



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

*December 2020*

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*Heron fishing near lilies on Viaduct Pond*



# Annual Report for the year 2019-2020

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**Front cover:** The photograph was taken by John Weston. John comments: "The grey heron is the largest bird you are likely to see on the Heath; this one was fishing by Viaduct Pond. Herons suffer badly in cold winters, as they find it much harder to feed when ponds and streams are frozen. However, recent warm winters have favoured their numbers and they can be spotted on many of the Heath's ponds."

**The views of guest contributors to this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Society.**

*by Marc Hutchinson*

I am grateful to be able to report to you that, notwithstanding the huge disruption to our national and local life during the pandemic, the Society, through its committees and officers, has managed to continue the pursuit of its principal charitable objects of protecting the Heath and the Village.

### **President**

Our distinguished President Lord Hoffmann, who has served us in that position for over 16 years now, has decided to step down. The Society will always owe him a great debt of gratitude for the expertise which he has brought to our decision-making and for the time and effort (despite his many other commitments) he has devoted to the Society. We shall pay tributes to him at our forthcoming Annual General Meeting when he formally steps down.

I am delighted to announce that Lord Mance, a long-time Hampstead resident and Society member, and until recently Deputy President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, has agreed to stand for election as our new President. It goes without saying how fortunate we are to have found such an eminent successor to Lord Hoffmann.

### **Annual General Meeting**

Under our constitution we should hold our annual general meeting in June of each year. That was not possible this year because of the first lockdown and we had hoped to hold it in this December. Unfortunately, the second lockdown derailed that plan, with the result that we now intend to hold the "2020 Annual General Meeting" as soon as possible in 2021 and on the minimum 28 days' notice, Covid restrictions allowing.

## ***Annual Report for the year 2019-2020 (cont)***

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As we are administratively well prepared for this meeting, this Newsletter contains a Notice of Annual General Meeting outlining the business to be transacted. The date, time and venue will be notified to members as soon as they are known.

Apart from the welcome to our new President, a distinct piece of business on the agenda is the adoption of a new rule for our constitution under which the Society and its committees will be able to hold virtual meetings. There is no intention that virtual meetings replace face-to-face meetings, which we feel strongly are the best means of transacting the business of the Society, but adopting the new rule will put beyond any legal doubt the validity of virtual meetings which circumstances force us to hold. We have of course been holding virtual committee meetings throughout this year. The Charity Commission urges unincorporated charities such as ours to adopt such a rule.

### ***Ave atque vale***

The Society extends a warm welcome to Anne Fairweather, who became Chairman of the Hampstead Heath Management Committee in June of this year in succession to Karina Dostolova. We have formally thanked Karina for her distinguished work during her three years as Chairman.

We note with sadness the recent passing of two public figures who had a significant connection with the Society.

Michael Welbank served the Society in several roles, as a trustee, as a member of the Heath Sub-Committee and as the Society's representative on the City's Heath Consultative Committee. I am grateful to one of our retired trustees, Jeremy Wright, who has kindly written Michael's obituary, which appears on page 10. Michael was a planning expert and an amusing and forthright character: he declined an invitation to join the Society's Planning Sub-Committee for the reason that he

disapproved of Conservation Areas!

Some of you will have attended the Springett Lecture given by Lindy Guinness, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, in 2018. She died on 26 October. As some of the obituaries in the national press noted, it was her suggestion which led to the reintroduction of grazing sheep on the Heath in 2019, a successful and much-publicised project which we and the City hope to repeat in 2021.

### ***The Heath in time of Covid***

It was understandable that, with the introduction of the first lockdown, we should receive many communications from members and the public about the behaviour of visitors to the Heath. Many complaints related to rubbish, squatting and illegal cycling (especially on Sandy Heath) and these problems continued for many months. It is important that members understand that, with the introduction of lockdown, it was necessary for the City to require almost all the Heath staff to remain at home for their own safety, with the result that there was only ever a skeleton staff available to try to keep the Heath tidy and to enforce the byelaws. Heath staff who were on duty deserve the highest praise for their hard work in dealing with problems which were unprecedented in their scale and nature, not least the hugely increased number of Heath visitors desperate to exercise in a large open space. The increase in visitor numbers is reflected in the corresponding growth in the number of areas of the Heath fenced off for decompaction and regeneration.

The Heath Report in this Newsletter comments on the problem of cycling in response to which the City has now developed a long list of complementary measures to bring the problem under control. Not all cyclists finding themselves on a non-cycling path are intentionally breaking the law. Whilst cycle paths are clearly identified as such at each entrance to the



*Fenced regeneration area by Hampstead Mixed Bathing Pond*

Heath, once the cyclist is on their way and comes to a fork, it is usually unclear which path is the continuation of the cycle path. It is intended, amongst other things, that a small blue disc on a short post be placed at these junctions in order to allow cyclists to stay on the designated route. The recently acquired ability of the Heath Constabulary to impose significant on-the-spot fines for illegal cycling (and e.g. litter) is a further measure.

I am very grateful to Bob Warnock, the Heath Superintendent, for agreeing, since the first lockdown, to have a weekly (now fortnightly) comprehensive Zoom briefing with me and colleagues over the latest issues affecting the Heath. These regular sessions have been extremely helpful to us in allowing us, where necessary, to inform our members of sudden developments and to enable us to express our concerns and views to the Superintendent as he grapples with so many current problems, not least the almost total loss of income from licensed activities on the Heath.

### ***Ham & High***

We have accepted the invitation of the Editor of the Ham & High, Andre Langlois, to contribute a monthly column to the Heathwatch page of the Ham & High. The topics are extremely varied, and pieces on painting and archaeology have already been published. We hope you will enjoy reading them.

### ***Swimming***

Nothing has materially changed from the position outlined by John Beyer in his Heath Report to you of May 2020. The swimming ponds reopened after the first lockdown but were closed again during the second lockdown. They reopened again on 2 December 2020. A group of activist swimmers, under the name of "Forum 71" (a reference to the Hampstead Heath 1871 with its provisions requiring the Heath to be kept unenclosed and free to visitors) has been founded in order to campaign against the introduction of compulsory swimming charges.

Although the Society accepts the decision of the Hampstead Heath Management Committee to introduce compulsory charging, it feels that the manner in which the decision was taken, in rejection of the views of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, has unwelcome implications for the future operation of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018, and the Society is raising this matter formally with the City.

### ***Lisvane***

The City has commissioned an independent report from Lord Lisvane relating to all aspects of the City's governance. The report is now a public document. Amongst numerous radical proposals, it recommends, in the interests of cost-saving and efficiency, the 'abolition' of the Hampstead Heath Management and Consultative Committees: see page 23 of this Newsletter. We have made verbal, and will submit written, representations to City Sheriff Christopher Hayward, who is charged with consulting on the recommendations in the report.

### ***South Fairground Site – Vale of Health***

The owner of this site, following the order of Camden Council to demolish the illegal house she had built on the site (an order which was upheld by the Planning Inspector in proceedings in which the Society and the Vale of Health Society ("VoHS") appeared as Rule 6



*South Fairground Site, Vale of Health*

parties in support of Camden), brought a large mobile home onto the site. She then proceeded to construct further illegal buildings on the site which have been the subject of another enforcement notice by Camden. We understand those buildings, like the house before them, are now being demolished.

### ***North Fairground Site – Vale of Health***

The fate of this site was also the subject of an appeal to a Planning Inspector who last year refused to overturn Camden's non-determination of whether to grant a Certificate of Lawfulness for a new permitted use, namely the establishment on the site of residential 'bungalows' (on wheels). The Society and the VoHS also appeared in these proceedings as Rule 6 parties in support of Camden. The Planning Inspector found that the site legally remains, under planning regulation, a site for showground families and their equipment. Nevertheless we understand that site has recently been sold to Knightsbridge Parks LLP, a caravan site operator, which made the original Certificate application. With the VoHS and Camden, we shall be monitoring any further developments, physical or legal, do with the site.

### ***The Heath and 'Social Prescription'***

With the pandemic as catalyst, the Heath management has begun to liaise with local GPs and health and social services with a view to supporting the growing practice of social (as distinct from medical) prescription for patients whose wellbeing would be improved by visits to the Heath and enjoyment of its green and quiet space.

### ***The Village in time of Covid***

The shops in the Village have suffered badly as a result of the lockdowns. Some have closed permanently, although it has been a small relief to see that some of the affected premises are already being refurbished with a view to new shops opening. The Society is in dialogue with Camden about the collection of the increased volume of rubbish from takeaway outlets.



The Town Report in this Newsletter mentions some of the licensing applications in which the Society has been involved over the past year. A fairly common feature of the applications has been the wish of unlicensed premises to begin to sell alcohol for consumption off the premises, and for food outlets to extend their night hours. The Society always opposes these applications in the general interests of protecting the amenity of the Village and South End Green. I am pleased to say that our objections have been upheld in the important cases. My thanks go to our Licensing Officer, Maddy Raman, who has the tedious weekly task of checking the Camden website for these applications, which are no longer notified to us.

We do hope that our members will continue to support our local shops and restaurants as they struggle to survive under very adverse conditions.

### ***Abacus School***

An eight-day virtual hearing (twice adjourned and finishing in October) took place before a Planning Inspector by way of appeal against Camden's refusal to allow the Old Police Station (Grade 2 listed) on Rosslyn Hill to be converted to a primary school academy. The Society, along with residents and their associations, the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum and many other local groups, supported Camden and were represented by the Hampstead Community for Responsible Development which appeared, with counsel, as the Rule 6 party. There was much conflicting expert evidence and some of the non-expert evidence was remarkable, such as the proposed location of the reception classroom in the disused underground prison cells. The Planning Inspector's decision is expected in the New Year.

