



The Heath & Hampstead Society

NEWSLETTER

January 2009

Vol 40 No. 1

Athlone House - a grave threat to the Heath

Contents

	Page
Chairman's Report	1
<hr/> <i>Tony Hillier</i>	
Athlone House	4
<hr/> <i>Jeremy Wright</i>	
Heath Report	7
<hr/> <i>Tony Ghilchik</i>	
Town Reports	9
<hr/> <i>Gordon Maclean, Frank Harding, Nigel Steward</i>	
Putting the fun into fungi	12
<hr/> <i>Andy Overall</i>	
St. Stephen's to open soon - progress report	17
<hr/> <i>Michael Taylor</i>	
Hampstead Musical connections	18
<hr/> <i>Helen Lawrence</i>	
Bulletin Board, Society events, & Heath Walks . .	20



Front cover photo: Michael

Chairman's Report

by Tony Hillier

Good Wishes and New Year's Resolve

I always like to begin our January Newsletter by wishing all members a happy, prosperous and peaceful New Year. I do so again as the Society's spokesman. However, this year I must confess to feelings of unease, particularly with the word "prosperous". It is not going to be an easy time for any of us and for some it may be pretty grim. In preparing to write this piece, I have been puzzling over what, if anything, can the Society do on behalf of members to address the difficulties of 2009 and possibly beyond.

The answer has to be "more of the same". For over 100 years, which have included some very bad times indeed, our volunteers have worked expertly with the support of members to maintain on behalf of the community as a whole the feel, the quality and the amenities of Hampstead and the Heath. We are going to need your continued support more than ever this year, so please stay loyal, renew your membership, join a committee and bring in your friends.

Let me remind you of some of our recent achievements.

Whitestone Pond

In the September Newsletter Town Sub-Committee member Juliette Sonabend, told us how as the "Lady of the Pond" she tackled the task of revitalising Whitestone Pond and its setting, as an inspired crown for Hampstead from which to enjoy views that Constable painted, among many others, across the Heath panorama. There will not be a dramatic moment when the wand is waved. The improvements have been going on over a number of months: removing fences, softening lines, changing the surface at the edge of the grass. At some point we shall have new lamp posts. The pond may not recover its tourist

Chairman's report (cont)

attraction status from the first half of the twentieth century with donkey rides, children paddling and sailing boats, however bad the economy gets, but the makeover should give all of us a greater tinge of pride.

One lesson to be learned is that, after 15 or more years of meetings, committees and officialdom, Juliette arrived at a good time for the various budgets, learned there was a problem, did her homework and - concealing an iron will with irresistible charm - got the job done. It's a lesson for all of us and, I hope, an example of how the Society is a great platform for movers and shakers. We have the technical records, the collective memories and a strong tradition of opening doors and getting things done.

Challenging the Developers ahead of the Starter's Gun

For some of the most important sites, we residents are at our most effective in getting our concerns voiced and formally channelled, before a planning application is submitted. By the time a large proposed development is submitted to the planners for formal approval a lot of detailed but informal discussions will have taken place with officers. It is important that the proper worries of residents, where these are relevant to planning law, are placed before the officers in such a way and at a time that they can maintain a balanced and informed view throughout these preliminary stages.

There are two current examples which illustrate the point well. Jeremy Wright, a former Chairman of our Heath Committee, wrote an excellent Camden New Journal article in November in his capacity as a member of the Athlone House Working Group. Athlone House is an extremely important site overlooking the

Heath. It is crucial that together with the Highgate Society we have been able to remind the planners, before an application is submitted, that demolishing this historic Victorian mansion, let alone breaching MOL law by replacing it with a modern monstrosity twice its size, would be neither acceptable nor legal.

In a second example, the Downshire Hill Residents Association has recently sought to remind Camden of the quite demanding obligations that specific planning policies and laws place on developers of large basements. They must submit detailed reports on, and prove that they can effectively mitigate, a whole range of environmental risks to waterflow, drainage, trees and land slippage. This was in connection with another controversial proposal for a derelict (but historically important) house demolition prior to the submission of a formal application.

As you know from Gordon Maclean's reports over the past year and more, we have sought in vain to have such applications refused due to the multiple threats to the environment from deep basement excavation in Hampstead. We shall watch this space closely to see whether the combination of the pre-emptive approach with a subsequent direct objection, showing where the risks have not been addressed, can better curb the dangerous consents that are still being given to the current fashionable urge to dig for valuable square footage.

Unfinished Business with London's Mayor

It seemed reasonable to hope that new blood at the GLA might open the way to introduce some clear and rational thought into the estates planning by the Metropolitan Police Authority, and so allow the rather obvious and sensible solution for the future of the Police Station to be approved, which the Society put forward over two years ago.

We intend to start once again pressing for our solution to receive approval. However, we have been warned that the ghost of Kafka still stalks the corridors of City Hall. In November 2008. The Chief Executive announced the membership of the Resources Sub-Committee, whose responsibilities will include “considering and making recommendations to the Finance and Resources Committee in respect of the disposal and acquisition of property above £1mn in value”; he also announced the membership of the Productivity and Performance Sub-Committee whose responsibilities include “considering different methodologies to improve the leverage of strategic resources”.....; the third plank was the membership of the Estates Strategy Panel, which will also report to the Finance and Resources Committee on “undertaking further consultation of the citizen/public facing estate and a review of the Estates Strategy” *[sic]*. I just hope we do not get lost in translation.

A further initiative which has come from our Planning Committee is to try to strengthen the focus and effectiveness of the Mayor’s team for protecting and increasing the numbers of trees in London. Again, there is an existing bureaucracy, but we believe a tree czar with the right brief could dramatically improve the situation.

