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*The Heath & Hampstead Society*

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# *NEWSLETTER*

*January 2025*

*Vol 56 No 1*

*'Foggy morning in Kenwood'*

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**Front cover:** The Society runs a regular photographic competition. To enter your photographs, just post them using the hashtag #myhampsteadheath to Instagram or Facebook. Assunta Dogali's image is the Society's current winner. Professional photographer and author, Matt Maran, is the Society's judge for the competition: *"It's refreshing to witness a fresh perspective on the often-photographed Kenwood House. The composition skilfully highlights the geometric symmetry of the building, echoed beautifully in the tall trees that frame it on the left. The presence of mist adds a layer of atmosphere. Kudos to Assunta for capturing such a thoughtful and visually striking image."*

## Chair's Notes

*by Marc Hutchinson*

### **Your Chair**

In the May 2024 Newsletter, I announced my intention to seek to step down as Society Chair in 2025. One of our members indicated he would be interested in taking over the role, and he has shadowed me for the past few months. He has, however, for personal reasons, now decided to withdraw his candidature, with the result that my potential successor has yet to be identified. Accordingly, I repeat the request made in May 2024 that any members who would be interested in shadowing me for a while with a view to becoming Chair of the Society at some point in the future should contact me, in confidence, in the first instance on 07768 827 405.

### **The Well Walk Theatre**

We heartily congratulate Dylan, Zina and Marina at the Well Walk Theatre on its recent award, from The Stage newspaper, of "Theatre Building of the Year". This is a prestigious national award, won against serious competition. Its website is <https://www.thewellwalktheatre.com> and, if you have not already done so, we urge you to pay a visit and read the profile in the October 2024 Newsletter (Vol 55 No 3).

### **Christmas party**

We enjoyed a wonderful Christmas party on 4 December at Keats House with a record number of over 120 guests. The success and popularity of the party depend upon the delicious food prepared by Evelyn Ellis and Maureen Clark-Darby, the music played by (professional pianist) Chad Lelong, the skill and charm of Charlie Kirk (the Society's "resident" barman), and the unfailing support and help – on the night – from Rob Shakespeare and Ken Page of the Keats House staff.

I am very grateful to all of them.

## *Chair's Notes (cont)*

### ***Postal service disruption***

Royal Mail continues to provide a disgracefully bad service across North London, and Hampstead in particular. The almost daily failure of the service includes: letters and newsletters undelivered, lost, or marked “not known at this address- return to sender”, even when the member’s address is correctly stated on the envelope; letters sent to the Society’s PO Box marked “unknown – return to sender”; under-stamped or unbarcoded-stamped letters sent to the Society but returned to sender before the Society is even notified of the possibility of collecting the letter from the Hampstead Sorting Office; the mail redirection service ceasing and then restarting, in a wholly chaotic fashion, its operation because (as confirmed to me personally) there are no staff at the Hampstead Sorting Office available to operate it; and so the list goes on.

Apart from complaining and demanding investigations, there is almost nothing the Society can do about this state of affairs which has entailed, for the Society, amongst other things, a marked decline in annual membership via postal renewals (because we are not receiving the renewals) and members not getting the Newsletter.

I can only apologise for the continuing shambles, and make this twofold plea to members:

1. Our Newsletters come out in early February, mid-May and late October. If you do not receive yours, please let us know by email or by text, or voice message to 07768 827405, so we can post you a replacement.
2. If your letter addressed to us is returned to you, do not give up but, please, likewise, let us know so we can decide how best to take delivery of your letter.

### ***Your Secretary***

Amory Fathi took over as Society Secretary with effect from November 2024.

It is appropriate I pay tribute to Evelyn Ellis who was our Society Secretary, and de facto membership secretary, from 2017, and who has now stepped down as a trustee. Evelyn performed these somewhat time-consuming roles with great efficiency and patience, writing very full minutes of meetings and dealing regularly with new members claiming they were unable to log into our website! I am pleased that Evelyn will stay very much involved with the Society’s activities, continuing to help with social events and membership recruitment. On behalf of the Society, I thank her for her long service.

### ***Pentameters Theatre***

I reported in the October 2024 Newsletter on the threat by the new pub landlord to close the theatre, and that the Society was assisting the theatre to obtain legal advice on its security of leasehold tenure. The advice was favourable and, at the date of writing, we are hoping the tenant can carry out some necessary redecoration of the theatre in order to comply with the lease. Any reader who is a Pentameters supporter and who would like to assist, financially or otherwise, with this project should email the theatre at [theatre@pentameters.co.uk](mailto:theatre@pentameters.co.uk).

### ***Armistice Day service***

Each year, Hampstead Ward Councillor Linda Chung arranges for an inter-denominational service of remembrance, with wreath-laying by the Mayor of Camden and other local bodies, at the Hampstead War



*Society Chair lays the Society's wreath*

Memorial outside Heath House, led by the Rev'd Kate Dean of Rosslyn Hill Chapel. I represented the Society at last year's service on Monday 11 November.

### ***3rd Hunter Davies Lecture***

May I draw your attention to our 3rd Hunter Davies Lecture which will be given by Society Patron Tom Oliver at Rosslyn Hill Chapel on Thursday 27 March 2025. The event is free to members and will be live-streamed. Full details are on page 5.

### ***Fairground Sites road***

As mentioned in the October 2024 Newsletter, we are endeavouring to get Camden Council to order the removal of the bollards unlawfully blocking the road between the two fairground sites in the Vale of Health. We are still assembling the historical evidence (Camden

Council previously ordered the removal of another set of bollards there in 2018 ) before approaching the enforcement team at Camden.

### ***Committee changes***

#### *General Committee*

Since the date of the October 2024 Newsletter, I am pleased to welcome to the General Committee new members Amory Fathi as Society Secretary and, as the new Co-chairs of the Planning Sub-Committee, Gordon Curtis and Alexander Smaga, both of whom succeed David Castle. David has been appointed to a vacancy on the General Committee until the 2025 annual general meeting.

#### *Planning Sub-Committee*

We welcome new member Barnaby Nerberka to the Sub-Committee. A Hampstead resident since 2017, he is secretary of the residents association of the famous Isokon Flats. He is a journalist with AFP and Getty Images.

#### *Town Sub-Committee*

The Town Sub-Committee welcomes three new members:

Victoria Barclay, a retired journalist and PR consultant, has lived in Hampstead since 1990. She is a member of the RedFrog Neighbourhood Forum Executive Committee and a regular attendee of HCAAC meetings.

Peter Kohl has lived in Hampstead since 1992. He is a retired City corporate lawyer. He will be well known to Society members as the husband of Janine Griffis who was the Society Secretary for many years before she moved on to co-found the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum. Peter has provided legal advice to the Forum and also supports musical charities in his spare time.

Maira Zanatta is a retired banker who is now the



*Unlawful bollards on the Fairground Sites road. Photo courtesy: John Weston*

## Chair's Notes (cont)

community project lead for London Clean Air. She has held she has lived in Hampstead for ten years and is involved in environmental and community issues

The two Sub-Committees look forward to the expertise and input of these distinguished activists.

### **Events**

We are gratifyingly well prepared for the Society's calendar of events throughout 2025, the dates for all of which are now fixed. Please see the table on page 4.

May I take this opportunity to thank, in anticipation, you the members of the Society for your continuing support in 2025, and to wish you all a very happy New Year.

## **Guided Walk of Hampstead's Historic Plaques**

**Saturday 5 April at 2.30pm**

*Led by Society Plaque Panelist, Juliette Sonabend*

The Society is hosting a historic plaque walk through and around Hampstead Village to discover where some of its most famous residents lived and worked. They are commemorated by the English Heritage blue plaques and the black oval plaques of the Society, some of which are on Hampstead's landmark buildings.

The meeting point for the walk will be Whitestone Pond and the walk will end at New End. The walk will take approximately two hours.