### ***People***

#### *Trustees*

In early 2020 we appointed three new trustees to the General Committee. Each of them will be standing

for election for a three-year term at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting. Professor Jeff Waage OBE and Latoya Austin JP are both active members of the Heath Sub-Committee. Dafydd James-Williams has been appointed to conduct our local schools outreach project which of course has been delayed for the time being. Dafydd has also taken over from Martin Humphery as the Society's representative on the Keats House Consultative Committee. We are very grateful to Martin for his many years' service on that Committee.

#### *Town Sub-Committee*

As noted in the Town Report, we said goodbye to Anousheh Barbezieux who served on the Town Sub-Committee for many years and as its acting Chair before the current appointment of Andrew Haslam-Jones. We wish her well for the future.

### ***Events***

We are very sorry not to have been able to hold the events we had planned this year. In addition to the Annual General Meeting, there could be no new members' party or Christmas party, and we have decided to postpone to 2021 this year's Springett Lecture by Merlin Sheldrake.

### ***Conclusion***

All our committees have continued their work during the year under difficult circumstances and I am very grateful to all their members. May I also thank you, the members of our Society, who continue to support our work with your subscriptions and donations and timely information about local issues.

This has been an unprecedentedly horrible year but the Society is now preparing for a return to its full schedule of activities for 2021 and, on behalf of the trustees, I wish you all a happy Christmas and even happier New Year.

# *Notice of the Annual General Meeting*

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***Notice is given that the delayed 123rd Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on a date and at a time in 2021 to be advised and at a venue also to be advised.***

***The business of the meeting will be as follows:***

1. Approval of the minutes of the 122nd Annual General Meeting held on 19 June 2019.
2. Chair's report for 2019-2020.
3. Treasurer's report on the Society's examined financial statements for the 2019 financial year and adoption of those financial statements.
4. Appointment of Fisher Phillips LLP, Chartered Accountants, as the Society's auditors for the 2020 financial year.
5. Determination of membership subscription rates for the 2021 financial year. The trustees propose that there should be no change to the rates.
6. Determination of the limit on free/discounted memberships. The trustees propose that there be no change to the current limit of 200, approved by members in 2019.

*Note: this relates to the figure of 200 specified in Rule 10(4):*

*"10(3) Notwithstanding Rules 10(1) and (2), the General Committee may determine, with effect from 1 January 2017, that the applicable annual subscription for a new member shall, for the member's first year of membership only, be less than the applicable annual subscription determined under Rule 10(1).*

*10(4) The General Committee may make such a determination only as part of a particular scheme designed to increase the paid membership of the Society, and so that the amount of subscription income thereby forgone in respect of such new members does not exceed, in any year, an amount equal to the aggregate of subscription income (for a standard*

*annual individual membership) that would be payable in that year by, subject to Rule 10(5), 200 members.*

*10(5) The number of members specified in Rule 10(4) may be changed by resolution of the members of the Society at any general meeting of the Society."*

7. Amendment of the Society's constitution

The General Committee, with the support of the Charity Commission, recommends the adoption of a new Rule 27A in the Society's constitution to permit members and committees of the Society to meet virtually. The text of the new Rule is as follows:

*"Rule 27A Virtual Meetings*

- (1) If the General Committee decides that it is unlawful or impracticable to conduct a general meeting of the Society involving the physical attendance of members of the Society, the General Committee shall be entitled to decide that such a general meeting shall be conducted by electronic audio-visual means.
- (2) If the Chair of the General Committee or the Chair of any Sub-Committee decides that it is unlawful or impracticable to conduct a meeting of the General Committee or, as the case may be, the relevant Sub-Committee, in either case, involving the physical attendance members of the committee, that Chair shall be entitled to decide that the relevant meeting shall be conducted by electronic audio or audio-visual means.
- (3) At a meeting conducted under paragraph (1) or (2) of this Rule 27A, no member shall have the right to attend the meeting in person and votes may be permitted to be cast at the meeting by electronic or any other means.
- (4) The provisions of this constitution have effect

## Notice of the Annual General Meeting (cont)

subject to this Rule 27A.”

8. Election of Officers and other members of the General Committee.

### **Officers**

The following candidates have been duly proposed for election to the following positions:

**Vice-President:** Martin Humphery  
**Chair:** Marc Hutchinson  
**Treasurer:** Maureen Clark-Darby  
**Secretary:** Evelyn Ellis

### **General Committee Members**

The following have been duly proposed for election for a first term of three years:

Latoya Austin, Dafydd James-Williams, Jessica Learmond-Criqui and Prof. Jeff Waage OBE.

The following have been duly proposed for election for a second term of three years:

Frank Harding and Robert Linger.

*Note: Tony Ghilchik and Vicki Harding continue the terms for which they were elected. The Chairs of the three Sub-Committees are trustees and members of the General Committee, but they are appointed from time to time by the General Committee, not elected. It is the intention of the General Committee to re-appoint Peter Tausig (currently an appointed member) and to appoint John Weston (currently an elected member serving a second three-year term) to the General Committee as appointed members for the year 2020-2021.*

9. Any other business.
10. Retirement of Lord Hoffmann and election of Lord Mance as President.

Information about the candidates standing for election to the General Committee is set out on pages 8-9.

Evelyn Ellis, Secretary  
21 November 2020

### **World Peace Garden**

On 10 September the Society's Chair, Marc Hutchinson, joined with Kate Slemeck, CEO of the Royal Free Hospital, to unveil this commemorative glass tile in tribute to the heroic work of the hospital staff during the pandemic. The tile, which is located in the World Peace Garden at Hampstead Heath Overground Station, was designed and made by Melissa Fairbanks, a member of the Heath Sub-Committee, and the unveiling was organised and hosted by Jonathan Bergman, a member of the Town Sub-Committee.





# *Candidates for Election*

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## ***Lord (Jonathan) Mance***

Lord Mance was a barrister, becoming a judge in 1993 and retiring from the UK Supreme Court as its Deputy President in 2018. Since retirement, he practises as an arbitrator and chairs the Conduct Committee of the House of Lords as well as the International Law Association.

He has had much to do with Europe and international affairs, having spent time in Germany after university. He chaired the Council of Europe's Consultative Council of European Judges (2000-2003) and sat on the panel appraising candidates to be Judges or Advocate-Generals at the Court of Justice (2010-2018). He led a group working on domestic enforcement of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and a delegation reporting on the problem of impunity in relation to violence against women in the Congo in 2008. He also chaired Hampstead Counselling Service (2005-2020).

He is an honorary fellow of University College, as well as of Wolfson College, Oxford. He was High Steward of Oxford University (2012-2018) and received an honorary DCL from the University in 2016.

## ***Latoya Austin JP***

Latoya has worked in City law firms and investment banks, within legal contract and transaction management teams. She is also currently appointed as a magistrate in the London area.

Latoya has lived in the Hampstead area for over 12 years and has been a member of the Heath Sub-Committee since 2015. Latoya has also been part of the communications sub-committee with responsibility for social media for the Society.

## ***Frank Harding***

Frank is a chartered accountant who was a partner in KMG Thomson McLintock and subsequently KPMG in London from 1967 to 1996. He represented the United Kingdom on the Council of the International Federation of Accountants from 1987 to 1997 and served as its President from 1997 to 2000. Since his retirement from practice, Frank served as a director of a number of companies and as a trustee on the boards of a number of charities. He is currently a trustee of the Wiener Library and the Association of Jewish Refugees and, for a number of years, was an adviser for Pilotlight, the charity that provides advice to small and medium-sized charities. Frank was formerly a Vice-Chair of the Society and Chair of the Town Sub-Committee when that committee was re-established in 2008.

## ***Jessica Learmond-Criqui***

Jessica Learmond-Criqui is an employment and immigration solicitor. She has lived in Hampstead for over 32 years. She joined The Heath & Hampstead Society over 20 years ago and has served on the Society's Town Sub-Committee since 2007 and as a trustee on its General Committee since 2013. She has been involved in the planning work of the Society and has campaigned in Hampstead on a variety of initiatives. She is involved in the Hampstead Transport Partnership which brings various voluntary groups together, including the Society, to discuss and engage with the community on actions to make Hampstead and Frognal and Fitzjohns wards a pleasant environment for residents addressing, among other things, congestion and pollution issues. Jessica is a governor of UCL Academy.

***Robert Linger***

Robert is a chartered accountant by profession and was an audit partner in Arthur Andersen until his retirement in 1997. Born in 1941, he has lived in and around Hampstead all his life and, accordingly, has accumulated a considerable understanding of its ethos, history, architecture and literary and artistic associations. Since his retirement, Robert has been involved in a number of local community groups. He joined the Society's Town Sub-Committee in 2008 (becoming closely involved with the restoration of the Spaniards Tollgate House, and the new heritage signposts in the Village), and the General Committee in 2010, where his responsibilities continue to include membership promotion and have included the staging of the Society's recent series of art exhibitions at Burgh House. His more general interests include architecture, current affairs and most sports, whilst his collection of local art and antiquarian books provides him with a wealth of valuable reference material. His wife, Angela, is also a lifelong local resident and their children and grandchildren live nearby too.

***Prof. Jeff Waage OBE***

Jeff is an ecologist, largely retired from a 40-year career at the University of London where he led programmes focused on addressing complex agricultural, environmental and health challenges in the developing world. For 12 years, he also managed science programmes in the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau. He has served on the science advisory committees of DEFRA and Natural England and in 2008 received an OBE for his contributions to science.

