



# *The Heath & Hampstead Society* **NEWSLETTER**

*October 2019*

*Vol 50 No 3*



*Gerald Isaaman OBE, 1933-2019*

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# Contents

# Chair's Notes

by Marc Hutchinson

	Page
Chair's Notes .....	1
by Marc Hutchinson	
Planning Report .....	4
by David Castle	
Town Report .....	6
by Andrew Haslam-Jones	
Autumn Musical Events at St. John-at-Hampstead.....	7
Heath Report .....	8
by John Beyer	
Photographic Competition #myhampsteadheath.....	11
Acid Grassland and Heath: a distinctive and threatened habitat .....	12
by Jeff Waage	
Inside Out Wac Arts.....	14
by Sioban Whitney-Low	
Queen Mary's Hospital.....	16
by Helen Lawrence	
Camden Arts Centre .....	21
The Society Celebrates 30 Years of the City's Custodianship of the Heath .....	22
by John Beyer	
Autumn Events in the Library .....	27
A Tribute for Gerald Isaaman OBE.....	28
by Martin Humphery	
Heath Walks 2019 – 2020 .....	30

Front cover: Gerald at Burgh House in 2013.  
Photo courtesy: Nigel Sutton

## Gerry Isamaan

Our long-time Patron Gerry Isaaman passed away as we went to press on the May Newsletter, so we were unable to pay timely tribute to him. However, we do so now on pages 28–29. Gerry was a great supporter, and sometime committee member, of the Society and it is our intention to erect a plaque to him in Hampstead, in recognition of what he did for our village during his lifetime. We sent our deepest sympathies to his wife Delphine and family at the time.

## Ian Harrison

Ian Harrison was chairman of the Vale of Health Society for many years, during which he worked closely with our Society on Heath matters. His passing was noted in our October 2014 Newsletter. I was privileged in early summer this year to represent our Society at the unveiling of a memorial bench to Ian on the Heath. The site of the bench offers a wonderful view over the Vale as you can see from the picture.



Ian Harrison memorial bench

## ***Chair's Notes (cont)***



*Representatives of the Vale of Health Society and our Society, with Janet Harrison and other members of Ian Harrison's family*

### ***'30 Years' Heath party***

Our party for the City of London and Heath staff held on 11 September was a great success, not least because of the sunny weather. The compliments and gratitude of our guests were very touching. I wish to thank our team of committee members who worked so hard to put on this event. A full report appears on pages 22–26.

### ***South Fairground Site***

We have had a great victory in our battle, fighting alongside the Vale of Health Society, Camden Council and the City of London, to achieve the demolition of the new house illegally built on the South Fairground Site (metropolitan open land) at the Vale of Health. The planning inspector upheld Camden's demolition order and made a partial award of costs against the owner on account of her unreasonable behaviour during the inquiry. An award of costs is rare in planning inquiries. The Societies were instrumental in obtaining evidence from a local witness who was familiar with the site before it was bought by the new owner, and he was able to testify, from his personal knowledge, that the ramshackle structure, which the new owner claims to have refurbished, was still being built in 2016; that is,

within the four-year limitation period applicable to Camden's order. It remains to be seen whether the owner will appeal the decision to the High Court.

We and the Vale of Health Society are very grateful to our counsel David Altaras who, although we were only Rule 6 parties, ended up having a central role in the seven-day hearing.

### ***Keats House***

An application was made to Camden Council in early summer by Keats House for a film licence and an alcohol licence. The application was unintentionally written in such a way as to give the impression that, behind the application, lay an intention to commercialise the House by turning it into a party venue. Unsurprisingly, there was a chorus of protest, which included the Society. Keats House subsequently met us and local residents to discuss modifications to the licence applications. As a result of those discussions, a compromise was reached on all but one of the issues by the time the licensing hearing took place on 12 September. I did not speak at the hearing because objectors were fully represented by Hampstead Ward Councillor Maria Higson and Mr Michael Sternberg QC, a local resident and former joint convenor of the Patrons of Keats House, who between them persuasively said everything that needed to be said. The film licence application was withdrawn and the alcohol licence granted on much restricted terms. The only unresolved point was the maximum number of persons to be invited to one of the permitted six annual outdoor events. We would have preferred a limit of 100 (only on the ground of noise) but the licensing panel, by majority, decided to allow 200. If residents are disturbed by noise from these outside events, they should in the first instance contact the duty manager at Keats House on 0207 332 1818 or, failing that, the Camden noise

control department at <https://contact.camden.gov.uk/noise/noiseform/whenNoiseHappen.xhtml?cid=2>. There have, so far as we are aware, been no recent complaints about noise and the members of the licensing panel made clear that the licence could be reviewed if there were complaints in the future. The Society is very grateful to Councillor Higson and Mr Sternberg for their extensive efforts in bringing about this amicable settlement.

### ***Sculpture at Kenwood***

There was a proposal, by the Memorial for Humanitarian Aid Workers, to erect a sculpture on the Stable Field on the Heath, to the south of Kenwood House, as a memorial to aid workers killed in the course of duty. We and many others opposed the choice of this particular site on account of the eye-catching visibility of the proposed sculpture from many parts of the open Heath, such as Cohen's Fields. I am pleased to report that the site is no longer being considered for the sculpture.

### ***Local ward boundary changes - South End Green***

The Local Boundary Commission has been considering changing the ward boundaries at South End Green in such a way as to move some of the residential enclaves and streets there out of Hampstead Town Ward and into Gospel Oak Ward. Local residents overwhelmingly opposed this. The Society was drawn into the discussion because one of the submissions in favour of change implied that the local coverage, work and membership of the Society did not really extend to South End Green. Since this was incorrect, the Society went on the record to correct it and, at the same time, argued against the change. We understand this will indeed be the result of the Commission's recent consultation.

### ***Town Sub-Committee***

We welcome Pamela Castle OBE as a new member of this Sub-Committee.

### ***Members' e-mail addresses and telephone numbers***

With this Newsletter you will receive details of the e-mail address and telephone number we hold for you. If the details are incorrect, please let us know by telephoning the Secretary or sending an e-mail to [info@HeathandHampstead.org.uk](mailto:info@HeathandHampstead.org.uk).

### ***New members***

We shall be carrying out a large mail drop in Hampstead in October to residents who are not yet members. We hope this will bring in new members to increase our number towards 2,500. This is not about funding, as our finances are in good shape. It is about being able to speak, to government and other bodies, while being seen to represent an ever-larger number of members. So, if you are personally able to introduce a neighbour or friend to membership of the Society, your committee members will be very grateful.

### ***Christmas party***

I look forward to welcoming you to our forthcoming Christmas party at Burgh House on Monday 9 December. We have much to celebrate this past year. □

# *Planning Report*

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*by David Castle*

The chief objective of the Planning Sub-Committee is not necessarily to prevent new building or the destruction or amendment of existing buildings, although in some cases we wish we could, but to ensure the changes taking place add to, rather than subtract from, the existing admirable qualities of Hampstead.