The cost of the walk is £10 per person, which can be paid at the start of the walk in cash or by credit card. To reserve your place(s), please email the Society on [info@HeathandHampstead.org.uk](mailto:info@HeathandHampstead.org.uk)

## *Dates for your diaries*

The Society looks forward to seeing you at these events details of which (other than the first event) will also be advertised in the May Newsletter:

### **Thursday 27 March**

3rd Hunter Davies Lecture,  
Rosslyn Hill Chapel – see page 5

### **Wednesday 25 June (provisional)**

Annual General Meeting, St Stephen's

### **Sunday 29 June**

Kite Festival on Parliament Hill

### **Sunday 31 August**

Natural Aspect Concert at the  
Parliament Hill Bandstand

### **Friday 5-Monday 15 September**

Sheep grazing on Heath Extension

### **Thursday 30 October**

Springett Lecture, Rosslyn Hill Chapel:  
Robert MacFarlane



*The Heath & Hampstead Society presents*

The 3rd Hunter Davies Lecture

***Mystery tour: the quest to revive an ancient landscape***

**An illustrated lecture by Tom Oliver, Society Patron**

Tom Oliver and his wife bought a traditional farm in the Welsh Marches, an ancient but threadbare landscape, worn down by decades of hard farming, in order to revive its character and ecology. Seven years on, what are the lessons learnt and how might they be relevant to the revival of the equally ancient landscape of Hampstead Heath?

**Thursday 27 March 2025**

**7.30pm for 8.00pm**

**Rosslyn Hill Chapel, 3 Pilgrim's Place, London NW3 1NG**

Tom Oliver qualified as a landscape architect after a first career in advertising at CDP and BMPDDB in London. He led the restoration of the great 18thC landscape of Croome Park for the National Trust and then followed the policy river 'upstream' playing a lead role in the creation of the New Forest and South Downs national parks. He went on to run national policy for the Campaign to Protect Rural England, living in Frogmal Lane for several years. Later, after directing the Game Conservancy's communications and parliamentary work between 2010 and 2014, Tom travelled back down the 'policy river' to set about trying to practice what he'd preached as a conservation landowner.



This event is free to Society members, who should RSVP to [info@heathandhampstead.org.uk](mailto:info@heathandhampstead.org.uk)

**Tickets will be available for non-members via Eventbrite for £15.**

The lecture will be live streamed. If you wish to attend online, please email [info@heathandhampstead.org.uk](mailto:info@heathandhampstead.org.uk). You will be sent the link nearer the time.

# Heath Report

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by John Beyer

## **Heath Vision revision**

The City of London Corporation has completed the overdue mid-term review of the Hampstead Heath Ten Year Management Strategy 2018-2028. The Strategy is also known as the Heath Vision, echoing the Heath Vision document produced by the Society in 2004 to guide the City's approach to the Heath.

The review was conducted by members of the City's Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee. Our thanks to them, and to Heath Sub-Committee member Jeff Waage in particular, for putting in time and effort to complete the work. It is heartening



*Local councillors and community leaders at Mortimer Terrace Nature Reserve as they walk the proposed Camden Nature Corridor*

to see in the new version strong references to the protection of the fringes of the Heath from urban encroachment and the need for expansion of green corridors radiating from the Heath. Biodiversity is also championed, with the promise of work with the Greater London Authority on nature recovery on the Heath. The City's 2023 Natural Capital Assessment showed that for every pound spent on managing the Heath, there was a £8.40 return in health, environmental and other intangible benefits.

The strategy notes that use of the Heath for walkers increased dramatically in the summer of 2020 following Covid lockdown, and there remains a balance to be struck in encouraging more biodiversity while welcoming so many visitors. The vogue for wild swimming has also been reflected in an increase in swims at the three ponds and the Lido, from 200,000 in 2020-21 to 620,000 in 2023-24.

## **Charities review**

The Society continues to monitor and challenge proposals emanating from the City on the future of the Hampstead Heath Charity. A review seeks to change the funding model from one where the City covers whatever deficit there is in the budget each year, to one where the Heath receives a grant fixed in advance. While there has been engagement on some specific issues, for example an audit of the state of buildings on the Heath, the City has yet to address key questions. For example, what might the future nature of the relationship between the Charity and the City be like? Who would pay for the large projects such as the running track and repairs to the Pergola? Should there not be a risk assessment? As it happens, the roll-out of the overall City's charities review will start with Epping Forest and West Ham

Park this year. Hampstead Heath's review is unlikely to be implemented before 2027. The Society is liaising with colleagues concerned about the Heath and representatives of the other open spaces affected.

***Dog swimming***

Following the study of the effect of dog swimming in ponds on the Heath (See 'Pooches, Pesticides and Ponds' in Newsletter Vol 55 No 3), the Society will work with Heath staff to devise plans for public awareness of ways to reduce, if not eliminate, flea treatment pollution in the ponds.

***Fringes of the Heath***

The Society has set up a joint working group with the Planning Sub-Committee to look at issues around the Heath.

The Society is grateful to Camden planning colleagues for their objections and comments on the

proposed 27 storey tower at Archway Tube and south of the Heath, Bacton Tower Two.

Congratulations also to Jeska Harrington-Gould and many others in Highgate for persuading Highgate School to give up plans to introduce artificial grass in its playing fields.

***Events this year***

Our first Heath event will be the Kite festival on Parliament Hill (Kite Hill) on Sunday 29 June, organised as ever with the City and the Kite Society of Great Britain. The Society will end the summer with another Natural Aspect family concert on Sunday 31 August.

The Society plans to return with sheep to the Heath Extension for their grazing work 5-15 September. The Society is delighted that the Springett Lecture speaker this year will be Robert MacFarlane, academic and acclaimed author, on Thursday 30 October.



*Adrian Brooker, City of London, addressing local councillors and community leaders on a "Walk the Camden Nature Corridor" event organised by Jeff Waage*





# KITE DISPLAY

## AT PARLIAMENT HILL

Come and see members of The Kite Society of Great Britain give a spectacular display of the art of kite flying, with tricks and intricate routines accompanied by music, in the beautiful surroundings of the Heath

**Sunday 29 June**

**Noon - 4 PM**

**Parliament Hill Fields**



Supported by The Heath & Hampstead Society, The Kite Society of Great Britain, Heath Hands and The City of London Corporation

# Town Report

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by Andrew Haslam-Jones

## Transport

Much has been happening with transport in Hampstead, though the changes that have been agreed are not yet visible.

The Hampstead Transport Partnership (HTP) has made some impressive progress. The HTP was set up by Jessica Learmond-Cricqui. Various residents' groups and the Society were invited to participate. In November, Phil Jones Associates (PJA), the experienced traffic consultants appointed by the HTP, held a co-design workshop and a public presentation and consultation. Having reviewed the survey data gathered by the HTP earlier, PJA are preparing a report that will be presented to Camden Council. The report will take into account all the comments received and will seek to set out a strategy for future changes to traffic management in Hampstead and Frognal, addressing people's concerns.

The idea behind the HTP is, if the local community is involved in considering the issues, then any changes will not only be locally supported, but will also reflect local knowledge the planners at Camden Council will not have.

On that note, the Christchurch Hill and Flask Walk/Well Walk Area Safe and Healthy Streets Scheme, which raised much comment last year, was approved on 17 October 2024 (<https://democracy.camden.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4446>). You will be able to see from the drawings that, after representations were made to the Council, several of the original proposals were withdrawn. The barrier between Hampstead Square and Cannon Place has been retained because of worries about cyclists and mopeds speeding over the pedestrianised area. The one-way, exit-only from Cannon Lane onto East Heath Road, which would

have been dangerous, has been withdrawn. So, too the proposal to convert into a cycle way the section of Cannon Lane climbing steeply from Well Road. There was a sense with that scheme that it had originally been put together as a “desk-top” exercise without much time having been spent visiting the area or engaging with local residents.

The same issue appears to have arisen on the other side of the Heath with the Dartmouth Park Healthy Neighbourhood Scheme. Camden Council has been working on a scheme for Dartmouth Park for a number of years. In July, last year, the Council presented a scheme for consultation which covered a much larger area, from Dartmouth Park all the way up to the centre of Highgate. The consultation period was due to last only a few weeks over the 2024 summer holiday season and end in August. Residents' groups demanded a much longer consultation period for such extensive changes.

In September, the Highgate Society arranged a very well attended meeting at La Sainte Union School. Councillors from Camden and Haringey, along with a variety of speakers both for and against the proposed scheme addressed hundreds of local residents packed in the hall. It became clear in that meeting that local knowledge had not been exploited and there was a sense that the scheme had been yet another “desk-top” exercise. The Society was asked to speak and we challenged the scheme on the basis of the knock-on effect it might have on Hampstead Lane and Gordon House Road to the north and south of the Heath, and the lack of traffic modelling.

