



Est. 1897

The Heath & Hampstead Society

NEWSLETTER

October 2026

Vol 57 No 2



*Bill Oddie OBE
1941–2026*

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<i>Front cover:</i> Bill Oddie photographed on the Heath. Courtesy/licensed: James Cheadle	

Chair's Notes

by Marc Hutchinson

Bill Oddie OBE

We were desperately sorry to learn of the death of our long-serving patron Bill Oddie. As Helen Lawrence writes in her tribute (see page 16), Bill's involvement with the Society goes right back to the 1980s and the Society's campaign to save Hampstead Heath from division amongst its various adjoining London boroughs. We send our deepest sympathy to his widow and family.

Gift Aid forms

Annual members will receive with this Newsletter their annual renewal form. If an annual member is a UK taxpayer, may I ask the member to complete the Gift Aid section in the annual renewal form and send it back to us.

Life members will receive with this Newsletter a stand-alone Gift Aid form. If a life member is a UK taxpayer, may I ask the member to complete this Gift Aid form and send it back to us.

These forms can be scanned to us as pdfs; they do not need to be posted.

Your Chair

I am very pleased to advise that, at last, a long-time Society member, a retired solicitor and Hampstead resident with much experience of charity work both local and national, has agreed to shadow me for the coming year with a view to standing for election as the new Chair of the Society at our annual general meeting in 2027.

Chair's Notes (cont)

Your Treasurer

Maureen Clark-Darby has served as our Treasurer for 19 years and wishes to identify her successor with a view to that person taking over at the annual general meeting in 2027. This is a very important role in the functioning of the Society and I urge any member interested in the role to contact me in confidence as a first step. My mobile number is 07768 827 405, and my email address is marchutch54@gmail.com.

Membership Secretary

We think the Society would benefit from the creation of the post of Membership Secretary, in order to lighten, in a few respects, the workload of the Treasurer. Please have a look at the advertisement on page 5 to see if you might be interested in the role. If you are, you should contact me in confidence in the first instance (details above).

Annual general meeting 2026

It was a pleasure to see so many of you at our recent annual general meeting at which all the candidates for election were duly elected. No changes were proposed to the limit on free annual Society memberships (given, for example, to winners of our photographic competition #myhampsteadheath) or current subscription rates. After conclusion of the annual general meeting, we had the pleasure of hearing from Nell Frizell who spoke about her recent publication "Brave and Bold", a centennial history of the Kenwood Ladies' Pond, and a most fascinating and delightful history it is.

South End Green retail

I reported regretfully in May on the closure of the historic pub at the top of Fleet Road and South End

Green, known then as The South End Green Social, part of a long saga of openings and financially driven closings affecting that building. How welcome it is then to see a new owner refurbishing the pub and reopening it as The Fleet Tavern. We wish the owner the success that has so eluded its predecessors.

On a sad note, the famous north London Italian delicatessen, Giacobazzi's, which had been in business for over 35 years, finally, in September, closed its doors after its retiring owners failed to find a buyer for the business. When I moved to South Hill Park in 2002, there were three family-owned delicatessens in South End Green; now there is none.



The South End Green Social reopens as The Fleet Tavern



Giacobazzi's closes forever after 35 years

Kite Festival and Natural Aspect Concert

These events were hosted by us again over the summer and were very well attended: see page 12. I wish to thank Paul Maskell of the City of London Corporation, John Beyer, Chair of the Society's Heath Sub-Committee, and Jeska Harrington-Gould and Melissa Fairbanks, both members of that Sub-Committee, for all the hard organisational work that made these events such a success, not forgetting all the Heath staff and Society volunteers who turned out on the day to support them.

Camden Film Quarter

The Planning Report (see page 10) records the planning approval by Camden Council for the outsized Camden Film Quarter, despite widespread local opposition, including opposition within the Council, and the admitted damage to the views of St Paul's Cathedral. On the one hand, the Society, which has a charitable mandate to protect Hampstead Heath and its views and viewpoints, deplores the decision to build the Quarter for that reason. On the other hand, there may be many

other valid grounds, legal and otherwise, for objecting to the project which are not properly the concern of the Society. At the time of writing, we are not aware of any proposed action by the amenity groups who, on the record, objected to the development. However, the Society is planning to investigate the alleged legal justification for the damage to the statutory view(s).

David Altaras

David is a retired barrister and judge and former trustee of the Society. He became the Society's legal adviser, a position he held for many years. Following his retirement from practice, he now steps down from that position. I wish to record our sincere thanks for all the work he has done for the Society in his professional capacity over the decades, including representing, and leading to victory, the Society in the famous *Garden House* and *Athlone House* appeals, and the two planning inquiries into the *Fairground Site* at the Vale of Health, among many other cases. We wish him well in his retirement.

New Committee members

We welcome Adam Cooke as a new trustee of the Society on the General Committee, John Robins as a new member of the Town Sub-Committee, and Maria Chiara Caviggioli as a new member of the Planning Sub-Committee. We thank them for their commitment to the work of the Society.

Springett Lecture and Christmas Party

I hope to see you at the Springett Lecture on 22 October (see page 4) and, with this Newsletter, you will find your invitation to our sell-out Christmas party to be held once again at Keats House on Tuesday, 8 December.

The Heath & Hampstead Society presents

The Springett Lecture 2026

A Lecture by Liz Andrew

Thursday 22 October

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

So close to central London, Hampstead Heath's biodiversity continues to amaze.

Each year, new records are added to a list that already has over 800 species of plants, similar numbers of fungi, and at least 1500 invertebrates.

Liz Andrew will take you on a journey through the habitats where some species have lived perhaps for centuries, others have more recently arrived, and tantalisingly more are yet to be discovered.

Admission is free for members of:

- The Heath & Hampstead Society
- The Marylebone Bird Watching Society
- The Vale of Health Society
- The Highgate Society
- Heath Hands

RSVP to events@heathandhampstead.org.uk

Tickets for non-members are available for purchase on EventBrite

If you wish to watch the lecture free of charge via Zoom, please contact: events@heathandhampstead.org.uk and request the Zoom link





Membership Secretary

The Membership Secretary supervises the administrative side of admission of new members and the renewal of annually renewing members. The day-to-day administrative side is handled by the Society's bookkeeper, Stafford & Co. Members join and renew online and occasionally by post. There is a simple and standard process to be followed in completing the admission or renewal process. The Membership Secretary banks the few subscription cheques (most pay by BACS or PayPal) and also handles, by phone or email, ad hoc membership queries. The Membership Secretary liaises as necessary with the Treasurer.

The busiest time is early in the new year when most annual members renew. The time entailed in the role, averaged out over the entire year, is, we think, one to two hours per week but the role does not require weekly activity.

This is an important role in the resilience and functioning of the Society and we hope that a member can be found to take it on. It would be up to the applicant to decide whether they wished to join the General Committee as a trustee.



