



The Heath & Hampstead Society

NEWSLETTER

September 2010

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Whitestone Pond restored

photo: Andrew Morley

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Basement Crisis

An appeal by Tony Hillier, Chairman

There is a Tide in the Affairs of Men...

Brutus did not have Hampstead in mind when he called for a surge at the battle of Philippi, although from our point of view the present crisis feels similarly threatening, while being possibly of less geopolitical importance.

Please read on, because this is a serious appeal for your financial support. We are talking £30K. You are due to receive individual letters asking for your help, but I think it is essential to spell out more fully the justification for approaching members in this way.

The dimensions of the crisis

It is roughly four years since the current fashion for deep basement excavations first hit the headlines with a serious flooding incident on Christchurch Hill. Since then there have been a substantial number of such planning applications approved, against our advice. Of these we have been made aware of twenty cases where neighbours have complained of substantial damage or flooding during or after excavation. We have now commissioned a first technical Case Study of selected cases to help provide evidence in support of the different legal and policy initiatives summarised below. This is one area where we need immediate support.

We remain very worried about another twenty, where we believe sooner or later major problems will occur. There are also around ten such applications in the pipeline. Any or all of these may need to be monitored later. Two of Camden's decisions, where we have persuaded the Committee to refuse the application against Officers' recommendation, have been appealed; both are test cases for us.

Intimidating legal difficulties

In one of these the developer is trying to bury us,

Basement Crisis (cont)

by choosing the Public Enquiry appeal method. This requires us to appoint and pay for a legal team and expert witnesses to prove to the Inspector over a number of days that the development should not go ahead. This in particular is where we now need your help. The date is set for mid October.

Bullying tactics: defying and using the law

In the other case the developer has, regardless of the appeal, physically begun what can only be described as a “cowboy” excavation, which has already led to substantial damage next door, exposing an ambiguity in the law, which urgently needs to be clarified either at judicial review or by a statutory revision from the Government. This same “cowboy” approach is being tried at the Garden House, where you will recall we have fought and won a different battle to protect Metropolitan Open Land.

Incidentally, the big developers are making a fashion of trying to bury local protest with money by adopting this type of extremely expensive appeal procedure. They are about to try it on with for Athlone House, where the MOL principle is also at stake. This is another case where the Society will take financial exposure. Bullying can work. The developers of Witanhurst recently successfully appealed for a substantial development including a mega basement, prevailing over a group of private protesters in Highgate, who simply could not afford to match costs for witness cross-examination.

Has the Society acted prudently so far?

It has taken the Society some time to understand fully how these risks should be controlled within the planning system, how to win at the Camden level the test cases we have chosen, and how to guide Camden to write better policies and adopt better practices in future. The process has had

some success in recent months and has cost us around £12K so far for the specialist legal, geotechnical and structural engineering advice needed to supplement our very strong in-house team. This has been an appropriate use of our funds, though resulting in a deficit last year. However, it is obvious from the list above that a lot of applications “got away”, either because they occurred pre-2009 and/or we could not afford to join in fighting them all with the necessary level of expensive technical evidence. We are trail-blazing this one, not for the first time in our past 113 years.

Working with Camden

We have spent a great deal of time this year behind the scenes working with senior planning and legal officers in Camden trying to minimise the areas of disagreement on policy and interpretation. We say serious damage prevention is a matter for public planning law; Camden and other local authorities say it is exclusively a matter for civil law, once damage has occurred. The result has been that in the two test case appeals we now confront, we are working alongside Camden against the developers. Camden has also accepted our amendments for their new local policies to control excavation, which are due to be adopted later this year. Camden has consulted us in the preparation of their written request for advice from their outside legal adviser seeking clarification on relevant national policies and statutes. We hope and expect to persuade Camden to work with us to obtain clarification from the Government on the statutory issue, rather than attempt to go down the potentially expensive judicial review route.

We have in all cases asked that resident associations or neighbour groups with whom we work, meet at least 50% of costs jointly incurred.

Basement Crisis and Chairman's notes

We intend to use the current high level of interest locally in this topic to try to recruit more members to the Society to spread our financial burdens and increase the clout of the Society

How will any funds raised help meet the Society's objectives?

The Technical Case Study or Studies (tightly controlling costs) will help the Society to strengthen:

- Our appearance at the test case Public Enquiry Appeal in October.
- Our lobby to Central Government to clarify the law to stop "cowboy" basement digging.
- Our case against future objections to basement applications in Hampstead.
- Camden's defence of its new local policies against future challenges from developers.
- Camden's case to obtain advice from their external legal adviser to interpret national policy along the same lines as the Society.