We are sometimes accused of being only concerned with the protection of Hampstead, and not the wider problems of London, or of being inward-looking or only concerned with our own area. The Planning Sub-Committee is aware that the environmental crisis, the shortage of affordable housing, and the problem caring for the elderly, for instance, are not being dealt with adequately. We would be very pleased to see the existing buildings and the few development sites in Hampstead used to help solve such critical problems.

Alas, since the 1980s, the combination of a variety of laws and regulations, the shortage of development land, and the high price of housing in London have all ensured that the only building and demolition taking place in Hampstead has been for increasingly pricey and larger dwellings. As a consequence, there is less diversity in Hampstead, with the loss of smaller dwellings, many of them non-residential work-places, and other uses. The central government could easily make changes to help deal with the environmental crisis and the housing crisis, and also to reduce the large profits to be made in building new high-priced flats and houses, the latter of which do not help solve the housing crisis. However, until it does, we will be faced with continual pressure to spoil Hampstead.

With respect to climate change, it is worth noting that Camden's Local Plan is clear about the need to take action. Two policies of the Local Plan, which are very welcome, are: first, preference should be given to upgrading existing buildings and not to demolition; and second, tree cover and planted areas should be increased and hard paving limited. However, over the coming years it is inevitable that there will be considerable and increasing pressure to build at ever higher densities and height to meet the anticipated population growth, coupled with the shortage of land, and the need to protect increasingly precious agricultural land to provide sufficient food in a world where agricultural land and water supply will be seriously reduced.

But, back to current local issues. There is nothing currently to report on Queen Mary's House, 55 Fitzroy Park, or the Ex Police Station (Abacus School) (for details see previous Newsletters).

However, now that Lloyds Bank, Rosslyn Hill, has closed, we have to be concerned that the very fine original Banking Hall (listed Grade 2\* - dated 1895-6) might be at risk. The exceptionally fine oak carvings, joinery and wall linings are a remarkable survival and must be saved. Unfortunately, in the past, usually in ignorance, such interiors have been destroyed. We have informed Camden Planning about the importance of the interior, and that they should be soon receiving a planning application for permission to amend the bank.

***If you see any builders at work in the building please contact the Society immediately. □***





*Interior panelling of former Banking Hall in Lloyds Bank*



*Oak carvings of former Banking Hall in Lloyds Bank*



*Lloyds Bank, Rosslyn Hill*

# Town Report

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by Andrew Haslam-Jones

## ***Electric hire bikes***

Members of the Society will have noticed the growing presence, proliferation even, of electric-powered hire bicycles in Hampstead in recent months. In July, members of the Sub-Committee joined other interested community groups at a transport consultation held by Camden Council and Transport for London at the council offices, and chaired by the cabinet member responsible for transport, Councillor Harrison. At the meeting, we were informed that all London boroughs are working together to put in place a bye-law to give councils the power to regulate the use of the free-standing electric hire bikes. The intention is that the bye-law will give councils the power to adopt a range of approaches, from allowing unrestricted use, or managing parking places, to complete banning. However, the bye-law will not be in place until next summer, at the earliest.

We also learned that, from 1 August, Camden contracted with two of the electric bicycle hire companies, Lime (the bright green bikes) and Jump (red bikes; an Uber affiliate). This means bikes from other companies should not be present on our streets.



*Electric hire bikes: a good or bad thing? Or does it just depend where they are?*

Anecdotal, local sentiment about the bicycles is split. Opinions range from those happy to see an increase in the convenient availability of a less polluting, healthier form of transport, to those who think the bikes are simply unwelcome street clutter. In between, there are

those who see the advantages, whilst also complaining of the obstacles the bicycles present when they are left on narrow pavements or on residential side streets to less mobile residents or those with visual impairment.

To identify a limited number of places on the main streets where the bikes could be parked without causing an impediment, I met with the Camden officer responsible for dealing with the electric bike hire companies and the Hampstead Village Business Improvement District manager. We were able to identify several places where the pavement allows for bicycles, including by the bike stands next to Oriel Place on Heath Street, on the corner of Vane Close and Greenhill, by the bike stands on the opposite side of the High Street from the post office by the pedestrian crossing, and on the broad pavement by Queen Mary's House at the top of Heath Street. We will continue to monitor the situation and will feed back comments to the Camden officer.

## ***Oriel Place Garden***

The renovation of Oriel Place Garden, which had been due to start in May and last for four months, has been delayed. Following concerns raised by local residents about the potential for anti-social behaviour after the fence currently separating the large tree and garden from the thoroughfare, I understand that council officers and local councillors have been meeting with the residents to try to allay their fears. The plans for the garden are intended to design out the potential for anti-social behaviour, for example by avoiding dark corners and a partitioned bench to prevent rough-sleeping. However, the space is tucked away and there have already been occasional complaints about late night activity in Oriel Place even before the garden is opened. We await the outcome of the discussions between the council, councillors and local residents. □

## ***Autumn Musical Events***

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

***Church Row NW3***

***Saturday 2 November***

***Dream of Gerontius***

Soloists and Professional Choristers from  
Hampstead Parish Church

Hampstead Arts Festival at 7.30 pm

***Wednesday 6 November***

***The Passion of Joan of Arc (film)***

Hampstead Arts Festival at 7.30 pm

***Saturday 9 November***

***Come and sing the Verdi Requiem***

Everyone is welcome to join members of the  
Church Professional Choir

Conducted by Peter Foggitt, Director of Music  
Rehearsal at 2.00 pm; performance at 6.00 pm

***Sunday 10 November***

***Monteverdi's Vespro della Beata Vergine Maria***

Hampstead Arts Festival at 7.00 pm

***28 to 30 November***

***The Sound of Music***

A production by the Hampstead Players with  
orchestra

Evening performances at 7.30 pm

One matinee on 30 November at 2.30 pm

***22 December***

***Carol Service***

At 6.00 pm

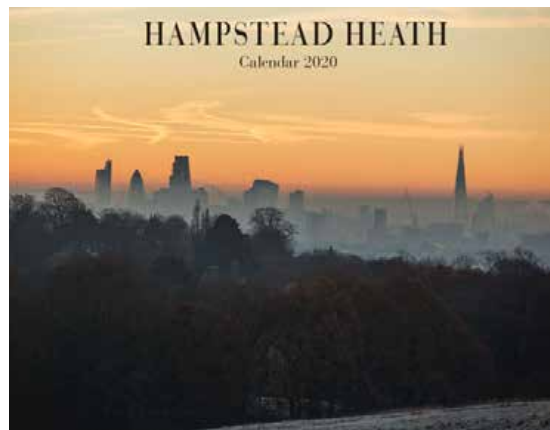
All enquiries to Jenny Macdonald-Hay 0207 794 1193

## ***Hampstead Heath 2020 Calendar***

***Back for 2020, featuring brand new  
images and the best of the rest from  
the hardback book – Hampstead Heath,  
London's Countryside.***

The calendar is a collaborative production between  
Matthew Maran Photography, Heath Hands  
and the City of London.

Available from [www.matthewmaranshop.com](http://www.matthewmaranshop.com),  
selected local shops and Amazon.