Musical Events

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

Sunday 13th December, 7.00 pm

***J.S. Bach Christmas Oratorio
(Parts 1 – 3 & 6)***

The Choirs of Hampstead Parish Church
with Baroque Orchestra

Directed by Geoffrey Webber

Tickets: £20 adults, £15 concessions,
under 18s free

Website:

[hampsteadparishchurch.org.uk/
friends-of-the-music](http://hampsteadparishchurch.org.uk/friends-of-the-music)

Sunday 20th December, 5.00 pm

Carol Service

The Hampstead Collective

Monday 5th October, 7.00 pm

***Mega Polyphony 16th century English
sacred vocal music and poetry***

Tickets and more info at

www.thehampsteadcollective.com

Town Report

Hampstead's Historic Street Signs

As noted in previous newsletters, the Town Sub-Committee has been concerned about the state of our historic street signs. Hampstead is well known for its tiled nameplates, of which there is a greater concentration in Hampstead than in any other part of London (possibly, the country).

The Society is pleased to report many of the worst-damaged nameplates have now been restored and/or replaced with hand-crafted tiles in the same style as the originals. Special thanks go to Andrew Haslem-Jones, who single-handedly surveyed and recorded the tiled signs, and thanks to Camden's Highways team with whom the Society has worked over several years on this project. The Society also thanks the Downshire Hill Residents Association and the Pilgrim's to Willoughby Residents Associations for their contributions, and commends the Redington Frognal Residents Association for its previous work with Camden Council to install heritage-style tiled street signs in the RedFrog area.

Hampstead's tiled nameplates are generally embedded into brick walls (although occasionally attached into wooden frames) so that, in one author's words "they become integral to their environment – part of the very fabric of the area" (Alistair Hall, *London's Street Signs: A visual history of London's street name plates*). Also, as they are made of tile inlaid into brick, they have been remarkably long-lasting.

There is scant documentation regarding the history of Hampstead's tiled nameplates. For sure, though, they are tied to the history of London's postal districts and the evolution of local government in our area. In 1857, London's first postal districts were introduced, initially into 10 geographic districts of which Hampstead fell into "NW." In 1917, London's postal districts were further subdivided into numbered sub-districts, thereby creating the "NW3" of Hampstead. Street signs followed these divisions, with nameplates which were initially labelled "NW" modified to add a "3," sometimes awkwardly



Here are a few of the Hampstead tiled signs, likely dating from the early 1900s, which have been recently restored





Here are hand-painted metal signs of the Borough of Hampstead, dating before 1965, which have been recently restored



in different fonts or in ways disrupting the signs' symmetry and perhaps adding to our neighbourhood's charm.

The signs likely were an early initiative of the newly formed Borough of Hampstead, which was created in 1900 along with the other metropolitan boroughs. At least two historians have estimated that Hampstead's tiled nameplates date principally from 1905–1911, and one historian (Alistair Hall) believes they were manufactured by Minton Hollins & Co of Stoke-on-Trent.

In later years, the Borough of Hampstead developed a handsome "modern" style of nameplate in hand-painted aluminium, almost always mounted on concrete posts, and which proudly proclaimed the borough's name. These were created before 1965, when the Borough of Hampstead combined with Holborn and St. Pancras to form the new Borough of Camden. There now are only a very few of these Borough of Hampstead signs still on our streets, and happily two of these have been recently and beautifully restored by the Pilgrim's to Willoughby Residents Association.

After 1965, Camden Council introduced a new nameplate, initially in the borough's then signature burnt orange, which later was switched to green. These nameplates prominently display Camden Council's logo, which was commissioned in 1965 from the internationally renowned design firm, Wolff Olins, which is still headquartered in Camden. The favourite colour of the lead designer, Michael Wolff, was the burnt orange adopted by Camden Council. The logo, which has been in regular use since 1965, features four pairs of clasped hands linked in a continuous circle.



Left is a sign from the early years following the creation of the Borough of Camden in 1965, showing the new Camden logo and Camden's then signature burnt orange colouring

Whether by design or happenstance, for over 100 years our local government officials have not made wholesale replacements of Hampstead's nameplates, even when adopting new styles as noted above. Luckily, Hampstead differs from most other London boroughs which for the most part have wiped clean all past styles. Hampstead's signs not only add beauty to its streetscape, but also provide a glimpse into the historic evolution of our community.

Making our Pavements Accessible

The Town Sub-Committee remains committed to improving the pedestrian experience in Hampstead. The Society can be proud the village has become an increasingly attractive destination; however, greater numbers of visitors makes navigating Hampstead's pavements more difficult, particularly with competition for pavement space from outdoor tables and chairs, advertising boards (A-boards) and e-bikes and scooters.

Outdoor pavement dining is a wonderful feature of our village, as long as tables and chairs do not creep beyond permitted parameters to cause unsafe obstructions to other users.

Each restaurant and café must obtain a pavement licence from Camden Council to place outdoor tables, chairs and heaters. Every pavement licence must be renewed annually. Pavement licences regulate the items which may be set out, including the maximum number of permitted tables and chairs and physical boundaries that may be occupied. The Town Sub-Committee regularly reviews pavement applications and, where appropriate, provides comments to Camden Council as part of the application process.

A-boards, on the other hand, are not subject to licence or prior approval, although Camden Council and national policy dictate they should not obstruct movement on pavements.

The Society has been engaged with Camden Council to explore how Hampstead's pavements may be made safer. Later this year in Hampstead, Camden Council plans to implement a pilot pavement safety program. The Society expects to work with Hampstead's business owners and the larger community to assist in the program.

Camden Art Centre
Arkwright Road
London NW3

Liz Lerner: A hard line to bend

11 September 2026 – 17 January 2027

Camden Art Centre is proud to present the first exhibition at a major UK institution of Liz Lerner (b. 1960) – one of the most influential and significant American sculptors of her generation.



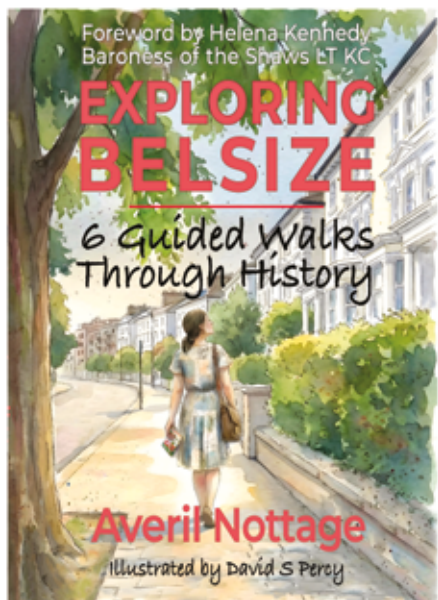
Image: Liz Lerner, *Marthe*, 2019. Ceramic, epoxy.
Photo: Evan Bedford. © Liz Lerner, Courtesy Galerie Max Hetzler, Anton Kern Gallery, The Modern Institute, Regen Projects

Art Centre, Café & Garden: Tue-Sun 11am-6pm; Thu 11am-9pm

Camden Art 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 W www.camdenartscentre.org



EXPLORING BELSIZE

6 Guided Walks Through History

Averil Nottage

Illustrated in colour by David S Percy

Step into the captivating story of Belsize as the author uncovers five centuries of its history through six engaging, fully illustrated walks. This richly researched guide takes you from the origins of Belsize – a landscape of hay meadows and gracious country estates that lay beyond London's boundary – to the lively, characterful streets of today. As the story unfolds, elegant Regency terraces, Italianate villas, ornate Queen Anne houses and Arts and Crafts homes trace the area's dramatic transformation.