The Society has attended several meetings since then, most recently in January, organised by the Highgate Society, which has set up a Joint Action Committee

## ***Town Report (cont)***

with the aim of persuading Camden to engage with the local community in further consultations. So far, Camden has agreed to have a wider consultation on the scheme and the Highgate Society has been able to raise money to fund advice from a traffic consultancy on the shortcomings in the preparation of the proposed scheme. This story is likely to run on for many months.

Back in Hampstead, Camden has approved revised plans for the changes that are to happen in South End Green (<https://democracy.camden.gov.uk/mg/IssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=69011&Opt=0>). The final plans differ from those that were put out to consultation. Some residents were particularly concerned about the appearance of several bus stops in Fleet Road. The Society has raised questions about the danger of mixing cyclists with pedestrians in the slip road, between the shops and the garden triangle and where the No. 1 buses currently stop, which is to be pedestrianised, and about the need for cycle crossings between pavements where cyclists are not supposed to ride. We understand that plans have yet to be finalised.

### ***Policing***

A Society member drew our attention to the fact that many shops on Hampstead High Street are locking their doors and only letting customers in on request because fear of shoplifting and the lack of a police presence. That has not, anecdotally, stopped at least one shop and its customers suffering an attempted theft and threatening behaviour. Readers may also be aware of the window-smashing incident, where several adjacent shops had their windows broken, and the daubing of red paint over one of the buildings in Hampstead High Street.

The Society considered organising a public meeting with the police to discuss how they are handling security issues. We approached the Hampstead Safer Neighbourhood Panel (SNP), the local body that

represents local people with the ward police Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT). In December, Janine Griffis, the interim chair of the SNT, organised a meeting that was very well attended by local residents and business groups, as well as the ward sergeant, one of the police community support officers and Camden's Community Safety Officer. The good news was that the Hampstead SNT was about to be boosted by the presence of an additional police constable. The message delivered to the police was that residents and businesses wanted to see a greater police presence on the streets both for reassurance and as a deterrent. A further meeting of the SNP is expected to take place in the spring of 2025.

### ***Post Office***

A Society member also alerted us to a threat of closure to the Hampstead post office. There was a list of a hundred post offices nationwide which the Post Office is considering closing in a newspaper report (<https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/the-full-list-of-post-office-branches-which-could-close-under-major-overhaul-b1193826.html>). The list included both Hampstead and Golders Green branches. Apparently, the Post Office is seeking, over the next few years, to close its directly managed branches because they are loss-making, or replace them with franchises.

One of our members has, on her own account, written to the Post Office and received a non-committal response, setting out the reasons why the Post Office is looking at this. We have heard, indirectly from Hampstead Post Office employees there are no immediate plans to close this branch. We also talked to the branch manager who confirmed nothing had been finalised. We understand the position with the Hampstead branch is complicated because it provides such a wide range of services. Those services could not be replaced by the much smaller Belsize branch, which

is a franchise, and the Post Office does not like to leave large areas, so-called “white zones”, where its full range of services are not available. The Society will continue to follow up on this.

***Retiring Committee Members***

Two of our members, Pam Castle and Juliette Sonabend, are retiring from the Sub-Committee. Pam joined the Sub-Committee after the pandemic and, with her extensive legal background in environmental law, represented the Society on the Hampstead Transport Partnership.

Juliette has been a member of the Sub-Committee for well over a decade. She has been a very active and effective member. Her involvement included promoting and overseeing the original refurbishment of Whitestone Pond, as well as the more recent adjustment of one of its junctions. She championed the opening of the space around the veteran tree in Oriel Place and conducted extensive work on the mending of Hampstead’s street name tiles, and so much more. Juliette will not be leaving the Society completely as she continues to serve on the Plaques Panel where her contributions are invaluable.

We are extremely grateful to both Pam and Juliette for all their work over the years.

***New Committee Members***

With each departure, if we are lucky, there are new arrivals, and in this we are very lucky.

We have three new members of the Sub-Committee:

Victoria Barclay also sits on the Redfrog Neighbourhood Forum Executive Committee and is a regular attendee at Hampstead Conservation Area Advisory Committee meetings. Victoria is a retired journalist and PR consultant.

Moira Zanatta holds a degree in economics and has

a background in banking. She currently works as the community project lead for London Clean Air, where she focuses on rewilding projects in local schools with the support of volunteers.

Peter Kohl has lived in Hampstead since 1992. Until very recently, he practised corporate law in the City, as a partner with several law firms. He retired from the law in July, 2024. Outside of his legal practice, he has served as a director, officer and advisor to the American Friends of the English National Opera, the World Orchestra for Peace and, locally, as a legal advisor to the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum.

We are very pleased to welcome Victoria, Moira and Peter to the Sub-Committee.

**THE SIDWELL RECITAL**  
**Songs at Sunset**  
*a journey from Brahms to Howells*

**REBEKAH NIEBER-JONES**  
MEZZO-SOPRANO

**EOGHAN DESMOND**  
BARITONE

**JO RAMADAN**  
PIANO

**Saturday 8th February 2025 at 7.30 pm**  
**HAMPSTEAD PARISH CHURCH**  
**CHURCH ROW, NW3 6UU**

Tickets £15 (Concessions £10)  
Buy online at [fohm.org.uk](http://fohm.org.uk)  
Tickets also available on the door  
Information: 020 7794 5808

Tube: Hampstead (Northern Line) Buses: 46, 268  
Parking is difficult in the immediate vicinity

THE PARISH CHURCH ST JOHN'S HAMPSTEAD  
**FRIENDS OF THE MUSIC**

# *Planning Report: Special Extended Edition*

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*by Alexander Smaga and Gordon Curtis*

Recent activity in Hampstead can be split in two ways. First, the number of planning applications within the area has continued to decline and are now at all-time lows – possibly a reflection on political and socio-economic changes, the cost of living and reduced confidence. As a result, we have only had to deal with quite small scale applications within Hampstead.

Second, this contrasts with some quite radical activity on our borders. There are large developments emerging and progressing, a significant detail of these is the tall building content which impacts on views from the Heath. The much-awaited application at Archway has now been submitted to Islington Council and includes a 28-storey tower. Plans for mass housing projects are already in place at four prominent sites to the south of the Heath; these are already at advanced stages of design and formal planning applications are imminent. Whilst these are outside of Hampstead, we remain aware of the effect on the skyline, as well as increased densities which impact on separately planned green spaces and corridors. We wish to raise awareness and take this opportunity to describe the current movements.

## ***Government and local policy***

The change in government six months ago promised to deliver a significant increase housebuilding across the nation. This confronts the perceived ‘crisis’ in adequate housing supply, particularly low cost or ‘affordable’ homes. The direction is ambitious – to increase targets to provide 1.5 million new homes over the next five years. It has already started; a revised national policy was published in December 2024, and the requirements have been passed onto local authorities with targets, together with penalties for not achieving them, have been reinstated.

Camden Council is also revising the Local Plan. The latest draft for consultation is expected this spring and is likely to be adopted later in the year. As would be expected, this confronts the raised requirement for housing and various sites have been identified for large developments, some with concession for high rise buildings. Five such sites are within 800 metres south of the Heath, with one – the now famous Murphy’s Yard – literally at the boundary.

Last year, the Society made representations regarding the Local Plan discouraging very tall buildings whilst encouraging greater provision for green spaces, nature corridors and nature conservation. The Local Plan should increase its attention to these and seek greater control over their inclusion in major schemes. Naturally, we expect that it will continue to prescribe the protection of open spaces, – notably the Heath, to conserve special buildings and historic areas.

Funding of these ambitious plans is obviously a big deal. The government has committed £3 billion to support small and medium-sized housebuilders and the build-to-rent sector. Helpful though this is, it is not enough. Local authorities have to balance their books on their own, many are already cash-strapped and the viable option seems to be to sell off some assets and upcycle the revenue to finance affordable housing. This has rapidly emerged as the financial model and we now see local authorities partnering up with private sector developers to achieve a common goal.

This should be welcome news for the construction industry and those looking for a new – or in some cases any – place to live. Opportunities are being realised, but there is also a danger in meeting targets with minimum standards, or streaming profit away from local authorities. It is a challenging mission.