Congratulations

Our Christmas party was held on 18 December and enjoyed once again by around 180 members. The Town Hall auditorium looked very festive; we had great lighting and a delightful teenage jazz ensemble from the Weekend Arts College, which has together with the new Trustees of Interchange introduced such a welcome change to the management of the Town Hall. Once again the party was a great success and I should like to offer our

congratulations and thanks to Janine Griffis, her family and team for making it so. We were also delighted to welcome the Mayor of Camden, whose theme of making the whole of Camden a more caring and prosperous community seemed especially apt.

Barney Rogers

We have all been deeply saddened to hear of the death of Barney Rodgers. We send our sincerest condolences to Margaret - long-time Society committee member and Vice President for several years.

Barney was one of ten children brought up in Southend-on-Sea. Life was never easy and the memory, from an early age, of things hard-won, inspired his high ethic of work and a horror of waste. His hard work led to a rich, varied and successful life in business.

Barney was keen to support charity and use his gifts, not just for himself and those close to him, but to enable good things to blossom and flourish. Together, he and Margaret hosted countless social occasions to support Burgh House, Hampstead Parish Church, and for this Society. As Philip Buckler said at Barney’s funeral service, many thought Barney was just a wine waiter and indeed a very good one at that! And of course Margaret is famous for her amazing home-made canapés. Their capacity for fun and enjoyment was huge and lightened every occasion.

Barney’s genial presence, friendship and characteristic generosity will be sorely missed by us all.

Athlone House - a new threat to the Heath

by Jeremy Wright

Most of our members will be familiar with Athlone House, the distinctive brick and stone Victorian mansion with a square tower that stands on a prominent site overlooking Hampstead Heath just east of Kenwood House. It was last used as a hospital but became redundant and has since been at risk of major development. It looks set to become another long running planning saga on a par with others in the Society's annals such as Witanhurst or Branch Hill.

The Athlone House Working Group

Eleven years ago, the Society, (represented by Martin Humphery and Jeremy Wright) joined with the Highgate Society and the Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee in forming the Athlone House Working Group. Since then, AHWG has closely monitored proposals for the future use of this historic mansion and estate, to try to ensure the best outcome for the local community with minimal impact on Hampstead Heath and Kenwood. AHWG liaises with, and has received much support from the City of London, which owns Hampstead Heath, and which surrounds Athlone House on three sides.

A recent picture of Athlone House



Land added to the Heath.

We thought we had achieved reasonable success when, three years ago, the developer and then owner of Athlone House was granted planning approval to demolish the ugly 1950's hospital extensions and build three blocks of luxury apartments on the site, after redesigning them for minimal impact on the Heath. As a condition of this very advantageous consent, hugely increasing the value of the site, they signed a binding legal agreement with Camden under Section 106 of the Planning Act to restore this historic mansion and three cottages within 42 months. Additionally, an area of land was transferred to the City of London as an extension to Hampstead Heath.

A new owner

However, although the apartments are now near completion, no restoration work has yet started. In fact, the developer sold on the mansion and two cottages to a Middle-Eastern buyer who now wants to bulldoze this historic building and replace it with, according to the plans we have been shown, a vast pretentious palace. We understand that David Cooper, the solicitor acting for the new owner of Athlone House, has recently reconfirmed his client's intention to submit imminently a planning application to demolish and replace. We find this astounding! Perhaps he feels that with a virtually unlimited budget, reputedly £80m, his client can ride roughshod over legal agreements. But the S106 obligations to restore the buildings still remain absolutely binding on him and all subsequent owners.

Camden's role

We are therefore encouraged to learn that Camden has at last reminded the new owners of these S106 obligations and has asked for details of how they propose to complete restoration works within the 42 months. They also inspected the mansion on 19 December to review its condition. It was clearly not being adequately maintained, there were pigeons in the building, and further waterproofing and associated works was required. Camden stated that they would be requesting the owner to improve its maintenance, and that it be heated and lit. They did not mention the cottages, which are now neglected and covered with ivy. However, the state of the building is entirely the responsibility of the owner, and Camden can and must require that all deterioration be repaired in accordance with the agreement, which was a key condition on which the construction of the three blocks of luxury apartments was allowed. Camden has said that they will now continue to monitor the site on an ongoing basis to ensure the building does not become 'at risk'.

Support from the Museum of London,

Camden commissioned a report from the Museum of London, and this emphasised the importance of Athlone House and the desirability of retaining it.

A terrible threat to the Heath

Despite this, the owner's architect Robert Adam and his historical consultant Mervyn Miller both protest that Athlone House is of little value and should be demolished. These two consultants have other involvements next to the Heath. It was Mr Miller who produced the report that persuaded Camden Council that Fitzroy Farm in Millfield Lane next to Hampstead Heath was worthless, should be demolished and be replaced

with a vast and ugly be-columned palace. Two plots away from Fitzroy Farm is a proposal to demolish the Water House and replace it with a much larger palatial edifice for which Robert Adam is the architect. The impact of these insensitive and oversized developments on Millfield Lane, the Ladies Swimming Pond, and on Hampstead Heath would be terrible. These projects have met with overwhelming opposition, and have become notorious causes célèbres in the area, as featured in the Camden New Journal.

We have no doubt that Athlone House is an important historic building with significant local connections. It also fits perfectly into the landscape. Although highly visible from the northern parts of Hampstead Heath, yet it merges unobtrusively into the background because of its mellow red brick and eccentric profile. It could be readily restored into a spectacular modern family home.

An ugly and ostentatious replacement

The proposed replacement for Athlone House is a huge ostentatious palace in near-white stone with green domes; it could also be seen as an attempt to rival Kenwood House itself. It will dominate the skyline over Hampstead Heath in a disastrous way. It will stand on Metropolitan Open Land (urban Green Belt), where a replacement dwelling cannot be permitted if it is 'materially larger'. Since plans shown to us by Mr. Cooper indicate that it has some two and half times the floor area of Athlone House, it is therefore surprising that this proposal is even being contemplated.