Written in a warm, accessible style as if guided in person, each walk lasts around 90 minutes and includes clear maps, and is packed with a wide variety of evocative colour photographs and illustrations.

Perfect for residents, visitors and anyone interested in London's architecture and local heritage, these six walks reveal the fascinating past waiting just around the corner.

"This compelling and descriptive guide brings a deeper understanding of this intriguing part of London."
– Nicola C. Manasseh, Publisher, *In The Square* magazine

Price: £14.99

Available from Waterstones Hampstead
and Daunt Books Belsize Park



Planning Report

by Gordon Curtis

Starting with some interesting news of minor amendments to national planning policy, known as the NPPF, which were implemented in August. This framework is periodically updated and it is the prime source of guidance for local authorities. One of the changes is concerned with retrospective planning applications, particularly where works have been intentional and seemingly a deliberate manoeuvre to avoid the normal process. The policy now directs that 'serious weight' is given to such applications.

This is a subtle change but it is potentially powerful for local authorities, should they chose the 'serious' option, and it is a new clause. Retrospective applications come up quite often, and they vary from genuine mistakes to a deliberate avoidance of the law, particularly where an applicant has anticipated getting refused. Planners often struggle with the latter: the adage 'it is sometimes easier to be forgiven for something that you shouldn't have done rather than to have asked for consent in the first place' sometime applies. Applicants and their agents can be persuasive and know that the threat of an appeal or enforcement action is a burden on resources. But this new law gives teeth to planning officials, should they need them.

There is a very recent example of this in Hampstead. In 2014, the owner of the Magdala pub applied for permission to change the use of a function room into a self-contained flat. The application was refused and the pub and function room were subsequently given status as an Asset of Community Value. The owner went ahead with the conversion anyway. Once this was exposed, a new application was made to retrospectively legitimise the works, with Camden planners supportive of approval.

The case was finally presented to the planning committee in August, just four days after the new policy came into effect. For this and various other reasons it was refused permission. Whilst undoubtedly an appeal will follow, a sound defence

emerged and it is pleasing to see councillors giving due attention. Much of this was a highly focused campaign by Stephen Taylor of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum whose research and succinct presentation caught the attention of councillors.

A similar case is also in process in Flask Walk, a construction that has been slowly progressed over many years, with multiple and confusing planning applications. As well as retrospective applications, the new policy is confronting flood risk and in particular extending the impact of flooding 'elsewhere' and further away from the origin, as 'elsewhere' is most often where the effects are experienced.

Elsewhere in the Hampstead area we remain aware of looming large developments, in particular high rise. We are saddened to report that the application for the Camden Film Quarter was approved, with seven out of eight councillors supporting the recommendation. This was despite quite intense and reasoned arguments against it mounted by the Society and the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum, as well as hundreds of individual and local group objections. It seemed this development was to be approved no matter how legitimate the criticism: the Society and others drew attention to the permanent loss of world famous views over London from the Heath and Parliament Hill and yet it was concluded that this 'harm' was justified by the 'benefits' of the development. This is despite extensive and long-established legislation and guidance which designates important London views and forces their protection. The Society disagrees with the decision, and it remains concerned such an approach will apply to numerous similar and imminent applications: the much-anticipated Murphy's Yard redevelopment is being finalised at the time of writing. The Archway Tower is blighted whilst it awaits a decision from the London Mayor; this case has been on hold since March 2025 and

as yet no date is set for its conclusion. The Society expects the Camden Film Quarter will now stand as convenient reference for future proposals.

As previously reported, the London Mayor has also reduced the mandatory requirements for affordable housing. The justification is the previous requirements were too high

and were deterring developers. The intention is to release housing schemes, new applications, and amendments of existing permissions: the Society has already seen a substantial revision of the o2 centre redevelopment which has cut the affordable quota. The current mood seems to be that any number is better than nothing.



Courtesy: Camden New Journal



Kites in unison

Heath Report

by John Beyer

Heath Events

Kite Festival soars again

The Society's Kite Festival returned to Parliament Hill on Sunday 28 June. The Society was delighted to welcome back the Kite Society of Great Britain, who wowed the crowds with aerial gymnastics. Twelve of their kite maestros and mistresses put on a stunning display to an estimated 3,000 people, picnicking or passing. Meanwhile visitors were entertained by The Well Walk Theatre and kite-making with Sanjar Qiam, the Afghan kite master. Children joined Sally's Adventure Walk introducing them to the nature of the Heath, and enjoyed sessions of Mini Mozart. It was a fun day for families and friends. Sanjar Qiam taught people to make kites from scratch. The Society has been keen to build up some activities to provide some distraction when there is little wind and the big kites cannot get airborne. The Society's aim is to entertain spectators, while educating them on the need to protect the Heath.

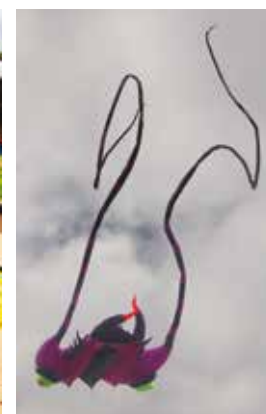
As the event has grown, the Society has found the need to provide more facilities, such as porta-loos, which were (incidentally) well received. The Society is moving away from having diesel generation for catering – there was none this time – and the ice cream van was solar powered.

The Society stand sold kites so that everyone could have a go; they sold very rapidly indeed.

Mark the date in your diary for the Kite Festival next year: *Sunday 27 June 2027.*



Felix and Matei with their new kite



Scary kite



Bianca Swalem, Heath Sub-Committee member



Bobeme bring a mid-European flavour. Courtesy: Zander Goss



Singer Vimala Rowe consults with organiser-in-chief Jeska Harrington-Gould. Courtesy: Zander Goss



Attentive crowd watches Jazz Bobeme

Concert a fun finale to the summer

There was fun and entertainment for all at the Natural Aspect Concert which returned once again to the Bandstand on Sunday 30 August.

Three amazing bands enthralled and enchanted the audience, which reached 1,500. Vimala Rowe opened the show and entertained the crowd with rock and roll, and with much applause, a song in Sanskrit. Next up was Boheme Hot Club, bringing a mid-European flavour, as well as some Edith Piaf favourites. Peace and Love then played to an already well warmed-up audience, some of whom showed their best dance moves. Local celebrity and Camden New Journal reporter Dan Carrier and organiser-in-chief, Jeska Harrington-Gould, (sporting a Vivienne Westwood anarchy shirt) provided the continuity. A brief shower mid-concert did not seem to dampen spirits for long!

