hour and school run. The Society opposes any scheme designed – as this one overtly is – to increase traffic and pollution in Hampstead, and I hope members will individually make their objections known in the consultation.

Newsletter editor

We are fortunate that Martin Webster, one of the Society's life members and a long-time resident of Hampstead Garden Suburb, has offered to become our Newsletter editor, and the trustees have appointed him to that office with effect from May 2016. Martin's career has been largely in corporate secretarial and administration, so the management of accurately written documents, deadlines and coordination is nothing new to him. He will be supported in the short term by the members of the current Editorial Committee. The editorship entails significant, if periodic, work and responsibility, and we are very grateful to Martin for taking it on.

Heath House

Over 40 individual objections were in the end made to this dreadful planning application, and I want to thank those members who took the time and trouble to object in response to the Society's e-mail. We will continue to press the

Society's objection on the relevant planning officers at Camden.

One of the objectionable items in the application is the oversized basement. The “basement problem” in Hampstead is now to be reviewed by the Society in the light of the accumulated evidence of the resulting damage done to the public realm and adjoining owners' houses, and those of you who have been affected by the problem are invited to assist us by responding to a survey which will be described in the May 2016 Newsletter.

Open Spaces Bill

Your trustees foresaw that the Society would be publicly attacked by a few of its members and others for supporting this Bill, and therefore suggested that I write a piece for the May 2016 Newsletter explaining the purpose and effect of the Bill, which has now had its unopposed Second Reading in the House of Commons. It has been petitioned against by the Kennel Club and a private landowner in Slough.

The passage of the Bill through Parliament coincides – and it is coincidence – with a “service review” of the day-to-day management and other services provided by the Heath Superintendent and his staff. The need for the City to find some savings, over a period of three years, in the operation of all their open spaces is well known, and is mainly the result of the City having unexpectedly to contribute £200 million of their own funds to the Crossrail project: “unexpectedly” because, when the project began, it was believed that City businesses would themselves collectively make the major part of this contribution. This unfortunately has not happened.

The Society, through its representation on the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and

the Hampstead Heath Management Committee, will be reviewing and commenting on the programme of cost savings, but it is not (and cannot be) part of the Society's charitable remit, for example, to campaign to protect staff jobs or conditions of employment. These are operational matters for the Superintendent. The Society would however expect to intervene if the programme of savings was such as to jeopardise the level and quality of management necessary to maintain the Heath as the wonderful open space it currently is. There is no present reason to think that we face such a situation.

Members may have recently read in the local press of proposals from the Green Party and others to transfer the Heath to the Mayor of London or the Greater London Authority. The Society does not support these proposals because there is no body other than the City who will allocate annual resources of more than £6 million to running and protecting the Heath, as the City currently do. Hampstead residents who remember the Heath before the City took it over in 1989 also remember how less well-managed it was by the City's predecessor, the Greater London Council.

Sub-Committees

We welcome local architect Jeremy Walker on to the Planning Sub-Committee. We also say farewell to Simon Briscoe who leaves the Heath Sub-Committee, and thank him for all his work on and for it, in particular helping in the establishment of the DamNonsense campaign.

Parties

The 2015 Christmas party at Burgh House was a great success and our thanks go to the staff there for hosting us. We return to Burgh House

on 9 March 2016 for our New Members party. New members should by now have received their invitations and should contact info@HeathandHampstead.org.uk if they have not.

Heath Calendar

Heath lovers may be aware that each year the City produce a large and beautiful calendar (24x34cm) with Heath photographs. On page 9 of this Newsletter there are details of how to obtain it.

Hampstead Heath, London's Countryside

The guest speaker at our Annual General Meeting on 2 June 2016 will be the photographer Matthew Maran, who has just completed a four-year project, with the support of the City, to publish a book of photographs of Hampstead Heath with the above title. Publication is planned for June and supporters of the project can in effect purchase advance copies by "kickstarting" the funding of the publication costs: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2061014066/hampstead-heath-londons-countryside> If, for whatever reason, the publication does not occur, your money will of course be refunded. □



Don't forget to use the
Hampstead Card

The current list of businesses taking part in the scheme can be found on the Society's website, and can be downloaded from there: www.heathandhampstead.org.uk

Benefits offered are granted at the traders' discretion. The Society is not responsible for changes in terms or availability of any discounts or offers.

Annual General Meeting: 2 June 2016

Elections to General Committee

Officers

The existing Officers of the Society who are elected annually (President, Vice-President, Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) propose to stand for re-election.

General Committee

If these Officers are elected, there will be six vacancies on the General Committee.

Jessica Learmond-Criqui (founder and publisher of “I Love Hampstead”, local lawyer and campaigner, and member of the Town Sub-Committee) will have completed her first term of three years as an elected member of the General Committee and will stand for re-election for a second term of three years.

Douglas Maxwell (chartered architect, former Vice-Chair of the Society (Planning Sub-Committee) and current member of the Athlone House Working Group) will have completed his first term of three years as an elected member of the General Committee and will stand for re-election for a second term of three years.

Peter Tausig (founder member of Heath Hands and long-serving member of the Heath Sub-Committee) will have completed his first term of three years as an elected member of the General Committee and will stand for re-election for a second term of three years.

The maximum number of members of the General Committee is 20. If the above persons are elected, there will be three vacancies on the General Committee. There is no constitutional requirement that these vacancies be filled. Any future resignations or changes to the above election proposals will be promptly announced on the Society’s website.

Robert Linger (Membership Promotion Secretary and member of the Town Sub-Committee) will complete his second term of three years as an elected member of the General Committee and will not be eligible for re-election this year. If there is a vacancy on the General Committee, it is the intention of the trustees to appoint Robert for one year as a member of the General Committee under Rule 21(2)(b).

Nominations for elections to the General Committee must be received by the Society in writing before 15 April 2015 in accordance with Rule 21(4). The Society’s constitution can be viewed on the Society’s website. □



Heath Report

by John Beyer and Lynda Cook

The Water House

The owners of the Water House on Millfield Lane opposite the Ladies' Pond have continued with plans for a disruptive building project which will last for at least three years.

The proposals aim to prevent public access to Millfield Lane during the development, allegedly on health and safety grounds, since the heavy lorry traffic cannot travel on a footpath shared by pedestrians. The developers are seeking to override the concerns of their neighbours along Millfield Lane, and also the concerns of the City of London who own the western side of the Lane. If permission to close the Lane to pedestrians is granted, an additional temporary pedestrian path would have to be built parallel to the Lane on Heath land. As many are aware, directly adjacent to the Lane on the western side, the land is enclosed by fencing and is a protected environment for trees, wildlife and birdlife; thus a new path would have an additional detrimental effect.

A further problem exists in that building a new basement will necessitate digging a drain to dispose of ground water, and this drain will discharge directly into the Bird Sanctuary Pond resulting in harmful effluents and contaminants in this protected and fragile environment. The City are also contesting the drain.

The City, and the other landowners along Millfield Lane, are legally obliged to allow "reasonable access" to the private properties (such as The Water House) who live alongside the Lane. However, it is clear that closing Millfield Lane for three years to facilitate a private development of such scale (a high proportion of the construction traffic is linked to the large basement proposed) is unreasonable,

and probably in contravention of the 1871 Hampstead Heath Act in so far as part of the Lane is part of the Heath.

There are additional concerns about the major impact from lorries on the roots of the mature and significant trees along the Lane. It is estimated that there would be over 2,000 Heavy Goods Vehicle movements over the term of the development work, more than those made for the entire duration of the Ponds Project on the Heath! Heath trees will have to be cut back or pruned to avoid damage by the heavy traffic; this is not considered "reasonable".