***Current developments and considerations***

Naturally, we recognise the mission. We are in a fairly fortunate position that much of the government's housing targets will be delivered outside of central London, with concentration on green/grey belt land. But there is plenty of development close to Hampstead as well, and development which has been anticipated for a while is now happening.

As a conservation charity, one of the Society's prime duties and honours is to protect the openness and the amenities of the Heath. The Society also continues to investigate the quality and design of building developments around Hampstead. Buildings last a long time, especially large estates. The design and planning stages are relatively short in the life-cycle of a large project, but are vital if the results are to be durable, useful and enjoyable. For developers and planners this is a complicated task, and it can be tempting to compromise. Externally, there is a useful role to monitor and lobby if necessary to avoid harmful compromise, even in the course of urgent deadlines.

For these reasons, the Society follows vigorously the developments surrounding the Heath, and elsewhere around Hampstead, upholding pledges to preserve the open spaces, the wonderful far-reaching views over London, and the thriving natural world of the Heath. The Society is engaging with neighbouring communities and groups, and encourages all members and friends to participate individually.

***The rise of the high-rise***

Throughout 2022 and 2023, proposals were made for a medium- and high-rise development at Murphy's Yard, to the south-east of the Heath. Allegedly, these proposals received a record-breaking number of objections to Camden – including a substantial effort

from the Society – and the application was eventually withdrawn. A revised proposal is a certainty, and any subsequent application will be greatly assisted by Camden having effectively now designated the site as suitable for tall buildings in the new Local Plan. We expect developers are biding their time.

The Archway campus development is currently proposed for Islington. It has merit, but includes a 28-storey tower – mostly for student accommodation – and requires demolition of some historic buildings to make way for the new build. The developers produced alternative designs without a tower local residents favoured these. Yet, in spite of the low rise solutions achieving similar levels of accommodation, the Society understands Islington Council planners were particularly supportive of the tower element.

Local opposition has been galvanised into a single entity action group called The Archway Campus Joint Action Group. They have submitted an excellent representation which addresses a plethora of issues in addition to the visual aspects of the tower. They have included the Society's support, and



*The proposed Archway tower viewed from Parliament Hill  
image supplied courtesy of the Archway Campus Joint Action Group*

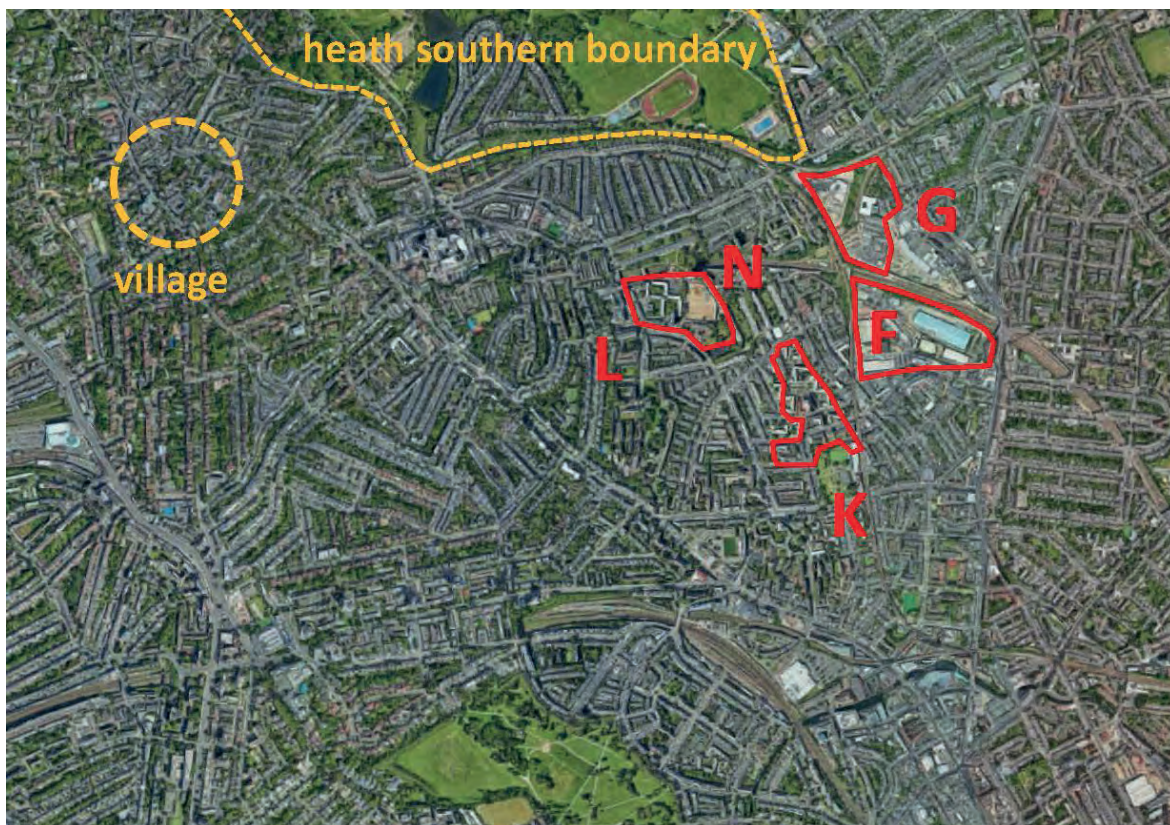
## *Planning Report: Special Extended Edition (cont)*

the Society has submitted its own representation about the impact on the skyline. If this tower it is built, it will be very noticeable from the south of the Heath, very visible from Parliament Hill and, somewhat surprisingly, will even loom above the treeline views from the Henry Moore sculpture and the Kenwood viewpoint. Until now, these vantage points are virtually devoid of any buildings.

It is also worth mentioning Camden – as a neighbouring borough – was a statutory consultee to the application. It declined to object and did not solicit opinion from within its own borough. The Society has challenged that.

Elsewhere in London, major developments are underway with residential towers – some already show on the skyline, and others are in progress. For example, at Nine Elms there are a number of planned projects with towers up to 58 storeys. At Canary Wharf, two 65-storey towers are under construction, and a 58-storey tower has been granted permission at North Acton. As a point of reference, the original Canary Wharf tower is equivalent to 70 storeys. Residential towers seem to be flavour of the month.

The Hampstead area is set for a wave of similar developments, although not quite as high. The diagram shows the planned location for five large



*Satellite image of the Heath with designated tall building zones highlighted in red*

scale developments south of Hampstead Heath. These are designated as suitable for tall buildings of up to 14 storeys. The sites are at Bacton Tower (n), the Wendling Estate (l), the West Kentish Town Estate (k), Murphy's Yard (g) and the Regis Road / Holmes Road sites (f).

### ***Bacton Tower – phase 2***

The Bacton Tower low-rise project, also known as Bacton Phase Two, is currently reaching final designs. The land has been vacant since 2018. Initially a low-rise scheme (hence the name), it was to provide around 250 homes, 61 of which would have been affordable, the rest for sale. The existing 22-storey tower would be retained, although the site is designated as suitable for new 15-storey buildings.

Camden and its development partners (Mount Anvil) recently released revised plans which astonished local residents. They doubled the density, now with circa 450 homes, of which 75% will be for private sale. But significantly, the proposal is for a cluster of additional towers – one of which is proposed as 26 storeys.

There are concerns about the quality of the design and internal planning, and there is disappointment the proportion of affordable housing is only 25% of the overall. The scheme is out to preliminary consultation and is attracting some opposition. Again, locals have formed an action group which is growing in force, and the Society is minded to support them. The image – commissioned by the action group – gives some reality of what has been proposed. To the Society, it is very visible from the Heath, and the Society is also concerned about sustaining life quality for residents in such a dense development.

The action group is soliciting representations and has a website ([bactontowersaction.org](http://bactontowersaction.org)) and on-line petition ([www.change.org/p/stop-bacton-towers](http://www.change.org/p/stop-bacton-towers))



*Simulated effect of new towers proposed at the Bacton Phase Two project. Image supplied courtesy of the Bacon Towers Action Group*

### ***West Kentish Town Estate***

This development seeks to demolish the existing estate – which is currently three-storey buildings – and replace with it a mixture of seven to ten-storey blocks and one 14-storey tower. It will increase the housing density threefold, which is of concern to residents.