# Heath Report

by John Beyer

## Sheep return to the Heath

Sheep grazed on the Heath once again this summer, after a gap of 60 years. The initiative flowed from a talk given by painter Lindy Guinness at the Society's Springett Lecture in October 2018. Lindy showed how John Constable interpreted and painted the landscape to good effect, featuring cattle and sheep. When Lindy concluded her lecture with a plea, *we should see cattle on the Heath again*, there was rapturous agreement from the Society's members present.

We, therefore, pursued this with Bob Warnock, Heath Superintendent, and colleagues. The romantic vision happily coincided with a long-held aspiration of Heath staff to experiment with grazing to manage the landscape. There followed lengthy discussions and consultations, with many questions and objections raised. Who would supply the livestock? Would there be enough grazing? Would people object to fencing? Where would the water come from? What would happen at night? Would it be sheep or cattle? What about dogs? Why were we doing it? These questions were precisely



Norfolk Horn and Oxford Down sheep grazing on the Tumulus



Eden, age six, noting need for signs

those raised by Heath users who came to see the sheep during the trial.

Gradually, the issues were resolved. The Society contacted the Rare Breeds Survival Trust who put us in contact with Tom Davis at Mudchute Farm on the Isle of Dogs. Tom had just the right experience of managing sheep and cattle in public spaces. He had pioneered a project with sheep and cattle grazing in Green Park each summer over the last three years. During this short period, there already appeared to be ecological benefits. While perfect



for summer sunbathing, *Deckchair Lawn* is a desert in terms of providing habitat for wildlife such as beetles and mice. The grazed area has wild carrot, chicory and knapweed; field mice reappeared; and there was the first sighting for many years of a Tawney Owl. Public reaction to the Royal Parks' initiative had been very positive.

### ***Where sheep may safely graze***

With Superintendent Bob Warnock, who has been a firm advocate of the grazing idea, we arranged a series of site visits by Tom Davis. The Tumulus Mound emerged as the best area to consider first. As an ancient monument, it was already closed to the public and surrounded by a fence. Historic England were happy to have the site inhabited by sheep. Tom verified there was ample plant life to keep the sheep well-fed, while veteran Heath ranger Richard Payne, worked out water supply, fencing, and overnight accommodation in barns near Kenwood. Having a bed and breakfast half a mile away minimised travel for the sheep. Their welfare was always the primary consideration.



*Ian Aitchison, age 96, reading about the sheep at the Tumulus.  
Ian walks the Heath daily*

Tom advised that for the Tumulus, and for a first trial, five sheep would be ideal. He provided a mix of Oxford Downs and Norfolk Horns, both rare breeds and very hardy in rain and sunshine. Although the pilot project was brief, it was interesting to see the sheep ate some of the coarse grass, nettles, bramble, hawthorn and rose bay willow herb. For the first time on the Heath, we saw a Yellow Dung Fly near the sheep droppings. More work would need to be done in future years to assess the effects on the landscape.



*Rory Dimond and Jill Cornish from Heath Hands, ready to explain*

The biggest risk in the whole venture was how dogs would react. The problem was addressed in two ways. One was to add a temporary extra fence around the Tumulus. The other, perhaps more important, was to have a rota of Heath Sub-Committee members and volunteers from Heath Hands on site throughout the hours of 10:00am to 4:00pm, when the sheep were on view for the nine-day period from 27 August to 4 September. Having three or four volunteers present at any time meant there was adequate scope to engage with people walking their dogs.

## ***Heath Report (cont)***



*Norfolk Horn browsing hawthorn*

### ***We like sheep!***

Reaction from Heath users was amazingly supportive. Most reservations were concerned with the fear that dogs might worry the sheep. Media coverage was very positive. There were film clips on the BBC and ITV, and articles with charming photos in many of the national dailies. Over a hundred local media across the country also covered the story, from Falmouth to Hull. More surprisingly, international media picked up the story, including *The New Yorker*. For the Society



*The author and his flock. Photo courtesy: Ron Vester*

and the Springett Lecture, the publicity was both unusually wide and consistently positive.

We very much hope this pioneer project can continue. Once again, suitable areas might include returning to the Tumulus, or an already-fenced area, such as the island in the Model Boating Pond, or areas needing sensitive attention, such as the Tormentil Slopes near East Heath Road. We will be working with Heath colleagues to plot the way forward for a return next year. □



*Angelina Engler, Society volunteer, briefs Clara, age six, on sheep stomachs*



*Return to Mudchute*



# *Photographic Competition #myhampsteadheath*

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*The Society runs a regular photographic competition on Instagram.  
Louisa Green's image is the Society's current winner*



*Dad of the Year*

Louisa recounts:

Papa and Mamma swan produced a record number of eggs this year. Up until 10 weeks of age, all 10 of their cygnets were thriving, and as far as I was able to determine, this year there was not another swan pair in the whole of the UK with as many surviving as long. I have photographed this family every day since they started building their nest in March. I was honoured to witness the first egg hatch. They now know me so well; I only have to whistle and the family swim (or fly!) right over to me. They will also very happily follow me on land between Hampstead Ponds 1 and 2, and many people on the Heath joke all I need now is a little flute to become the Pied Piper of Hampstead! I have recently contacted the City of London to discuss ways in which we can help improve the safety of our swans on the Heath. So far, discussions are going well. I am also currently training with The Swan Sanctuary in Shepperton to become a volunteer rescuer, and there is honestly nothing I wouldn't do for our beautiful swan family.

*Matt Manan is the Society's judge for this competition. "This image shows great action and technical ability in holding the exposure of a white bird against a dark background", says Matt.*

*Since 2000, Matt has travelled the world photographing wildlife and landscapes, from Alaskan bears and South-East Asian primates to soda lakes, glacial rivers and primeval forests. His images are represented by Nature Picture Library and have featured in films, books, conversation journals and magazines, including BBC Wildlife, Outdoor Photography and National Geographic. His work has also been awarded in the European Wildlife Photographer of the Year; the Wanderlust Travel Photographer of the Year and the British Wildlife Photography Awards.*

*See the Society's website for competition rules*

# *Acid Grassland and Heath: a distinctive and threatened habitat*

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*by Jeff Waage*

*Acid grasslands and heath are one of the Heath's most distinctive habitats, but facing an uncertain future if not managed and restored.*

The Heath's acid grasslands and heathlands were the subject of the Heath Sub-Committee's summer walk. Adrian Brooker, Ecologist for the City of London's Open Spaces Department, led the walk, which took us to a number of sites for this special habitat in the East and West Heath.

Grasslands once dominated the Heath, but in the past century, a reduction in grazing and other management practices have let much grassland turn gradually into woodland. The Heath's grasslands are of several types, and the most familiar will be the dense grassy sloping meadows, such as those stretching north from Parliament Hill to Kenwood House, and across the Heath Extension. These are growing mostly on clay soils, rich in nutrients. They boast a dense grass sward, ideal for picnicking. In the past few years, thanks to the City of London's efforts to create native wildflower meadows, these grasslands have become rich in wildflowers and butterflies.