The developers have only carried out one compaction study in the area immediately outside their development. This is insufficient, and studies must be carried out at further locations and at regular intervals.

The Friends of Millfield Lane (which includes representatives from the Heath & Hampstead Society and the Highgate Society) have been consistently campaigning against this harmful development, The Camden Development Control Committee meeting is due to be held on 25 February 2016. Please visit their website: <http://www.friendsofmillfieldlane.com> where you will be invited to sign the 38 Degrees petition.

The welcome news is, at the time of writing, that the planning officers have just recommended to Councillors to reject the application.

Ponds Project

Construction work on the ponds has now reached maximum intensity, with large numbers of vehicle movements and extensive disruption across a wide area. A temporary path has been built across Pryors' Field in order for lorries to

Heath Report (cont)

transport clay from the field in order to build the Catch Pit dry dam; pipelines continue to carry silt from the desilting pumps in the Mixed Bathing Pond to a site on the Sports Field, which is currently a major construction site. The City has accelerated work and at some sites work continues through Saturday mornings until 2pm (this was permitted in the planning permission). BAM Nuttall are doing everything to ensure that all engineering work will be completed by the end of October 2016, ready for planting in the autumn and winter. Representatives of the Heath Sub-Committee have requested that special care be taken to avoid harming the mole population inhabiting Pryors' Field, and that vibration methods should be used to encourage the mole population to relocate before the actual work commences.

The twelve-week delay at the Model Boating Pond caused by problems with leakage in the steel pilings has meant that silt extraction and drying extended into the winter months, when the wet and cold weather delays the drying time. To compensate for the delay, BAM Nuttall engineers have had to take over two additional



Model Boating Pond

sections of open space above the current compound to the west of the Model Boating Pond in order to dry silt and store topsoil.

Desilting work has finished at the Stock Pond and Men's Bathing Pond, and continues elsewhere. The suction technique used has less environmental impact and causes less disruption than draining the ponds, as is clear where the impact of draining Model Boating Pond is extensive. The effect on wildlife has still not been ascertained. Problems arising and changes in the sequencing of activity continued to be discussed in the Community Working Group and Ponds Project Stakeholder Group, where the Society is represented by Marc Hutchinson and Lynda Cook.

Hedgehog Survey

The Heath Ecology Team undertook a pilot survey of the hedgehog population in Golders Hill Park in September 2015. The aim was to establish that there were hedgehogs in the Park and to pave the way for a wider survey which would map their whereabouts across the Heath. The survey would help identify habitats which



Stock Pond

are favourable to hedgehogs, in particular for their foraging. This pilot follows a survey carried out in Regent's Park in 2014 and 2015.

The numbers of the West-European hedgehog (*Erinaceus Europaeus*) in the UK sadly show a decrease. Trends from two long-running surveys show that the decline is in both rural and urban areas. It is believed that a quarter of the British hedgehog population has been lost between 2001 and 2011. A recent update "Living with Mammals", by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) showed the downward trend continuing.

At the same time, the hedgehog is the most popular wild animal in Britain, according to polls by the Environment Agency (2007) and BBC Wildlife Magazine (31 July 2013). Mrs Tiggywinkle lives in our hearts.

The trial took place over the night of 9/10 September. The trial provided the opportunity to try out different monitoring techniques. Three methods were used: mammal footprint tunnels, spotlighting, and wildlife cameras (webcams). Footprint tunnels (initially developed by Nottingham Trent University) consist of simple plastic triangular tunnels with an internal tracking plate of ink strips and A4 paper to record footprints. The hedgehogs are attracted by bait placed in the centre and enters the tunnel leaving a set of footprints which can then be identified.

In the eight tunnels set up on the first night, five tunnels had hedgehog footprints in them the following morning. On the same night, staff observed for two hours (9–11pm) using torches, and made three sightings involving at least two individuals. Cameras at the tunnels recorded two individuals.

Observation was resumed for two hours (8pm–10pm) on 29 September. Hedgehogs were, in this case, weighed, identified by sex and temporarily tagged with Blu Tack to ensure there were no repeat counts. Nine individuals were identified in a wide area across the Park.

Hedgehogs travel over an impressive range of up to three kilometres during one night. Most of the hedgehogs observed were seen foraging on short, regularly-mown grass, with one seen in the slightly longer grass of the deer enclosure.

Hedgehogs eat beetles, caterpillars and earthworms.

Of the nine individuals monitored, the lightest was a late-born young hedgehog (440 gms), the heaviest a female weighing one kilogram. The remaining seven were all above the weight which would enable successful hibernation (735 gms). Hedgehogs gain peak weight in the autumn prior to hibernation. For further information on this project, contact Adrian.Brooker@CityofLondon.org.gov.



Mrs Tiggy Winkle

Heath Report (cont)



Hedgehog tunnel

Snakes in the Grass

The snake survey follows on from a census of grass snakes completed in 2014. This was to check whether populations had been maintained since the London, Essex and Hertfordshire Amphibian and Reptile Trust (LEHART) carried out a survey in 2009. The report recommended methods of improving habitat, such as creating new ponds and the establishment of vegetation piles. The survey appears to confirm that numbers have increased.

The survey recorded sightings of the grass snake (*Natrix Helvetica*) around the Kenwood Nursery and Orchard area, as well as in the vicinity of Athlone House and the stretch down towards the Bird Sanctuary, which are its core areas of habitation. None was seen at the Viaduct or South Meadow, although there were sightings in both areas in the 2009 study. In the first year of monitoring in 2011, there were 150

snake sightings. Monitoring, mostly by volunteers who undergo training, has continued in subsequent years.

The main factor limiting the spread of grass snakes across the Heath is pressure of the public, so their main habitats remain within the fenced areas of the Heath.

Sub-Committee

Simon Briscoe has left the Sub-Committee, which thanks him for his contribution.

The Sub-Committee has launched a Twitter account to send out news about the Heath and advertise activities such as the Society's Walks (see the back cover of this Newsletter). The Twitter "handle" is @HandHSocHeath □



Snakes alive



Spring Book Sale

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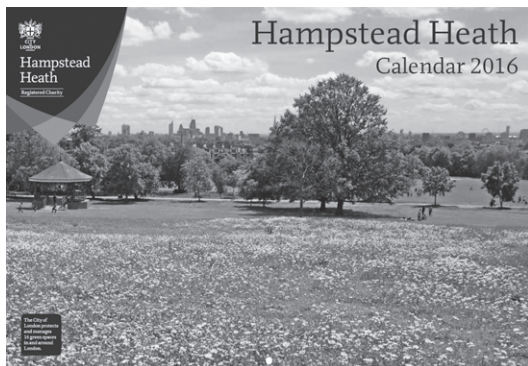
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Hampstead Heath Calendar

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Forthcoming Concerts

***St John-at-Hampstead
Parish Church***

Church Row NW3

13 March 2016

***St. John Passion by Bach – sung by
the choir, with Ensemble Passio,
conducted by James Sherlock***

10 June 2016

***Sidwell Recital – given by
Rachel Ambrose Evans and Kathy
Nicholson. Programme includes two
Stabat Maters for soprano and alto
with accompaniment for strings
and basso continuo, one by Scarlatti
and one by Pergolesi***

Planning Report

by David Castle

The planning process

At a recent meeting Camden Planners were apparently shocked at the amount of hostility they faced from angry residents. They should not have been surprised – time and again Camden Planners appear to act as enablers for whatever a developer demands, ignoring the valid concerns of those living nearby or otherwise affected by the proposed development.