There was plenty to amuse the many children who came. The Well Walk Theatre tent was a hive of paper cutting and theatrical animation. There was also the opportunity to learn juggling and other circus skills, or to marvel at Kate the Stilt-walker. Our diesel-free ice-cream van was busy, as was the Parliament Hill Café.

Once again mark the next concert date in your diary: *Sunday 29 August 2027.*

Our thanks to Camden Council for a supporting grant, to the City for sage advice and professional support, as well as the Society's other partners in the Kite Festival and the Natural Aspect Concert. The two events (which are totally free of charge) bring people of all ages and backgrounds to the Heath for outside recreation, encouraging enjoyment of the open space, while



The Well Walk Theatre was a magnet for children



Shower creates a brief pause. Courtesy: Jeska Harrington-Gould



Alma and Lilly seated on a log with their father, Nir



Cocktails are part of the package. Courtesy: Jeska Harrington-Gould



Kate promotes the Society from on high



Isabel Law shows rare breeds



Oxford down trims ant hill

receiving messaging on the need for us all to protect and cherish the unequalled Hampstead Heath.

Sheep need to graze more

Five rare breed sheep came to graze again on the Heath Extension from 29 May until 8 June. They made good progress in nibbling away at the coarser grass and cinquefoil. They returned in September for another round to increase the impact. In the enclosure, there are a dozen ant hills favoured by the yellow meadow ant, but rough growth makes the mounds less favourable to the ants. The Society is working again with Tom Davis (manager of Mudchute Farm on the Isle of Dogs) since he can provide the hardy Norfolk horn and Oxford down who will eat even the roughest pasture. Heath chair of the London Natural History Society, Liz Andrew, is leading on the survey work to see what changes this ecological grazing experiment will bring. The project is overseen by Heath Ecologist Adrian Brooker.

Welcome to the New Head of Conservation

Nicholas Garbutt joined the City team as Head of Conservation in July. Nicholas brings broad and relevant experience as Parks and Estates Manager at the Royal Parks. The Society looks forward to working with him.

Model Boating Pond marred

The Society has strongly condemned the anti-social behaviour seen at the Model Boating Pond and elsewhere on the Heath ponds, especially over the weekend of 30–31 May. The incidents included someone moving swan eggs from their nest. We arranged an urgent meeting with the Superintendent Bill LoSasso on the following Monday to discuss how such incidents should be handled. The Society believes people who disturb wildlife should be prosecuted. The Society is working to increase the reed beds around the Model Boating Pond to protect swans and water fowl in future.

Drinking fountains will flow

Many Society members have lamented the state of the drinking fountains on the Heath. The Society has been working with the City to remedy the situation. Society members have contributed funding to pay for four fountains, which will have the name of the Society on them.

Bill Oddie OBE – Society Patron

by Helen Lawrence

We are deeply saddened to learn of the death of Bill Oddie, one of the Society's esteemed Patrons. Long a member of the Society, his deep attachment to Hampstead and its Heath was well known. He was one of the first to be approached when the Society decided in 2003 to restore the position of Patron, long in abeyance. But his support for the Society's work to protect and enhance the Heath goes back much further than that – to 1984 when the GLC was abolished and the Society tried to stop the Heath from being divided between two separate managements; he was one of several eminent signatories – including Dame Peggy Ashcroft, Professor Medawar and the Rt Hon Michael Foot MP – in support of an open letter of protest from the Society to the press. Over the years since then he has given generously of his time whenever he could: presenting prizes to the Society's Springett Competition winners on several occasions; chairing a public Brains Trust meeting on nature conservation promoted by the Society in 1995; contributing occasional articles to this Newsletter; and most recently ceremonially planting a new tree in Hampstead High Street in 2018 as part of the Society's drive, with Camden Council, to 'green the village'. We send our sincerest condolences to his family. He will be remembered most affectionately.



***Bill Oddie OBE
1941–2026***



Bill Oddie with Society trustees, the Mayor of Camden and other Councillors, and local MP, Tulip Siddiq in 2018

Michael Eldred Retires

A few words of appreciation for former Chair of the Society from 2003 to 2014 and one of the Society's advisers on basements and hydrogeology written by the Society's Tree Officer and member of the Society's Planning Sub-Committee.

The civil, structural and geotechnical engineer Michael Eldred recently retired from practice and being one of the Society's two advisers on basements and hydrogeology. In 2009, he was introduced to the Society by engineering geologist Dr Michael de Freitas, his 45 years of experience giving him huge insight into the problems, constraints and solutions for digging basements into Hampstead's unusual geology.

The '2 Michaels' together helped the Society to formulate and challenge Camden Council's basement planning guidelines. Michael Eldred's work on several cases of buildings damaged by neighbouring basement excavation drove the Society's push to improve the 2010 ARUP Guidelines for protecting local homes from structural damage. Together, the '2 Michaels' were an inspiring example of how collaboration between their two professions was essential for

exploring the interaction between structural and ground engineering, particularly for the challenging ground and water courses beneath Hampstead. He contributed to saving St Stephen's church from more serious damage due to the Pears building's construction and Air Studios from a neighbouring basement and swimming pool proposal. He helped to guide the Society's work on analysing damage caused by tree roots.

In 2015, Michael Eldred gave the Glass in Hand lecture entitled *Hampstead Geology, Basements and Engineers; an incompatible threesome?* to help the Society understand some key issues for keeping Hampstead safe. The Society – and Hampstead – owe much to Michael Eldred, and the Society wishes him an enjoyable retirement, with its sincere thanks for his work as one of its key advisers.



Hampstead Pond no 2



George the heron

Rosslyn Hill Chapel: 'A spiritual home for open minds'

Hampstead NW3 1NG

We offer a stay and play for children under-5 called Saturday Club during term-time. The Chapel is open all day on Sundays with a morning service at 11am, afternoon workshops at 2pm on various spiritual and life skills subjects, a short mindfulness meditation at 6pm and informal meditation-based evening gatherings at 7pm. Our friendly choir meets on Wednesdays at 7.30pm and performs each month. We are looking forward to an autumn of diverse events.

Seasonal Highlights

Sunday workshops and events

Dec 13th at 11am	Carol Service
Dec 13th at 12pm	Community Lunch Club
Dec 20th at 7pm	Yule Pagan Gathering
Dec 24th at 6:30pm	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Jan 10th at 2pm	Workshop: Step into the New Year
Jan 31st at 2pm	Death Cafe

Visit www.rosslynhillchapel.org.uk/whats-on
or scan the QR code for more information



Image by vetecey

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.