By contrast, on the nutrient-poor, sandy soils covering higher parts of the Heath, a very different kind of grassland grows. This is "acid grassland", because the porous soils quickly drain away nutrients, leaving a slightly acidic substrate for plants. A particular complex of grasses grows on these soils, often quite thinly, leaving patches of bare soil in-between. In some cases gorse and heather invade this habitat, forming patchy, dense clumps. When this occurs, the area is then called *heath*.

Historically, there was a great deal of acid grassland

and heath on the Heath. Today, there are just fragments of both, scattered across East, West and Sandy Heath, perhaps two hectares at most. Acid grassland has a distinctive flora, with characteristic grasses, like wavy hair grass, and wildflowers, like tormentil and heath bedstraw



*Wavy hair grass. Photo courtesy: Adrian Brooker*



*Heath bedstraw. Photo courtesy: Adrian Brooker*

The patches of bare earth between plants create habitats for a great diversity of insects, including a variety of bees nesting in burrows in the sand, specialized wasps and spiders. One of the best patches of acid grassland can be found down the



slopes from the children's playground between The Pryors and Vale of Health Pond, with good patches of tormentil and heath bedstraw. At the Pond, rough grassland has taken over, but acid grassland appears on the slopes up, towards the Fairground site, and then becomes a dense gorse patch. On Sandy and West Heath, there are similar large patches of heath with gorse.



*Tormentil. Photo courtesy: Adrian Brooker*

Acid grassland and heath are one of the Heath's rarest habitats, and one which is under threat across southern England, but the City of London is actively conserving and restoring them on the Heath. Wear and tear by foot and paw-fall is perhaps not as severe as in other Heath habitats, but encroachment by rough grassland and woodland is constant. For restoring acid grassland, the strategy is to work away at its woody edges, removing scrub and alien trees. This often involves scraping off a layer of topsoil, which is too nutrient-rich for the desired flora. On Sandy Heath, much acid grassland has progressed to oak woodland. During our walk there, Adrian pointed out wavy hair grass on the woodland floor, a clue that this had once been acid grassland. In these areas, City staff are waiting for a tree to fall, creating a light gap and the opportunity to restore the grassland.

For gorse-covered heathland, patches of gorse are managed on a 12 year rotation. Older stands are coppiced right to the ground, and re-sprout quickly, creating a mosaic of different gorse heights and age structure enhancing heathland biodiversity. Were gorse

not managed in this way, stands would begin to die off at around 15 years, and trees would take over.

Another distinctive heath species is heather. Heather is rare on the Heath, and the subject of much replanting by City staff and volunteers. Unfortunately, there has been much vandalism of heather seedlings, and new strategies to re-establish heather are being tried. In the coming year, a mapping of heathland and its biodiversity will be completed, to help design future management.



*Heathland, growing on similar soils, supports heather species. Photo courtesy: Adrian Brooker*

Acid grasslands and heath are one of the Heath's most distinctive habitats, and deserve a concerted conservation and restoration effort. While few, small and far between, these areas often lie on steep, sandy slopes, and contribute, with their pale grass, bracken and heather, to striking internal Heath views. Extending these habitats by reducing surrounding woodland will be important. In the grand scheme of balancing wood and meadow on the Heath, turning a bit of woodland or scrub into acid grasslands can be offset by allowing small areas of much more common rough grasslands to revert to woodland. In this way, the biodiversity and richness of habitats on the Heath is enhanced and made more sustainable. □

# *Inside Out Wac Arts*

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*by Sioban Whitney-Low*

*The planned development of Wac Arts will open up the Old Town Hall for all, ensuring the charity's work continues to remain vibrant and viable.*

Wac Arts is a charity offering high-quality access to the arts for people who face the worst barriers to participation. We are also the custodian of the beautiful Grade 2 listed Old Town Hall building in Belsize Park. The building was saved from commercial development in the 1990s by the Friends of Hampstead Town Hall (now known as Friends of the Old Town Hall). Subsequently, Camden invited us to take up residence.

The Old Town Hall was built in 1878. It has always been a platform for those who found a voice through the arts and has a rich history of change-makers. It was the place where the suffragettes rallied support, George Bernard Shaw spoke, Lord Pitt gave an anti-racism speech in 1959, T.S. Eliot married, and the band Madness played their first gig. Today, the Old Town Hall houses a vibrant, intergenerational community, and provides an open creative environment, fostering social cohesion and empowering people to transcend social and economic barriers to success.

For over 40 years, Wac Arts has offered a year-round accessible programme of performing arts classes and media training for young people aged five to 30, and their families. We partner with other organisations to deliver arts and science learning. Through our work with Camden, we deliver out-of-hours and residential care support, including activities for young people with Special Education Needs & Disabilities ("SEND"). Our programmes draw people into Camden from 29 London boroughs, including Outer London, and from as far away as the Midlands, to experience best practice in a broad range of inclusive performing arts. The programmes connect an intergenerational community

including the London University of the Third Age ("U3A").

Wac Arts works to improve social cohesion in London. The extraordinary mixture of communities interacting through Wac Arts makes for a unique creative ecosystem. Jolyon Brewis, architect and Wac Arts Trustee, remarked:

Wac Arts has an engaged audience unlike any other arts organisation I know. We benefit from incredible diversity, and we constantly seek to harness this breadth of approach to challenge our own assumptions. This rich dialogue has helped us to evolve an approach to adapting the heritage of our home to meet our needs today.

In 2017, we drafted a Master Plan, providing a coherent overview of the planned development for our whole site over the next decade and beyond. The first phase of the Master Plan is *Inside Out Wac Arts* ("IOWA"). IOWA will open up a wealth of opportunities for our community and neighbours. Before devising the plan, we consulted the local community. Young people asked us for "outside play and performance spaces, an improved café, more green spaces and more community spaces". Older Londoners asked us to "keep the building's grand appearance, while making it more accessible". In December 2018, we appointed Ash Sakula Architects to co-design IOWA, mindful of internal and external stakeholders' needs.

We undertook 18 co-design workshops during RIBA Stages 1 and 2 to ensure input into the design process from a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, parents and carers, programme participants, Camden councillors, the Heath & Hampstead Society, local business, community groups, local residents, and



*Aerial sketch of the building  
Image courtesy: Ash Sakula Architects*

building partners, with several sessions for U3A who are one of our key partners. Sakula's plans combine exceptional design, restoration of original features, and refurbishment to transform an existing community asset into a structure for wider public benefit.

We have also organised project meetings with a variety

of external stakeholders, including this Society and the Friends of the Old Town Hall. In addition, we are setting up a number of user groups to include participants from the co-design workshops to enable continued active stakeholder involvement into the next design stages.

IOWA will enable Wac Arts to offer a welcoming and safe meeting place.

The new space will allow year-round community-led activities, helping to reduce isolation and foster social cohesion for people of all ages. Events in the new public-facing areas will be supported by 100 active volunteers.

The creation of a dedicated flexible performance space will include new, specialist higher education courses for 75 students a year aged 18+, with progression routes into employment in the creative industries or further study. Each year, we expect 1,600 over-55s and 180 young people with SEND to access every part of the improved building. Currently, 78% of children and young people participating in Wac Art's work are black, Asian and minority ethnic, and 72% come from a background of deprivation.