Is it time for all local societies and interest groups in Camden to join together in order to campaign for an increase in the involvement of residents with the planning process – and to swing the balance of power from the developer to those most affected?

The planning system is already stacked against us and in favour of the developer who, because of the massive potential profits, can afford to pay the enormous costs of mounting appeal after appeal, finally wearing down the opposition and winning a lucrative approval.

It would be good to see planners deliberately redressing the balance. It is not difficult to make a list of changes in Camden's administrative procedures and the way that they could openly involve themselves with public concern – many have already been mentioned in previous issues of this Newsletter.



"Smash the next lamp on the left, flatten the pavement by the pub, nudge the sweet shop, scrape the Market Cross, then just follow the skid marks to London..."

Acknowledgement to Punch, 1979

Most of the changes are not to do with policies, but with administrative procedures, many of which could be more open and allow more involvement with residents, as well as our local democratically-elected representatives, the Councillors.

For instance, when a developer applies for a "Pre-Application" discussion with the

Planning Department (with payment of a large fee), Camden refuse to inform those that will be affected by the proposed development. Even Councillors are not informed. The developer gets preferential treatment and neighbours are put at a disadvantage. When Construction Management Plans, and the Conditions being imposed by the Planning Permission or by the Section 106 Agreement, are being considered, those neighbours or groups who have objected should automatically be involved in agreeing the terms – and any changes subsequently agreed by Camden's traffic management section etc.

Where considerable objections to, and suggestions for improving, a proposed development have been made, I can see no reason why those objectors should not be answered, and given reasons why they are not valid, or if they are valid, informed about (and even included in) negotiations being made to improve the development.

Of course, any administration (especially if underfunded) will find it easier and more efficient to involve as few people as possible in the decision-making process. No wonder so many poor decisions favouring gross developments are made.

Heath House, North End Way – conversion into six flats

Thank you to all who sent an objection to Camden regarding the loss of the interior of this important listed building (Grade II*), and the consequent transformation of the entrance court behind the War Memorial into a carpark. Camden now know how much we are concerned – but do they care?

There are no immediate neighbours, so it is necessary for the Society to lead the campaign to stop this threatened profit-led proposal. Please contact us if you wish to help.

Unfortunately the developers have had the advantage of discussing their overdevelopment with Camden in a “Pre-Application” (see above), and development control officers, judging by their responses at a recent meeting, seemed oblivious or indifferent to our comments and already inclined to consider the proposal as satisfactory and worth considering without amendment.

Grove Lodge, Admirals Walk – another unfortunate approval

In January 2016, despite a very positive campaign by neighbours and a strong objection by the Society, an enormous basement and unfortunate alterations to the existing very important and charming listed building were approved by Camden. Further months, if not years, of disruption in the narrow streets of this

important part of Hampstead will be caused by this approval. However, such disruption is unfortunately not a reason in itself for Camden to be able to refuse an application.

Basements

No doubt everyone has read about the “Iceberg House” – so called because there will, when finished, be much more house below ground than above! The large house, in Kensington Palace Gardens, will have a five-storey basement, including a tennis court and an antique car museum. Such a basement, it has been legally assumed, does not require planning permission!!

The law in this case is, as Dickens said, “an ass”. We are told that, because basements are not mentioned in the regulations defining “permitted development”, then basements must be deemed to be permitted development. Very strange. And what is even stranger is that the Government Minister concerned is empowered, without the approval of Parliament, to amend the regulations in order to clarify the situation – one sentence would be sufficient – but has not done so during the past 10 years.

Finally

The good news is that Camden, at long last, have decided to issue an Article 4 Direction making it necessary for all proposed basements to need planning permission.

Barnet issued a similar Article 4 Direction some time ago for the Hampstead Garden Suburb, and also at that time the Society suggested to Camden, without success, that this was the best way of dealing with the future surge of basement construction. □

Town Report

by Frank Harding

Hampstead Police Station/Abacus Belsize Primary School

The Society has submitted its concerns and raised certain issues in its submission to the consultation process conducted by those endeavouring to establish the Abacus Belsize Primary School on the former police station site. That consultation relates to a proposal to increase the catchment area from which pupils will be selected; our concerns in this regard relate primarily to traffic and parking issues. We appreciate that there will also be more local issues but these are being addressed by the relevant residents' associations.

We understand that the establishment of this new school results from a perceived need for more primary school places to be available for pupils living in the area of Belsize Park. Yet the location of the school is to be in Hampstead. Whilst the extension of the catchment area now proposed would include students from a small section to the east of Rosslyn Hill, by far the majority of the pupils would be resident in Belsize Park, Swiss Cottage and Chalk Farm, and most of them will have to travel right across the catchment area to reach the school. It may reasonably be surmised that a significant proportion of them, probably a majority, will have to be brought to and collected from school by their parents in cars.

We believe that, wherever possible, in heavily-built-up areas such as that under consideration, children should travel between home and school on foot, by bicycle or on scooters. This is better for their health and reduces traffic congestion, short term parking issues and pollution.

We therefore questioned the concept of positioning the school so far from the centre of the existing catchment area. We assume that the search for premises close to the centre of Belsize Park has so far proved unsuccessful, but surely that has to be the right solution for the residents and children of that area. Alternatively, we have asked whether consideration had been given to reducing the catchment area to the south west of the school, whilst increasing it, as is now proposed, to the east – assuming that this would still meet the perceived need. This would enable most of those within the redrawn catchment area to walk, cycle or scooter to school, and significantly reduce the use of parental cars.

We expressed our particular concern to understand how it is proposed that the delivery and collection of pupils will be managed. Haverstock Hill, Rosslyn Hill and Hampstead High Street are already heavily congested in the morning rush hour, as is Downshire Hill, and the existing school run traffic in the afternoon is also very heavy. There is practically no parking space available close to the proposed school, none can be created, and double parking will halt traffic flows entirely. Dropping off and collection will be extremely difficult, if not impossible. Pollution will be even worsened. We asked how the school proposes to overcome this problem and how will it enforce whatever procedures it introduces.

There may well be planning objections relating to the use and conversion of the building; these will be considered in due course, by the Society's Planning Sub-Committee, once the planning application is submitted to Camden.

Oriel Place

We are hopeful that the small garden in Oriel Place, which is at present closed to the public behind railings, might become available as a



public space. This could make a really pleasant place to sit, meet others, have a coffee etc, right in the heart of the Village. We are optimistic that Camden will duly approve this change.

Open Air Art Exhibition

Readers will recall that the Hampstead Open Air Art Exhibition on Heath Street was held on three summer Sundays last year in what was poor weather. Whilst we were all very disappointed with the turnout of art enthusiasts and passers-by, we are sufficiently encouraged to hold another Open Air Exhibition this coming summer, albeit at a different location in Hampstead. We are therefore currently planning, with the Hampstead School of Art, to hold the exhibition closer to the centre of the Village and probably in September rather than in July. We believe and hope that these changes and other improvements will lead to greater support for the event from the residents of Hampstead and those visiting it.

In the coming weeks, as the arrangements are finalised, we shall be providing more details and looking to encourage artists to come forward and submit their work for exhibiting. Those details will be advertised, displayed on the Society's website and generally circulated as widely as we can. □

Spring at Burgh House

Wilde at Heart

Thursday 31 March, 7pm

Acclaimed actor Patrick Marley presents a scintillating one-man show revealing the triumphs and tragedies that characterised the flawed genius of Oscar Wilde. Tickets are £12 (£10 FoBH), including a glass of wine.