The Society is less concerned about the visual aspects of this as the eight and nine-storey blocks will merge into the skyline and the tower will merge with an existing 15-storey block being retained. The Society is making representations about design quality, proportions of affordable housing and the need to ensure adequate green space and passages.

### ***Planned Camden Film Quarter***

Another project to watch is the masterplan for Regis Road and Holmes Road. The plan is to remove all of the light industry and regenerate it as a mixed-use area, gravitating around a specialised film and media production complex. Potentially, this is an exciting development of a vibrant and creative environment,



seeking to attract world-class companies from the film industry with peripheral business activity and employment. There is provision for high-rise elements and affordable housing, the latter originally set at 50%. The Society is also extremely keen to ensure the implementation of the Camden Nature Corridor, the Society project which is currently supported by Camden.

***Why high-rise and is there an alternative?***

The scale of high-rise developments prescribed in the specific zones in the Camden local plan is mooted at 40 metres. Otherwise, the blanket limit for land to the south of Hampstead is 30 metres, or nine or ten storeys. Medium-rise, on the other hand, is considered to be six to eight storeys and this is the predominant level that currently exists. Of course, much of the land use remains as traditional three or four-storey houses.

*What is incentivising the trend for high-rise buildings?*

Profit. City skyline views are very marketable, as is a view over Hampstead Heath.

One cannot ignore the idea local authorities are now motivated by profit shares as well. It is quite often their only solution for raising money to pay off debts and to respond to desperate calls for low-cost housing. This also suits central government. It is able to deliver promises without having to pass the cost burden to the taxpayer. This may license developers to squeeze more out of a site than is comfortable, without reproach from any authority.

*Disadvantages of high-rise residential buildings*

Aside from the appearance, there are many environmental arguments against tall buildings. In construction, the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint increases exponentially with increasing height. The maintenance is more difficult and expensive. They

are difficult to remove at the end of their useful life. In maintaining comfort, they tend to be difficult to ventilate naturally and are often sealed, requiring air conditioning and mechanical solutions, instead of simply opening windows. Then there is the effect on wind. Clusters of towers or even single towers will funnel and intensify wind into uncomfortable or even dangerous levels on the ground surrounding them, which is disturbing and noisy.

On the human side, it is also argued tower blocks do not foster interaction or enhance communities; there is a fear of isolation and insecurity. Following the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower, we sense many people feel uncomfortable in a high-rise building.

On the other hand, medium-rise buildings are cheaper to build and maintain. They are often more enjoyable to live in, being more connected to neighbourhoods, promoting a sense of community. Environmentally, they are viable, requiring less construction energy per unit of space, and are often more energy efficient.

***Conclusions***

Evidently, we are in a period of rapid movement: local authorities are tasked to deliver, and licensed to exercise significant control. It is rare to have a situation where a client-developer is also its own regulator.

Although the Society is primarily concerned with preservation, it remains aware of what is going on around it and, if there are special challenges, then the Society can try to rise to them. Members may from time to time remember the origins of the 1871 Act protecting the Heath, and its recital:

It would be of great advantage to the inhabitants of the Metropolis if the Heath were always kept unenclosed and unbuilt on, its natural aspect and state being, as far as may be, preserved.

# Seen on the Heath



Photos courtesy: Ron Vester



HAMPSTEAD  
SUMMER  
FESTIVAL

2025

## Dates for your diary

- 20th June** Art Street – canvases in Keats Grove for a month
- 22nd June** Art Fair 12-5pm in Keats House Garden – Free entry
- 26th &** Performances of Vanity Fair\*
- 27th June** 7pm in Keats House Garden
- 29th June** Family Garden Party 2-5pm in Keats House Garden – Free entry
- 5th July** Vanity Fair\*, mat 2pm & eve 6pm in Keats House Garden
- 6th July** Big Fair 12-5pm in Heath Street – Free entry

### \*Ticketed

Bring your rug & a picnic, some chairs and refreshments available

See website for details: [www.hampsteadsummerfestival.org.uk](http://www.hampsteadsummerfestival.org.uk)



# *Explore the Heath with our free expert-guided walks this year*

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*by Tereza Pultarova*

*Thanks to our generous donors for 2025, the Society will be offering free expert-guided walks exploring the natural diversity and historical heritage of the Heath.*

Taking place on the first Sunday of each month, the Heath Walks series presents a fantastic opportunity to learn more about London's little piece of wilderness. Covering 320 hectares of land, the Heath has a rich and complex history and an evolving ecosystem that is responding to the challenges of climate change and increasing human presence.

Among the highlights of this year's schedule is the November 2025 exploration of the Heath's response to the shifting climate and weather patterns led by the Society's Jeff Waage in cooperation with the City's Head of Conservation, Jonathan Meares. The walk will reveal the ongoing changes and demonstrate how management of the Heath is being directed towards



*Edward Milner, spider expert*

helping London and its residents address the effects of climate change on the Heath's ecosystem.

New this year will be a walk exploring the Heath's ferns, a fascinating group among its diverse flora. The walk will be run in cooperation with the London Natural History Society and co-led by Jeff Waage and the LNHS's Liz Andrew.

After a successful event in 2024, Edward Milner's hands-on spider walk will be back in June, allowing those not fearful of the eight-legged beings to get close and personal with them. Whilst you are likely to completely overlook the Heath's plentiful arachnid inhabitants during your regular explorations, the Heath is home to more than 200 spider species, including the blue-web spider who can be found under the bark of old plane trees.

Peter Mantle's ever-popular bird-watching sorties will be back in March and October, focusing on the early spring and mid-autumn avifauna. Bring your binoculars and good shoes to make the best of the day!

On the history front, the Society's Lynda Cooke will lead a walk in April focusing on the history of the lesser-known Heath Extension and its links to the early 20th century philanthropist Henrietta Barnett. Thomas Radice will lead a walk in February focusing on the complex historical relationship between Hampstead Heath and the adjacent Kenwood Estate.

The up-to-date schedule of 2025 walks is available on the Society's website with meeting points and starting times varying month on month, so pay attention to the announcements. The schedule is also available at the back of each Newsletter but may be subject to changes. We are looking forward to welcoming you.

*The Heath & Hampstead Society presents*  
The Springett Lecture

*A Lecture by*  
*Robert Macfarlane*

Thursday 30 October

7:30pm for 8:00pm | Rosslyn Hill Chapel, NW3

Robert Macfarlane is a renowned British writer whose works explore nature, landscape, and the human relationship with the natural world. His acclaimed books include *Mountains of the Mind* (2003), *The Wild Places* (2007), *The Old Way s* (2012), and *Underland* (2019), which have won numerous awards and captivated readers worldwide.

This event is free to Society members. Tickets will be available for non members at £15.



# THE HAMPSTEAD COLLECTIVE

24/25 SEASON



**SATURDAY 11TH JANUARY 7PM**

**In This Earthly Paradise: Monteverdi and Purcell**

Rebecca Hardwick, Christine Buras, Malachy Frame, the Players of the  
Hampstead Collective  
St Peter's Church, Belsize Park

**MONDAY 3RD FEBRUARY 7PM**

**Messiaen: Harawi**

Rebecca Hardwick (soprano)  
Hampstead Parish Church

**MONDAY 3RD MARCH 7PM**

**Harmonische Raffinesse: A German Homage to the Italian Baroque**  
Malachy Frame, Rebecca Hardwick, the Players of the Hampstead Collective  
Hampstead Parish Church

**MONDAY 7TH APRIL 7PM**

**Dowland: Lachrimae, or Seven Tears**

Aidan Coburn, the Players of the Hampstead Collective  
Hampstead Parish Church

**MONDAY 5TH MAY 7PM**

**Handel: Saul**

Malachy Frame, Rebekah Jones, Ruairi Bowen, Christine Buras,  
Rebecca Hardwick, Colla Voce Singers, Aidan Coburn  
Hampstead Parish Church

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Tickets £15 - more info at [www.thehampsteadcollective.com](http://www.thehampsteadcollective.com)

## ***Musical Events***

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

### **Organ Recitals**

(all commence at 4.00 pm)