### ***Join our fundraising campaign***

IOWA costs are projected to be approximately £3 million. We are asking the community to join in our fundraising. To find out more about Wac Arts, our programmes and plans, and to donate, please see our website at <https://www.wacarts.co.uk> or visit us at the Old Town Hall. □



*Sketch of the café. Image courtesy: Ash Sakula Architects*

# Queen Mary's Hospital

by Helen Lawrence

*As the NHS hospital faces demolition, Helen Lawrence recounts the fascinating history of this important Hampstead site.*

Hampstead's fame as a literary and artistic centre began in this corner of the village at the top of East Heath Road. Yet the public hardly knows its fascinating history. Not only was it the place where the foundation for Hampstead's literary fame and artistic associations was laid, but later it was home to some of the people who campaigned to save the Heath.



*Map of Upper Heath House, 1860*

In 1689, even before the existence of East Heath Road, the site was carved out of the Heath as a two-acre enclosure by Henry Scerrit (or Skerrett, there are multiple spellings in the court rolls) to create a Bowling Green, together with “a convenient house for entertaining guests”. There was a great fashion for the sport at that time and every inn had a bowling green. By the early 1700's, the Inn was called Bowling Green House or the old Upper Flask Inn. According

to the 1711 court roll, when the vintner, Samuel Stainton (or Stanton), took the copyhold, it was “commonly called by the name of Le Upper Bowling Green House”.

With the discovery of the Chalybeate Well, Hampstead's fame as a spa grew to rival Tunbridge Wells' and other similar places. The Upper Flask Inn, with its spacious grounds, became an indispensable element of Hampstead Spa life. It was the place to enter your horses for the races on the “horse course” on West Heath, with amusing names such as *Drowsy Jenny* and *Creeping Kate*, and prizes of 10 and 20 guineas. It was also a destination for wagers. In 1720, the London Journal announced “a noble earl is to walk from St Giles pound to the Upper Flask for a wager”, and in 1736, a similar wager was made for a horse race.

As Daniel Defoe famously wrote, “Hampstead indeed is risen from a little Country Village, to a City, not upon the credit only of the Waters. Though 'tis apparent its growing Greatness began there; but Company increasing gradually, and the People liking both the Place and the Diversions together.” Most significant of that *company* was the illustrious Kit Cat Club. Formed around 1700 to further Whig objectives, its origins probably predate the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when meetings began at a tavern in Shire Lane near Temple Bar, for “a little free and cheerful Conversation,” in what were then dangerous times. The Club's curious name is thought to have been derived from the proprietor of the Shire Lane tavern, Christopher Catt or Catling, who sold mutton pies known as “Kit Cats”. But Dr Arbuthnot wrote, “Whence deathless Kit-Kat took his name/Few critics can unriddle/Some say from pastry cook it came/And others from Cat and Fiddle”.



Attracted by Hampstead's growing fame, lively social scene and beautiful situation, the Kit Cat Club soon began to hold occasional summer meetings at the Upper Flask. Despite its childish-sounding name, the Club was an assemblage of formidable power and patronage, both political and artistic, with an extraordinarily distinguished membership including no fewer than nine dukes, leading Whig politicians, and the leading writers and artists of the day, such as William Congreve, John Locke, Sir John Vanbrugh, Sir Robert Walpole (first Prime Minister of Great Britain), Joseph Addison (founder of *The Spectator* magazine) and Richard Steele, who already had Hampstead connections. Walpole's son, Horace, remembered it "as a set of wits, in reality the patriots that saved Britain", and in 1736, the *London Daily Post and General Advertiser* recalled it as having comprised "the Chief of Nobility and Men of Learning."

Sir Richard Blackmore, a court physician to William III, and a minor, somewhat derided poet, wrote a poem describing the Kit Cat meetings and the attractions of Hampstead in the most flowery terms: "Or when, Apollo-like, thou'rt pleased to lead Thy sons to feast on Hampstead's airy head – Hampstead, that, towering in superior sky, Now with Parnassus does in honour vie". The artist Sir Godfrey Kneller established the tradition of painting members' portraits. Now, forty-eight of these paintings hang in the National Portrait Gallery and the National Trust's Beningbrough Hall.

But by 1720, both the Spa and the Kit Cat club were finished. The Club had dispersed; the Wells Charity was in financial difficulties; and the entertainments at Hampstead Spa had descended into licentiousness. The magistrates took action, replacing the Wells trustees, and closing down the gambling dens. "Hampstead came in for its full share of folly and indecorum", says Park, and its good name suffered:

The general dissoluteness of the period must be a matter of lamentation and disgust to every refined mind... you see sometimes more gallantry than modesty: So that the ladies who value their reputation, have of late more avoided the wells and walks at Hampstead.

Stanton left the Upper Flask to his nephew, who had risen sufficiently in the world to style himself as a *gentleman*. The Upper Flask's days as an inn were over. In 1750, the gentleman nephew subsequently bequeathed the property to his niece, Lady Charlotte Rich, who was the Earl of Warwick's only child. But the inn's fame continued. In the novel *Clarissa*, Richardson sets the heroine's escape from the pursuit of Lovelace at the Upper Flask. For a while, it became a tourist attraction, foreshadowing modern-day curiosity about buildings mentioned in popular novels and television series. According to Anna Barbauld, "a Frenchman paid a visit to Hampstead, for the sole purpose of finding out the house... where *Clarissa* lodged".

The house became home to a succession of distinguished Hampstead residents, some of whom were involved in the efforts to save the Heath. From



*The residence of George Steevens, 1771-1800.  
(Drawing by John Thomas Smith, published in Johnsoniana, 1836)*



## *Queen Mary's Hospital (cont)*

1771 until his death in 1800, George Steevens, the eccentric annotator of Shakespeare, occupied the home and called it Upper Bowling Green House.

Thomas Sheppard, MP for Frome, lived there from 1804 to 1845. He was active in local campaigns, including on the Copyholder's Committee, which was set up in 1801 to protect residents' rights from the Lord of the Manor's attempts to undermine them, and in the subsequent battles to save the Heath from Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson.

In 1858, Isaac Solly Lister purchased the property and renamed it Upper Heath House. Lister was a solicitor in the City, an active member of the Fishmongers Company, and a member of the Rosslyn Hill Chapel. He was also a stalwart Heath campaigner as a founder, and active committee member, of the Heath Protection Society, which is the original name of today's Society. In 1867, as part of Sir Thomas' reprisals against Heath campaigners, Lister was forced to enfranchise, which meant he had to buy the freehold of the property. It cost him one thousand and forty-five pounds, seventeen shillings and sixpence (£1,045/17/6).

Lister's death in 1913 was also the death-knell for this historic house. In 1916, The Times described it as one of the most charming of the old houses of Hampstead from the days of Queen Anne. That year, Upper Heath House was put up for sale still with a large garden, and was snapped up by Sir William Lever (later, Lord Leverhulme) for £11,000, which The Times considered a "war-time bargain". Lever lived at The Hill, on West Heath (now Inverforth House), formerly the home of John Gurney Hoare. I have not been able to discover quite why he wanted Upper Heath House as well, but it was certainly to come in useful to him later on.