Lifelines with Lady Antonia Fraser

Thursday 26 May, 7:30pm

Lady Antonia Fraser, renowned writer of novels, detective fiction, history, anthologies and biographies, joins Piers Plowright for a conversation about her life and career. Tickets are £12 (£10 FoBH), including a glass of wine. Supper in the Buttery Cafe available afterwards for £20.

Burgh House & Hampstead Museum

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The Athlone House Saga 1998–2016

Michael Hammerson, a long-serving member of the Heath Sub-Committee and the Athlone House Working Group, and a Vice-President of the Highgate Society, reflects on the extraordinary story of the successful campaign to save Athlone House.

It seems almost incredible, for the battered veterans who went through the arduous campaign, that it is 18 years – more than four times the length of the First World War, and five years longer than the period covered by *War And Peace* – since the Athlone House Working Group (AHWG) – a coming-together of the Highgate Society, the Heath & Hampstead Society, and the Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee, chaired at the time by Jeremy Wright – were first called to the studio of Sir David Chipperfield, the project architect for Athlone House, situated in the Highgate Conservation Area and on Metropolitan Open Land overlooking Hampstead Heath, to discuss his clients' proposals to build three blocks of flats and restore the house. The talks took several years, during which we persisted in seeking considerable changes to the flats to improve their design and ensure that they were not visible from the Heath; but they were marked throughout by a friendly, constructive and co-operative atmosphere, participated in by the City of London under their then Heath Superintendent, Simon Lee. The outcome was an acceptable development scheme for the flats, and – critically, as far as AHWG was concerned – a commitment to restore Athlone House and its gardens, under a legal "Section 106 Agreement". On that basis, AHWG were able to advise Camden that they supported the proposals, and permission was granted in 2005. The affair even ended with a letter from the Chief Executive of the then developer, Dwyer Ltd, thanking us for our input, saying some very nice things about how we had conducted ourselves, and expressing the conviction that it was a better scheme as a result.



Athlone House today

Equally importantly, we had the idea, during the negotiations, of taking what was, after all, a unique opportunity, to suggest to Dwyer that they could cement their image as responsible developers by giving a part of the extensive gardens to Hampstead Heath. They were more than willing, the City of London were enthusiastic and, as a result, a hectare of the Athlone House land, one of the largest additions to the Heath in a century, was donated to it, together with a substantial capital sum to allow it to be incorporated into the Heath – an achievement of which we are immensely proud. Most of it is now accessible to the public; a part is kept as a nature reserve, where grass snakes are flourishing, and a small part is currently occupied by Harry Hallowes, the local "hermit".

That is surely how every development should go; I have always been convinced that, if the local community is given a genuine role in the planning process, the result will not be less development, but more, and better, development. Now we could dust ourselves

down with the satisfaction of a job well done, and move on to planning battles anew, and the Good Fairy, having done her bit, thought it was safe to move on. Alas, “just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water...”.

A little background, before going on to the outbreak of the war, as it were. Athlone House is a very fine and ornate Victorian-Flemish mansion, built in 1870 by the well-known Manchester architect Edward Salomon – most of whose surviving buildings are Listed – for industrialist Edward Brooke as “Caen Wood Towers”. It went through a succession of wealthy industrialist owners, but was taken over by the War Office during the Second World War – though it was not revealed until about 2005 that it had been the Headquarters of RAF Intelligence Training, adding great historical interest to its architectural value. After the war, the last owners, the Waley-Cohen family, donated the mansion to the National Health Service, and part of the land was given to Hampstead Heath: if you had ever wondered why the two areas around it were called Cohen’s Field, that’s why.



Caen Wood Towers

Despite much alteration and neglect under the NHS, it remained one of the finest mansions of the style in London, and a vital part of Highgate’s architectural history, being described in Camden’s Conservation Area Appraisal as making a positive contribution. Its mellowed red brick, which helps it blend into the green rural character of the area, is a critical element in views from Hampstead Heath. Despite our sustained efforts, though, English Heritage declined to List it, even though their Head of Listing astonishingly put on record that “One rejects a building of such character for Listing with a heavy heart”.

When, in 1997, the NHS closed the hospital and sold Athlone House and its land, AHWG was set up when it was realised that there was now a threat of demolition, and pressed Camden to produce what was a strong planning brief to protect the house. That aim seemed to be achieved when, in 2005, Camden granted permission to Dwyer Ltd. to build three luxury blocks of flats on the eastern half of the site, subject to the donation of the land to the Heath, an agreement to restore the house within 42 months of starting the flats, and in the meantime to maintain it from deterioration.

Construction of the flats began in 2008, they were sold – presumably at a significant profit – but Dwyer then sold the remaining western half of the site, containing Athlone House; and the next eleven years became an arduous, life-disrupting process for us all, as it developed into a titanic clash between the local David and an anonymous offshore Goliath with bottomless pockets.

It soon became evident that the new purchasers, who clung to a shameful anonymity, had bought it with the intention of redeveloping

The Athlone House Saga 1998–2016 (cont)



Archery Tower folly (still extant)

it. They dispensed with the services of David Chipperfield, announced that they had no intention of restoring the house, and brought in a new architect, Robert Adam, the well-known aficionado of the classical style, to design a vast and ostentatious new luxury mansion specifically aimed at the super-rich, which would presumably sell for many times the price of a restored house. Armed with a battery of expensive consultants, including, we concluded, the Bad Fairy, in July 2009 they showed AHWG their design – which horrified us: enormously larger than Athlone House, and subsequently described as a “Stalinist Wedding Cake” and an “Arabian Nightmare” – and also held an exhibition at Holly Lodge, which was so badly attended, and so excoriated by the few who did attend, that their efforts to make the comments look like support would have made good material for Morecambe and Wise. The aim was clearly to proclaim to users of Hampstead Heath, from which it would be appallingly visible, that here lived someone with unlimited money, no taste, and a contempt for mere mortals such as us.

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) status means that any development must be to a scale and sympathy which respects the Heath and does not adversely affect views from it. Most important, the replacement of an existing dwelling on MOL must not be ‘materially larger’ unless there are very special circumstances; but the new building would be over twice the floor area of Athlone House. In a signal victory by the Heath & Hampstead Society in 2008, the Court of Appeal ruled conclusively that “materially larger” meant just that – *not appreciably larger*. There is no doubt that the developers knew this, and set out to defy it, the eventual 2009 application proposing a building *two and a half times* the area of the existing house. It was refused by Camden, who received an astonishing 550 letters of objection. The developers appealed; this brought an amazing 650 objections to the Inspector, plus the condemnation of the scheme by nationally known figures in the architectural world, English Heritage, the Victorian Society and Save Britain’s Heritage, and a powerful article in the Evening Standard by Sir Simon Jenkins, titled “Greed, egos and yet another blot on the horizon”. To our relief, the appeal was dismissed, though the reasoned decision was a poor one, which seemed not to understand the issues at stake, refusing it only on MOL grounds – which even the Inspector could not ignore – and left the door wide open for another application.

The developers tried again, arguing in a masterpiece of verbal prestidigitation that that their new scheme was “significantly” smaller, even though our calculations (by Gordon Maclean) showed that the proposed area was still 68% greater. It is impossible to quantify the vast amount of work, and personal and even professional time, which AHWG and its

supporters had to devote to this battle; the Highgate Society alone has two cupboards full of papers; my computer folder is some 11 GB; and my Athlone House e-mail folder has over 6,000 e-mails in it.