If we are successful, about which we are reasonably confident, having a full technical and legal team (we will control costs as tightly as possible) at the test case appeal in October will,

- go some way to creating a precedent for our interpretation of relevant national policy
- send a strong message to future developers and their advisers including those in the pipeline
- prevent an outrageously dangerous development from taking place in central Hampstead.

Why give?

Please give as generously as you feel able and complete the Gift Aid forms with your donation. You gave pledges very generously three years ago for our successful judicial review of the Garden House decision, which fortunately we

were able to avoid calling on, because costs were awarded in our favour.

This time it is hard cash that we are calling for in much harder times. There are, however, on this occasion, good personal reasons, as well as altruistic ones, for giving us your support:

- The next application to dig a large hole may be next door or in your street with all the resulting months of noise, dirt, truck movements and in some cases severe damage.
- If this goes on much longer, insurance premiums in Hampstead will soar even higher and property values suffer from fear of widespread subsidence risks.

Two generous members have already sent donations even before this appeal - see page 11.

Chairman's Notes

AGM

This year's AGM was held in the Town Hall on June 14. It was no doubt a tribute to our guest speaker, Tom Oliver, that we had such an excellent turn out in competition with a number of early round World Cup games. Tom confirmed our wisdom and good fortune in recently appointing him as a Patron of the Society. He delighted us with his erudition and appreciation of the vital role a Society such as ours plays in maintaining this setting and environment for civilised living. This is achieved, he eloquently reminded us, by a combination of vigilance, commitment to quality, both of individual buildings and of their whole setting, and of course sheer backbone in standing up to the forces of Mammon and bureaucracy.

Tributes to retiring committee members

We paid grateful tribute to Janine Griffis for her enormous contribution since 2001 as Honorary Secretary to the Society. She has asked for a break

Chairman's notes (cont)

and we know she will continue to give great service to the local community in so many ways.

Gordon Maclean asked to hand over responsibilities as Chair of the Planning Sub-Committee to Douglas Maxwell. We are enormously grateful to Gordon for all that he has done in keeping pressure on Camden and developers alike by reviewing with his professional eye all local planning applications. In this time of huge continued challenge from those who seek to bring bad, excessive and at times dangerous development to Hampstead, we are delighted that Gordon remains on the General and Planning Committees and will keep up the huge work load of reviewing all local applications.

The Good News

Since our last Newsletter the Society has contributed to a number of local successes. The high point, both literally and metaphorically, has been the restoration of the surround to Whitestone Pond. Juliette Sonabend and her colleagues on the Town Committee have played a vital role on cajoling, encouraging and co-ordinating the generous efforts of Camden, the City of London and English Heritage to bring this project to such a spectacular conclusion. We hope through the continued efforts of the Heath Committee to clear the sightlines and sharpen the wonderful and historic views back into London and over to Harrow that could be enjoyed from these heights.

We of course also welcome the news that the current Mayor of London, in response to amenity societies all round the capital including ourselves, has restored to the statute book wider protective lines of sight of the views of St Paul's and the Palace of Westminster. In our case these are as seen from two positions on Parliament Hill and one at Kenwood. They had been narrowed in favour of developers in the

centre of London by the previous Mayor under the previous Government.

We were also pleased that the *Duke of Hamilton* pub has been able to avoid immediate closure. We had lent our support to the active efforts of the regulars and real ale supporters, who made the real difference, with support from David Bedford and local Councillors. However, as Mr Wooderson the owner points out, the best way to support the Duke is to go and drink there, quietly we hope and within Camden's Framework Hours.

Robert Linger and his colleagues on the Town Committee have worked closely with Camden and the local traders in NW3Hampstead to have heritage "finger" signposts installed at strategic points around Hampstead to help our many visitors find their way around.

The Society has joined the newly established Civic Voice, set up to replace the Civic Trust. Helen Marcus was elected a trustee of the new organisation and gives an encouraging report on page 7

The Bad News

We continue our fight, described in the first part of this report, to persuade Camden to control dangerous basement excavation as a crucial part of their planning decisions, and to force developers to undertake the necessary investigations before proceeding, to demonstrate that they will not damage the neighbour's property. We are making good progress. The bad news is that the process is dragging on and on, taking a great deal of the Society's time and resources. We will need to approach members for financial help with this campaign, which we believe is one for which we have considerable local support. We hope therefore that you will respond generously.