Mr Cooper knows this only too well, as he was the solicitor representing the owners of the Garden House, which stands in Metropolitan Open Land on the bank of the Vale of Health pond. Camden Council granted approval for a

Athlone House - a new threat to the Heath (cont)

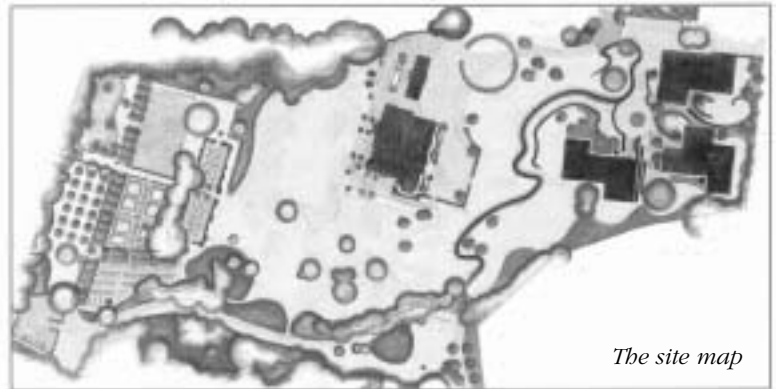
replacement dwelling some four times larger. However, the Heath & Hampstead Society successfully won a Judicial Review that overturned Camden's decision, and won again decisively in the Court of Appeal. This landmark decision, that a replacement dwelling should not be 'materially larger' than the existing, now applies to Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land throughout the country. Our Counsel's opinion is that this decision also applies to the proposed replacement for Athlone House, which is most certainly 'materially larger'.

We stand ready to fight

We stand ready to defend this hard won test case. But this should not be necessary. Camden has a cast-iron legal agreement requiring the restoration of the mansion and cottages. If any applications are submitted to demolish and replace the mansion, these should immediately be sent back. Instead, Camden must ensure that all the obligations of their existing and excellent agreement are fully implemented and complied with. We, and other organisations in the area, will give them every support to ensure this is fulfilled.



Another view from Coben's Fields



The site map

We urge Camden Council to stand firm

Restoration of the mansion and three cottages was imposed – and willingly accepted - as a binding condition permitting a huge and lavish development of apartments. Now that this has been constructed, it would be an appalling breach of faith by Camden Council if they were to allow their agreement to be flouted. In this matter, Camden is answerable to the public and to their electors, and not to a new developer, however wealthy.

Heath Report

by Tony Ghilchik

Improvements at Whitestone Pond

It is good to see the work around Whitestone Pond under way at last. By the time you read this, the first phase will be finished, and detailed design and procurement work will have started on the second phase covering the pond itself and its perimeter. Construction work is scheduled to start in September and be completed in February 2010. The pond, though not the roads surrounding it, is part of the Heath and these works have been developed in response to Juliette Sonabend of the Town Committee, with the Heath Committee's support, pushing both Camden and the City to improve the area. The road layout changes needed to close Whitestone Walk to vehicles proved to require too much of the pond to be filled in and be too expensive, so the pond will be visually reunited with the Heath by changing the Walk's road surface, making the paving around the pond a mix of York stone and resin bonded hoggin, and having a grass mound on its western area. The pond itself is to be re-lined to stop the present leaks, given sloping granite sides reminiscent of its former shape, and a small reedbed planted along its eastern side at the Heath Street end to improve water quality. You can see the proposals on Camden's website.

Lottery bid at Parliament Hill Triangle

The City's bid for Lottery funding to help improve the Parliament Hill Triangle has been submitted and we must wait until the spring to learn the outcome. The bid is based on an overall Masterplan for the area, covering improved access through the five major entrances in the area; transferring vehicle access from the Highgate Road entrance to a new route from Gordon House Road; landscaping

changes and realignment of paths designed to restore a more rural character to the area; a floodlit all-weather sports facility down near the railway track, and a new Heritage/Interpretation Centre beside a re-sited café. A successful bid, which is by no means certain, would enable work to start on the detailed designs but it would be another three years before the work was completed.

The proposed new vehicle route from Gordon House Road up to the Café area would also be useable by cyclists and have a shared pedestrian/cyclist leg beside the cricket pitch to create one of the two additional cycle routes requested by the Camden Cycling Campaign which are still being considered. Proposals to improve safety for both pedestrians and cyclists on the existing cycling routes have also been agreed. On lower sections of the Viaduct Path the plan includes widening the path alongside the playing field to 4m, realigning the path on the narrow corner of the cutting and installing a raised cushion to slow cyclists, and widening the path as it approaches Hampstead Ponds plus another set of cushions. On the route from the Viaduct Path down to the Highgate Ponds the agreed solution is to remake the path a little further from the hedgerow using rolled aggregate, rather than the present tarmac. The new path would be wider, at 4.5m, and have a couple of sets of raised cushions to slow cyclists, with bramble/scrub alongside to prevent detours on to the grass.

Path widening and relocation are expensive – they cannot be done within the existing budget without taking money away from the essential work of managing the Heath. This work will, therefore, only be done when additional external funds are available.

Heath Report (cont)

As you walk or look across the southern slope of Parliament Hill this spring, you will see a fenced-off area. The City is taking part in a three-year project led by the RSPB to investigate why house sparrows have declined markedly in London – down 66% between 1994 and 2003, and the Heath's contribution will be to sow and maintain 0.25 hectares of wildflower meadow on the southern slope of Parliament Hill to see if flower meadows have more insects than long grass without flowers. The area will be cultivated to produce a seed bed for sowing about mid-April and then fenced off for a couple of months until it is established. In this first year, the area will be lightly topped as required to control annual weeds whilst the wild flowers get established; in future years it will just be cut in early spring and then left to grow until autumn. The RSPB will be monitoring the birds in the area and, at the end of the season, measuring the numbers of invertebrates and seeds.

We are delighted that the City's management of its Open Spaces has once again been recognised with a fist full of Green Flag Awards, including ones for the Heath and for Highgate Wood – the eleventh consecutive year for the Heath whilst Highgate Wood and Queens Park have received an award in each of the twelve years since the scheme started.