AHWG were now pressing Camden, continually and frantically, to enforce the Section 106 Agreement to restore the house; but they were warned by their legal advisers – incorrectly as we tried to tell them and as it eventually transpired – that they could not do so while there was either an application or an appeal in progress, even though the developers had even made it clear, in the local press, that they had no intention of restoring the house, arguing that the house was in too bad a condition to be worth restoring except at great cost – £20 million, they maintained (though their new “palace” would cost vastly more – possibly £80 million). What particularly angered us was that one of their consultants was an architectural historian who argued for them that Athlone House was worthless; but, we pointed out, nothing had changed since they freely and willingly agreed to restore it, in return for a lucrative planning

consent, and since they agreed to maintain it in the interim, it must be in the same condition as when they agreed to restore it. As it transpired, Camden had been issuing regular condition reports showing that the house was, indeed, being allowed to deteriorate, and – perhaps unwisely – the developers allowed AHWG access to the house several times, during which we took hundreds of photographs of the interior and exterior. Nevertheless, the basic structure was indeed sound.

The developers even tried to argue that, since the house was under different ownership, the Section 106 Agreement was no longer applicable; completely untenable, as the Agreement legally passes with the land. They also sought to argue that the house could not be adapted for “modern living” conditions – probably true, if you were, as was by now rumoured, the fourth richest person in the world. Our argument was that there are many examples of historic houses in far worse condition which have been restored. The house was a critical and unique element of the Highgate Conservation Area, which would be compromised by a vulgar fake. Views from Hampstead Heath would also be ruined, and in this AHWG was very strongly supported by the City of London, who made their own strong objections and willingly allowed us to campaign on the Heath to get Heath users to sign our online petition urging Camden to refuse; gratifyingly, 5,200 people signed, not just from our area, but from all over London and, indeed, from people all over the world who knew the Heath and the house.

The revised scheme – hardly revised at all – went to Camden in 2009 and was refused. However, under the shadow of their legal



Medallion on gable

The Athlone House Saga 1998–2016 (cont)

advice, Camden only refused it on a single ground, that of being over-development on MOL, despite sterling efforts by Councillor Sue Vincent to urge them to refuse on grounds that the Section 106 Agreement must be observed. The outcome of the inevitable further appeal, it seemed, hung in the balance.

We estimate that the developers spent in the order of £1 million on fighting the appeal with a Star Wars-style galaxy of expert witnesses and advisers. How on earth could we match that? Fortunately, as in the 2010 appeal, some experts were willing to fight to see justice done, and to waive any fees. At the helm of the Good Ship AHWG was Heath & Hampstead Society member David Altaras, a respected planning barrister who did a vast amount of work reading briefs, attending meetings, writing submissions, and offering advice and guidance whenever it was wanted; our only costs were for a day of his time at the appeal inquiry, which his clerk insisted upon as he was taking time off from his chambers! The generous response of members of both Societies to our appeal for contributions towards our costs actually covered them.

Expert witnesses did us proud, too. Prominent was Professor Joseph Rykwert, respected architectural historian and winner of the 2014 RIBA Gold Medal, who relished crossing swords with Robert Adam over design in both appeals. Deborah Wolton once again gave compelling evidence about the value of the house to the Heath and its users. Susan Rose and Gail Waldman, armed with invaluable information from Salomons expert Richard Byrom, gave compelling evidence of the importance of the house, both in itself and as a heritage asset for

Highgate; and Gail Waldman made a vigorous attack on the developers' claim that the house could not be refurbished, standing her ground in the face of aggressive cross-examination by the developers' "experts", and effectively arguing the validity of Gordon Maclean's figures on overdevelopment.

Where, though, were we to find someone who could argue for us that the house was – as we now believed, having been able to inspect it ourselves – actually in good condition and perfectly restorable? The dilemma solved itself when we were contacted, out of the blue, by Jon Avent, a director of a Bath firm of structural engineers specialising in the repair of major historic buildings, who, remarkably, read about our battle and was so angered by what he read that he contacted us, offering his services as an expert witness *pro bono*. He visited the house twice to survey it, produced a superbly professional report which was submitted to Camden and to the appeal, and came to London to give evidence at the Inquiry.

Finally, the City of London's planning consultants submitted a strong objection to the



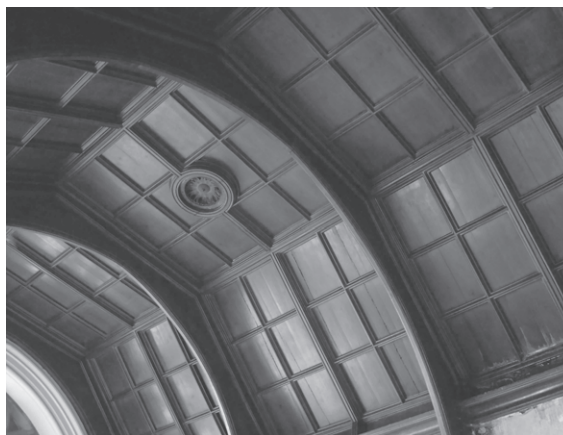
Staircase from upper landing

appeal, and English Heritage made their own, which a Conservation Officer contact described to us as the strongest he had ever seen from them; and, just before the appeal, *Private Eye* printed a powerful attack on the developers which even became part of the Appeal documentation!

The 2015 appeal Inspector was Colin Ball, who had, the previous year, dismissed an appeal to demolish and redevelop part of the Smithfield Market, which would have had major Heritage implications had it succeeded. Despite Camden's only refusing the development on one ground, he confirmed to us that we could argue on as many grounds as we wished – which we of course did with, as is clear in retrospect, telling results, the Inspector, in his decision, agreeing with every point AHWG made and completely dismissing the developers' case. Critically, he made it quite clear that the Section 106 Agreement was still in force and had to be observed. It is not going too far to say that it could not have been a better decision had we written it ourselves.

Of course, that was not the end of it if you are the fourth richest man in the world since throwing a few more megabucks at it will only use up a few days' pocket money: his expert witnesses and consultants were hurled into action again to seek a third throw of the dice, in the High Court, to argue that the Inspector had erred in his conclusions and that his decision should be overturned.

Although the action was against the Planning Inspectorate and Camden, we wanted to defend our argument, but were at a loss to know how we could meet the costs of appearing in the High Court, let alone run the risk of having costs awarded against us if the appeal



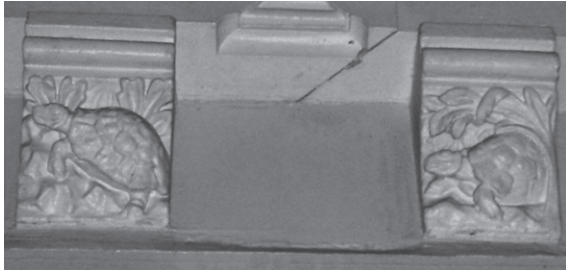
Staircase ceiling

succeeded. Fortunately our dilemma was resolved when our application to appear as an interested party was rejected by the Court – a decision which upset us at the time but which, in retrospect, was clearly made because the judge must have already assessed all the evidence and concluded that our participation was not necessary. The Planning Inspectorate, and Camden – with whose Senior Counsel Morag Ellis QC and legal adviser William Bartlett we had worked closely, both at the appeal and in preparing our argument for the High Court – put up a spirited defence, and after a nerve-wracking week's wait, we returned to the court to hear the judge, Mr Justice Dove, deliver his verdict.