Seen on the Heath

Photos by Ron Vester





HAMPSTEAD
SUMMER
FESTIVAL

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR!
2026



*This is part of the Hampstead Summer Festival and a portion of tickets sales comes to
Hampstead School of Art & Keats Community Library.*
Keats Community Library and Keats House, Keats Grove, NW3 2RR

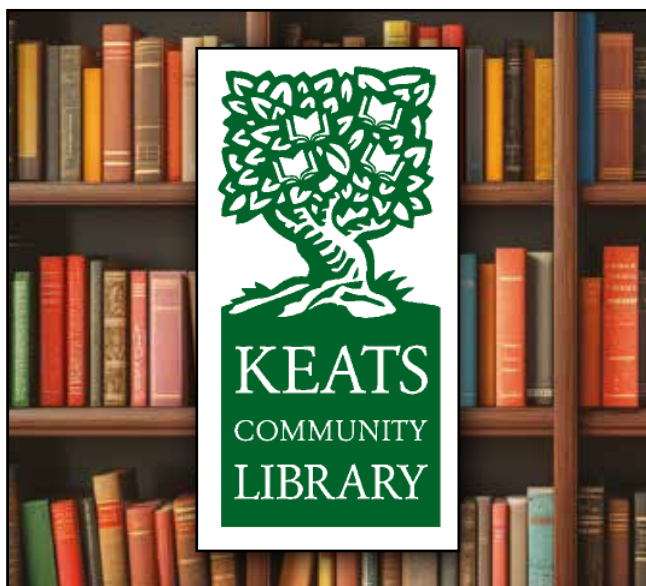


Thanks to our sponsors



**Hampstead
School of Art**





Give your Books a Good Home

Your local library is a volunteer-run charity.

We need donations of books in good condition. We keep some of the newest books for you to borrow, and others we sell to people who will love them... help us to keep the library open and free to use. Thank you.

www.keatscommunitylibrary.org.uk

To join our mailing list, email:

keatscommunitylibrary@gmail.com

Opening Hours:

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Quartet, etching by Milein Cosman, 1960s.
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A Family Divided: Drought, Danger, and the Swans of the Heath

by Anthony Harwood. All photos courtesy Ron Vester

A regular visitor to the Heath was instrumental in alerting the Heath's helpers to a potentially dangerous situation. This incident highlights some of the struggles facing the Heath's wildlife during very difficult climate conditions. At the end of the piece, readers will find information on feeding swans and who to call in case of any swan emergency.

On 13 August, I went for a 7.00 am swim in the Men's Pond with a friend, after which he left and I waited for my wife, Tanith, and daughter, Lily, to join me for a walk with our dog, Honey.

I waited by the wall next to the path at the south end of the Men's Pond, between it and Highgate No 1 Pond.

There was an adult male swan ("Beau") on the inside path who seemed to be trying to find a way back to No 1 Pond to reunite with the female ("Berry") and their five large cygnets. Wherever he was on the path, the others shadowed him in the water, and they would chat to each other as they could not see each other for the most part.

The most worrying time was when Berry also got out of the water to join Beau on the path. Berry emerged from where

the fishermen gather and the fence has been trodden down at the Millfield Lane end. The squeaking cygnets were now on their own in the water.

At some point, Berry decided she wanted to rejoin the cygnets in the water. She thrashed through some really thick undergrowth and kept coming up against the strong wire fence covering that stretch of the pond and which is hidden by the undergrowth. Berry could not get past it and, in some desperation, was walking back and forth trying to find a way through.

Eventually, Berry managed to go under the fence and get back into the pond. This was a risky manoeuvre because she had to dive beneath water and through the undergrowth. If she had gotten snagged on the bottom of the fence or a bush or other obstruction, Berry could have drowned.

Eventually, Beau went back in the water too and calm was



Anastasia, Swan Sanctuary volunteer



The ramp



Rescue in action by the Swan Sanctuary and Heath Rangers

A Family Divided: Drought, Danger, and the Swans of the Heath (cont)

restored. But it felt like something which could happen again as the family would inevitably try to get back to the No 1 Pond. I had always seen them there before, but I gather there have been issues with dogs who swim there, breaching floating barriers to get near them.

I relayed all this to the Swan Sanctuary, Heath Hands and a local campaigner. The Swan Sanctuary did not seem worried because they were happy the swans were back in the water again. Heath Hands said they would alert the Heath Rangers.

The campaigner suggested that, due to the drought, the water levels in the Men's Pond have dropped so much that the cygnets are unable to get out onto the bank to rest and just be. They will be unable to fly for another month or two. She wondered whether a platform could be created for them to use and I suggested a plank might also be helpful for them to walk up. She later sent me a video of a makeshift plank the Heath Rangers installed at the bottom end of the Men's Pond on the Parliament Hill side, but to me it looks a bit narrow.

When later the same day we returned to the pond, Berry was on her own in No 1 Pond, while Beau and the cygnets were still in the Men's Pond. We fed them some lettuce (*Ed note: do not feed bread or other human foods to swans. If you must feed swans, choose grains, lettuce, potatoes, corn, chopped cabbage, spinach or frozen peas. Throw the food into the water so*

you do not encourage them onto the bank).

About 10 days after the incident, I went for a run on the Heath and checked the ponds as I passed. Berry and the five cygnets were on Hampstead No 1 Pond, and Beau was on his own on the Men's Pond. I learned that the swan family was relocated with the great help of the Swan Sanctuary and Heath Rangers. Beau will be able to join them any day once he has stopped moulting and is able to fly once again.

Whereas Highgate No 1 Pond has nowhere for them to climb out, it does have two platforms they can use to sleep, preen and rest. This seems to me to be the best place for them as long as they are not bothered by dogs.

Ed.: Beau rejoined his family on No 1 Pond. However, as of printing, the entire swan family has returned to the Men's Pond! No one is quite sure why, but it could be due to disturbance, water levels, insufficient food, personal preference or who knows what else.

If you see a swan in distress, please contact: 1) Heath Constabulary (who will contact the Heath Rangers) on 0208 3405 260; and 2) The Swan Sanctuary on 01932 240790. If at all possible, please stay with the swan to increase the chances of successfully locating them. Alternatively, please create a What3Words location identifier.



Swan family movin' on up!



Swan family reunited

The Palmer Memorial Drinking Fountain

by Diarmuid O'Hegarty

Diarmuid O'Hegarty delves into the fascinating story behind the familiar Palmer Memorial Drinking Fountain on College Green, from its Victorian origins with the world's largest biscuit maker and the design ethos of the era, to its major restoration by the Society in 1994 and the reasons it no longer flows today.

Harry's Flowers is a familiar landmark for those heading up or down Fitzjohn's Avenue. The flower stand shares College Green, the triangular site at the corner of Fitzjohn's Avenue and College Crescent, with the Palmer Memorial Drinking Fountain (see fig.1 exterior and fig.2 interior). This was erected in 1904 in memory of Samuel Palmer, one of three brothers who, over the second half of the 19th century, had developed Huntley & Palmers of Reading into the largest biscuit enterprise in the world. Samuel died in 1903 at the age of 83. He had built and lived since 1882 in what is now Palmer Lodge, 40 College Crescent, across the road from the Fountain (see fig.3).



Fig.1 Palmer Fountain – Exterior



Fig.2 Palmer Fountain – Interior



Fig.3 Palmer Lodge

A bronze plaque records that the fountain and the site were presented to the Borough of Hampstead for the public benefit by Samuel's widow and family. The gift included four cast iron benches and a red granite cattle trough. A photograph, published in the Reading Standard newspaper on 19 November 1904, shows the site in its full glory (see fig.4).