Jeff has a lifelong interest in natural history and has been indulging this on the Heath since moving to the area in 2008. He is an active member of Heath Hands, and now represents the Society on the board of that charity. Research is still a passion, and he is currently studying the impact of human and dog activity on the Heath's wildlife, with colleagues at City of London and the Zoological Society of London.

***Dafydd James Williams***

Dafydd James-Williams, as the name suggests, hails from Wales, but has lived in the borough of Camden for the most part of the last 30 years or so, and in Hampstead for the last six. He has worked at North London Collegiate School since 2000, for 15 of those as their Head of English and currently as their Director of University Admissions.

Prior to his career in education, he worked in community and public relations for the National Parks in Wales in a European Union-funded role, working alongside the Conservation Department of the three Welsh National Parks on balancing the varying stake holders' priorities, from land-management, to tourism and to the conservation of sites of special scientific interest.

He has a particular interest in seeking to widen engagement with younger members of the local community in the conservation of both the Heath and Town for the future. He is especially keen to try to draw upon the current involvement of younger members of the community with long-term sustainability on a more local level.

# *Michael Welbank MBE 1930 – 2020*

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*by Jeremy Wright*

I well remember my first meeting with Michael. I had been Chair of the Society's Heath Sub-Committee since January 1998. Early in 1999 I was delighted but intrigued to learn that this unknown member was interested in joining our Sub-Committee. But as an architect, surely he would be better suited to join our Town Sub-Committee?

Over an introductory coffee at his delightful house in South Hill Park, I gained a little knowledge about Michael, and learnt more later on. For 30 years he had been a director of various international consultancies and had been involved in a wide range of development, planning, environmental and conservation projects in the UK and overseas. However, he had lived all his life near the Heath, walked on it frequently and obviously knew it well. I was impressed by his tremendous enthusiasm for the Heath, by his knowledge and professional background, and his proactive attitude and energy.

Michael then joined our Sub-Committee and soon made constructive contributions. He started to suggest articles about the Heath for our Newsletter, and then developed into a co-ordinator for these, seeking contributions from others. Since the death of David Watt, who had organised the Society's monthly Heath walks, I had stood in as pro tem organiser. I was therefore very grateful when Michael offered to take over this task in early 2000. The Heath Sub-Committee had to comment on Heath fringe planning applications, as this was before the Society created a separate Planning Sub-Committee. Michael's specialist planning experience and advice became increasingly invaluable on these applications, and he helped to draft our comments to Camden and Barnet.



*Michael Welbank MBE*

He became involved through our Sub-Committee with some of the many issues on the Heath. This must have later helped him to appreciate these from the viewpoint of users, when he became a member of City of London Heath committees. By 2001, cycling on the Heath was becoming a serious concern to us, and Michael saw this major issue develop, as he did with the Kenwood concerts, sex activities on the Heath, the threatened demolition of Athlone House, and numerous other problems.

We were concerned that there was no proper Heath Management Plan, and had been pressing hard for



one. In 2000, Michael observed the City's Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee when it debated what was supposed to be the Plan. He reported back to us his dismay at the apparent confusion about the cascade of documents (policies, area plans, work schedules) and the consultations on them.

The Society then appointed Michael as its representative on the City's Heath Consultative Committee in summer 2001, and he therefore later joined our General Committee as a trustee of the Society. Michael effectively reported back the various Heath issues, and was adept at seeing the long-term implications. He had become by then an invaluable and very active contributor to the work of our Society.

However, Michael was very keen to join the City of London and contribute to its work. To achieve this, he first had to be elected as a common councillor. He therefore actively and unusually personally canvassed the electorate in the Billingsgate ward, both businesses and individuals, and was elected as an independent City councillor in 2005. He therefore resigned from our Heath Sub-Committee and as our Heath Consultative Committee representative in 2006, and from our General Committee soon after.

By late 2005, the development of a proper Heath Management Plan had just started. Michael threw himself enthusiastically into this project. The City appointed him as Chairman of its Built Environment Working Group, and his team produced extremely comprehensive data and reports to contribute to the development of the Plan. This was published in late 2007.

When Michael joined the City he was appointed a member of the City's Heath Management Committee. He stayed as a member until 2016, and

served as Chairman from 2009 to 2012. During this time, he was involved with many contentious issues, and dealt with these in a constructive but direct manner. He strongly supported opposition to the proposed demolition of Athlone House and erection of a 'palace' overlooking the Heath. He had no love of the existing mansion, regarding it ugly and with little intrinsic merit, and so wisely advised us to concentrate our objections on the environmental impact of the proposed replacement on the Metropolitan Open Land. He was delighted when the appeal was won, and also when part of the House's gardens were returned to the Heath.

On Heath cycling, he did not fully agree with our stance, but helped guide the Heath Management Committee to refuse a major expansion of routes. When Chairman, he encouraged us to work closely with the City on cycling rather than try to achieve results by public campaigning, and this proved effective.

During 2010 and 2011 the City revealed that it was required to carry out major safety works to the Heath dams. Michael made huge efforts to act as



*Michael at Kenwood House*

## ***Michael Welbank MBE (cont)***

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a mediator between the City and the Society. He fully appreciated our concerns about the potential impact of the works on the Heath environment. He frequently met us privately to explore what options might satisfy us, sought our views on the scope of works and responsibilities of staff, and appointed an independent Strategic Landscape Architect to try to allay our fears. He had the difficult job of trying to balance our concerns as leading stakeholder with those in the City who often had different and strongly held views. He threw all his energies into trying to reconcile these with practical suggestions. However, when our discussions moved to the challengeable legal basis for the works, Michael was unable to bridge the irreconcilable. He became frustrated and irritated with the judicial review brought by the Society, and relations between the City and Society cooled. This was only resolved by the legal judgment against the Society, when the City and Society worked closely together again.

Michael was a member of other City committees, in particular its Planning and Transportation Committee

from 2005 to 2017. Probably his most challenging role was as Chairman of this Committee from 2014 to 2016, when he oversaw many high profile applications, but was also the driving force in developments to make the City a safer place. He was a very able and enthusiastic Chairman, tough but fair, brooked no nonsense, and tried hard to bring different factions together.

Michael was a past President of the Royal Town Planning Institute and Chair of the British Consultants Bureau, amongst other prestigious appointments, and was awarded an MBE in 2013 for services to local government and the community.

However, for our Society, Michael's main contribution was undoubtedly the successful and acceptable completion of the Heath Dams Project. By his persuasion, many measures were introduced to soften its impact on the Heath landscape, and doubting voices were eventually turned to accept this project. This is a legacy of which I am sure he was proud, and for which we are very grateful.



*Michael at Viaduct Pond, Hampstead Heath*



*Dams Project, with Society Chair: Photo courtesy: Ham & High*

# ***Treasurer's Report for 2019***

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*by Maureen Clark-Darby*

## ***The Society is pleased to present its Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2019.***

The Society reviews its accounting policies each year. The trustees are satisfied that the current policies meet the Society's needs and circumstances. These policies, which have not changed, are disclosed on pages 8 and 9 of the Financial Statements.

The operating deficit for 2019 was £21,489 (2018: deficit of £2,098).

The Society made an unrealised gain of £710 on its investments. The resulting total deficit for the year was therefore £20,779.

Membership subscription income decreased by 7% year on year – 2019: £26,325 (2018: £28,303). This decrease is due mainly to timing differences of subscription renewal rather than a decreasing membership.

Dividend income slightly increased for the year to £249 (2018: £237). Interest income was up for the year to £508 (2018: £383).

The Society's running costs, excluding exceptional costs, slightly increased in 2019 to £21,354 (2018: £20,512). The increase is mainly due to membership promotion costs.

The Society's exceptional costs for the year include legal fees for counsel and an expert witness in the planning appeals concerning the North and South Fairground Sites at the Vale of Health. These costs amounted to £67,472 and were mostly met by members' donations, the Society contributing just over £15,000 from its reserves.

During 2019 the Society continued its efforts to increase membership and subscription income.

The trustees believe that the Society's Capital and Reserves are satisfactory at £44,509, of which £15,686 are held in unrestricted reserves and £28,823 in restricted reserves.

The Society wishes to thank Fisher Phillips LLP, Chartered Accountants, for carrying out the independent examination of the Financial Statements for 2019.

### ***Fisher Phillips LLP, Chartered Accountants***

Fisher Phillips LLP is a proactive and forward-thinking UK firm of Chartered Accountants based in North West London providing accountancy, taxation and business advisory services to individuals and businesses.

The Society is very grateful to Fisher Phillips LLP for examining the Society's annual financial statements each year.

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# *Heath Report*

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*by John Beyer*

## ***A welcome to the new Chairman of the City's Heath Committees***

Anne Fairweather, who knows the Heath well, took over from Karina Dostalova as Chairman of the City's Heath Management and Consultative Committees in June. We look forward to working with her.

## ***Heath now receiving up to 15 million visits a year***

The Heath has received a huge number of visitors since the pandemic took effect in March.

Heath staff estimate this year visits to the Heath will reach 15 million. This compares to 11 million last year, already double the number of visits 10 years ago. To say the least, this number raises huge challenges when the Society seeks not only to preserve the wildness of the Heath but to look for ways of improving biodiversity.

As the number of visits has increased, this precious open space has been buffeted by some visitors abusing the Heath. A huge problem is the number of cyclists who have been roaming not only on paths which are for pedestrians only, but also going off-road. There has been a particular problem with mountain bikes causing compaction and other damage on the fragile landscape of the Sandy Heath.