He noted that:

- “a working group” – AHWG – *had* opposed the demolition and argued that the house was of historical value, that it was in good structural condition, suitable for refurbishment, and that it was inconceivable that the costs of refurbishment would not be covered by the value of the house;

The Athlone House Saga 1998–2016 (cont)



Entrance hall architectural detail

- the applicant argued that the cost of renovation would be prohibitive;
- the inspector had held that the proposed building was against MOL policy, that the house was of high architectural, social and historical interest, that the Section 106 Agreement to restore remained in force, and that the benefits of the proposal were not sufficient to overcome the harm it would cause: and
- the applicant claimed that the Inspector had: (1) erred in using the existing building as the baseline to be compared to the proposed development; (2) misunderstood the costs involved in renovation; and (3) had given inadequate reasons for his decision.

He concluded that the Inspector had been perfectly correct in his conclusions; that the policy was clear; that the Inspector had been correct and clear in interpreting AHWG's evidence on costs; that the Inspector had attached great weight to the lost opportunity of not restoring the building and that the Section 106 obligation remained in force; and that the developers' case had no validity. He also refused leave for them to take the matter to the Court of Appeal.

We had to wait six weeks to learn whether or not the developer was going to give up. Thank the stars, he did.

What we hope this unbelievable saga has shown is that you cannot always use unlimited wealth to bulldoze a bad development through the planning system. We never doubted that it had to be fought to the end, because it clearly had national implications. If it had succeeded:

- it would have driven a coach and horses through Metropolitan Open Land protection;
- Conservation Area status would have been undermined;
- no undesignated heritage asset would have been safe; and
- no Section 106 Agreement would have been worth the paper it was written on.

We hope, too, that it will encourage other communities to realise that David can beat Goliath. Despite having two of the most active amenity societies in the country, with a wealth of local knowledge and expertise, it still took 18 years, two planning appeals and a High Court hearing to reach the final denouement. What happens in communities which are not so fortunate as to have amenity groups able to fight on their behalf?

The seriousness of what we were fighting became clear in a letter from David Chipperfield to the first public inquiry, which we used again in the second. In it, he observed that "In all our meetings with the planners and residents, the client... assured everyone that the... house would be... restored. I very much doubt that permission... would have been given without this commitment.

“As you know, the developer removed us from the project as soon as permission was granted. By his actions, it is clear that I was used cynically to obtain permission and have no doubt that it was always the developer’s intention to redevelop Athlone House.

“There can be no justification for the demolition of Athlone House based on the supposed quality of the replacement... I believe [it] would be a mistake, and more importantly it would be a betrayal of the local residents and amenity groups, with whom I worked long and constructively on the project, who were assured

that it would be restored when they were asked to support [it].”

This highlights the gravity of the situation under a systematic demolition of the planning system which seems now to be almost encouraging such behaviour. It also highlights how vital it is that local authorities and communities work together in times like this when our planning system is under attack as never before. Local authority planning departments, under huge pressure, must use the vast resource of local knowledge and expertise when it is available; it is significant that the Chairman of our parent body, the London Forum of Amenity and Civil Societies, Peter Eversden of the Bedford Park Society, was awarded an MBE in the New Year’s Honours list for services to Community Planning in London.

A few of the main actors in the saga were mentioned above; but many more have played their part, and here I can only thank everyone, past and present, who has been so active and worked so selflessly in the battle: they were all essential to the outcome, with perhaps a special “thank you” to the present Mayor of Camden, Councillor Lorraine Revah, who invited the whole AHWG to a celebration tea at the Town Hall to congratulate us on our triumph!

The future? I almost forgot. It can now be made public that a new owner has been found, who is willing sympathetically to restore the house. AHWG have already met his architects and agents, at Camden’s insistence, and we have made clear the basis on which we would support any application. What we have seen certainly encourages us, particularly the fact that the new owner – almost unbelievably – does *not* want a basement!

Watch this space. □



Main staircase

When our Heath Swans are Injured

Ron Vester, a member of the Heath Sub-Committee, has a special interest in the Heath swans. Here he describes the role of the Swan Sanctuary and recounts a recent case of a swan rescue on the Heath.

Every day throughout the year I walk across Hampstead Heath, visiting each pond to check on the various swans and their families. When an injured swan is spotted, it is monitored closely by Heath rangers and myself. If the bird has been snared by a fishing hook or has other obvious injuries, volunteer rescuers are called from the Swan Sanctuary in Shepperton – the largest veterinary-registered swan hospital in the country, dedicated to the treatment, care and rehabilitation of swans and all wildfowl in the United Kingdom.



The entrance to the Swan Sanctuary in Shepperton

Swans are very territorial and will not tolerate intruders such as Egyptian geese or stray swans (known as 'rogues'). The resident swan will chase the intruder, and fighting very often occurs.

It is often said that a swan can break your arm. Indeed, it can – if you allow it to!

To safely catch a swan if it is injured, one needs to coax it over and swiftly cup the neck beneath the head, at the same time covering its flapping wings.



Injured swan in holding cage

The Sanctuary was founded by Dorothy Beeson who received the British Empire Medal in 1990 for her work rescuing swans on the River Thames and was appointed MBE in the 2015 New Year's Honours list. She has received numerous other awards. Dot, as she is known, works with her partner Steve and daughter Melanie, as well as on-site staff, several volunteers and Sally, the resident vet.

The swans on our Heath are the species known as mute swans (*Cygnus olor*).

Today we have only two pairs of mute swans, although, just a few years ago, I recall seven pairs. They stay year round on the pond they have chosen as 'theirs'.

Frequently the swan will then allow itself to be carefully examined for wounds or hooks. Unless the hook is swallowed, it can often be taken out immediately, and the swan released back into the water. However, if the swan is snared by a hook and line, one should never reel it in but, as most responsible fishermen know, the line should be cut and the incident reported to the rangers. If hospitalisation is required, the swan may be caged while waiting for the Swan Sanctuary volunteers to come and pick it up.

Other common injuries are caused by dog attacks, fighting and crashing into trees or fences. Sadly, when this happens the wing can be damaged, resulting in its amputation.

Once in the Sanctuary hospital, the bird will stay in a protected pond with other wildfowl.

The cob (the male swan) and the pen (the female) will defend their young cygnets when dogs are allowed to attack them. Strangely enough, one sometimes sees, on the Heath, the dog's owner throwing a stick or ball directly into a group of swans and their young. In the past year there have been fewer fatalities – but it is also true that there are fewer swans surviving on our Heath. It is good to see the public response in these situations, as owners learn the importance of keeping their dog under control when near the swans.



One of the spaces in a large ward. You will notice that there is white bread in the feeding bowl. This is

not recommended food for swans but, as the Sanctuary exists solely by donations, it is used out of necessity. We encourage Heath users to buy special waterfowl food, available online

Here is the story of how one recent rescue occurred on the Highgate ponds.

The pen and the cob flew from the Bird Sanctuary pond heading towards the Model Boating pond. The pen hit the fencing surrounding Bird Sanctuary Pond and tumbled to the ground. I noticed she had lost many small feathers from her breast but she somehow managed to make it to the Model Boating pond. I monitored her the rest of that day and all of the next. Although nothing was visible, she appeared distressed.

I put in a call to Gill, a volunteer from the Swan Sanctuary, and asked if she would come and examine the bird. The next day she and I stood at the edge of the pond and I coaxed the male cob away from the pen with some food. Gill grabbed the pen and placed the bird on a clean blanket. It was then that we saw a very large hole in the side of the pen's body. Clearly she had to go to hospital as the wound was below the waterline. We both went to the Swan Sanctuary and there Melanie examined the swan, giving her a shot of antibiotics and



Swan pair defending their cygnets from dog

a coating of Manuka honey around the wound. She was put in a 'ward' while awaiting Sally, the vet.