Over in Kenwood, we are still waiting for the grass damage from last summer's Concerts to be repaired, even though we had been assured that whatever was needed would be done shortly after the concert season ended. The required work was, indeed, identified promptly but it then took so long to get a contractor lined up to do the work in October that, by then, the ground had become too waterlogged

for him to do it. The October rainfall was compounded by the long-broken drain from the old Dairy Pond down to the Wood Pond – that small stream you have to jump over when crossing the Pasture Ground, takes the water which should have gone through it and follows roughly along its line and the surface water makes the area near the pond very muddy. In addition, the heavy footfall from the large number of visitors and boosted by the concert-goers has led to soil compaction, so water flows over the surface of the compacted ground and collects in the hollows.

The concerts, with their extra revenues, were supposed to help English Heritage maintain Kenwood but instead they are bringing the grounds to below the standard required of a Grade II listed garden. We will be looking for all this to be rectified in the spring and a more robust policy for rectification work to be in place if the concerts are to continue.

Those of you who were at Burgh House on 23rd October for the thirteenth in our annual Springett Lectures heard Andy Overall give a fascinating overview of the 400 plus fungi he has identified on the Heath (see page 12). Andy set up and runs 'Fungi to be with', and has agreed to lead our autumn fungi foray. However, he is unable to do a walk as part of our regular series so we are arranging it as a special addition to our normal programme - details on the back page with the rest of our walk programme for 2009. Apart from Andy's foray, the walks are on the 1st Sunday of each month (bar January) and start at 10:30am on the short winter days and 2:30pm when the days get longer. Most start from Burgh House. I hope we will see you there

Town Reports

Town Committee

by Frank Harding

There has been some limited progress on matters being pursued by the Town Committee since I last reported; let me bring you up to date.

The School Run

At the time of writing, in mid December, it seems that the congestion and related problems caused by heavy traffic at the time of the opening and closing of the school day in and around Fitzjohns Avenue may be on the point of significant improvement. There remain logistical issues to the proposed scheme whereby buses collect and deliver the children from various parts of North London on a basis covering all or most of the schools in the area. The scheme needs the support of the schools, parents and Camden; discussions, however, are progressing and it is to be hoped that a solution satisfactory to all will soon be reached.

Whitestone Pond

Our Chairman reminds readers of the article by Juliette Sonabend in the last issue of the Newsletter in which she set out the recent development of plans to improve the area surrounding the Whitestone Pond. At the time, the proposed scheme was the subject of consultation. That consultation period has now closed, the proposals were put to the relevant committee of the Camden Council in recent weeks and, I am pleased to say, were approved. Work on the improvements is expected to start early in the new year.

The Tollhouse

Concerns at the state of repair of the Tollhouse opposite the Spaniards Inn have again been pursued. After years of trying to persuade the authorities to do something about it, it appears that the efforts of Robert Linger have brought this saga closer to resolution.

The Civic Trust plaque, which it had been thought was lost, is on the building.

Secondly, Camden has erected a new bollard on the corner of the building in order to make vehicles pass it rather closer to the middle of the road, thus providing it greater protection, particularly from high-sided buses, lorries and vans.

Thirdly, Camden has agreed to carry out the maintenance work required to preserve this historic building in, we understand, the next few weeks.

Licensing

Licensing issues seem to be growing again. Licensed premises are seeking extensions of drinking hours etc which, in residential areas, can create disruption and nuisance. The Society carefully monitors such applications and supports local area groups that object.

There were recently two particularly contentious hearings, one of which concerned opening hours, where we attended and spoke in support of the residents; in that case, a partial victory was won, a victory on the most important elements of the case. In the other, an issue of late night noise and litter, further work is required – and evidence being produced - by local residents in order to improve the situation.

General

Other issues continue to be debated and worked on. I shall report on them as they arise.

Town Reports (cont)

Planning Sub-Committee

by Gordon Maclean

Just as we thought that the flood of Planning policy changes had been relieved by the passing of the Planning Bill, new avalanches of bureaucracy and proposals for further “streamlining” of the Planning process are approaching. We are now obliged to burn more gallons of midnight oil to face up to them.

Local Development Frameworks (where do they dig up their jargon from?)

For many years, all Planning Authorities’ policies have been set out in Unitary Development Plans (UDPs). Camden has published such a massive tome, which has from time to time been revised - last time, after extensive and expensive public consultation, in 2006. We have found this, although unnecessarily inexact and unspecific in many ways, a reasonable document, giving well-grounded instruction and assistance to Officers making Planning decisions.

This has now to be thrown into the dustbin. The Government has decided that all UDPs must be replaced by new documents: Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). These are designed to “streamline” Planning. That is to say, to make it easier for applicants to obtain Planning Permission; or, put another way, to weaken the ability of Local Authorities to oppose unacceptable development. We know only too well here in Hampstead what this could mean.

The drafts of the Camden LDF documents are now out for consultation, and we are grinding our way through them. They make depressing reading. Many of the existing policies have been emasculated into vague and ambiguous statements which could be interpreted very widely; in effect a recital of platitudes. A number of important policies have been lost, including those relating to conservation and urban design, on development on the fringes of Hampstead Heath, on

Metropolitan Open Land (revenge for the Garden House court victory?) and on enforcement action.

There is one, qualified, gain: a new policy on Basements. We don’t know whether this has been conceded as a result of our persistent lobbying on the subject or not; probably not. We don’t think the policy goes far enough in some respects, but at least it is something where there was nothing before.

We know that Camden has had to draft the LDF to follow Ministry instructions, and we cannot blame them for the general dumbing-down of policy. We will, however, be doing our best to try and get a few teeth into it. But it’s not an encouraging start to 2009.

Killian/Pretty

Killian/Pretty is the new Barker. You may recall that the Planning Bill was preceded by the Barker Report, prepared by an eminent economist much in the thrall of the mass housing industry, who recommended, amongst other things, huge expansion to Permitted Development; that is, to the scope of what can be built without Planning Permission. Her proposals were, in the event, somewhat reduced in the Bill as passed.