The Heath Sub-Committee has urged the Heath Constabulary to be active in policing and, if necessary, prosecuting cyclists causing damage by cycling where they should not be. The Constabulary have responded, but they have often been distracted by other concerns; apart from people trying to swim in ponds, where it may be dangerous to swim, there have been large gatherings in the hot weather (especially while the pubs were closed), an increase in antisocial

behaviour and people using barbecues or starting fires.

We are assuming the increase in numbers is because the Heath is attracting new people who do not know the Heath. We will need to work with the City to show new visitors the need to cherish the diverse landscape we enjoy.

## ***Bird survey***

This spring and summer, Prof. Jeff Waage OBE, Pete Mantle, John Weston and colleagues from Heath Hands, English Heritage and the City of London completed the first survey of nesting birds on the Heath in many years, with a view to seeing which areas should in future be off-bounds to forest schools and, perhaps in future, extending specific habitats favoured by rarer species.



*Great tit at nest, West Heath*



*Sparrow hawk at nest, West Heath*

### ***Hampstead Heath Act 150th anniversary***

Following on from the bird survey and the need to inform and educate visitors to the Heath about protecting its threatened biodiversity, Prof. Jeff Waage OBE has proposed we erect wildlife display boards to mark the sesquicentenary of the Hampstead Heath Act of 1871. These will not be on the wilder sections of the Heath, where the Society would normally oppose extra signage, but on the edges of the Heath. Initial ideas include the Parliament Hill Café, the entrance near the toilets above the Model Boating Pond, the café planned for the Extension and the entrance at South End Green, as well as Kenwood. We are working with the City and English Heritage, and other partners, on this project. The displays would highlight the Heath's distinctive birdlife, linking the wonder of birdlife to the responsibility visitors have to protect bird habitats.

### ***Licences for professional dogwalkers***

Most other open spaces in London have a licensing regime for professional dog walkers. While there has not been one for the Heath, dog walkers have naturally come to somewhere where they can exercise



*Black cap, Sandy Heath*

dogs free of charge. The Heath Sub-Committee has been working closely with the City to draw up guidelines and policies for professional dog walkers. The maximum number of dogs allowed with each walker will be four, and there will be a cap on the number of firms who use the Heath at any one time. The new arrangements will come into force in 2021, with sanctions for those who allow dogs to threaten swans or leave dogs unattended in cars. There will also be a leaflet for individual dog walkers offering advice and urging people to respect and protect wildlife on the Heath.

### ***Waste on the Heath***

The Heath has suffered terribly from picnic and other rubbish over the summer. While in the early summer bins were removed under Covid-19 restrictions, when it came to restoring rubbish collection it seemed a good idea to rethink the siting of bins. Large bins have been placed at the edges of the Heath for people either to take their waste home or deposit it as they leave the Heath (where it is easier to collect). Extra bins will be put out at busy weekends. The Heath Sub-Committee agreed this as a principle, and favours the

## **Heath Report (cont)**

move to recycling where possible, but will work with the City on the devilish detail. It will be a challenge to mask the large bins on the edges of the Heath.

### ***Protect the Heath, protect cyclists***

In June, the threat of creating more cycle routes on the Heath meant we had to run a short campaign to oppose. Our thanks to Society members and partner organisations, such as Heath for Feet, for joining this effort. We had a tremendous response to the online survey, run by Camden Council, which asked for ideas on improving cycling and walking in Camden.

It was clear from comments on the Camden Safer Travel online survey map that most people favour the Heath being for pedestrian enjoyment rather than cycling. Taking comments on the Lime Avenue footpath, 18 wanted to make this a cycle route, 133 wanted it pedestrian only. Twenty seven people said they wanted to extend the cycle path along Millfield Lane north to Kenwood; 66 opposed. Many other comments opposed any more cycle routes, as have emails to the Society. However, what was significant and novel was that many people said they found cyclists on the Heath intimidating, and wanted no cycling on the Heath at all. The Heath Sub-Committee believes that, as the number of walking visitors rises each year, it will not be sustainable to have shared cycle-pedestrian paths.

The view of the Society is clear: no new cycling paths on the Heath. The Heath should not be used as part of a commuter network. Meanwhile, the push to have more cycling on the Heath will not go away easily. One way we might relieve the pressure is to establish safe cycling routes on the roads around the Heath.

### ***Lord Lisvane review of City Committees***

In his report to the City issued in September, Lord Lisvane recommended abolishing the City's

Heath Consultative Committee and Management Committee, with their functions taken on by the Open Spaces Committee. The Society has stated its opposition to the suggestion:

*The Society would oppose unconditionally, and by every means at its disposal, the suggested abolition of the Consultative Committee. The Society was instrumental in its original establishment by order of the Environment Secretary in 1989, and that order can only be changed by that minister. Even a cursory review of the regular proceedings of the Committee shows how essential it is to the protection and good management of the Heath.*

### ***Planning: the good, the bad and the ugly***

The Heath Sub-Committee is concerned that the government's Planning White Paper makes no mention of Metropolitan Open Land, the designation for land that is treated the same as Green Belt within urban areas.

We are grateful as ever to David Castle and the Planning Sub-Committee for opposing developments which would adversely affect the Heath. We also wish to thank the City, which opposes developments which affect the Heath and works closely with us.

We are engaging with the developers at Murphy's Yard in Kentish Town. We would like the height of the buildings to be such that the impact from the Heath is minimised; however, it is likely that the plans for 18 storey towers will go ahead, and more towers are likely to follow elsewhere in Camden. Our other concern is to ensure the promises by the developer of a green corridor bringing people from Kentish Town to the Heath at Gospel Oak can be realised in full. An additional storey planned for flats in Chandos Way, which will also be visible from the Heath, is also of concern.



***Events again in 2021***

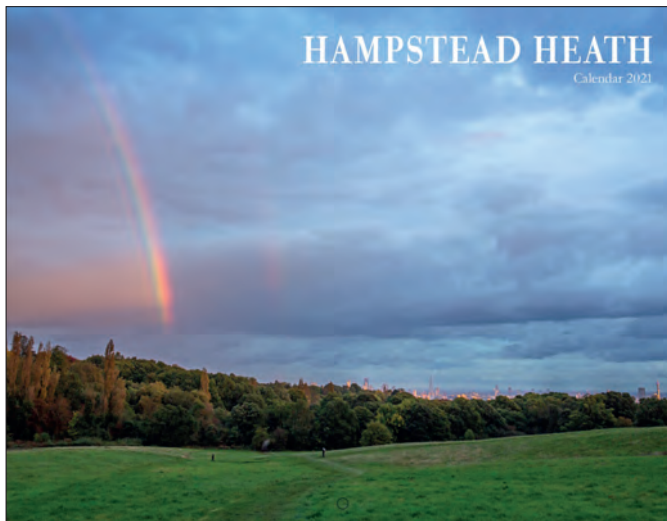
The Society had to cancel a variety of public events in 2020, including the planned return of sheep to graze the Heath and the Springett Lecture. We hope to return with a programme next year. Events on the Heath organised by the City have mostly also been postponed.

The City is proposing to combine the two traditional funfairs (currently held at Easter and Whitsun) into one longer fair at Easter.

This may be a viable solution to the problem of falling attendance numbers, and would minimise the disruption of set-up and take-down.

All of us in the Society are delighted that David Humphries, the City's Trees Management Officer covering the Heath for 35 years, has been awarded the Individual Commitment Award at the London awards of the Forestry Commission.

## ***Hampstead Heath Calendar 2021***



***Back for 2021 and despite Covid-19, 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.

# ***Town Report***

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*by Andrew Haslam-Jones*

## ***Thank you***

We would very much like to repeat our thanks to the Town Sub-Committee's member, Anousheh Barbezieux, who has recently stepped down from the Sub-Committee, for her years of work on traffic and road signs and a host of other issues. We wish Anousheh all the very best in her future endeavours.

During the current circumstances, the work of the Sub-Committee has been curtailed, but members continue to pursue and monitor various activities in and around Hampstead Town.

## ***Oriel Court***

The renovation work on Oriel Place Garden continues to be suspended as it has been since the beginning of the first lockdown. Both the garden and the flagstones intended for repaving Oriel Court have been fenced off and shall remain so until the work on the garden and the repaving can be completed. The open-air art exhibition that the Society would have helped to organise there in the summer clearly did not take place, but we hope to contribute to its successful staging next summer. Although most work on the garden has been suspended, we are pleased to see that a new replica lamp has been installed behind the tree in the garden area. The Horseshoe public house installed some extra temporary structures in the summer following the relaxation of the lockdown in order to assist in physical distancing. The Society might have objected to these structures in normal times but, in the context of the pandemic, they are not overly intrusive and are for the reasonable purpose of distancing.

## ***Trees***

Robert Linger of our Sub-Committee, having succeeded in ensuring that several more trees were

planted on Hampstead High Street a couple of years ago, continues to pursue the possibility of Camden finding more sites for trees ready for next spring's planting season.

## ***Name plaques***

The Plaque Selection Panel has continued to be active in the period since the first lockdown began. A plaque in memory of Gerald Isaaman, "Mr. Hampstead", the onetime editor of the *Ham & High*, has been erected at 9 Lyndhurst Gardens. A formal unveiling will take place when the present difficulties have passed and that is likely to be in the New Year. A plaque in memory of the last chimney sweep in the area, Henry Kippen, is ready to be installed on the house where he resided in Perrin's Court.

## ***Licensing***

Over the current period there have been several licensing applications from small shops and enterprises, such as Meekhun Thai Restaurant on Heath Street and Mag One paper shop on Rosslyn Hill. The Society has made several submissions, all aimed at ensuring that the sale of alcohol is kept within the hours set out in Camden Council's own licensing guidelines while recognising that struggling small businesses may wish to extend their offering. We can report that all our submissions have been successful and further reassurances and conditions have also been sought and obtained by the local police.