Do we listen to members enough?

Anyone familiar with the Society's archives, and indeed recent history, will know that whenever a particularly controversial change is proposed by a developer or an authority (even worse when the latter also acts as the former), the chances are that some of our members will be unhappy with whatever position the Society may finally adopt.

The question arises in such cases whether the Society has arrived at its decision in the appropriate way. The point is sometimes made by vociferous members whose views have not been included in the Society's "position", that the management of the Society is therefore arrogant or undemocratic, with an assumed tendency to both. This broad issue was raised by one questioner twice at the AGM. Such accusations are again in the air in anticipation of what the Governors of South Hampstead High School may propose this autumn for redeveloping the school in Maresfield Gardens. We do not of course comment on any application until it has been formally submitted to Camden.

However as Chairman I am clearly responsible to members for seeing that we operate within the confines of good governance. Since a particularly well attended AGM was kind enough in June to vote the current Committee and Officers back for the next twelve months - a shorter and more accountable stint than many other democratically elected bodies offer their electorates - it is perhaps timely for me to explain how your current management team interprets this responsibility.

Do we stick to our constitution? We are very conscious of our charitable objects; we interpret them to include what we see as the long term interests of the Hampstead community.

Who is on the General Committee?

We welcome competent, committed, collegiate, hard-working, knowledgeable people. We would welcome more of these all too rare birds with enough time to spare to do the work of the Society. The rarest talent is to debate with those who hold opposite views with equal passion and accept the Committee decision once made.

- Are minority views discouraged? No.
- How transparent are we? We try to explain our views in the Newsletter and at the AGM, and many of our formal recommendations are on the public record.
- What steps do we take to find out what our members think, bearing in mind that the numbers fluctuate - now around 1600 - of whom only one-third or so are on email?

This is the nub of the matter. At the formal level it is clear that we have been delegated by members to deal with particular sets of problems, guided by the objects in our constitution, on their behalf. Members choose to delegate in this way in general because the problems we deal with require detailed and quite technical attention, and a familiarity with the personalities and workings of local "officialdom", for all of which we have a well-deserved reputation of delivering. Members are only too happy that we perform these functions. While we in no way discourage members from making their views known to the Chairs of our Committees, and thus seeking to influence our decisions, in practice this very rarely happens. Normally we are contacted by members seeking advice on how to deal with an immediate problem they are faced with. On official consultations, where we have a simple questionnaire from say Camden, we can and do poll those of our members who have given us

Chairman's notes (cont)

their email addresses. That is as close as it is sensible to get to running the Society by referendum.

But what about the really controversial problems? Those who accuse us often do so in the context of planning applications or Heath management. These are always complex and technical matters, where usually conflicting views must be either reconciled or chosen between. Our critics often favour a simple answer which may be obvious to those in one part of Hampstead at one particular moment. Sometimes we are fully aware of local feelings, but feel that wider considerations outweigh them. We may and sometimes do fall down, because our Committees have not got their ears close enough to the ground and simply fail to notice a significant interest is out there, which we ought to bring into our debate.

The word "our" is significant in this context. The Society is an interested party for planning applications. It is Camden that is statutorily required to consult interested parties, of which the Society is but one. The Society's Planning Committee will have their debate looking at both particular and strategic local issues, and submit their response.

On Heath management the Society is a statutory member of the City's Heath Management and Consultative Committees and our appointed representatives consult fellow members of the Heath Committee to debate policy before attending. In both cases controversial and strategic issues are also referred to the General Committee. All meetings are minuted.

So much for the formal position. Informally there is always room for improvement. We encourage our Committee members to have their ears close to the ground and to recruit more colleagues. Competence is essential; debate is encouraged.

However, I fully recognise we should and will increase the number of meetings we hold with as wide a range of local representative groups as can be sensibly managed, so that views can be aired and shared from time to time.

Enid Allen

We were sad to learn of the death of Enid Allen, stalwart of the Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee for 25 years. A pharmacist by training, she was chief pharmacist at St. Marks Hospital and also worked at the Middlesex hospital. After taking early retirement she developed a wide range of interests, especially in the arts, making jewellery and painting. She was passionate about conservation and the environment and made a huge contribution locally.

Members' Email addresses

If you have email, please email your name and street address to the Society at:

admin@heathandhampstead.org.uk

This will enable us to update our Membership Records and simplify our communications with you.

Thank you.