[Specially photographed for the "Reading Standard" by Messrs. Fradette & Young, Regent Street.]
THE SAMUEL PALMER MEMORIAL AT HAMPSTEAD.

Fig.4 Photo from Reading Standard 19 November 1904



Fig.5 Finsbury Circus Fountain

Fountain Design

It was not recorded on the fountain or cattle trough that they were erected under the auspices of the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association. The Palmer family approached the Association and, after looking through the Association's catalogue of memorial fountains, chose a design that was a more elaborate version

of a fountain constructed in 1902 in Finsbury Circus (see fig.5). The Association described them as 'rustic'.

Inside is a polished red granite drum with four basins, aligned north, south, east and west. The octagonal canopy has eight polished red granite supports with four openings opposite the basins and four pierced and turned oak screens filling the intervening spaces. The red tiled conical roof that splays at the bottom is the Fountain's most distinctive feature and its greatest similarity to the Finsbury Circus Fountain. Both were possibly inspired by the covered well at Red House, Bexleyheath, designed by Philip Webb in 1859 for William Morris.

The Fountain was designed and built by J. Whitehead and Sons, a firm of funerary sculptors, undertakers and stone merchants based in London, who had become the Association's official contractors in 1899. The Association had built up a set of designs for drinking

fountains, and the drum and basins follow a standard Association pattern. The Palmer family paid the Association £800 for erecting the fountain, canopy and cattle trough.

Polished granite was a hallmark of the Association. By the 1870s the Association's experience in maintaining drinking fountains and cattle troughs was that cast iron or other types of stone were prone to damage and started to look unhygienic. The Fountain originally had push-button bronze jets for water and two drinking cups on chains at each basin. Cups needed to be replaced regularly. By the 1930s, the use of cups was considered unhygienic and the Association started to replace the water jets with bubble jets. The Fountain retains its original bronze oakleaf and acorn jets at the north and south basins – the spring-action still works on the north one. The west basin jet was gone and the east basin jet has been replaced by a metal stop. The bronze oakleaf and acorn jets were first used in 1878 on a memorial drinking fountain in Portman Square designed by Augusta, Lady Hamilton (née Cockburn) as a memorial for her late husband, Sir James. The Association's records say that Lady Hamilton made a rough sketch of three acorns and leaves, and an Association workman used real oakleaves and acorns to make a plaster cast and then a mould for all subsequent oakleaf and acorn jets.

The absence of bubble jets suggests that the Fountain fell out of use as a drinking fountain in the middle of the 20th century. Many of the Association's more elaborate drinking fountains suffered the same fate because, like the Palmer Fountain, the position of the water jet, and the height and depth of the basins made it difficult or impossible to install accessible bubble jets. It would be interesting if any readers have information about when the Fountain stopped working.

The Palmer Memorial Drinking Fountain (cont)

The Fountain's polished red granite and axed grey granite floor and steps are in good repair. Polished red granite is hard wearing and resistant to moss and mould. The oak timber work is also in reasonable repair for its age. The bottom half of the south-east oak screen is damaged but a photograph from 1994 shows that it is not much worse now than it was then. However, the red tile roof is sprouting a fern on its north-west slope. There is no sign of water staining on the pine timber ceiling inside but that may not be the case for long.

The cattle trough was removed, probably in the 1960s or 1970s, as a hazard for cars turning a sharp corner out of College Crescent into Fitzjohn's Avenue. Again, it would be interesting if any readers have information about when it was removed.

Restoration in 1994

The Heath and Old Hampstead Society (as the Society then was) organised the restoration of the Fountain in 1994, at a cost of £8,200. An aluminium plaque on the central column records the restoration and lists the main donors. The architect Stephen Coultas, who surveyed the Fountain for the Society in 1992, advised that broken and missing tiles meant that the roof needed urgent repair. The stone was in good condition and the external woodwork was in reasonable condition, but he recommended using a preservative stain. The water jets were in the same state as they are today.

An article by Julian Lessey in the Society's October 1994 Newsletter summarised the repair project. The roof was stripped to repair the battens, although fewer were rotten than had been expected. A 'far greater number' of tiles had to be replaced than had been expected, mainly because earlier repairs had used cement to fix tiles which caused them to break when removed. The bronze finial

had its missing flower repaired and the copper sheeting below it was renewed. Mrs Peggy Jay, President of the Society and great niece of Samuel Palmer, performed the re-opening ceremony on 8 October 1994.

The article records that the Society looked into reconnecting the Fountain's water supply but the cost of replacing the old lead piping was prohibitive. The Society consulted with the Association, which still exists, but was advised at the time against restoration of the water supply because 'Firstly, hardly anybody drinks the water anyway, and secondly the plumbing tends to get vandalised'. The argument might be different today as people carrying water bottles could refill them.

Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association

The Association was founded in 1859 as the Metropolitan Free Drinking Fountain Association and changed its name to include 'Cattle Trough' in 1867.

An investigation by Dr John Snow in 1854 of a cholera outbreak in Soho had demonstrated that the source of cholera was not foul air but was contaminated drinking water from ground-water wells. London's population had grown from 1,100,000 in 1800 to 2,700,000 in 1850 without any great investment in sanitation. By 1859, it had generally accepted that the water from public wells was a health hazard. Fresh water was piped to homes in London by private water companies but the supply to poorer areas was only for a limited number of hours each day with the risk that water became contaminated when stored.

The Association's initial objective was to provide free drinking water fountains for the benefit of the public; particular those working in the streets and the residents

of areas with a restricted supply of fresh running water. There was a temperance aspect to the Association's aims as an alternative for the thirsty public was beer or gin in public houses. The objectives were expanded in 1867 to include water troughs for working horses and cattle being driven through the streets. The Association realised from the start that maintaining the drinking fountains and troughs was as important as building them. In most cases, it also had to pay the private water companies for the water used. Clearing blockages and replacing the drinking cups required a workforce to visit each site weekly, or daily for the busier sites. By 1870 the Association's annual income from subscriptions and ordinary donations was needed to maintain and supply water to the 130 drinking fountains and 132 cattle troughs already under its care. The strategy for building new drinking fountains moved to encouraging donors interested in paying for a specific drinking fountain, often as a memorial.

Hampstead was early to join, what was referred to at the time as, the Drinking Fountain Movement. Three simple drinking fountains were erected in 1860, paid for by public subscription. Not long after, they were put under the care of the Association because of the need to replace drinking cups, and maintain and repair the fountains. There is a record of a fountain near Jack Straw's Castle but it does not survive. Another was built against the wall of the Dispensary at New End but was removed by the local authority before the 1880s because the site was 'most unsuitable.' The third, and only one to survive, was originally built against the wall of the then police station at the corner of Holly Hill and Heath Street. In 1873 the police station building was demolished and replaced by a new fire station. This building and its clock tower are still with

us but stopped being a fire station in 1923.

The drinking fountain was moved by the Association to its present site between 65 Rosslyn Hill and Mulberry Close. The Association's records say that it was the same drinking fountain that was moved and not a replacement, which makes it an early example of the use of polished red granite rather than cast iron.