**Saturday 22 February**

Hugh Rowland

**Saturday 22 March**

Geoffrey Webber

**Saturday 22nd April**

Ivan Leung

## **Other Musical Events**

**Saturday 8 February 7.30 pm**

Martindale Sidwell Memorial Recital

Songs at Sunset – a journey from  
Brahms to Howells

Tickets £15; £10 concessions

**Sunday 6 April 6.00 pm**

St. Matthew Passion – J.S. Bach

The Choir of Hampstead Parish Church  
with orchestra of period instruments

Admission free

**Tickets on sale at the door**

**All enquiries to Jenny Macdonald-Hay  
0207 794 1193**



### ***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](mailto: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.*

## *Musical Event at Heath Street Baptist Church*

# **Kitchen Conversations**

The Brook Street Band (*“ensemble so pin-sharp it merits a safety warning”* – BBC Music Magazine) presents a musical feast with glorious music of the high baroque composers including Bach and Handel and *Tafelmusik* from Telemann. Alongside spectacular contemporary classical music by Master of the King’s Music Errollyn Wallen CBE, The Brook Street Band interweaves one or two surprising short popular favourites through the evening’s music bringing the centuries together, both worlds harmoniously and seamlessly blended together

The concert comprises a 75-minute performance (no interval), music and texts to evoke food preparation and cooking, eating and drinking and post-prandial conversation  
Narrator, Rachel Harris & Kathryn Parry (violins), Tatty Theo (cello), Carolyn Gibley (harp/sichord)

**Friday 14th March, 7.30pm**

See [www.brookstreetband.co.uk](http://www.brookstreetband.co.uk) for details and tickets

This project is generously supported by a grant from the Continuo Foundation



# Annual "Get Rid of the Kids"

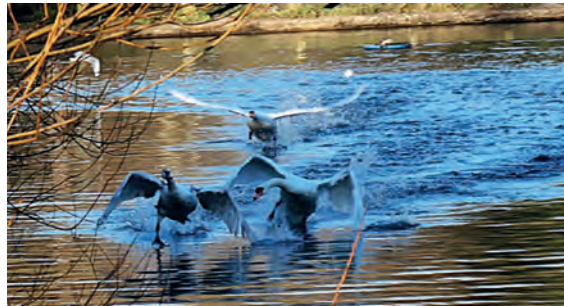
by Ron Vester, Heath Sub-Committee

*As they have done annually during their ten years of nesting on the Heath, parent swans are now chasing off the cygnets from Hampstead Ponds 1 and 2. Ron Vester was present and photographed the high drama of the five cygnets.*

On Friday, 4 January 2025, Heath rangers, [the Swan Sanctuary](#) team and the Heath Constabulary gathered to conduct and assist the capture and transfer of last year's cygnets to the Sanctuary. There was also a large number of Heath walkers witnessing the scene. The cob and pen were chasing the cygnets so hard. None of the cygnets was injured.

The team captured five out of the six eight-month-old cygnets. They were released in the Sanctuary. The last cygnet hid and has yet to be retrieved. For more about the Swan Sanctuary, see the January 2024 Newsletter (Vol 55 No 1) and [www.theswansanctuary.org.uk](http://www.theswansanctuary.org.uk).

In addition, that day a swan watcher found a dead fox floating on Hampstead Pond 1. Heath rangers retrieved the fox's body.





# *Henry Sharpe's Journal*

During the Victorian era, the Sharpes were a leading Hampstead family for over sixty years. They first lived at 1 Elm Row and then at Admiral's House. Henry's remarkable journal was discovered only recently in Camden's archives. Beautifully written, in parts almost with the art of a novelist, it sheds a fascinating light on Hampstead life from the 1840s and fills in vital missing bits of history.

The edited journal will be published later this year by the London Record Society and will be the subject of a talk at the Society's Annual General Meeting in June by Helen Lawrence, author of an award-winning history of the Heath and former Vice-President of the Society.

Watch this space!

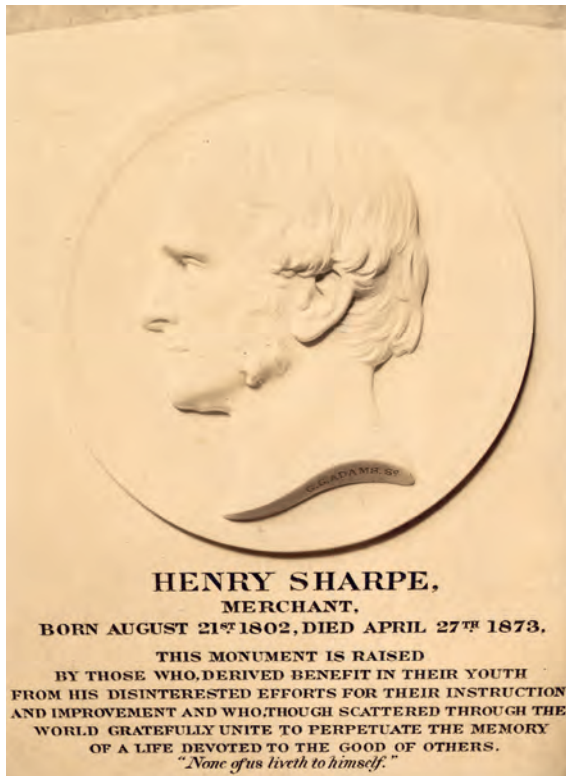


Image by vctrczy

## *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.



## Keats Community Library Spring 2025 Events



### January 30th *For the Love of Keats*

Virginia Dimitriou has won a Gold Medal for her poetry reading. She will celebrate the life of Keats with some of his best known work ('Ode to Autumn,' 'Ode to a Nightingale,' 'Ode to a Grecian Urn'), with some delightful music (including amongst others Saint Saens and Gluck), from Anete Graudina (Violin) and Oskars Kalnins (Keyboard)

### February 12th *Bee Rowlatt: One Woman Crime Wave*

Local author and broadcaster Bee Rowlatt will talk about her new book, [One Woman Crime Wave](#). Set in 2012 around Kentish Town, and influenced by Priestley's play 'An Inspector Calls,' this is a blistering critique of 21st century London, around characters in very different circumstances, living side by side in NW5. Fast-paced, witty and scalpel-sharp, *One Woman Crime Wave* examines the limits of what money can buy, and how easily the fragile web of middle-class privilege can be torn



### March 27th *Prof Bruce Boucher: Sir John Soane*

Former Director of the Sir John Soane Museum and Emeritus Professor of History of Art at UCL, Professor Boucher FSA will talk about Sir John Soane's pivotal role as architect and collector, and the fascinating museum which houses his collection

**Check our website [www.keatscommunitylibrary.org.uk](http://www.keatscommunitylibrary.org.uk) for April dates for:**

**Prof Philippe Sands KC**, the eminent human rights lawyer, will talk about his latest book, *Pinochet in London*.

Tickets are £12 and are available in person from the library or online at [www.wegottickets.com](http://www.wegottickets.com)

**Spring Book Sale** Thousands of lovely clean books at bargain prices. Free entry.


### Opening Hours:

**Tuesday and Wednesday 10–6 • Thursday and Friday 10–7 • Saturday and Sunday 12–4**

To learn more, see our website: [keatscommunitylibrary.org.uk](http://keatscommunitylibrary.org.uk)

To join our mailing list, email: [keatscommunitylibrary@gmail.com](mailto:keatscommunitylibrary@gmail.com)

Keats Community Library, 10A Keats Grove, NW3 2RR  
☎ 020 7 431 1266

KCL Events are  
generously  
supported by  Osbornes Law<sup>o</sup>  
1975–2023



*Marguerite 'Daisy' Hyde Leiter (c1879 – 1968), later 19th Countess of Suffolk, by John Singer Sargent (1856-1925). Courtesy: Historic England Archive*

## ***Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits***

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*by Helen Payne*

*Marking the 100th anniversary of the artist's death, "Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits" will present the women who married into British and European aristocracy and the artist who painted them. The exhibition will be open from 16 May to 5 October 2025 at Kenwood House. Helen Payne is the Membership Secretary / Development / Landscape Forum / Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee / Local Group*

*Liaison for The Friends of Kenwood.*

<https://friendsofkenwood.org.uk>

A major John Singer Sargent exhibition will open at Kenwood on 16 May 2025. *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* will gather together, for the first time, eighteen magnificent portraits of women once dismissively

## *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits (cont)*

known as the “Dollar Princesses”. A war-time nurse, a helicopter pilot and the first sitting female MP among them, the exhibition will reveal the often-overshadowed lives of these fascinating American women who crossed the Atlantic to marry British aristocrats in an exchange of money for titles.