Don't forget to use the Hampstead Card

The current list of businesses taking part in the scheme can be found on the Society's website

www.heathandhampstead.org.uk



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

Civic Voice

by Helen Marcus

Funding secured

Civic Voice Director Tony Burton (formerly of CPRE and the National Trust) has been successful in achieving funding to carry the organisation through its crucial establishment period, and has been active in ensuring that it has been taken note of in government circles.

Meetings with Ministers

Tony Burton has been taking full advantage of the new government's policy commitment to the 'Big Society' to press the civic movement's case at the highest level. He has held detailed discussions across the new Coalition Government, and with its advisers. These include personal discussions with Community Secretary Eric Pickles and Civil Society Minister Nick Hurd among others.

He has also discussed the Government's proposals for planning reform with civil servants particularly highlighting two concerns: the introduction of a public (third party) right of appeal against the grant of planning permission in certain cases – such as where a proposal clearly conflicts with the agreed development plan, and better enforcement.

New Planning Minister, Bob Neill, has agreed to meet Tony Burton and discuss the coalition ideas of giving power back to communities. He is keen to engage and involve civic societies: "the view that you can't trust local communities is not remotely acceptable in the 21st century".

Tony Burton's meeting with new Transport Minister, Norman Baker, to seek Government action on street clutter - the Civic Voice Street Pride campaign - was highly productive. The Minister was confronted with photographic evidence of the problems and agreed to raise the public profile of the issue with a major speech.

A recent government press release on proposed action to reduce Street Clutter specifically mentioned Civic Voice.

Focus for future campaigns

Civic Voice has also detected growing concerns about green street cabinets which are being installed to meet the target for broadband access by 2015. Too many are poorly located, inflexibly designed and made unnecessarily intrusive, and unfortunately do not need express planning consent except in conservation areas.

Civic Voice would welcome your views on where to focus effort and if you are interested to support Civic Voice you can join as an individual member.

Civic Voice first AGM

You may be interested to attend the first AGM which is being held on October 8th and 9th 2010, at the Great Northern Hotel, Peterborough hosted by Peterborough Civic Society. It starts at 1pm on the Friday and continues till approx 4pm on the Saturday. The registration fee is £20 which makes a contribution to costs. The formal AGM on Saturday morning is free and will provide an opportunity meet the Board, and to suggest ideas to shape Civic Voice's priorities.

You can find out more about Civic Voice activities at website: www.civicvoice.org.uk

Two short films of interest from the talented young film maker Nick Hillel

One is about the Men's Pond and can be found at: <http://vimeo.com/14713383>

The other is an online "crowd" funding pitch to raise the funds to film two seasons on the Heath, winter and spring. It can be seen at: <http://www.indiegogo.com/heathlife>

Heath Report

by Tony Ghilchik

The very wet first months of the year, followed by dry sunny ones, has been a mixed blessing for the Heath. In early summer, the view from the Viaduct Bridge across the pond to the Bird Bridge was a particular delight after last year's work, mentioned in my January Heath report. However the wet, then very hot, weather has delayed the resurfacing of many black tarmac paths with their final gravel surface until October. It has also been a seriously bad summer for the veteran oaks with the hot dry summer weather putting a lot of stress on these old trees, which have reacted by shedding many large branches, some substantial limbs and in a few cases, including one next to the Bird Bridge, falling completely.

Views

The new London View Management Framework has now been approved – the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Designated Views came into effect on 29 July 2010. The ten old Strategic Views included three from the Heath: (i) the view of St Paul's Cathedral from the top of Parliament Hill, (ii) a view of the Palace of Westminster from beside the path going down Parliament Hill above the bandstand, and (iii) the view of St Paul's Cathedral from the viewing gazebo in the stable field at Kenwood.

In 2007 there was an outcry when the previous Mayor, Ken Livingstone, drastically narrowed the width of protection of the old strategic views. Mayor Boris Johnson promised to re-look at them. After a year's consultation on the draft, the new SPG has widened them again and, although they are not fully back to their old width, and I am delighted that we now have a fourth Protected Vista, albeit a narrow one, of the Victoria Tower of the Palace of Westminster from the top of Parliament Hill.

These views are amongst the distinctive views that we highlighted in our Heath Vision booklet, published in 2004, as needing to be maintained or restored. The City have done a lot of work since then to restore the views from the top of Parliament Hill and I am pleased to say that they are now almost at the point, as simulated on the inside back cover of the booklet (if you no longer have your copy, you can see it on our website), where we will be honouring our pledge to fund an updated plaque at the top of Parliament Hill.