## ***Upper Heath Street***

The Sub-Committee continues to consider projects that might attract footfall to Upper Heath Street and Whitestone Pond. If any member has any suggestion or proposal that they would like us to consider, please let us know.

# *Planning Report*

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*by David Castle*

It is only nine months since the last Newsletter Planning Report, but it feels as though we are now in a different world. Of course, it remains to be seen if the dramatic changes in both where and how we live caused by home-working, internet-shopping, consequent traffic and transport reductions, etc. will be permanent.

The Camden Planning Department has been working on-line during the pandemic though no decision has yet been made on 55 Fitzroy Park (five houses in a wonderful garden on the edge of the Heath). There has been a slight reduction in planning applications since March and most applications being submitted are for small extensions or other improvements to flats and houses. Perhaps people have been sitting at home considering how their living conditions can be improved.

The good news is the application to build two houses on the car-park of Jack Straw's Castle has been refused. Surprisingly, refusal was based only on the ground that the design harmed the listed building, which it certainly would do. However, all who objected, including the City, the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum and, of course, the Society, also raised the equally important issue that the proposed two tall houses on the boundary would cause harm to the environment and the openness of the Heath which is protected not only by Camden's Local Plan, but also by its designation as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). The lack of reference to the Heath's MOL status, which gives very full protection to the Heath and its fringes, is both mystifying and worrying.

The chief objectors have agreed to challenge Camden Council about such a serious omission.

## ***Camden refuses enormous 15-metre high telecommunication pole in Spaniards Road***

Unfortunately, over the past years a large number of telecommunication boxes and poles have proliferated on the boundary of the Heath along Spaniards Road and opposite Jack Straw's Castle and Whitestone Pond.

In July, Camden Council received a planning application to erect an enormous 15-metres high pole, equivalent in height to a five-storey building, and one metre in diameter for the upper one-third of its height. As the pole would be surrounded by the Heath the Society, the City and the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum immediately objected.

The good news is Camden have refused the application – the bad news is an appeal was immediately lodged. An indication that this appeal might be dismissed by the inspector could be deduced from the recent dismissal of an application to build a similar high pole near Ivy House and Golders Hill Park – described by the Inspector as “intrusive”, “incongruous” and “obtrusive”. His decision acknowledges the importance of extending G5 coverage, but he “was not satisfied that a less harmful site could not be found”.

## ***The proposed massive changes to planning law***

The Government has published two draft White Papers proposing the most radical changes to Planning Law since 1947.

The first, on housing, will force all local authorities to designate enough land for a specific number of dwellings. That number, which cannot be challenged,



## Planning Report (cont)

will be decided centrally by an algorithm. The effect of this White Paper will be to force the building of flats and houses within all suburbs and on the fringes of villages, towns and cities throughout England and Wales, the Tory heartland. Already many MPs are voicing concerns. Perhaps the proposal may fail or be substantially changed during its progress through Parliament.

The second White Paper is equally drastic in its proposed centralisation. The power of local authorities to delay or prevent development would be substantially reduced. Approvals would be reduced to a rubber-stamping and box ticking exercise, with limited control over what is to be built. The power of local authorities would be diminished substantially. The important Local Plans would be cut to one-third of their current length. Councils would have to designate areas available for a specific use (which is the equivalent of granting outline planning permission) and would be limited in the amount of evidence concerning the application that they can require. It is

unclear what would happen to the Neighbourhood Plans, evolved from such hard work over the past few years, that are equally important and cover the problems specific to a smaller area. Although they will have to change, it is possible the Neighbourhood Plans may increase in significance and be able to deal with issues the Local Plan would be prevented from covering. The White Paper is unclear on this, as on much else.

The Government intends new Local Plans to be prepared by all local authorities quickly so that the proposed new Planning Law would be in operation before the next election and, actually, **just before** the election. Already a number of MPs are concerned the changes could affect their chances of re-election.

There are many improvements that should be made both to the planning system and also to address the problems in low-rental housing provision, but these Government proposals do not deal adequately with either issue.



*Photo courtesy: Louis Hellman / RIBA Collections*

## ***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.

## ***Autumn Musical Events***

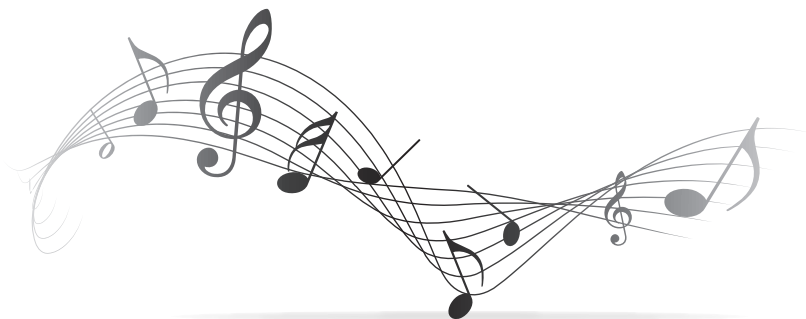
### ***St John-at-Hampstead Parish Church, Church Row NW3***

The Professional Singers forming Hampstead Parish Church Choir have created a new Concert Series under their title The Hampstead Collective.

These concerts take place on Monday evenings from 7.00 pm to 8.00 p.m. The Series will end with a performance of Handel's Messiah on 21st December 2020.

All details including method of booking on the website under The Hampstead Collective or from 0207 794 1193.

***Editor's Note: Events and opening hours will be affected by any relevant Covid-19 restrictions.***



# *The Ponds: Still Waters, Deep Trouble*

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*by Nicky Mayhew, former Co-Chair of the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association*

*Access to swimming in the ponds on the Heath has been radically changed. What does this mean for those who rely on this access for their wellbeing and who are now being excluded by price and technology? This piece is followed by a response by Anne Fairweather, present Chairman of the Hampstead Heath Management and Consultative Committees.*

For many of us fortunate enough to live nearby, the open expanses of the Heath make London bearable. Some 800 acres of largely wild green space, just five miles from Oxford Circus, provide welcome relief from the towering buildings, crowded streets and incessant traffic of a city that is home to 9 million other people.

Members of the Society know all too well the preservation of the Heath as unspoiled common land has not happened by accident. Before and since the core area was secured by public subscription and protected for the people of London by the 1871 Hampstead Heath Act, local residents have had to fight to ensure that “the natural aspect and state of the Heath” is maintained and to keep the land for ever “unenclosed and unbuilt”. The value and potential of the surrounding land means constant vigilance is needed to resist attempts at over-development and commercial exploitation.

Like most of Britain's natural landscape, the Heath requires careful and sympathetic management. As a regular visitor to the Heath for many years and, more recently, as a local resident, I have not always agreed with the City's plans – notably the Dams Project – but I have been grateful to the City for its stewardship of this unique and precious place. So, it has been an unwelcome surprise for me to find myself at odds with the City and Heath management over something else

dear to my heart: swimming.

The Heath's three swimming ponds, women's, men's, and mixed sex, have long been world-famous, partly for their exceptional beauty and also because of the supposed eccentricity of some of the city-dwellers who frequent them. For decades, before the invention of fashionable, instagrammable wild swimming, and the success of the 2018 *The Ponds* film celebrating their culture, *the ponds* were part of everyday life for all-weather swimmers willing to share the water with fish and wildfowl, surrounded in summer by water lilies, flag iris and overhanging willows, and by bare branches and massive ice crystals in the depths of winter.

I became a regular swimmer in the Ladies' Pond, initially in summer and later, to my family's horror, through the winter, in 2005, around the time the City introduced charges for swimming. Then living outside the immediate area, I had not been involved in the two-year campaign against the City's cost-saving plans to close the Mixed Pond and reduce swimming hours at the other ponds. I could afford the cost of an annual season ticket and, given how much I loved swimming on the Heath, it did not seem unreasonable for me to pay to support the ponds. However, I quickly learned that many of my fellow swimmers, who had fought and won a fierce battle against the erosion of the right to swim, felt differently. I respected the principled arguments that some had against paying to swim.

Fifteen years later, as Co-Chair of the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association (KLPA), I became a participant in a consultation on swimming on the Heath launched by the City in January 2020. Initially, we welcomed the invitation to join the review. We hoped it would be an opportunity to work with the City and Heath management to preserve the unique





*Members of the Kenwood Regulars break the ice at the Ladies' Pond in the 1930s. Photo courtesy: KLPA Archive, Bishopsgate Institute.*

character of the ponds and protect the interests of regular and casual swimmers and Heath staff. Sadly, it soon became clear that this was likely to be a consultation in name only.

As far as the City was concerned, a significant increase in swimmer numbers, two years of summer heatwaves and Health and Safety Executive advice on lifeguarding arrangements following the death of a swimmer in the Men's Pond in June 2019 (one of only two recorded fatalities during opening hours, both from heart attacks, in the swimming ponds' entire

history) threatened to make the ponds unsustainable.

The City claimed it remained committed to subsidising swimming, but it declined to say by how much. It pointed to the fact that the ponds cost the Hampstead Heath charity over £700,000 a year to run and income from swimmers amounted to only £67,000. The City would not indicate what level of revenue would be regarded as sustainable. At the same time, while admitting when challenged that it had failed to collect any reliable data on swimmer numbers or lost income, the City insisted publicly that "only 4%

## *The Ponds: Still Waters, Deep Trouble (cont)*



*A lone winter swimmer in the Ladies' Pond.*

*Photo courtesy: Sarah Saunders*

of swimmers pay to swim,” implying swimmers were dishonest.