Some of us name the swans on the Heath, and this particular one was known as Mrs. Newbie (she had once been a recent arrival) – so we suggested this name be added to the impersonal ID number 035 that had been given her at the Sanctuary.

Nine weeks later the wound had healed and Gill drove her back to the Heath. A ranger opened the gates and Gill carried the swan over to the pond.

The moment arrived... would the cob be friendly or aggressive? They bonded in moments, doing the swans' classic courting ritual, rhythmically entwining their necks. Some

When our Heath Swans are Injured (cont)



Volunteer Laurent Howes holding injured swan before driving to the Swan Sanctuary

40 days later she had nested and five new cygnets were hatched.

A happy moment, as otherwise only one pair of swans would remain on the Heath today.

Along with the rangers and the Heath Constabulary, I have watched the Heath swans for over eight years and I have learnt much about them. They, too, have learnt about me, and will come swimming over when I whistle to them. □

Society notices

Delivering the Newsletter by email

Would you prefer to receive your Newsletter by email in the form of a Acrobat PDF file so that you can read it on screen?

It is environmentally more friendly, saving paper, unnecessary waste and cost.

With postage charges increasing enormously this is now becoming a major consideration.

The occasional extra flyers could also be sent via email, if wished.

PDFs of the Newsletter can be seen on the website. If you would like to try this please let us know at:

info@HeathandHampstead.org.uk

Members' email addresses – Are you missing out?

Keeping you informed of the latest news and events.

The Society is increasingly using email, to let members know of vital issues that crop up between Newsletters.

It is also an invaluable way to bring you other useful information, such as walks, talks and events that do not fit in with the Newsletter timetable.

If we do not have your email address you may be missing out on important local and Society news and initiatives.

So, if you have not already done so, please do send your email address to the Society at:

info@HeathandHampstead.org.uk

Make sure that you include your name and street address so that we can identify you.

This will also enable us to update our Membership Records and simplify our communications with you.

Air Pollution and Traffic

Stephen Taylor FRSA is a former trustee of the Society, Secretary of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum, and the Green Party candidate for the Barnet & Camden seat in the London Assembly. This is the first of two articles on a problem that directly affects us all. The views expressed in the articles are Stephen's own. He can be contacted at stephen.taylor@greenparty.org.uk

Air pollution has been in the news recently, with alarming numbers of Londoners reported as dying from it every year. What is the situation, how does it affect Hampstead, and what needs to be done?

Historic pollution

London has a long and intimate relationship with pollution. Written complaints about foul air go back at least as far as the fourteenth century. (The problem then was smoky brown coal.) London's very geography is given by the prevailing south-westerly. Close to the city, the better land has always been upwind. London's effluent drained from its gutters into its ditches and rivers. The Fleet River, which rises on Hampstead Heath, was six hundred

feet wide where it met the Thames beneath Ludgate Hill in Roman times, and was navigable up to what is now Kentish Town. After the Great Fire of 1666, Wren built fine quays and a customs house on its banks, but it was not long before the poisoned river was covered over, along with the other buried rivers of London.

The city's air might be smoky and pongy – but what could be done? It seemed an inevitable urbanity. Then the summer of 1858 brought the Great Stink, and Parliament, despite dipping its curtains in lime chloride, could not sit. At last, Something Had To Be Done. The engineer Joseph Bazalgette was hired to build the Northern and Southern Outfalls that still drain London's sewage away east for processing.

Millions of hearths kept the air smoky until the Great Smog of 1952, which was estimated at the time to have caused 4,000 deaths. Again, at last, Something Had To Be Done. The result was the Clean Air Act 1956 and the subsequent eradication of London's notorious 'pea soupers'.

Traffic pollution

We now face a greater crisis. The pollutants this time are nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), particulate matter (PM₁₀) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}). Nitrogen dioxide turns to nitric acid in our lungs. Both the gas and the particulate matter are invisible, but extraordinarily dangerous.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) designate airborne particulates a Group 1 carcinogen. Particulates



'The silent highwayman', by Punch Magazine – Original: Cartoon from Punch Magazine, Volume 35 Page 137; 10 July 1858. This copy: City and Water Blog. Licensed under Public Domain via Commons – https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_silent_highwayman.jpg#/media/

Air Pollution and Traffic (cont)



Members of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum plan the installation of NO₂ diffusion tubes

are the deadliest form of air pollution owing to their ability to penetrate deep into the lungs and blood streams unfiltered, causing permanent DNA mutations, heart attacks and premature death. In 2013, a study involving 312,944 people in nine European countries revealed that there was no safe level of particulates and that, for every increase of $10\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in PM₁₀, the lung cancer rate rose 22%. The smaller PM_{2.5} was particularly deadly, with a 36% increase in lung cancer per $10\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ as it can penetrate deeper into the lungs. Wikipedia¹

It follows that at $20\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, PM_{2.5} would be responsible for 45% of all lung cancer.

Public Health England² calculates that in 2010 long-term exposure to PM_{2.5} pollution was responsible for 7.7% of all deaths in Camden, slightly above the London average. Or, put another way, long-term exposure to the PM_{2.5} in London's air shortens our lives by 11–12 years.

King's College London calculates the combined effect of NO₂ and PM_{2.5} poisoning kills 9,500 Londoners each year. For perspective, that is more than double the death toll that led to the Clean Air Act 1956. Consider the uproar if terrorists were killing nearly 10,000 of us each year!

Where does the poison come from?

Nearly half the NO₂ in Camden comes from vehicle engines, diesel engines in particular. Although promoted in the last decade for their lower emissions of carbon dioxide, diesels emit 17 times as much NO₂ as petrol engines.

Another 40% of the NO₂ comes from burning gas as a fuel, divided equally between commercial and domestic boilers. Rail transport accounts for nearly all the rest.

Three-quarters of the particulate matter comes from transport, and 80% of that from road transport. 40% of PM₁₀ emissions from vehicles are tyre and brake wear – even electric cars pollute! Camden Council²

What do the doctors say?

There is no safety threshold for these poisons, no concentration at which they do not harm us.

Small particulate pollution has health impacts even at very low concentrations – indeed no threshold has been identified below which no damage to health is observed. Therefore, the WHO 2005 guideline limits aimed to achieve the lowest concentrations of PM possible. World Health Organization⁴

The WHO sets guideline limits for exposure ($\text{in}\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) both as annual means and measured over short peaks:

- NO₂: 40 (annual); 200 (one-hour)
- PM_{2.5}: 10 (annual); 25 (24-hour)
- PM₁₀: 20 (annual); 50 (24-hour)

Note the one-hour mean limit for NO₂. At concentrations above $200\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, NO₂ is “a toxic gas”.

The right to breathe

Born from bad memories of the 1930s and 1940s, much EU law specifies the obligations of states to their citizens. EU Directive 2008/50/EC⁵ sets limits to exposure to these poisons. The EU limits for NO₂ match the WHO recommendations, with 18 breaches allowed of the one-hour peaks. The EU limits for PM₁₀ and the more dangerous PM_{2.5} are ****double**** the WHO recommendations, with no limits set to short peaks of PM_{2.5}, the most dangerous of the poisons:

- NO₂: 40; 200 for one hour (18 breaches allowed)
- PM₁₀: 40; 50 for 24 hours (35 breaches allowed)
- PM_{2.5}: 20.