Heath Management Plan progress

Work continues on the Topic Papers within Part 2 of the new Management Plan for the Heath with a report on Reptiles on the Heath. Grass snakes were re-introduced in the 1980s and the population seems to have maintained itself and spread its range since then with some twenty individual grass snakes recently found on the Heath, predominately in the fenced areas of the Highgate Valley and around Cohen's Fields. It has been agreed that action to encourage reptiles should include creating more new small ponds to boost amphibian numbers (the snakes eat frogs & newts); providing vegetation piles to increase opportunities for egg laying; avoiding clearing longer grass until late October and, ideally, clear on very hot days, making open clearings by selected ponds so snakes can bask at the pond edges, and continue to restore heathland to provide the opportunity to re-introduce slowworms to the West Heath and other restored heathland areas.

Progress is also being made with the developing detailed area plans for Part 3 of the Management Plan. Management Work Plans have been developed for the Seven Sisters Ponds on the Extension; for the Third Hedge which runs east-west dividing the Tumulus and

Mini Tumulus Fields, and for Springett's Wood. Whilst broadly supporting all three plans, there are some aspects of the plans for the Seven Sisters Ponds which we are unhappy with.

Up to 20 or so years ago I thought this area one of the most delightful on the Heath, with the grass meadow of the Pond Field sloping gently down between the Cart Path and the open water of the ponds. The unintended consequences of spreading silt dredged from the ponds on to the meadow, fencing in five of the ponds and then planting alongside the fence to hide it, has changed the area beyond recognition – most of the ponds are now invisible to walkers on the Cart Path. More recent work has greatly improved the conservation value of the ponds, but the draft plans would restrict physical access even further and do little to open up visual access to them. We are talking with the City to see what can be done to improve visual access to the water for walkers and to get a reasonable balance between the conflicting need for physical access to the water, so children can learn about and enjoy the life there and dogs can have somewhere to swim, and improving the essential conservation value of the ponds, which was highlighted recently by the sight of a pair of kingfishers by Pond No 7, the largest and most northerly of the Seven Sisters.

Kenwood concert site

Over in Kenwood, we will soon see if English Heritage are able to repair grass damaged by the concerts before the wet autumn weather sets in. Camden Planners accepted our argument that the grass repairs need to be completed within a reasonable time to prove the site suitable for concerts and their licence was restricted to just this one year. We very much hope that the damage repair goes to plan.

The next phase of the roof repairs to the house (phase 4 of 7) is to start in autumn, for completion in spring 2011. The front of the house will be done at the same time, going back to mid C19 colours and finish, and entry to the house will be through a tunnel during this work.

Springett Lecture

Finally, a reminder that this year's Springett Lecture will be on Thursday 7th October when Oliver Rackham will talk about Hampstead Heath and Woods: deer, woodcutting and the urban heat island. Professor Rackham is an authority on the British countryside, and he will be bringing together for us some of his research topics into the effects on Kenwood and the Heath that their higher temperatures as urban heat islands have on their trees, woodlands and wood pastures – a subject which is particularly topical in the context of the effects of global warming on our environment.

As I mentioned in the last Newsletter, we are expecting him to attract a large audience and have therefore moved the lecture to the Rosslyn Hill Chapel. The doors will open at 7:30 for a glass of wine with the talk starting at 8pm. Please join us for what is expected to be a most interesting and enjoyable evening.

I hope to see you there.

Springett Lecture 2010
Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel

Thursday 7th October
7.30pm

Oliver
Rackham



The Kingfisher

Planning Committee

by Douglas Maxwell

When I took over from Gordon Maclean as Chairman of the Society's Planning committee in the spring, I was conscious that his determination, vigour and formidable powers of analysis would make him a hard act to follow. Suffice it to say here that it has needed three people to replace him – and one of the other two is Gordon himself, as he continues to analyse and comment on every planning application made that relates to Hampstead and its environs – and last month there were seventy-four of them. In addition, Jenny Alderman has kindly agreed to act as secretary to the committee on an honorary basis.

In planning terms it has been a significant and demanding few months. We continue to see a large number of new basement proposals, some of considerable size, either alone or as part of larger developments. A new twist has been that the Council is now acquiescing in some basement works on the grounds that they are permitted development; a view which we consider is entirely wrong and which we are challenging vigorously. We are very fortunate in that the Society's Chairman, Tony Hillier, is combining his main role with leading the charge on this important issue, and he reports on it elsewhere in this newsletter.