Exasperated, representatives of all the Heath swimming associations pointed out that for years our calls for better signage and communication, up-to-date payment methods and efficient cash collection had been ignored, but still the City blamed users for the shortfall. Nevertheless, we offered to work with Heath management to encourage payment of existing charges by all who could afford them and to promote donations to the Hampstead Heath registered charity. We knew this was already working in the early months of the year and sales of season tickets – at long last available to buy online – were soaring.

A series of controversial options for charging and controlling access to the ponds were published and shared with swimmers only after the formal consultation meetings had ended. In response, we indicated our firm support for Option 2, which would retain existing charges and encourage payment without excluding anyone who could not pay.

In March, the proposals were considered first by the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, whose members, including a representative from the Society,

were selected for their detailed knowledge of the Heath. With the exception of the Chairman and Deputy (both City Common Council Members), the committee unanimously supported a year's trial of the swimmers' preferred consensual option, but the Chairman declined to take a formal vote. Two days later, in an unprecedented move, the City's Hampstead Heath Management Committee, under the same Chairman and Deputy, disregarded local advice and voted to double the adult ticket price (to £4.00), increase concessionary charges by 140 per cent (to £2.40), and employ additional staff to enforce payment. Only the committee member representing the Society voted against this decision.

Within days, Covid-19 lockdown provided perfect cover for implementation of the new regime. When the ponds reopened in July, the online booking system required to limit numbers and ensure safe distancing also enforced payment. Tickets went to tech-savvy, digitally-enabled people who are often younger and wealthier. Swimmers without access to a computer and the Internet, let alone smartphones and Twitter, were effectively locked out, in spite of the attempts of Heath staff on the ground to help some of those most in need.

It is easy to caricature Hampstead as a bastion of privilege, but the reality of the Heath is much more mixed. Even before Covid-19, the surrounding boroughs experienced high levels of poverty. The ponds provide a vital lifeline for the mental and physical wellbeing of men and women, young and old, of hugely varied means, drawn from a wide catchment. The Ladies' Pond in particular attracts women living with abuse and oppression, as well as those whose religious beliefs require modesty.

At a time of unprecedented stress and hardship for many, the pandemic and the new charges have

atomised the pond communities and created a hostile environment for the financially challenged, the lonely, the fragile and the desperate. One KLPA member wrote to explain she is not eligible for concessions and £4.00 is more than her daily food budget. She simply cannot afford to eat and swim. Others – some disabled, others newly redundant post Covid – have commented on the indignity of having to request the concessionary rate in a place once characterised by discretion and equality for all.

Following lockdown, we invited the new Chairman of the Hampstead Heath Management Committee (formerly the Deputy Chairman) to consider suspending enforcement of the new charges as an act of compassion in these exceptional times, but she insists the decision must stand.

The ponds inspire artists, writers, poets, photographers and film-makers. To the City, which is the trustee of the Hampstead Heath charity whose purpose is “the preservation of [the] Heath for the recreation and enjoyment of the public”, and one of the world’s richest local authorities, with billions of pounds in reserves built up over 800 years, they are swimming facilities. The City has used the pandemic to impose vastly increased, and now compulsory, charges on

swimmers, treating the ponds in the same way as a chlorinated swimming pool, rather than as natural surroundings to be enjoyed with the same freedom as walkers and runners use other parts of the Heath.

In our troubled times, does all of this matter to anyone other than the swimmers? Given the cavalier disregard shown for the Consultative Committee’s views on the future of the ponds, I believe the City’s lack of accountability to those of us who live around the Heath and use it regularly is a real cause for concern. We do not elect the decision-makers on the Management Committee currently charged with protecting and conserving the Heath and maintaining it as an inclusive and welcoming space.

For the future, Lord Lisvane’s independent review of Corporate Governance of the City recommends a major rationalisation of the Corporation’s committee system. This includes the abolition of area-specific committees such as those dealing with the Heath. The proposed new structure would see a 12-member Open Spaces Committee covering a range of locations across London and the South East take over the management of Hampstead Heath. I fail to see how this could be a positive development for any of us.



*A banner created to embody the spirit of the KLPA community. Photo courtesy: Sarah Saunders*

## *Response by Anne Fairweather, present Chairman of the Hampstead Heath Management and Consultative Committees*

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One of the reasons I put myself forward to sit on, and then chair, the Hampstead Heath Management Committee was the Bathing Ponds and Parliament Hill Lido. As an outdoor swimmer today, I know how valuable having access to swimming is, especially in the current circumstances.

I also have many happy memories of visiting the Ladies' Pond with my female dominated family. My mum, two sisters and my great Aunt Anne all used to go together – walking from her back gate straight onto the Heath was so special. Then to discover the Ladies' Pond through the trees and to be able to swim with the ducks certainly made a big impression.

But of course, time has marched on since those days, and the ponds are so much more popular. Managing the numbers who come to swim on the Heath, along with the advice received from the Health and Safety Executive, all led to change our management practices of the ponds and the Lido.

After a comprehensive review of swimming at the beginning of the year, a decision was taken by the Hampstead Heath Management Committee to move towards a compulsory charge for swimming in the three bathing ponds on Hampstead Heath. This was to reflect the increasing costs associated with managing swimming in the ponds safely. At £4.00 per swim (£2.40 concession) we still provide the cheapest lifeguarded outdoor swimming in the capital for Londoners of all abilities and backgrounds.

We believe these charges, coupled with an agreed subsidy of 42% from the City's funds, is a balanced approach to managing these much-loved ponds safely.

The decision to introduce compulsory charges came with a commitment to keep these spaces open 365 days a year.

For many years we have offered a season ticket which is excellent value for regular swimmers at £125 (£66 concession) for one year of unlimited swimming in the ponds. The Management Committee agreed to freeze the cost of this season ticket until April 2021 and we are delighted that we have had thousands of new applications for the season ticket since we entered the winter season last month.

We are also now offering a free morning swim to those over 60 and under 16 at the bathing ponds from 7.00am until 9.30am. The Lido has been doing this for 15 years and it has been very successful.

We are very proud of what we have been able to achieve this year, providing outdoor swimming when many organisations have struggled to reopen their facilities.

It was a difficult start to the 2020 summer season, with so much uncertainty around re-opening. But we were able to move quickly and put in place COVID-secure arrangements as soon as Government guidance arrived. The staff have done an incredible job. Re-opening during a pandemic really was a challenge that no one was planning for and the staff have really worked together to come up with solutions and get as many people swimming safely as possible.

The re-opening was met with huge demand, with almost 125,000 tickets sold in two months.

It is a combination of the City's commitment towards



***Response by Anne Fairweather, present Chairman of the Hampstead Heath Management and Consultative Committees (cont)***

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swimming on the Heath and the decisions committee members have taken to allocate resources from the Heath's budget, that has made this possible.

At the end of the summer season we asked swimmers to answer a short survey on their experiences of summer swimming. Over 1,100 people took part in the survey, 60 per cent of whom were swimmers using the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond and 68 per cent were local residents, with over a quarter of these at the concession rate of £2.40.

Over 80 per cent of survey respondents gave the COVID-19 safety measures a score of between 7 and 10, with 10 ranked as 'excellent', while almost 60 per cent rated the online booking system between 7 and 10.

We have been in discussions with the Heath swimming associations for many years about how we increase revenue at the ponds and encourage payment. Unfortunately, these discussions had not resulted in any major change. Feedback from swimmers has resulted in a number of additions and adaptations to our way of operating, including the addition of a telephone booking line for those with no online access during the summer months, access to the meadow at the Ladies' Pond for those who wish to enjoy the surroundings and atmosphere but not swim, the reintroduction of season tickets, and the end of the online booking system during the winter season.

The introduction of credit and debit card payment at the ponds was also something requested by the Heath swimming associations as well as

keeping a cash payment option. We also, as a result of discussions with swimmers, expanded the concession offer to those on universal credit and those in receipt of the Personal Independence Payment.

We remain committed to working to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Heath budget and to ensure finances are on a sustainable footing for the medium and long-term. We also remain committed to ensuring that Londoners, and those from further afield, can swim on the Heath in all seasons for generations to come.

Hampstead Heath is thriving under the City's stewardship, playing a crucial role for London's communities and attracting more swimmers than ever before. These changes were designed to ensure that swimming in the ponds is sustainable for the long term. I do hope that members of the Society join me in enjoying the magical experience of swimming on the Heath.

As the years have gone by, my great Aunt Anne, and her house on the edge of the Heath, have sadly gone. But my mum is still a keen outdoor swimmer and I certainly take after her. As my nieces grow older, I will have to talk them into swimming in the Ladies' Pond as well. And who knows, maybe I will become great Aunt Anne myself, taking their children to the pond in decades to come.



## Do you need some help while self-isolating?

If you, or someone you know, needs a hand with collecting shopping or prescriptions, or just wants someone to talk to, our **NHS Volunteer Responders** are here to help.

Join the thousands of others throughout England who are already receiving support – even if it's just for a friendly chat.

**Call 0808 196 3646 or visit**  
**[nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk](https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk)**

Help is available if you have a medical condition which makes you vulnerable to COVID-19, especially if you are over 70. You also qualify if you are pregnant or have a disability.

Royal Voluntary Service is a registered charity 1015988 (England and Wales) & SC038924 (Scotland).