Now we have a new Government-inspired Report, by Joanna Killian, a senior Local Authority civil servant, and David Pretty, a director/ex-director of several mass housing companies including Barratt and McCarthy & Stone, returning to the same subject. They go over much of the same ground as Barker, proposing removal of large areas of development from Planning control, and are clearly trail-blazing further parliamentary action. In the words of their introduction “an ambitious but deliverable package of practical recommendations which will create a more proportionate customer-focused and responsive process....”

continued on next page

Safer Neighbourhood Panel (SNP) for Hampstead Town Ward

by Nigel Steward, Chairman

It has been hugely encouraging these last three years to witness how much interest exists amongst the local community about the chances of retaining services at our Police Station site in Rossllyn Hill, from where, at present, the SN Teams for both Hampstead and Fitzjohns & Frognal ward operate. The saga about the proposed closure is in its fourth year. It really was as long ago as Autumn 2005, when following a Freedom of Information request, I and others directly challenged our last Borough Commander about the accuracy of the closure plans which we had uncovered.

A public consultation eventually took place in December 2007, following many false starts by the Metropolitan Police Authority. The Met however still continue their policy of closing police stations “not fit for purpose“, and moved the new SN Teams into “bases” adjacent to the communities they were serving without any prior consultation with those communities or their elected and unelected representatives. The consultation in Camden was a landmark success according to the Metropolitan Police Authority. Camden gave a

decisive no to closure of Police Stations in the Borough, and a similarly strong no to the idea of just one Patrol Centre in the borough.

The new Borough Commander, who took over in January 2008, played a welcome and meaningful role in the public debates. But the Mayoral election put another stop to the process. As Camden had predicted, the consultation was deemed an abject failure. The wrong questions had been put, and few Boroughs had become properly engaged. So Boris Johnson announced a complete block on any decisions until he took over as MPA Chair in October, when one of his first decisions was to set up a Committee to investigate the issues again, consult as necessary and produce a final report by June 2009. Local politicians have made it clear that they are not giving up the fight, and it has been heartening to see that the Camden Council Executive backed the community view in March 2008 and again in a personal written plea to the Mayor in December.

Your Committee will fight on in 2009.

Planning report continued

The language is pure government-speak, and the implications chilling, especially for us in Hampstead. We have to prepare for further struggles.

Trees

Trees are so important to us all, in so many ways, not least in the way they are in the front line of our fight against climate change. Those of us who try to protect our present urban trees, and encourage the planting of new ones, often feel isolated and powerless, in the face of trees’ enemies: development, disease, neglect and indifference, and the insurance industry. We have the help, sometimes effective, of LA Tree Officers, and organisations such as the Woodland Trust,

the Forestry Commission and others. However, we have concluded that this is not enough.

We are therefore preparing a submission to the Mayor of London asking for the appointment of a London Tree Commissioner. A tree champion for London, perhaps even a czar; a focus for people’s feelings about trees and a source of authoritative knowledge and advice. We know that Boris has supported initiatives for London tree planting, and may be open to our idea. We hope to get this moving very shortly.

I think that I shall never see

A poem lovely as a tree

Joyce Kilmer 1888-1918

Putting the fun into fungi

The Springett Lecture 2008: The Fungi of Hampstead Heath

by Andy Overall

Introduction

In the autumn of 1996 'fungi to be with' (FTBW) was set up to facilitate a then sprouting interest in the mushrooms and toadstools that fruit within the many green spaces of the Greater London area. 12 years on and FTBW is now the longest standing fungus group in London, playing a dual role as The London Fungus Group which is affiliated to the British Mycological Society.

During these 12 years, 450 species of fungi have been recorded from Hampstead Heath and thousands of people have enjoyed the fungal delights of the Heath via the yearly forays and beginners workshops held by FTBW. Many of the rarer and occasionally some of the more common fungi of the Heath, are collected, measured, written up, dried and deposited as voucher specimens for the county, at the Fungal Herbarium held at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

In order to begin to understand these interesting and curious organisms it is important to know what fungi actually are.

What are fungi?

Fungi are not plants because they cannot photosynthesize; they are not animals because they do not digest food. Fungi absorb their nutrients by growing on the food source and secreting enzymes into it. Fungi belong to their own Kingdom. Kingdom Fungi.

Most fungi consist of thread-like filaments called hyphae; these hyphae collectively form what is called mycelium. This is the 'fungal engine' that produces what we know as mushrooms and toadstools. Mycelium can be found on the surface of dead wood, throughout leaf litter and in the soil where it is busy

competing with other fungi for nutrients. Historically the word mushroom was supposed to denote those types of fungi that are edible, whilst the word toadstool stood for an inedible fungus. Even though this term is commonly used today it is best to just see them all as fungi, among which there are edible, inedible and toxic species. There are an estimated 4000 mushrooms and toadstools in the UK, around 200 of these are edible and around 50 of them are toxic, the remainder are plain inedible.

Lifecycle of fungi

The life of a fungus begins with the germination of spores, these are produced on the gills or pores of mushrooms, which in the case of Basidiomycetes (Mushrooms & Toadstools) 4 spores, sometimes 2, form on microscopic, prong-like protrusions called sterigmata from club shaped cells called Basidia. In the case of Ascomycetes (Morels etc) 8 spores are produced inside long thin tube-like cells called Asci.

Once the spores have germinated a mycelium is formed on the particular substrate upon which they will then begin to obtain nutrients and eventually produce mushrooms.

How fungi obtain their nutrients

There are 3 main ways in which fungi obtain nutrients.

- Mycorrhizal fungi form a mutual symbiosis with trees and shrubs. The mycelium penetrates the fine root tips of plants and thereby exchanges nutrients with the plant.
- Saprophytic fungi absorb nutrients from dead matter, such as leaves, twigs, grass and animals, releasing valuable nutrients and trace elements back into the soil.