We must now introduce two other strands of the story. The first is that of Leverhulme with his grandiose plans for The Hill, his property that included a curious enclosure of the Heath called The Paddock, located on the opposite side of North End Way. He set about enlarging his house and garden by buying up two neighbouring properties, Heath Lodge and Cedar Lawns, which were to be demolished to make way for his garden. He then tried to close a footpath running between Heath Lodge and The Hill. He used The Paddock as a bargaining chip, but encountered stiff local opposition led by the Heath Protection Society.



*Upper Heath House,  
by Adcock, 1912*

## Queen Mary's Hospital (cont)



*Map of The Hill and The Paddock*

The second strand began during the First World War, when Queen Mary established a Needlework Guild to provide clothes and other help to servicemen. After the war, a large sum of money remained and she decided it should be used to provide a maternity home for the benefit of the wives and children of soldiers, to be known as Queen Mary's Maternity Home. Her intention was to provide a model to encourage national provision of maternity homes and hospitals by building a simple and homely institution with only 15 to 17 beds, rather than a pretentious hospital elaborately fitted with expensive appliances.

In 1919, having heard of the Queen's plans, Lever, now Lord Leverhulme, presumably in a fit of pique at finding his offer of The Paddock thwarted, offered Upper Heath House to the Queen for her nursing home. He must have known that this proposal could only inflame the local opposition still further. The Queen was made well aware of local feelings and declined the offer.

Leverhulme must have been mortified, but it must also have been at this point that he realised the utility of Upper Heath House, and revised his plans. Or is it possible this was always part of his plan? He had put in an application to the Borough Council to extend the house, but he



*Lord Leverhulme*

now offered it to the Queen for the new maternity home as an alternative to The Paddock site, which was accepted. While the old house of Kit Cat and Clarissa fame was being demolished to make way for the new maternity home, he was also able to offer temporary accommodation for it in 1919 at Cedar Lawns, which during the war he had lent for use as a hospital.



*Map of the site after Queen Mary's Maternity Home was built*

## *Queen Mary's Hospital (cont)*

In October 1921, the Queen laid the foundation stone of the new Maternity Home on the site of the old Upper Flask Inn. Among those present were Sir Alfred Mond, Minister of Health, Lord Leverhulme, Lord Astor, and George Balfour, MP for Hampstead. Other Hampstead worthies included Alderman Fraser and Mrs. Gerald du Maurier (another early Society Committee member), and the foundation stone was blessed by the Bishop of Willesden. Girls from the Royal Soldiers' Orphan Home, Hampstead, dressed in red and blue dresses, formed a "guard of honour" for Her Majesty as she left.

In the Second World War, the Home was evacuated to Oxford and, on its return to Hampstead in 1946, its management was taken over by the London Hospital. In 1972, it was transferred to the Royal Free Hospital. Funds from the closure and sale of New End Hospital in 1986 were used in 1991 for the development of the Home as a Care of the Elderly Unit, managed by the Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust. It is to be hoped that any future use of the site will have some regard to its exceptional history. □

### ***Delivering the Newsletter by email***

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

It is environmentally more friendly, saving paper and cost.

With postage charges increasing, this is now 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**

### ***Hampstead Theatre***

Eton Avenue

#### ***Support your local theatre – Become a Friend of Hampstead Theatre***

Avoid disappointment by becoming a Friend and taking advantage of our priority booking period. For just £60 per annum Friends receive the following benefits:

- Priority Booking • Advance notice of forthcoming productions • Quarterly e-newsletter • Invitations to exclusive events at the Theatre • 10% discount at Hampstead Theatre bar

**For more details see**  
**www.hampsteadtheatre.com/support-us**  
**☎ 020 7449 4155**

***We look forward to welcoming you soon***



Remember 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.*

## **Christodoulos Panayiotou: *Act II: The Island* to 5 January 2020**

***With Basma Alsharif, Adam Christiansen, CAConrad, Laurence Crane, Maria Palacios Cruz, Diocouda Diaoune, Nick Gordon, Eileen Myles, Alice Notley, Ben Rivers and Ana Vaz.***

This is the first major UK exhibition for Christodoulos Panayiotou (b. 1978, Limassol, Cyprus). It brings together works from the last 10 years, many of which have not been shown in the UK before, and new commissions, activating Camden Arts Centre with a series of poetic interventions.

Informed by his interest in archaeology, anthropology and his background in dance and theatre, Panayiotou uncovers obscured and forgotten stories, transforming the world into a theatre where myths are acted out. Natural stone mosaics, gilded icons, mineralogical curiosities and the photographic archive of a Cypriot newspaper, all become materials and motifs for his seductive and highly charged works.

**Opening times:**

**Tuesday – Sunday, 10am – 6pm**

**Wednesdays, 10am – 9pm**

**Closed Mondays**

**Camden Arts Centre, Arkwright Road, NW3 6DG**

**Nearest Station: Finchley Road (Underground); Finchley Road and Frognal (Overground)**

**T +44(0)20 7472 5500**

**E [info@camdenartscentre.org](mailto:info@camdenartscentre.org)**

**W [www.camdenartscentre.org](http://www.camdenartscentre.org)**



*Untitled, by Christodoulos Panayiotou.*

# *The Society Celebrates 30 Years of the City's Custodianship of the Heath*

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*by John Beyer*

*The City of London Corporation has been managing and preserving the Heath since 1989. During that time, the Society has been working closely with the City and it was only fitting to host a party to mark that anniversary and honour the relationship. The selection of photographs, courtesy of Diana Von R Photography, and the reprint of the addresses by Society Chair Marc Hutchinson and Karina Dostalova, Chair of the City's Hampstead Heath Management Committee, recreate the festive ambience from that late summer evening.*

On Wednesday 11 September, the Society hosted an evening reception to celebrate the City's custodianship of the Heath over the last 30 years. Leading figures from Camden, Haringey and Barnet together with leaders from City of London Corporation joined in the celebration.

Councillor Sheila Peacock (Mayor of Haringey), Councillor Lachhya Gurung (Deputy Mayor of Barnet), and Immediate Past Mayor of Camden Jenny Headlam-Wells met City of London Sheriff Elizabeth Green, and other dignitaries at the party. Some two hundred guests gathered at the Cricket Ground near the Parliament Hill

Pavilion in fine weather and fine mood.

The party not only celebrated an anniversary, but also paid tribute to the Heath rangers, ecologists, constabulary, lifeguards, and other dedicated staff who keep the Heath a special place through their daily efforts, come rain or shine.

At the gathering, guests enjoyed the world premiere of a musical tribute to the Heath, specially written and performed by world famous guitarist John Etheridge and singer Vimala Rowe.

Guests also heard from Society Chair Marc Hutchinson who highlighted the connections between the City and the Heath since Tudor times, and the close cooperation between the City and the Society over the last 30 years to preserve this unique open space and its surroundings. In reply, Karina Dostalova, Chair of the City's Hampstead Heath Management Committee, also addressed the gathering and particularly acknowledged the vital role of everyone who works on the Heath.