# *Hampstead Heath's ponds: reconciling and supporting their many uses and functions*

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*by Prof. Jeff Waage OBE*

*The ponds are a vital part of life on the Heath for people and animals. The City and the Society discuss how to ensure the ponds continue to serve all those who depend on them for life and wellbeing.*

The Heath ponds were the subject of the Heath Sub-Committee's autumn walk in 2019. This gave the Society an opportunity to feed some ideas into the current development by the City of a new strategy for pond management over the next 20 years. The many functions of the ponds make it a challenge for management. Fishing, swimming, biodiversity conservation and flood management are not necessarily compatible in the same space!

Our walk considered the six ponds of the Highgate chain, and the five ponds of the Hampstead chain, some of which were originally created in the 18th century from tributaries of the River Fleet.

Before exploring different activities in these ponds, our walkers were briefed on an issue underpinning all pond management – desilting. The ponds are gradually filling with silt, washed in from the surrounding landscapes. Ultimately, if silt is not removed, the ponds will grow shallower and some will revert to marsh and possibly woodland over the next 100 years. Digging out silt and taking it off site is very expensive – desilting all of the ponds would cost millions of pounds. The ponds are currently on different desilting schedules and, anticipating future desilting costs, the City is measuring silt accumulation and implementing ways to reduce its occurrence. These include placing small, natural log dams in streams between ponds and making woodland “scrapes”, small ponds which hold water, along their route, all of which increases woodland wildlife, including frogs and newts. A more dramatic solution,



*At Hampstead No 2 Pond. A parent swan and six of the cygnets born 1 June 2020. Photo courtesy: Roman Vester*

which our Sub-Committee endorsed, is to use the silt dredged from ponds to create one or two new islands in the middle of ponds which could serve as wildlife sanctuaries, or to use this silt to build up reedbeds and other vegetation around pond edges.

Swimming is the priority activity for three ponds, and other uses must fit around it. Fishing is allowed on five Heath ponds, but it has become more restricted over time, to the frustration of the Heath's longstanding fishing community. For instance, we learned that fishing has been discontinued on the north bank of the Men's Pond because of swimmers encountering lines and hooks. An ongoing dialogue between the Heath's swimming associations, the City and the Society is exploring ways in which to best manage fishing on the Heath. We also learned that managing ponds for fishing is not a passive process. Heath ponds may become low in oxygen at particular times of year, and the blue aerators bubbling away in most ponds are there to reduce this risk. However, an algal bloom that appears on the ponds and then quickly dies off can overcome these efforts and lead to death of fish. Ponds can also get too crowded with fish, leading to problems with fish welfare and different impacts on different fish species and other wildlife. But maintaining ponds for fishing and biodiversity is possible with measurement and effort.

The ponds are also sites for enjoying and conserving nature. The Heath is very fortunate in having a rich biodiversity of plants and animals on its ponds, including some very rare and special species like kingfishers, which have bred, probably twice, in the Bird Sanctuary Pond in 2020. Several species of ducks, as well as swans, geese, coots and moorhens all breed successfully, and the ponds support 15 species of colourful dragonflies and damselflies. The reedbeds recently established around the edges of the Model Boating Pond support native wildflowers like water mint, gypsywort, and purple and yellow loosestrife.



*The cygnets at No 1 Pond. Newbie and Wallace, parents of seven cygnets born 1 June 2020. Photo courtesy: Roman Vester*

Growing reedbeds, possibly through desilting solutions previously mentioned, could attract new bird species, like reed warblers, who are visiting the ponds now every year. Evening visitors to the ponds will notice how important they are to supporting North London's dwindling swift population, and the nationally-protected Daubenton's (water) bat, both of which forage for insects just above the pond surface.

Some of our discussion on conservation focused on the issue of dogs swimming in ponds. Everyone wants dogs to have an opportunity to swim in ponds on the Heath. This is enormously popular with dog walkers as well as their dogs! When this is done within the designated dog-swimming areas, with floats preventing dogs from swimming all over a pond, there is no conflict with conservation. But these restrictions are no longer being respected, and dogs are being encouraged to swim from many pond edges and in ponds where they are not allowed. We learned that the impact of this on biodiversity conservation is considerable. Most dramatic is the harm done by dogs to waterfowl. Many Society members will have heard of the attack this year on the Dog Pond's much loved "Widow Swan" (now renamed "Mrs Newbie" and a proud mother).



We learned that this is not just a one-off – a number of wildfowl and their nests are destroyed by dogs every year across the Heath's ponds. Less obvious impacts of dog swimming are the erosion of banks, the muddying of areas of shallow water which suppresses pond life and plants, and the contamination of ponds with chemicals used on dogs for flea control, which are deadly poisons to pondlife like dragonflies. So, a balance needs to be struck and our Sub-Committee felt strongly that dogs should be given ample, designated spaces with floating barriers for swimming on some ponds but that a ban on dog swimming outside these areas should be firmly enforced.

Finally, we agreed with an idea from the City that several ponds could be specifically designated for biodiversity conservation, because of their current rich biodiversity and good habitats for future development. These include Highgate No 1 (or "Dog") Pond and Hampstead No 1 Pond, both of which now support nesting swans. With better managed dog swimming in Highgate No 1, and movement of dog swimming from Hampstead No 1 to a new Hampstead No 2 pond with floating barriers, a balance can be met between these different pond functions. The Bird Sanctuary Pond is already protected, and the Viaduct and Vale of Health Ponds may be future sites for improving protection and enjoyment of the plants and wildlife of the Heath's ponds.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown, challenges for the Heath's ponds have increased, with more human and dog swimming in restricted areas. Realising the ambitions that arose from our walk with the City will require first getting us back to where we were before the pandemic. But the Sub-Committee feels confident that the ponds can be developed effectively for their many different uses, and we are hopeful that our contributions to the City's strategic planning for ponds will help this to happen soon.

### ***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, unnecessary waste 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**



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](http://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.*

# *Hampstead Green: Ancient Wildflower Meadow Oasis in an Urban Desert*

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by Linda Chung

*Former Camden Councillor, Linda Chung, explores Hampstead Green, an emblematic wildflower meadow, and its history. Linda is also part of the Friends of Hampstead Green who are seeking new members.*

## ***The Green on Rosslyn Hill***

The topography of Hampstead has changed massively in the past century, particularly following the two World Wars. Considerable urbanisation meant Rosslyn Hill, which connects Hampstead to Camden Town, became the busy A502 road, filled on either side with new housing. There is one patch of land adjoining Haverstock Hill and Rosslyn Hill and facing the newly built Pears Hospital, due to be opened in 2021, which remains open and untouched: Hampstead Green.



*Cow parsley, *Anthriscus sylvestris*, in early summer.*



*Hampstead Green in the summer, with native wildflowers.*

Owned by Camden Council, loss of the Green is not a far-fetched idea. Selling land can be an all too easy solution in cash-strapped times. Just 3% of wildflower meadows are left in the UK and their loss has had a devastating impact on wildlife, including vital pollinators like bees, butterflies, moths and bats. One can go into an ancient, wildflower-rich meadow and plough it up within an afternoon, and centuries of carefully managed habitat will disappear.

How has Hampstead Green, an ancient wildflower meadow, managed to stay undisturbed and untrammelled over the years, fending off development? Friends of Hampstead Green discovered that the Green is protected by the bequest of a generous family. Sitting on the Green, with its frontage on Rosslyn Hill, is a modest little kiosk built in 1935. It is known as the Wharrie Cabman's Shelter. It was donated to the borough by Mary Wharrie, daughter of Sir Henry Harben, the first mayor of the Borough of Hampstead. Mary's wish was for this prominent open space to be protected in perpetuity for the benefit of patients in the Royal Free Hospital. The Green was to be closed to the public, to allow nature to flourish, providing peaceful recuperative value to patients looking out of the

## ***Hampstead Green: Ancient Wildflower Meadow, Oasis in an Urban Desert (cont)***

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hospital windows. Her wish has poignant vibrancy in these lockdown times, when our minds plead to see something more of nature than the walls surrounding us. Further protection for this precious green and biodiverse open space is provided by classification as a Camden Local Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation. The Green enjoys further statutory protection as a Local Green Space in the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan.

Hampstead Green is a wonderful site for wildlife. A snug insect hotel stands in a shady corner spot. There is a mix of native and cultivated daffodils and bluebells, cowslips and primroses, which flourish in spring. These are followed by wildflowers and grasses in summer. Camden, together with volunteers from the Friends of Hampstead Green, and BAGG (Belsize & Adelaide Green Gym) help to implement a maintenance regime. They have worked for many years to encourage biodiversity, planting bulbs and wildflower seeds, watering during parched summer periods, and cutting back the tall grasses over the seasons.

The meadow was badly disturbed when contractors working on the Pears development dug up the ground to bury their vibration monitoring equipment beneath, so that much of the hereditary planting was lost. The Friends of Hampstead Green are now looking forward to the removal of the instrumentation so the Green can again be left in peace, and work can properly begin to restore the land back to a tranquil wildflower-rich habitat.

Anyone interested in biodiversity and nature conservation is welcome to join the Friends of Hampstead Green. Our wish is to bring back some beauty and boost biodiversity by planting wildflowers where we can. Friends can be as active as they wish,

signing on to help with maintenance, or simply to signify support. Membership is free. For further information and to join, please contact: linda-chung.nw3@gmail.com.