- Parasitic fungi take nutrients from their host, giving nothing in return. There are various grades of parasitism among fungi, from weak to vigorous. Some are able to play the role of parasite and saprophyte during their life cycle.

Fungi of Hampstead Heath

The Habitat

Hampstead Heath has 3 different soil profiles: Clay; Claygate Beds, and Bagshot Sand. Together with a variety of native trees and shrubs and other habitats, such as bog, the Heath is good habitat for fungi.

Close to 450 species of fungi have been recorded from Hampstead by FTBW and many of these are rare and 1st records for the county of Middlesex. Here is a selection of these.



Above: Russula pseudo-affinis – Veiled Brittlegill. New To Britain – recorded from Golders Hill Park in 2003

Russula

The Russulas are commonly known as the ‘Brittlegills’ this is because unlike most other mushrooms their cells are spherical, rendering the flesh brittle. They are all mycorrhizal, small to medium sized; often brightly coloured and they grow in association with both deciduous broadleaved and conifer trees, depending on the species. There are around 150 species in the UK, many are edible, some toxic & some just not good to eat, due to acridness.

They can be difficult to identify without microscopic work, though some are easy enough in the field. 36 species have been recorded so far from Hampstead Heath, 1 species new to Britain and some new records for the county of Middlesex.

Below: Russula zvarae 1st record for Middlesex – recorded from the Kenwood Estate in 2007



The Springett Lecture (cont)



Above: Lactarius obscuratus
1st record for Middlesex – West Meadow-North Copse-Kenwood Estate

Lactarius

Like *Russula* the genus *Lactarius* has brittle flesh, though they are not called 'Brittle-gills' but 'Milk-caps' this is because they lactate a milky substance from the gills and flesh when injured. The 'milk' varies in colour from species to species, from white to orange to watery and in taste from mild to very hot. They are mycorrhizal with both deciduous and conifer trees, depending on the species. 16 species so far recorded from Hampstead heath, of which *L. turpis* & *L. quietus* are the most common.



Boletus

The majority of species belonging to the *Boletus* genus have tubes and pores on the underside of the cap which differentiates them from all other mushrooms. There are around 78 species in the UK at present. Most are mycorrhizal bar a few exceptions with both deciduous broadleaved trees and conifers, depending on the species and most, with some exceptions, are edible.

24 species so far recorded from Hampstead heath, preferring the sandy soils.

Left: Rubinoboletus rubinus. Second only record for Middlesex from the Kenwood Estate Hampstead Heath, the 1st coming from Waterlow Park.

***Podoscypha multizonata* ‘Zoned Rosette’**

80% of the world’s known population of this species occurs in England with particular concentrations in the South-East. Open areas such as old hunting parks with big veteran oaks and mature Beech are its preferred habitat. The Kenwood Estate has a couple of thriving populations of this fungus as does Golders Hill Park. It is not clear as to whether this species is parasitic, saprophytic or mutually symbiotic on the roots of these trees.

Top right: Entoloma aprile. 1st and only record for Middlesex in 2001-2006, a nationally rare species occurring with Elm on the Heath Ext.



Ganoderma lucidum

‘Reishi’ Although rare, this species was recorded by me from the Heath during the long hot spell of 2002. Some of those specimens collected were sent to Canada to act as the holotype for the species, as the original had been based only on a painting. This fungus is revered in Japan and China for its medicinal properties.

Right: Ganoderma lucidum



Polypores & Bracket Fungi

The word Polypore refers to something being multi-pored, which is exactly what these fungi are. Most Polypores have tough to very tough flesh, when they become almost wood-like, though some are softer fleshed as with the *Grifola frondosa* ‘Hen of the woods’ (bottom right), the Beefsteak fungus and others. Most are mildly to strongly parasitic or simply saprophytic or both, most are inedible, some have been used for medicinal purposes, especially in China & Japan.



The Springett Lecture (cont)

Conserving Fungi

Simply because of the ephemeral nature of fungi, some believe that there is not much point in attempting to conserve them, there is also some evidence to suggest that the presence of fruit bodies may not be an indication that the fungus is alive and well at all. In fact it may well be struggling to survive and having to produce fruit bodies in an attempt to proliferate the species, whilst the fungus that does not produce fruit bodies is doing well enough not to have to produce them. Even so, this is not conclusive enough evidence to suggest that the conservation of fungi is not worth while, for if the overwhelming evidence is of this nature

then we have done well to conserve the habitat of rarely fruiting fungi, beside which will be the commonly fruiting fungi.

Why Conserve Fungi?

The state of our woodlands and grasslands rely on the presence of fungi, without fungi, trees & other vascular plants would be weak & a lot less healthy, without fungi our world would resemble a refuse tip, without fungi hundreds of insect species would perish, without fungi the autumn would be a less colourful and inspiring time of year. The message is simple, conserve our natural habitats and we conserve the fungi therein.

Right: Laetiporus sulphureus - 'Chicken of the woods'

A common and stunning polypore on the Oaks of Hampstead & Kenwood during late spring & early summer with a few fruiting in the autumn.



St Stephen's to open soon - progress report

by Michael Taylor, Chairman of the Trustees

Good news for those interested in St Stephen's, Rosslyn Hill. The £3.5 million Phase 2 works, the major repair and restoration, is nearly complete, and Phase 3 is moving very quickly to fit out the lettable space created in Phase 2. St Stephen's will then be operational.

A sought-after venue

The Trustees expect that St Stephen's will be available for letting in March, yes that's right, in two months! We will be happy to accept bookings for theatre, concerts, recitals, wedding receptions, private parties, exhibitions, conferences, film and photo shoots and any other community use that comes to mind. We have every reason to hope that St Stephen's will become the most sought-after venue in the neighbourhood. Please telephone 0207 419 0544 or 0207 433 1272 for information.

Income generation

St Stephen's has been faithfully restored to its pre-WW2 state, and although income from the lower-ground floor lettable space is a major feature of the business plan, St Stephen's will need to earn a good deal from community and social lettings of the main body of the building in order to maintain the building in the condition it deserves and English Heritage will expect.