*Cake with Heath map*



*City of London Sheriff Liz Green talks to Heath rangers Terry Holly and Charles Cofie (right)*



## *The Society Celebrates 30 Years of the City's Custodianship of the Heath (cont)*



*Deputy Mayor of Barnet Lachhya Gurung with Mayor of Haringey Sheila Peacock*



*John Etheridge and Vimala Rowe debut their "Anthem to the Heath"*

### ***Marc Hutchinson's Speech***

“ I warmly welcome you all here today, and may I extend a particular welcome to Sheriff the Hon Elizabeth Green and Common Councillor Karina Dostolova from the City of London. The Mayor of Camden sends her last-minute apologies, but I am delighted that we can welcome here today, to represent Camden, Councillor Jenny Headlam-Wells, the Immediate Past Mayor of Camden and a good friend of the Society. I also particularly welcome the Mayor of Haringey, the Deputy Mayor of Barnet, and many local borough councillors also here.

On the 31st of March 1989, under an order made by Nicholas Ridley, Mrs Thatcher's Environment Secretary, the Heath was transferred to the City of London. Article 3 of the Order states simply, “on the transfer date there shall vest in the City all interests of the Residuary Body in the Heath lands,” and the Order went on to provide that £15m was to be paid by the residuary body to the newly created Hampstead Heath Trust Fund to defray maintenance costs.

What a fateful order that was. Not only did it finally remove the threat that portions of the ancient Heath would be parcelled up and transferred to a variety of local bodies, but it also secured the future of the Heath, as London's greatest and world-famous open space, by entrusting its custody and care to another ancient body that already had, not only centuries of experience of owning and managing public open spaces, but also the financial resources and expertise to carry out the task.

In the long historical context, the City's eventual ownership of the Heath is perhaps less surprising because the City has had strong links to Hampstead and its Heath since Tudor times, when the City was licensed to take a water supply from the Heath, and throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, when the City, and City aldermen and livery companies, helped, on a purely charitable basis, to save the original Heath and extend it with new parcels of land.

So we are here today to celebrate the City's achievements for the Heath over these past 30 years, and to express our heartfelt thanks to the

## *The Society Celebrates 30 Years of the City's Custodianship of the Heath (cont)*



*Heath staff David Humphries and Richard Payne*

Heath staff; the Superintendent and his team; Paul Maskell and his team who have helped us with this party; and the rangers, the ecologists, the lifeguards, and the sports staff, who work, every day and in all weathers, to protect this

rural refuge, and to provide so many opportunities for such a variety of human and - it has to be said - canine recreation.

I want to pay tribute especially to those staff who have worked here all their lives, and in some cases for the past 30 years.

When our Society was founded in 1897, its first chairman laid down its two founding principles: first, the desirability of interfering as little as possible with the natural beauty, that is to say, the natural growth of plants and shrubs and the natural bird life, of the Heath; and secondly, the necessity of working in harmony with the Heath's then owner, the London County Council.

Today, we pursue that second founding principle by working in harmony, albeit not always in complete and perfect harmony, with the City of London. The projects we have jointly and successfully pursued over these years are simply numberless. Some of them are recorded in the

new and definitive biography of the Heath written by Helen Lawrence who is with us today. Let me mention only three.

First, working with Camden Council and the Highgate Society, our Society and the City managed, in a fight which lasted 18 years, to save Athlone House from demolition, and how gratifying it has been not only to save the building but to see its current restoration by Mikhail Fridman, one of the Society's life members.

Second, in 1993 with the Vale of Health Society, we were able to persuade the City effectively to assert rights to the Heath's common land under the Commons Registration Act, and so prevent the construction of a new road across part of the Heath to a property known as Manor Cottage at the Vale of Health. The owner of the property claimed a personal right-of-way across the Heath after 20 years of use, but that claim could not stand in the face of the Act. My point here is that the Greater London Council, the previous owner



*Heath Superintendent Bob Warnock, presenting flowers to Karina Dostalova, Chair of the City's Hampstead Heath Management Committee*

## ***The Society Celebrates 30 Years of the City's Custodianship of the Heath (cont)***

of the Heath, consistently failed to assert those commons rights during the owner's claimed 20 years. It was the City who subsequently did so and, thereby, prevented the building of the road.

Third, and most recently - last week in fact - we worked with the City to bring sheep back onto the Heath after an absence of sixty years to demonstrate, among other things, the ecological benefits of grazing on the Heath. Even with so much competing news, you must have noticed the extraordinary level of media interest created by this unusual project which seems so to have captured the public's imagination that we hope it will be repeated next year.

And the City's and the Society's joint endeavours are not confined to the Heath lands; they extend to the fringes of the Heath. The City and the Society are, at this very moment, in some cases with the Highgate Society and the Vale of Health Society, working together to prevent inappropriate development on no fewer than five sites on the Heath fringes.

As a Society, we happily and often say how fortunate London is to have the City as the Heath's guardian. We live presently in uncertain times, but I feel confident enough to look



*Kenwood head Sam Cooper talks to Heath Superintendent Bob Warnock*



*Society Committee member John Weston with Helen Lawrence, author of "How The Heath Was Saved"*

forward to the next 30 years, and so to ask you to join with me in a toast to the City of London and its wonderful Heath staff -- to the next 30 years! ”

### ***Karina Dostalova's Speech***

“ Many thanks to the Society for hosting this wonderful event to celebrate 30 years of the City of London Corporation's custodianship of the Heath. I am delighted to have the opportunity to say a few words to express our gratitude for the support and guidance which the Society provides so willingly.

This is my third year as Chair, and it has been wonderful to be able to reflect on the challenges and successes over the 30 years that the City Corporation have had the responsibility for managing our much-loved Hampstead Heath.

The Society has played an integral role in protecting, enlarging and conserving the Heath since its foundation in 1897. It has fought with passion and commitment to preserve the



## *The Society Celebrates 30 Years of the City's Custodianship of the Heath (cont)*



*Richard Sumray JP, London Council for Recreation and Sport; founder member of Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, with Heath Sub-Committee member Thomas Radice*

Heath's wild and natural state.

In the 30 years that the City has cared for the Heath, we have worked closely with the Society - who are represented on both our decision-making bodies, the Management Committee and Consultative Committee.

I would particularly like to thank Marc Hutchinson, John Beyer and Thomas Radice for their support and commitment to the Heath.

Our frontline staff keep the Heath clean and pristine and, although it may look wild and natural, an incredible amount of skilled work goes into ensuring that it remains this way. They are the oil which keeps the cogs turning to ensure the Heath is, in our opinion, the best green space in the country.

We are proud that many of our staff show their dedication and stay with us for many years. We have a few key members of the team who have been here the whole 30 years and were even involved in the Heath before then. A heartfelt



*Society Chair Marc Hutchinson receives picture to commemorate sheep trial*



*Vimala Rowe "All OK!"*

thank you to all members of staff, new and old: this place would not be the same without you.

We are also joined today by my fellow members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee, and members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee. I would also like to thank you for your wise counsel and support.

The City of London Corporation is proud to be the custodian of this

remarkable open space and we will continue to work with our partners and the wider Heath community to protect and conserve Hampstead Heath to ensure it continues to enrich the lives of current and future generations.