Grateful thanks for their support and advice in writing this piece go to BAGG, Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum, the Camden Grounds Monitoring and Maintenance Teams and Camden Nature Conservation Officer, Greg Hitchcock, who says:

*We need your help to increase nature and natural spaces in Camden. We are witnessing a climate and ecological emergency and it's important we take steps to protect wildlife and encourage our natural spaces to thrive. Give us your ideas or just share with us what is important to you about Camden's wildlife and green spaces by responding to the current discussion paper: <https://camdenbiodiversitymap.commonplace.is/>*



*Bluebells, Hyacinthoides sp, that follow wild crocus, primroses, daffodils, in spring*



# *How Hampstead Heath Was Saved – A Story of People Power*

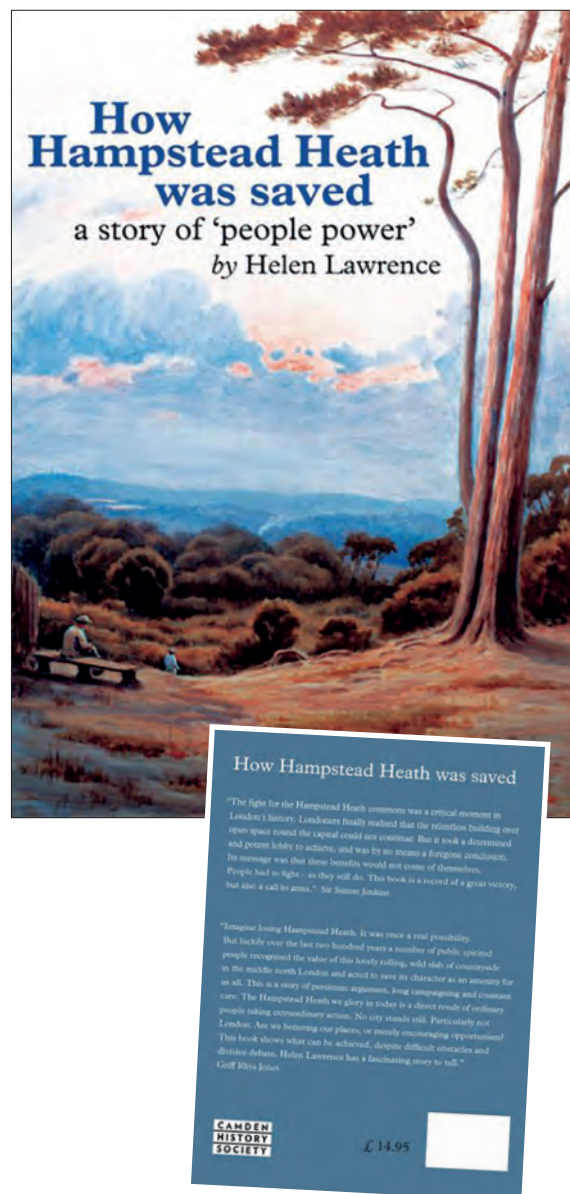
by Helen Lawrence

*A new history of the Heath is the first to tell the fascinating story of the Society: how it not only fought to ensure that the Heath remained natural countryside – not a park – but, as one of the first civic societies in the country, pioneered the idea of democratic accountability. This quite remarkable story of “people-power” continues today and has never been told before. Helen Lawrence (Mrs Helen Marcus) served on the Society’s committee for 25 years, first as Chair and then as Vice-President.*

The campaign to save the Heath was one of national importance, helping to change opinion and encourage others to take action. Of all the open spaces saved for the public in the 19th century, its story is the most extraordinary, involving legal stratagems of every kind, in and out of parliament, vitriolic character assassination, national press campaigns, perjury, wholesale misinformation and even accusations of bribery and blackmail.

A group of formidable people who had campaigned for the Heath went on to be at the heart of what became the new conservation movement, setting up the Commons Preservation Society in 1865 and the National Trust in 1895. They were all involved in the founding of the Hampstead Heath Protection Society in 1897 – today’s Society. This newly researched account places events in the larger historical context of social and political developments and focuses on the role of the individual people involved, many of them eminent public figures.

*How Hampstead Heath Was Saved – A Story of People Power* is published by the Camden History Society and, now in its second reprint, is available from them and most local bookshops.



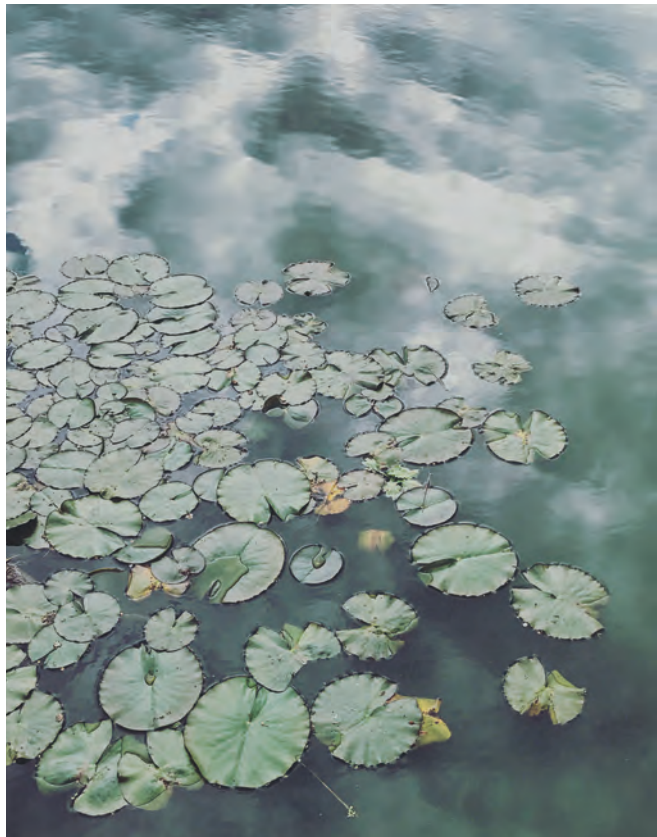


# *Photographic Competition #myhampsteadheath*

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*The Society runs a regular photographic competition on Instagram.*

*Sarah Archer's image (@saraharcher on Instagram) is the Society's current winner.*



*Grumpy skies*

*Matt Maran is the Society's judge for this competition. "The soft light, framing and simplicity of this image caught my attention immediately. I love the painterly quality of the sky reflected in the water, which is balanced superbly against the lilies in the foreground. The highlights created from the leaf edge breaking the water surface tension is most pleasing and proof that even on overcast days there is beauty to be found anywhere on the Heath" 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*



## *Keats Community Library*

**Temporary opening hours:**

**Saturdays 12-4pm**

**Tuesdays 10-6pm**

**We offer book and DVD borrowing, and access to our public computers with printing. We are currently unable to offer tables and seating for study, or perusal of newspapers, to manage the number of people in the building at any one time and sadly must discourage lingering!**

- Visitors to the building must wear a mask, use hand sanitiser on entry and respect social distancing rules. You may have to queue briefly to keep visitor numbers within our guidelines. Returned books are quarantined
- We are delighted to take donations of books – in good condition please
- As we currently cannot hold events in the library, we arrange Zoom talks from time to time
- Children's events and rhyme-time may be possible, subject to weather conditions
- For news or to make a much needed donation, please visit our website: [www.keatscommunitylibrary.org.uk](http://www.keatscommunitylibrary.org.uk)

We look forward to seeing you all again...

**Keats Community Library 10 Keats Grove NW3 2RR**

**☎ 0207 431 1266**

Charity reg no 1145702.

***Editor's Note: Events and opening hours will be affected by any relevant Covid-19 restrictions.***

**KCL Events are generously supported by**



**&**





## THE BOTANICAL MIND: Art, Mysticism and The Cosmic Tree to 23 December 2020

This exhibition brings together the work of over 50 artists, spanning more than 500 years, to investigate the ongoing significance of the plant kingdom to human life, consciousness and spirituality.

Free, timed-entry slots and Covid-19 safety precautions in place.

Please see website for more information and to you book your entry.

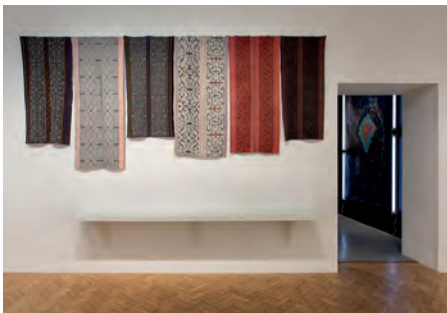
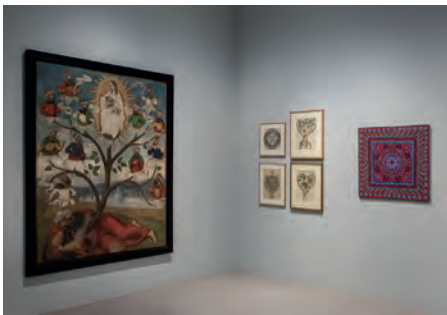
**Opening times: Thursday – Saturday, 11am – 6pm • Closed Sunday to Wednesday**

**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)**

*Editor's Note: Events and opening hours will be affected by any relevant Covid-19 restrictions.*



*The Botanical Mind. Photo courtesy: Rob Harris*

As faint glimmers of hope began to emerge during the summer, we explored more than once the possibility of resuming the walks, perhaps from the late autumn, but reluctantly concluded each time that the present position should continue to apply.

We remain hopeful the Society may be able to resume the monthly walks from some point in 2021. We recommend members put the following dates (all first Sundays in the month), and provisional details where known, in their diaries. We are in touch with the leaders of walks programmed but subsequently cancelled for the current season to see whether they would in principle be able to do the same walks for the equivalent dates in 2021. Further information will be posted on the Society's website as it becomes available.

**4 July 2.30pm**

**1 August 2.30pm**

**4 April 9.30am**  
*Bird watching*

**3 October 2.30pm**

**7 November 10.30am**

**5 December 10.30am**  
*Traces of the Heath's past*

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