Future events

A theatrical company is already booked for a five-week run of 'The Lion, the Witch and the wardrobe' in March and April as well as a Shakespeare comedy in June/July and *A Christmas Carol* over Christmas 2009. The Trustees are also proud that St Stephen's will be a venue for Benjamin Britten's opera *Curlew River* in May, as part of the Hampstead Festival for the first time. Watch the signboards for booking details.

Work still to be done

Although St Stephen's will become operational soon, much work will still remain to be done such as cleaning more of the external fabric, repairing boundary walls etc.. This must await further funding, but there is a much more pressing financial problem.

Your generosity still needed

The not-so good news is that the major works have proved more expensive than we had hoped. Many things look worse when viewed closely from scaffolding than they looked through binoculars from the ground! For example, we had to spend an extra £50,000 to completely re-roof the aisles. We have in the last ten years raised £4.5million which has been a great achievement. We are likely to be £200,000 short, but that is not a bad percentage against the £4.5 million we have raised. Nevertheless we desperately need more donations, in fact every pound your generosity will allow. Our brochure and reply-paid envelope are enclosed. Thank you.

cartoon by Tony Holland



Musical connections – Hampstead and

by Helen Lawrence

Well known for its literary and artistic connections, Hampstead has equally rich musical ones. Many great composers and performers have lived here, and many of them studied or taught at the Royal Academy of Music, just across Regent's Park at York Gate. The Academy, founded in 1822, is Britain's oldest music conservatoire and has an outstanding international reputation.

It runs a superb programme of concerts and recitals which are open to the general public, showcasing its talented pupils. There is a wide variety of events throughout the day: lunchtimes, afternoons and evenings, many of which are free, as are its lectures and masterclasses. Hampstead-based pianist Stephen Kovacevich recently gave an inspired class which held a large audience in thrall. Another Hampstead resident, Martin Lovett, cellist of the Amadeus Quartet, runs the Amadeus Summer Course there every year.

There are opera performances at the Jack Lyons Theatre with eminent conductors and directors. Highlights over the next few months include performances and masterclasses with Yan Pascal Tortelier, Trevor Pinnock, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Colin Matthews and Tasmin Little - as well as many concerts and events with the Academy's distinguished staff, students and visiting professors.



The founder of the Proms

The great Sir Henry Wood (1869-1944), who lived in Elsworth Road, studied composition and voice at the Academy from 1886 and became a professor there himself in 1923. The Academy's concert hall, the Duke's Hall, is the permanent home of the Wood statue which adorns the Proms at the Albert Hall every year.

A Master of the King's Music

Sir Arnold Bax's family moved to Hampstead in 1896 when the composer was 13. They lived at Ivy Bank in Rosslyn Hill next door to Hampstead Town Hall. Bax, later Master of the King's Music, and his brother left evocative reminiscences of the life of a wealthy and cultivated Hampstead family at the turn of the century: the large and beautiful garden at Ivy Bank; hockey and walks on the Heath, hearing Joachim play at Hampstead Town Hall. His uncle Ridley Bax, also a musician, was an early member of the Heath Protection Society (the original name of the H&HS). Bax attended Heath Mount School and studied for a time at the Hampstead Conservatoire of which Cecil Sharp was the Director, before going to the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied with the great pianist and teacher Tobias Matthay.

A renowned piano school

Matthay, who lived in Arkwright Road, was professor of piano at the Academy for fifty years and in 1905 he opened in addition, the Tobias Matthay Piano School. His superb teaching, stressing proper piano touch and analysis of arm movements, and his books on technique, brought him international recognition.

One of his more reluctant pupils, Arthur Alexander, having trudged up the hill at

the Royal Academy of Music

Arkwright Road, left an amusing description of him:

'He was tall but very stooping, his movements quick and shuffling; his entry into a room, blowing kisses, was allegro agitato murmurando. After my first visit I told my mother that not only was he mad, but that he was shaky and frail, and was unlikely to last more than a month or two. In fact he enjoyed almost perfect health for another forty years!'

He influenced a whole generation of pianists and composition students who went on to define a school of 20th century English pianism. They included Harriet Cohen, Myra Hess, Clifford Curzon, Moura Lympany, and Harold Craxton (1885 – 1971), who in turn inherited Matthay's mantle. He was a revered teacher and professor at the Academy for a whole new generation of pianists. His house in Kidderpore Gardens is now a rehearsal studio called the Craxton Studios and is run by his grandchildren.

A Mayor of Hampstead

Another Royal Academy professor whose descendents have remained part of Hampstead musical life was the Italian composer Luigi Denza, author of the song Funiculi, funiculà. He settled in London becoming a professor of singing at the Academy in 1898. His son – also Luigi - was a mayor of Hampstead and his great-grandson, Mark, is organist and director of music at Emmanuel Church, West Hampstead,

A superb Museum

The Academy's Museum acts as a showcase for the work of performers, composers, instrument makers and scholars from a wide range of musical and other relevant disciplines. It contains important collections of manuscripts, letters and instruments relating to some of the

most significant figures associated with the Academy's history, including Paganini, Jenny Lind, and John Barbirolli and some of the great Hampstead figures mentioned here. It is open to the public every day, 11:30am-5:30pm Monday to Friday, 12:00-4.00pm Saturday and Sunday.

Hear the 'stars of the future'

The Royal Academy of Music is increasingly reliant on the generosity of its supporters to ensure that outstanding students can be helped to develop their talent. By joining one of the Academy's Patron Schemes, you will receive the Diary of events providing exciting opportunities to enjoy a rich world of music and spot the 'stars of the future'. You will also help support the Academy's valuable work. To learn more you can speak to the Development Office on 020 7 873 7333 or go to www.ram.ac.uk/supportus



The Dukes Hall



Free Public Lecture Series Spring 2009

Birkbeck, University of London

43 Gordon Square, WC1H 0PD

in conjunction with

The Ecology and Conservation Studies Society

WATER! From Source to the Sea

Freshwater habitat issues in the UK

This series examines water ecosystems and habitats from London to the national level, their degradation, restoration and management, the challenge of new legislation to deal with new problems, and perhaps some positive solutions.