The picture of the Rosslyn

Hill drinking fountain (see fig.6) shows how simple and utilitarian it was. It no longer works but originally had a continuous water jet falling into a basin with two drinking cups on chains. The overflow from the basin fed the dog trough below. The continuous water jet was probably converted to a push-button jet at the time it was moved. A photograph from 1989 shows it fitted with a bubble jet, now gone. Some readers may know when the fountain stopped working.



Fig.6 Rosslyn Hill Fountain

The Palmer Memorial Drinking Fountain (cont)

The Palmer Fountain was a product of the Association's strategy of encouraging memorial drinking fountains. Hampstead has an earlier example of an elaborate memorial drinking fountain at South End Green (see fig.7). This was erected in 1881 by Miss Crump of Hereford House in memory of her cousin William Warburton Pearce (died 1872) and her uncle James Bradley Chamberlain (died 1880). Designed by J H Evins, the fountain cost her £600. Before starting Miss Crump had consulted with the Association which agreed to pay for and supervise the installation of the pipework and to take care of the fountain once it was built. It does not look like bubble jets were fitted. However, maybe they were and some readers may know if they were or when the fountain stopped working.

Lead water pipes were banned in 1970. This may be the reason why many drinking water fountains were disconnected. Attitudes to drinking water in public continue to evolve as people expect to be able to drink water while they are out and about. It is a pity that these fountains cannot be replumbing for refilling water bottles and help cut down on single-use plastic bottles.

Author's note: *I owe Marc Hutchinson a big thank you for his help in my research on the Palmer Memorial Fountain. When I, as a random stranger writing a university report on the Fountain, emailed the Society's info@ address, Marc's response was quick, kind and generous. The information he gave me on the 1994 restoration of the Fountain was invaluable.*



Fig 7 South End Green Fountain

The Working Poor in Hampstead and London – 1850 to 1910

by David Castle

Drawing on meticulous research and his own family memories, David Castle, a former Chair of the Planning Sub-Committee, paints a vivid portrait of the working poor in Hampstead and London, from the cramped courtyards and insanitary dwellings to the slow, hard-won gains in living standards, literacy, and leisure that transformed lives over six decades.

In 1850 Hampstead was still a semi-rural, middle class, semi-suburb with a population of about 11,500 of which approximately 65% were working class, including builders, milliners, servants, water-carriers, shop workers, blacksmiths, chimney-sweeps, policemen, ostlers, labourers and more. Many were provided with work by the middle class who were also, of course, together with the church, running the vestry and the workhouse. In 1900, the whole large area administered by the unelected vestry became, with elected councillors, the Borough of Hampstead. Finally, Hampstead became part of London, both physically and administratively.

Where did the working poor live?

The extremely detailed 1866 Ordnance Survey map of Hampstead shows where the working class lived, mainly to the east of the High Street and around New End, revealing a complicated confusion of narrow streets, courts, alleys, and small cramped dwellings with minute yards.

The rooms above the many shops and work-rooms would be where the manual and shop-workers and their families lived.

The detached and semi-detached houses of the middle class are large and surrounded by generous gardens.

Yorkshiregrey Yard, a cul-de-sac giving access to the

Yorkshire Grey Inn, known to be frequently rowdy, was presumably never visited by the middle class even though it was very close to the beautiful Georgian houses of Church Row.

The inn and the ramshackle dwellings were all demolished in 1880 to make way for the new shopping street linking Fitzjohn's Avenue to the top of Hampstead High Street. The displaced families were not offered alternative accommodation. In 1888, 62 flats were built by the Wells and Campden Trust but only for those who could afford a regular rent.

The conditions of the Hampstead working poor

In 1850, the conditions of the working poor of London were at their worst in the absolute poverty and appalling polluted disease-ridden conditions of parts of East London. The conditions of the working people of Hampstead were considerably better than the rest of London. There were poor, insanitary dwellings, but there was unpolluted air, uncontaminated water, low density surroundings and a thriving middle-class to serve and work for. By 1850, there was also the possibility of regular work and cheap housing a short walk away in the busy, important and extensive railway yards and canal transport interchange of Camden and Chalk Farm.

A thorough study of all London poor in 1851

By 1851, Henry Mayhew, who was a friend of

The Working Poor in Hampstead and London – 1850 to 1910 (cont)

Dickens, had published his very detailed social study, *London Labour and the London Poor*. This was a non-judgemental analysis revealing both the negative and the positive aspects of working-class communities.

Also, in 1845 Engels had published his analysis of the much worse conditions in the industrial city of Manchester. Engels' conclusion was very different from Mayhew and he believed revolution was the only answer to solving the problems caused by unfettered capitalism.

In 1850, 80% of the English population lived precarious lives with poor quality food, often living in insanitary, damp, crowded rooms and subject to many diseases. By definition the "working poor" had to work as they had no other income and did not own a place to live. They had to buy or steal food and fuel, find money for rent and food every week, and any loss of work during the many economic recessions of the period was disastrous.

They had to sell their skills, sell their labour, beg, steal, or attempt street-trading and the like, or, as a last resort, sell their bodies.

The political climate in the 1850s

The Irish famine of 1845 to 1852, during which about one million people died, shocked many in the middle class. The February Revolution in Paris of 1848 (and the later proto-Socialist Paris Commune of 1871) reactivated the fear that if the aims of the "rabble" were not met, they would sweep away all the privileges of the middle class and the elite.

The middle-class, and later, the working-class influence on legislation increases

In 1846, the repeal of the Corn Laws by Sir Robert Peel not only benefitted the poor with cheaper bread, which

was a staple food, but also heralded the beginning of the decline of power of the landed aristocracy.

The Prime Ministers and Cabinets during the 19th century remained staunchly aristocratic. By 1885, the middle-class formed a majority of MPs due to the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884–5. In 1871, the legalisation of the unions enabled working-class clamour for reform and influence, leading to seven Labour MPs elected in 1908, together with the first working-class PM, David Lloyd-George (Liberal).

All the legislation improving the working and living conditions and quality of life were driven by the middle and working classes. The Lords lost the power to prevent legislation in 1911, leaving the Commons as the supreme legislative body.

1850–1910 – 60 years of change and improved conditions

The organisation of government changed during these 60 years with the increasingly liberal central governments forcing the election of councillors and enabling or requiring the local authorities to carry out and pay for all the many improvements completely from the rates – totally decentralised as the central Government gave no money to the Local Authorities.

The drift to the present highly centralised system of government started in 1908 with the first centrally funded small state pension for the over 70s, which was means tested and not available to those in the workhouse or of dubious morality!

Hampstead also changed dramatically in that time span. It went from a population of 11,500 to a population of 82,137. In 1850, the hated workhouse still existed. By 1910, the borough was fully built-up and a part of

the London sprawl with a town hall, public library, swimming pool, public baths, police station, railway station, trams at South End Green, dispensary and medical support, mains drainage, and piped water and gas. It was a fully-fledged Edwardian London Borough. The Hampstead we experience today has changed physically little since 1910. The social changes are, of course, enormous.