Note again the one-hour “toxic gas” limit for NO₂. London used up its entire year’s allowance of 18 breaches in the first eight days of 2016.

The EU directed the UK to conform to these limits by 2015. The European Commission has been threatening London with hundreds of millions of pounds in fines for failing to tackle the problem. In April 2015 the legal charity Client Earth won a judgement in the UK Supreme Court requiring the UK government to present a “credible” plan for complying. Defra’s response looks set to see the UK government back in court in 2016.

London’s air, Hampstead’s air

The averages conceal sharp local differences. Camden’s map of annual PM₁₀ levels shows most of the city below 20µg/m³, with a tracery of higher concentrations following the road network. Its NO₂ map shows central London

(and Heathrow) bathed in the stuff, again with the high concentrations along the road network. But, of course, the road network is what we all use to get about. And many people live, work or study close to those roads. The roads are busiest where people most need to be.

Some of the concentrations are truly terrifying. Remember that at over 200µg/m³, NO₂ “is a toxic gas which causes acute inflammation of the airways” WHO⁴ and that London is allowed only 18 one-hour breaches of this level a year. Sections of Oxford Street and Marylebone Road record annual means of 120 and 145 respectively – edging towards “toxic gas” concentrations.

The effects on children are particularly worrying. “The data shows that traffic pollution stops children’s lungs growing properly,” said Ian Mudway, a respiratory toxicologist at King’s College London. “The evidence suggests that, by 8–9 years old, children from the most polluted areas have 5–10% less lung capacity and they may never get that back.” Sunday Times⁶



Members of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum install a NO₂ diffusion tube

Air Pollution and Traffic (cont)

Clean Air in London⁷ has found 1,148 schools in London within 150 metres of roads carrying 10,000 or more vehicles per day, and a total of 2,270 schools within 400 metres of such roads.

A Hampstead survey

Hampstead is spared the worst of London's poisoned air but is by no means free of it. Models such as Jenny Jones AM's howpollutedismyroad.org.uk tell only part of the story. The Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum recently measured NO₂ levels at 30 sites across the Forum area. The lowest exposure was recorded at the Viaduct Pond on the Heath. High above London, behind a hill, sheltered by woodland, far from roads, and with prevailing winds from west of the city. One cannot expect a lower reading in the area, and might take it as the 'background level'. We recorded 20µg/m³, a full 50% of the legal limit. Elsewhere in the area we found 30–40µg/m³ on the residential roads and up to 70µg/m³ on our main roads. As many residents suspected, while the air here is better than in the centre, it still carries dangerous levels of poison.

The school run

With its thousands of school places and wide catchment areas, Hampstead has special issues with the "school run". School Traffic Management Plans fail to stem a twice-daily tide of vehicles choking the roads and air. A local campaigner describes Hampstead as a "business park for education". That is unlikely to change anytime soon. So we must act robustly to protect the children sent to study here.

The Hampstead 2020 Plan needs reviving with a stronger emphasis on reducing motor traffic volumes. We can make Hampstead once again

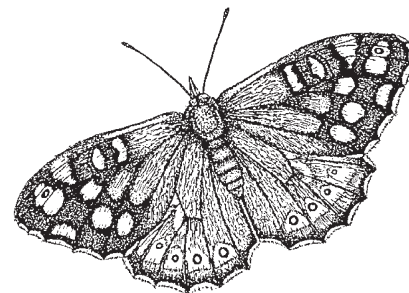
safe and healthy for children to navigate. This will be the subject of the second part of this article.

A public meeting

On Tuesday 26 April at 7pm, Castle Debates and the Green Party will co-host at St Stephen's, Rosslyn Hill, a public meeting on air pollution in Camden. It should be lively. Do come. □

References

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Particulates> *Wikipedia*
2. Estimating Local Mortality Burdens associated with Particulate Air Pollution, April 2014 *Public Health England*
3. Camden's Clean Air Action Plan 2013–2015, *Camden*
4. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs313/en/> *World Health Organization*
5. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/AL/L/?uri=CELEX:32008L0050> *EU Directive 2008/50/EC*
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7. <http://cleanair.london/sources/clean-air-in-london-has-found-1148-schools-in-london-within-150-metres-of-busiest-roads/> *Clean Air in London*



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Belsize in View

An exhibition
of photographs and engravings
curated by David S Percy

2 March – 20 May 2016

☎ 020 7431 0144

Burgh House, New End Square, Hampstead NW3 1LT

Franciszka & Stefan Themerson

Books, Camera, Ubu

24 March – 5 June 2016

Galleries 1 & 2

Partners and life-long collaborators from 1929 until their deaths in 1988, this exhibition delves into the Themersons' diverse practice, including photography, film, theatre design, literature, concrete poetry, publishing and illustration.

For further information
on these exhibitions
please visit
camdenartscentre.org

Karl Holmqvist

READ DEAR

24 March – 5 June 2016

Gallery 3

Karl Holmqvist (b. Västerås, 1964) presents a new text-based series in an intimate installation of digitally printed canvases, graffiti and concrete poetry. Together, the works unpack the many operations of language, how it can occupy space and provoke 'invisible images' within memory and imagination.

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Heath Walks 2016

Walks are normally held on the first Sunday of every month except January. Most start from Burgh House, New End Square. London NW3 1LT – 10 minutes walk from Hampstead Tube Station (for map see www.burghhouse.org.uk)

NB: *parking is extremely difficult locally, especially in spring and summer. West Heath car park (behind Jack Straw's Castle) is more likely to have spaces than the East Heath car park.*

Starting times are either 2:30pm or 10:30am (9:30 for birds), depending on season and subject matter.

Walks last approximately two hours. They do not necessarily follow made-up paths; you are recommended to wear suitable footwear as conditions may be rough or muddy.

You will be invited to make a minimum donation of £4.00 per adult, to be collected at the beginning of each walk, to help support future development of the walks programme and to promote the Society's activities generally.

Children are always welcome so long as they are suitably shod, can walk reasonable distances and are accompanied by an adult taking full responsibility for them.

Please note starting times and meeting points.

Further information from walks organiser, Thomas Radice,
mobile: 07941 528 034 or
email: hhs.walks@gmail.com



6 March 10:30am (meet in North End Way, on Hampstead side of Inverforth House) The Pergola, the Hill Garden and Golders Hill Park, led by a member of the Society (leader to be confirmed)

3 April 9:30am (meet at Burgh House) Birds of the Heath in spring, led by John Hunt, former Chairman of the Marylebone Birdwatching Society and member of the H&HS Heath Sub-Committee

1 May 2:30pm (meet at Burgh House) The Spider foray, led by Edward Milner, former BBC producer and National Spider Recorder for Middlesex and London; member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management; author of 'Trees of Britain and Ireland'

5 June 2:30pm (meet at the café in Golders Hill Park) Identifying trees in Golders Hill Park, led by Bettina Metcalfe, local tree enthusiast and member of the International Dendrology Society

3 July 2:30pm (meet at Burgh House) The Society, the City, the Engineer, the High Court and the Ponds, led by Thomas Radice and Lynda Cook, members of the H&HS Heath Sub-Committee

7 August 2:30pm (meet at the cattle trough and flower stall in Spaniards Road, near the Spaniards Inn) The Heath Extension, led by Tony Ghilchik, Trustee of the Heath & Hampstead Society and member of the Heath Sub-Committee

Details of walks between September 2016 and April 2017 are currently being finalised and will be available shortly on the Society's website

www.HeathandHampstead.org.uk

@HandHSocHeath