On the centenary of his death, the exhibition will be a salute to John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), the most admired and sought-after portraitist of the Gilded Age on both sides of the Atlantic. These portraits represent some of his most glamorous and powerful works. In addition to full-length oil paintings, masterful charcoal portraits will also feature, depicting their subjects in a candid and perceptive light.

The exhibition is curated by English Heritage with the charity drawing upon the expertise of Richard Ormond CBE, renowned Sargent scholar and the artist's great-nephew who is exhibition consultant.

Wendy Monkhouse, English Heritage's Curator of the exhibition said:

Heiress will explore a side to Sargent's portraits not often considered: the women behind the works. Dismissed historically as the ‘Dollar Princesses’, their stories were far more complex, and their reach stretched beyond the boundaries of their marriages. Exploring the reality behind the label, visitors will also witness Sargent's mastery of portraiture at a time when the seeds of the Special Relationship between England and America were sown.

Among the treasures included in the exhibition will be Kenwood's own magnificent portrait of Daisy Leiter, a Chicago heiress who married the Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, as well as private loans and major international loans of Edith, Lady Playfair from the Museum of Fine Art, Boston, and Mrs Joseph Chamberlain from the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

We invite all Society members and Newsletter readers to come to the show and share it with friends. This exhibition will demonstrate the potential of Kenwood as a major London destination, and we hope it will encourage visitors to engage with one of the country's greatest art collections.

Entry will be ticketed, but free for the Friends of Kenwood and for members of English Heritage. You will also be able to make donations on the day of your visit, and we will be grateful for any financial support you can give in advance. To find out more, please contact us at [info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk](mailto:info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk) or visit the ‘[Join Us](#)’ page of our website.

The **Friends of Kenwood** are delighted to support English Heritage in this ground-breaking exhibition in the centenary year of



Sargent's death. The Friends of Kenwood provide a voice for supporters and work to promote and preserve Kenwood House, its collection and estate for future generations. The permanent collection at Kenwood, its breath-taking interiors and stunning world-class art, including Rembrandt's ‘Self-Portrait with Two Circles’, is free to visit all year round.

In addition, while ‘*Heiress*’ is on at Kenwood, the magnificent 18th and 19th century paintings which normally populate the Music and Green Rooms at Kenwood will be on loan to Gainsborough's House, Sudbury, Suffolk, and will hang in the museum's transformational new extension. Entitled ‘*Masterpieces from Kenwood*’, this is an exceptional opportunity for collaboration between English Heritage at Kenwood and the National Centre for Thomas Gainsborough, encouraging new audiences outside the capital to experience Kenwood's world-class art.

# Wild Man of Hampstead

by Conor Mark Jameson



John Beyer, Chair of the Heath Sub-Committee, with Conor Mark Jameson before the 2024 Springett Lecture. Courtesy: Ron Vester

Conor Mark Jameson gave the 2024 Springett Lecture to the Society, about his recent biography *Finding W.H. Hudson – The Writer Who Came to Britain to Save the Birds*. Conor describes here the pioneering naturalist and author's links with Hampstead.



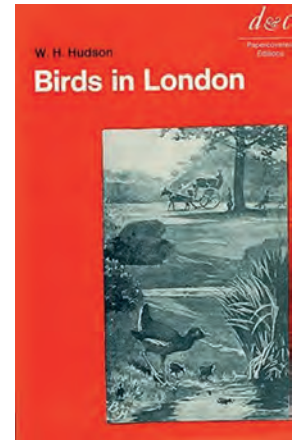
## Publication of *Birds in London*

William Henry Hudson was an enigma. For although history records him as the author of books about the nature and people of rural counties such as Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Cornwall, he lived all the while in London. And while famed for his shyness and the denial of his own greatness, surviving letters reveal the extent to which he became a pivotal presence in London's literary and artistic circles.

A focal point for this was the Hampstead studio of portrait artist William Rothenstein, from the start of the Edwardian decade. Hudson had been finding late success as a writer. He turned 60 in 1901 and was awarded a civil list pension of £150 a year, giving him a new lease of life. He was also granted British citizenship, having been born on the Argentine Pampas to North American parents, only arriving on these shores aged nearly 33, unschooled and impoverished.

Hudson's 1898 book, *Birds in London*, had caused a stir in the city. It was, as he put it, 'a book with a purpose' – the purpose being to issue a call for the better treatment of London's birds and other wildlife. Nothing had been expressly written about the subject until James Jennings's *Ornithologia* a century earlier – a long poem.

In his book, Hudson would dare to be critical of the royal and other parks. He thought these places 'sadly mismanaged' where wild birdlife was concerned. He offered firm encouragement to the public authorities to do better than to think of birds and plants merely as ornaments and to provide for the 'confined Londoner' the 'glad freedom and wildness which is our best medicine'. Providing flowerbeds for nature-starved Londoners he likened to putting Turkish delight before a hungry man. How he disdained 'prettified and vulgarised gardened parks.'



'A book with a purpose'. *Birds in London* was published in 1898



*House sparrows need insect food to raise their young. Hudson's beloved London sparrows have declined in urban areas since his day*

Hampstead is front and centre in this book. There are 50 or so references to it. "London's playing ground," or "Happy Hampstead" as it is lovingly called, must have a highly beneficial effect on the health, physical and moral, of the people,' Hudson wrote. His forthright views nearly landed him in court. But he was later invited to advise on park management – an advocate for 'rewilding' a century before the term was coined.

### ***Hudson's life changes***

Early in 1900, the government announced an intention to build the National Physical Laboratory at Kew. An agitated Hudson wrote to *The Times* about this 'great and disagreeable surprise to the inhabitants of London'. He was quick to remind readers of Her Majesty's expressed wish when she gifted the land to her people, 'The Queen earnestly trusts that this unique spot may be preserved in its present beautiful and natural conditions,' had been the pledge.

Hudson led a vigorous campaign and late in 1900 the government finally abandoned the project – with the help of the Society for the

Protection of Birds (SPB) and some friends in high places, the threat had been thwarted.

Soon after this, Hudson was adopted by Edward Garnett, star-maker in publishing at the time and mentor to illustrious names such as D. H. Lawrence and John Galsworthy. In letters, Hudson describes going with Garnett to Soho's Gerrard Street for lunch. They were joined at the Mont Blanc restaurant by Joseph Conrad, G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc.

Hudson recalled the dynamic, 'It was very amusing to listen to Belloc's tattle; even G.C. [G.K. Chesterton], the brilliant one, had his lights rather put out. I suppose Belloc looked on me as a sort of outsider – a naturalist who had no right to eat his shilling lunch in such company.' In fact, Belloc had told the group that he liked Hudson's anonymously published futuristic novel *A Crystal Age* more than any other book. 'He was amazed to hear that I had written it,' Hudson later reported. Things were certainly looking up for the humble field naturalist.



*Hudson (centre) in Soho with Morley Roberts (left) and Lancelot Cranmer-Byng. Courtesy: RSPB*

## *Wild Man of Hampstead (cont)*



*Hudson before his emigration from Argentina to live in London in 1874.  
Courtesy: Smithsonian*

### ***Hudson's portrait***

Before long, he was being invited to portrait artist William Rothenstein's studio in Church Row, Hampstead. In a letter late in 1903, Hudson called off:

'Dear Rothenstein, I cannot go to you just yet as I have a painful pimple on the bridge of my nose which must go away before I sit [at] yours. I hope it won't last more than a day or so longer.'

When the blemish had run its course, Hudson sat to be sketched and then done in oils. It was an address frequented by many illustrious figures, and a fruitful place to network. Hudson met one of the most illustrious names in literature of the time – Thomas Hardy, who invited him to visit his Dorchester home.

While in Dorset later that summer, Hudson tried to fulfil his promise to visit Hardy. In the event he spent a long while loitering at the gate, gripped with a social anxiety that often afflicted him. 'I walked by Hardy's house two or three times and though I'm quite sure he would have received me kindly I went not into his gate,' he wrote.