The average conditions of the London working class improved considerably over the 60 years

Life expectancy

In 1851, life expectancy was very low at 25 to 35 years of age. These figures were made low by shockingly high child mortality, with a death-rate of 38–55% before the age of five; whereas the life expectancy for adults over the age of 20 was 60 years of age.

By 1911, due to widespread mains drainage and mains water supply and some improvement in the treatment of disease, death before age five was much lower at 20–25% and average adult life expectancy was 65.

Working Conditions and Rights

In 1851, typical working hours were very high at 12–16 hours for six days a week with no holiday rights and instant dismissal. Leaving your work station was considered a penal offence.

By 1911 and thanks to the Factory Act of 1874, workers' hours per week were reduced to 55–60 hours, with some restriction on instant dismissal. There were still no statutory holidays, paid or unpaid.

In 1871, four bank holidays were introduced, but were not enforceable. And during this time, living-in servants had very little free time.

Basic facilities

In 1851, very primitive shared facilities prevailed. By 1890, considerable progress had occurred. The 1871 Metropolitan Water Act Mains made drainage and mains water supply available to 85–90% of dwellings.

Education

In 1851, very few could afford to pay for education. Some people learned basic skills in Sunday Schools, at work or in apprenticeships. In 1880, compulsory education was introduced for children up to 10 years of age. The classrooms often had 90 pupils per class. By 1911, the Education Acts of 1870 enabled a huge school building programme.

Literacy levels

In 1851, basic and skilled levels were 50% and 25%. By 1911, basic skills, due to compulsory school attendance, had improved to 95% and skilled reading and writing to 65%.

Legal status of all women in 1850

Unmarried women had the same rights as men, with total control over their own illegitimate children, property, contracts, wages, etc. Upon marriage, those rights were relinquished to the husband, including losing ownership of her children. The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 restored those rights back to married women but no women had the right to vote until 1928!

Legal status of working-class men in 1850

Working-class men could not vote until the limited franchise enabled by the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884. Despite reforms, by 1911 only 40–45% of working-class men could vote.

Charity in Hampstead

The Hampstead Workhouse eventually evolved into the New End Hospital. It was busy continually throughout the 19th century with an average during the period of 200–300 old and young inmates. By 1900, most of the inmates were old people, who were called the “decayed,” in the terminology of the time.

Effective complex surgery was not even available to the middle class until the 1880s. The Hampstead working class and paupers were relatively well served by the Provident Dispensary started in 1846 by the Rev. Thomas Ainger for the treatment of ailments and disease. It was taken over by the Hampstead Workhouse Dispensary (at the cost of the vestry), enabled by the Metropolitan Poor Act 1867.

The well-known charity, The Wells and Campden Trust, was effective throughout the 19th century giving poor-relief, paying for apprenticeships, building two public baths, and a large block of charitable dwellings, known as the Campden Buildings.

Not so well known is the Hampstead Soup Society. It was started in the harsh winter of 1818–1819. It continued during every winter up to 1910, first in Flask Walk and later in New End, which was a working-class enclave. In 1854, Hugh Jackson, a solicitor, provided 40 flats. They were called New Buildings at New Court, Flask Walk and were some of the earliest charitable dwellings in London. They are still in use and an important historic and listed building (see *Newsletter*, October 2023, Vol 54 No 3).

Leisure and Pleasure

There is no doubt that the highlight of the of the Hampstead working-class year was the Hampstead

Fair, though perhaps too riotous for some. After the railway arrived at South End Green in January 1860, the Fair became one of the important London events and attracted all the hustlers, costermongers and working class from all London, especially from the East End, with communal singing and dancing, musicians and magicians, boxing booths, fortune tellers, and pick-pockets, alongside all the usual amusements with noisy barkers. Probably anathema to some middle class, but to the more liberal-minded it was a spectacle to be enjoyed.

For the rest of the year there were the very popular public houses with darts, shove half-penny boards, card games, and with communal singing on Saturday evenings. On Sundays, all (except servants) were free to play football, picnic, or to “walk with your girl” on the Heath. Community events for singing and tea-dances were frequent in the available community spaces, such as the drill-hall. From 1879, the year after the Hampstead Town Hall was opened, community events frequently including dances, probably reserved for the more respectable working class.

Due to increased literacy and the production of cheap books that all could afford, book-reading spread quickly from the 1840s–1850s including not only Penny Dreadfuls, but serialised stories by Dickens, Gaskell, Eliot and, later, Conan Doyle.

The cheap railway fares from Hampstead Heath Station in 1865 enabled day-trips to the seaside for the better-off. In the 1880s, low-priced bus fares from South End Green enabled occasional trips to the many entertainments available in Camden Town and the West End.

In 1861, the Bedford Arms opened in Camden. It was an extremely popular music hall with a capacity of 1,000.

In 1907, the Kilburn Empire opened, followed by the Golders Green Hippodrome in 1913. From 1896 the early films of Melies, Paul, and Edison were being shown in London music halls.

Summary

Considerable improvements to the lives of the Hampstead working class had occurred in the 50 years since 1850. All this time most of the improvements and changes had been required by acts of government. They were paid for by the ratepayers of Hampstead vestry and administered by unelected middle class and church officials.

The Edwardian era, the next 14 years to the start of the Great European War, were the highlight and twilight of the Empire and the middle class. Immense changes were on their way with electricity, cars, revolution, the age of the dictators, Einstein, Picasso, Hollywood, Stravinsky, the Great Depression and two dreadful wars.

All caused significant cultural changes in the next tumultuous, depressed, 40 years to the first socialist government in 1945.

Personal reflection

Researching and writing about working-class life in Victorian times has reminded me of my own personal connections to the conditions of that era.

In 1942 at the age of four, I recall with fondness being bathed in a small zinc bath in front of a warm black built-in Victorian cast-iron stove in the scullery of my grandparents' small, run-down, two-storied, three-bedroom, 1880s byelaw terrace house. They had lived there since 1905 and my grandmother had given birth in that house to nine children of whom seven survived.

My two grandparents were tired and worn from a long hard life and died shortly afterwards. Absolutely typical working-class lives – hard and precarious but not without some of life's pleasures.

This article is intended as a memory for all the forgotten of those difficult times.

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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

Heath Walks: 2026

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

NB: *Parking is 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

Sunday 4 October 10am (meet at **Parliament Hill Bandstand**) *Hampstead Heath amid the Progressing Climate Change – adaptation and protection* with Professor Jeff Waage OBE, Society Trustee.

Sunday 1 November – Sorry no walk

Sunday 6 December 10am (meet at **Burgh House**) *The History of Hampstead Heath Ponds* with Marc Hutchinson, Society Chair

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

www.HeathandHampstead.org.uk

ⓧ @HandHSocHeath

2027 Heath Calendar



The 2027 calendar shows the very best of the Heath's diverse landscape and its wildlife throughout the seasons. The range of images reflects the work of City staff and Heath Hands volunteers who help protect the Heath for future generations. It is produced in partnership with the City, Heath Hands and Matthew Maran.

Available from matthewmaran.com, selected local shops and Amazon.



Remember to use the

Hampstead Card

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

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