All lectures are from 6.30pm to 8.30 pm on the following Fridays. Doors open at 6.00pm.

13 February 'The state of river ecosystems: a degraded past, an uncertain future?'

Professor Steve Ormerod, Professor of Ecology, Cardiff School of Biosciences

20 February 'Water management for nature conservation: conflicts and synergies'

Professor David Gowing, Department of Biological Sciences, The Open University

27 February 'Getting on with the job: taking practical action for freshwater ecology and conservation' Dr Raul Raven, Head of Conservation and Ecology, Environment Agency, Bristol

6 March 'Freshwater nature conservation and pollution: how important is it, and what can we do about it?' Dr Alastair Burn, Principal Specialist, Freshwater and Pollution, Natural England

13 March 'Does Climate Change pose a Threat to our Freshwater Ecosystems?' Professor Rick Battarbee, Emeritus Professor of Environmental Change, University College London

20 March 'The Future of Freshwaters: lessons from the Merchant of Venice. Have we backed the wrong horses in our conventional approaches to conservation and in the very nature of our society?' Professor Brian Moss, School of Biological Sciences, University of Liverpool

Booking essential. Space limited

For booking and venue details:

Telephone 020 7679 1069)

E-mail: environmentevents@FLL.bbk.ac.uk

Join the debate.

All welcome

To become a member

The Ecology and Conservation Studies Society welcomes new members. Details of the Society and application forms will be available at the door, and are on the website at: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ce/environment/> [follow the link to the Society]



Burgh House

Museum, Buttery, Bookstall

Open Wed - Fri, & Sun, 12 - 5.00pm

(Saturdays by appointment)

For more information about

Exhibitions, talks, concerts and classes

contact 7431 0144

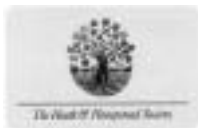
Support the Friends of Burgh House

For more information contact the Chair of
the Friends on 7435 8460

Burgh House, New End Square NW3

Tel: 7431 0144

www.burghhouse.org.uk



Don't forget to use the Hampstead Card

The current list of businesses taking part in
the scheme can be found at
www.heathandhampsteadsociety.org.uk

*Benefits they offer are granted at their discretion.
The Society cannot be held responsible for changes
in terms or availability of any discounts or offers*

In the hope that this
newsletter arrives in
time, a last minute
reminder of
performances this
weekend

at



Hampstead Parish Church

Church Row NW3 6UU

Hampstead + Musica Sacra

a musical journey through 1,000 years of
church music

Saturday 31st January 7.30pm

Sunday 1 February 6.00 pm

with dramatised introductions from historic
Hampstead characters performed by

The Hampstead Players

The Choir of

Hampstead Parish Church

The Junior Choir

Actors from the Friends of the Drama

Conducted by **Lee Ward**

Devised and written

by **Gill Perrin** and **Bill Risebero**

Heath Walks 2009

Walks are held on the first Sunday of every month except January. Most start from Burgh House, New End Square, London NW3 1LT -10 minutes walk from Hampstead Underground Station: for directions see

www.burghouse.org.uk (NB parking is extremely difficult, especially in spring and summer). Starting times are either 2.30pm or 10.30 am, depending on season and subject matter.

NB An extra walk on Saturday September 19

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

You will be invited to make a minimum donation of £2 per adult, to be collected at the beginning of each walk, to help support future development of the walks programme and to promote the Society's activities generally.

The Society does not organise walks specifically for children but they are always welcome so long as they are suitably shod, can walk reasonable distances and are accompanied by an adult taking full responsibility for them.

Please note starting times and meeting points.

For further information contact the walks organiser, Thomas Radice, on 020 8455 1025 (mobile: 07941 528 034) or email: thomas@radice.clara.co.uk.

1 February 10.30am (meet at Burgh House) Environmental Arboriculture led by David Humphries, Tree Supervisor of Hampstead Heath and North London Open Spaces City of London

1 March 10.30am (meet at Burgh House) Reading the Landscape led by Deborah Wolton and David McDowall, authors of Hampstead Heath: A Walker's Guide

5 April 10.30am (meet at Burgh House) Birds of the Heath in Spring led by John Hunt a former chairman of the Marylebone Birdwatching Society.

3 May 2.30pm (meet in North End Way, on Hampstead side of Inverforth House). The Pergola, the Hill Garden and Golders Hill Park led by Peter Tausig, member of the H&HS Committee and Heath Sub-Committee

7 June 2.30pm (meet at Burgh House) Spiders on the Heath led by Edward Milner, former BBC producer and National Spider Recorder for Middlesex and London

5 July 2.30pm (meet at Burgh House) Trees of the Heath in summer led by Lynne Leveson, local resident and official Kew Gardens guide, regularly leading tours on a wide variety of topics, including trees.

2 August 2.30pm (meet at the cattle trough in Spaniards Road, near the Spaniards Inn) The Heath Extension led by Tony Ghilchik, Vice-Chairman of the Heath & Hampstead Society

6 September 10.30am (meet at Burgh House) Birds of the Heath in Autumn led by John Hunt

SATURDAY 19 September 10.30am (meet at Burgh House) Hampstead Heath Fungi led by Andy Overall (see article page 12)

Note: advance booking opens 1 September; H&HS members have priority; maximum of 30 participants

4 October (Sunday) 2.30pm (meet at Burgh House) Practical conservation led by Rupert Sheldrake, biologist, author and member of the H&HS Heath Subcommittee

1 November 10.30am (meet at Burgh House) Ponds of the Heath led by Marc Hutchinson, Secretary, Hampstead Heath Winter Swimming Club and H&HS Committee member