Let's look forward to the next 30 years and work together to ensure that this special place remains just that. ” □



## *Autumn 2019 Events in the Library*

**Thursday 14 November 7.30pm**

**Dr Ines Schlenker:**

### *An illustrated talk on Milein Cosman*

Milein Cosman was a prolific and talented German-born artist who lived in Hampstead and was part of the British art scene in the second half of the 20th century. Her work can be seen in the National Portrait Gallery, the British Museum, The V&A, the Ashmolean and the Fitzwilliam.

Highly regarded in England's classical music circles, she drew primarily from life, as she knew many of the prominent artists and musicians of her time. Her portraits were fuelled by her own passions for music, literature, and visual arts.

Dr Ines Schlenker, her biographer, will give an illustrated talk on her life and work.

Tickets £10



**Thursday 12 December 7.30pm**

### **Seasonal Quiz**

With refreshments. Individual seats or team tables available.

Tickets £5 each or £30 for a table of 6. Booking recommended.



### **Children's Events**

**Rhyme-Time** every Tuesday & Friday, 10.30am, £3 per child on the door.

**Chess Class** every Saturday, 2.30pm, £5 per child on the door.

**We accept donations (at any time) of fiction, non-fiction, children's books and DVDs. These go into our stock if needed, or are sold to help pay our building costs.**

Book tickets by calling the library ☎ 020 7431 1266 or online at [www.wegottickets.com](http://www.wegottickets.com)

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# *A Tribute for Gerald Isaaman OBE*

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*by Martin Humphery, Vice-President of the Society*

*The Society's long-serving Patron and staunch supporter, Gerry Isaaman, died aged 85 on 29 April 2019. Because of the publishing schedule for the previous issue of this Newsletter, the Society could only note the event in the Chair's Notes. The following tribute is a heartfelt addition to the fine obituaries of this outstanding Hampstead figure published in The Times, The Guardian and local papers since his death.*

Now that we have all had time to reflect on the life and career of a man who could truly be called *Mr Hampstead*, I have been asked to compose a fuller tribute to a warm friend of the Society and, for many years, the distinguished editor of the *Ham & High*, which he transformed into a local newspaper with a national, and indeed international, reputation.

Gerry's truly ground-breaking career in local journalism began when he left school at 16 and was hired as a messenger boy by the *Stoke Newington and Hackney Observer* in 1949. His next job would be the role of his life. In 1955, he became a junior reporter at the *Ham & High*, earning 25 shillings a week, which is approximately £35 today. After rising to chief reporter and acting editor, Gerry was appointed editor in 1968. His career was steeped in dedication and a passion for good journalism, and Gerry once said, "Hampstead was my university." These are the bare bones of his career. For those of us lucky enough to have known and worked with Gerry, there is much more to say about the man himself.

All his colleagues tell the same story of a boss who was tough and insisted on his own high standards of

journalism. But, above all, Gerry was encouraging and supportive. He clearly had a gift for recruiting people who helped him make the *Ham & High* such an innovative and campaigning paper. Many of its journalists went on to distinguished journalistic careers on a wider stage. Gerry also had a knack for attracting local luminaries to the paper's amazing stable of reviewers, easily rivalling that of many national publications.

At the funeral which, following his own detailed instructions, was a joyful celebration devoid of "religious stuff", Matthew Lewin, his successor as *Ham & High* editor, told us Gerry:

had a piercing vision about what people wanted from their local newspaper which, he believed, should cover every aspect of their lives, including what he called 'the good things in life' – music, art, theatre, and above all, literature.

*The Independent* described the *Ham & High* as "the gold standard for British weekly newspapers". *The New York Times* suggested it was "the only local newspaper with a foreign policy", following fine coverage of events in Vietnam, South Africa and elsewhere.

Helen Marcus, the Society's former chair, recalls he once told her he was a member of 15 local committees. And that was in addition to being a committee member of the Society beginning in 1976, and acting as the Society's press representative in the 1980's when the Heath was under threat of being divided between Camden and Barnet. He was in the forefront of so

many local causes, including the fights to save Burgh House and the Old Hampstead Town Hall.

I think other former Society chairs will join me in saying Gerry certainly kept us on our toes. Hardly a week would go by without a call from him asking, “what’s new, Martin?” He chased down every story, reported it impeccably and, if he thought I was not being active enough about a local issue, would tell me so in no uncertain terms. Even in the last months of his life, he was chasing Marc, the Society’s current chair, and me to get on with a project to restore Constable’s tomb.

Gerry also took on so many appointments and tasks outside his editorial functions, including many years as a Saturday sub-editor of the *Sunday Express*. “It keeps me sharp,” he said. In addition, he was a member of the Press Complaints Commission and a trustee of the King’s Cross Disaster Fund, and served a term as a non-executive director of the Whittington Hospital Trust. All this reflects Gerry’s conviction that a local editor should involve himself fully in the life of the community he serves.

Above all his many achievements, we will remember Gerry Isaaman as a loyal supporter of the Society’s work in the preservation and conservation of the Heath and the built environment of Hampstead. He was a warm friend and a constant source of encouragement. Gerry loved Hampstead and Hampstead loved him.

He will be greatly missed. □

## ***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.

# Heath Walks: 2019 – 2020

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.burghouse.org.uk](http://www.burghouse.org.uk)).

***NB:*** *Parking is extremely difficult locally, especially in spring and summer; the 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 (9:30am 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 £5, to be collected at the beginning of each walk, to help support future walks programmes 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.***

Further information from the walks organiser, Thomas Radice

mobile: 07941 528 034 or

email: [hhs.walks@gmail.com](mailto:hhs.walks@gmail.com)



**3 November 10.30am** (meet at **the bandstand, Golders Hill Park**)

**Trees of the Heath** led by David Humphries, Trees Management Officer, Hampstead Heath (City of London Corporation).

***NB: restricted numbers – advance booking essential***

**1 December 10.30am** (meet at **Kenwood Walled Garden** entrance, off Hampstead Lane)

**The Hidden Heath: signs of the Heath's past** led by Michael Hammerson, a Vice-President of the Highgate Society and member of the Society's Heath Sub-Committee.

**2020 (No walk in January)**

**2 February 10.30am** (meet at **The Old Bull & Bush**, North End Way, NW3)

**Laughter in the Landscape: a walk to celebrate Grimaldi Sunday**

Explore 'Appy' Ampstead with accredited guide Lester Hillman, academic adviser to the Camden Tour Guides Association and to the Islington Archaeology and History Association.

***NB: restricted numbers – advance booking essential***

**1 March 10.30am** (meet at **Burgh House**)

**The history of the Hampstead Heath ponds** led by Marc Hutchinson, Chair of the Society and Secretary of the Hampstead Heath Winter Swimming Club.

**5 April 9.30am** (meet at **Burgh House**)

**Birds of the Heath** led by John Hunt member of the Society and former Chair of the Marylebone Birdwatching Society.

Further walks will be announced in the January 2020 Newsletter. Details of walk programmes are also available on the Society's website:

**[www.HeathandHampstead.org.uk](http://www.HeathandHampstead.org.uk)**

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