Hudson was sitting for Rothenstein late in 1906, saying: 'Rothenstein has not wholly done with me yet. You see we have been having foggy and very dull weather for some time past. I sat on Saturday and shall have to give him one more sitting.' When Hudson was finally able to view the results in the National Portrait Gallery, he could not pretend to like what he saw. His radical aristocrat friend Don Roberto Cunninghame Graham (whom Rothenstein had painted like a Velasquez) tried to reassure his friend that the portraits were flattering. Hudson would not be persuaded. 'Of course with your head and [Joseph] Conrad too – at a distance – [you] can afford to look with equanimity on the Rothensteins with their pencils, but when it comes to a man with distinctly Palaeolithic lineaments the case is slightly different. He does not feel so pleased at the idea of his portrait being held up before a smiling public.'

It seems that Hudson would remain dissatisfied with the outputs. 'Another book of portraits has been published by Rothenstein and one is of me,' he groaned, 'just as bad as all the others he has done so many times.'

### ***Missing Tagore***

In 1912, Hudson was invited to the Rothensteins' to meet their latest VIP guest, the Indian poet, musician and artist Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore had been dubbed the 'Bard of Bengal' and would receive the Nobel Prize a year later. This distinguished guest had at least one fellow author above others in his sights:

‘Tagore wanted to meet Hudson. *Green Mansions* was his favourite modern book, he said.’ Sadly, Hudson gave his apologies. ‘I should have liked to hear Yeats read the Tagore poems,’ he wrote in reply. ‘I hope he has got a poet to translate them. Not many of our poets know Hindustani.’

According to Rothenstein, Hudson missed a lively evening, and some other very big names, such as George Bernard Shaw, Ezra Pound, H. G. Wells and John Galsworthy. ‘After dinner we asked Tagore to sing *Bande Mataram*, the nationalist song. He hummed the tune but after the first words broke down; he could not remember the rest. Then Yeats began the Irish anthem—and his memory, again, was at fault; and Ernest Rhys could not for the life of him recollect the words of the Welsh national anthem. ‘What a crew!’ I said, when I too stumbled over God Save the King.’

### ***World War I, family life and making it in America***

World War I was announced to the nation by Hudson’s close friend Sir Edward Grey, Liberal Party Foreign Secretary. Despite serious illness during the war years, and his great distress at the loss of his friend and surrogate son Edward Thomas on the Western Front, Hudson worked feverishly to repackage his works for American editions.

His wife was in full-time care for a decade or more. William Rothenstein provides this fascinating insight. ‘As late as 1916, the Rane of Sarawak told us that, Hudson’s wife being seriously ill, he was hard put to it to send her away to the sea-side. Sir Edward Grey was then Foreign Minister; when I wrote to him of Hudson’s difficulties, he replied in his own handwriting; a delicate precaution, I thought, on the part of a man so beset as he was. A sum of money—£200—was collected among

his friends, and, through Edward Garnett, was discreetly placed to Hudson’s account without his ever discovering the secret.’

Hudson’s fortunes were about to change. He belatedly broke America with the help of John Galsworthy’s glowing testimonials and the backing of Theodore Roosevelt. Galsworthy had by now moved to Admiral’s Row in Hampstead.

Hudson was on his feet till his dying day, making up for lost time repackaging earlier works, earning money to leave to the now Royal SPB, and campaigning to prevent any more rare species being lost. His unfinished work was carried on by friends and colleagues. A monument and sanctuary in his honour were unveiled in Hyde Park in spring 1925, by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, on the very spot where Hudson had once slept rough.

A century on, his influence is still felt, even if his name is all but forgotten. His ‘rags to riches, all for noble causes’ story remains an inspiration.



*Hudson’s monument in Hyde Park – sculpted by Jacob Epstein*



# Burgh House & Hampstead Museum

## Sunday Sounds, a recital series showcasing emerging musicians

9th February, 1.00 pm Ruihan Wu

on piano featuring pieces by Chopin and Schubert

Sunday 16th February, 1.00 pm Leora Cohen

(accompanied by Paul Wingfield)

on violin, featuring pieces by Dvořák, Mozart, and Stravinsky

Sunday 2nd March, 1pm – Margalida Moll Salord

on piano, presenting a programme of Beethoven,  
Liszt, Charles Ives

Sunday 30th March, 1.00 pm Junior Academy  
at the Royal Academy of Music



In 2025, Burgh House will spotlight women artists and illustrators, highlighting Hampstead's historical and ongoing reputation as a hub for creativity and collaboration.



**Helen Oxenbury:** *Illustrating the Land of Childhood* is the first solo exhibition dedicated to the artist's work. A cornerstone of childhood and parenthood for generations, Oxenbury's work is beloved for its universal appeal, subtle celebration of diversity, and ability to connect with readers of all ages.

**Victorian Idylls: Kate Greenaway and Helen Allingham** celebrates two Victorian-era illustrators and artists whose legacy continues to inspire us today.

Kate Greenaway (1846-1901) revolutionised children's book illustration with her delicate and nostalgic images, while Helen Allingham (1848-1926) became renowned for her idyllic watercolours and illustrations for books and periodicals. Both women were lifelong friends and often sketched together on Hampstead Heath.

**Both exhibitions will open to the public from  
6 March – 14 December 2025 • Free entry**

Burgh House  
New End Square, NW3 1LT  
☎ 020 7431 0144  
info@burghhouse.org.uk  
www.burghhouse.org.uk  
@burghhouse1704

# BURGH HOUSE

**House & Museum:** Open Wed, Thu, Fri, Sun & Bank Hols 10am-4pm  
**Café:** Open Wed, Thu & Fri 10am-5pm; Sat, Sun & Bank Hols 9:30am-5:30pm



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LOCAL CULTURE AND NATURE TO FILL  
YOUR SUMMER WITH JOY!**



## Heath Walks: 2025

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

**NB:** *Parking is difficult locally, especially on fine weekends; the West Heath car park (behind Jack Straw's Castle) is more likely to have spaces than the East Heath car park.*

Advance booking not required except where indicated; simply turn up at meeting place 5–10 minutes before the start times. Walks last approximately two hours. They do not necessarily follow made-up paths, so you are recommended to wear suitable footwear as conditions may be rough or muddy.

The walks are now **FREE** but you will be encouraged to become a member of the Society – one of England's oldest and most respected conservation charities – if you are not one already.

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

Further information from the walks organiser, Tereza Pultarova

*mobile:* 0777 6649163 or

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

Further walks will be announced in the May 2025 Newsletter. Details of walk programmes will be available on the Society's website:

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

***✕ @HandHSocHeath***

### ***No walk in January***

**Sunday 2 February 10.30am** (meet at entrance to old kitchen garden, east of **Kenwood House** stable block) **Kenwood Estate versus Hampstead Heath – history and relationship.** Led by Thomas Radice, Society Trustee

**Sunday 2 March 9.30am** (meet at **Burgh House**) **Birds of Hampstead Heath in early spring.** Bring binoculars and good shoes. Led by Pete Mantle, Heath Sub-Committee member

**Sunday 6 April 2.30pm** (meet at **Spaniard's End** by the flower stall near the Spaniard's Inn) **Henrietta Barnett and the story of the Heath Extension.**

Led by Lynda Cook, Heath Sub-Committee member

**Sunday 4 May** *to be specified, please check the website*

**Sunday 1 June 2.30pm** (meet at **Burgh House**) **Spiders of the Heath.** Led by London's leading spider expert Edward Milner

**Sunday 6 July** *to be specified, please check the website*

**Sunday 3 August 10.30am start with an expected end at 3.00pm** (meet outside **Hampstead Heath Overground** station and bring lunch) **Hampstead Heath Ferns and Horsetails.** This new walk is organised jointly with the London Natural History Society. Led by Jeff Waage, Society Trustee, and Liz Andrew from LNHS

**Sunday 7 September** *to be specified, please check the website*

**Sunday 5 October 9.30am** (meet at **Burgh House**) **Autumn birds.** Bring binoculars and good shoes. Led by Pete Mantle, Heath Sub-Committee member

**Sunday 2 November** (time and meeting place to be advised) **How will Hampstead Heath respond to climate change?** Led by Jeff Waage, Society Trustee, and Jonathan Meares, City of London's Head of Conservation

**Sunday 7 December** *to be specified, please check the website*