Article 4 Directions imminent

Some of our campaigns have at last borne decisive fruit; following their approval by the Council in the spring, Article 4 Directions are expected to come into effect at the beginning of September in the conservation areas of Hampstead, Belsize and Swiss Cottage. These remove certain householder-permitted development rights to the front of houses and their front gardens and front walls, fences and hedges, and will make a great difference in our efforts to maintain the character and appearance of the conservation area at a detailed level.

Local Development Framework

As well as this, the new Local Development Framework (LDF) which will replace the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) has now progressed through its public examination stages, some sessions of which were attended by committee members to maintain a watching brief on coveted policies. These new policies covering basements, groundwater and other issues are now being accorded weight in planning decisions, and the LDF comes into full effect later this year.

The Garden House saga continues

A few days ago we received the welcome news that the appeal against refusal of planning permission for the second scheme for The Garden House has been withdrawn. However application has now been made for a Lawful Development Certificate for basement construction. The society has issued a vigorous objection on several grounds, including that a basement of this size and arrangement cannot be considered permitted development.

South Hampstead High School

Many of you will know that a new scheme for South Hampstead High School located off Fitzjohns Avenue is in preparation, and a planning application will probably have been made by the time you read this. The Society is well aware of the differing views held by members on this proposal, and its Planning Committee intends to consider all aspects of the application carefully before coming to a view, which will then be referred to the General Committee for a final decision. We also understand that the Council will be arranging for a development forum later in the year, over and above its normal consultation process; so there is every opportunity for individuals to make their views known in the decision-making process.

A tree survey

The Planning Committee also deals with trees, and Vicki Harding continues to work with great energy in reviewing applications for tree works or built development affecting trees. The Committee is currently looking at carrying out a tree survey in conjunction with Camden and possibly also a volunteer tree warden scheme, as well as seeking to move the issue up the agenda with the GLA.

Those of you who came to the Annual General Meeting will have heard Tom Oliver remind us that it is the detailed work which underpins the pursuit of our objectives; and I would like to thank all the Planning Committee members for their various contributions to this. I'd also like to thank the various officers at Camden for their hard work, particularly on the Article 4 Directions and Local Development Framework adoption process; and of

course our councillors, who have been unfailingly supportive and helpful with planning issues.



Society correspondence - via post and website

www.heathandhampsteadsociety.org.uk

From Mrs Moragh Gee.

My husband and I are life members of the Heath & Hampstead Society, though I have to add we've also been sleeping members.

We were delighted to read in the Ham & High on May 6th that the Society successfully challenged the risk of developers' projects causing structural damage to neighbouring older buildings and I enclose a cheque in token of our respect for the Society's continuing expertise and interest and determination, and we hope that every little helps.

PS We're most impressed at the re-structuring and planning of the hitherto rather tatty Whitestone Pond.

From Mrs Sarah Mark,

Enclosed is a donation to Heath & Hampstead Society in memory of Veronica Howard, who recently passed away. We also wanted to thank you for all the thorough research you have undertaken re basements. Congratulations on the victory you scored in Downshire Hill. Long may it continue.

Our website, superbly maintained by our team (do go and see for yourself if you haven't already done so) continues to provide an excellent medium for communicating with a wider world. Most recently a member of the public used it to send us scans of some charming pictures taken from old postcards of Hampstead Heath.

Town Committee Report

by Frank Harding

As I draft this report early in August, I am particularly aware of the hot summer days we have been enjoying – but the lawns are brown, watering a must and fortunately we have had no hosepipe ban – yet. I trust that by the time you read this, the grass will be green again and that we will not have suffered from any watering restrictions – and nevertheless had some good sunny spells. The lack of rain has affected the Town Committee’s activities as well no doubt as those of the Society’s other involvements. For me the most noteworthy was the impact on the newly laid turf on the mound beside the rejuvenated Whitestone Pond.

Whitestone Pond

The work to restore the pond and improve its surroundings was substantially completed during the latter part of July. Whilst there remained some “snagging” issues to put right, they were not significant in the scheme of things. The fence around the pond was removed on 21 July, the reeds having been planted and the mound turfed. It was great to see the effect of the work, the benefit of the improved surroundings, the new comfortable benches and thus the impact of the efforts of Juliette Sonabend (whose concept was thus delivered) and the City of London and Camden teams, with the support of English Heritage and Transport for London, being realised for the benefit of all who drive, ride or walk through the area.

My reference above to the mound turf needing replacement was that, within days of it being laid it needed to be replaced because, in the heat of the sun, it had dried out and curled at the edges like an old sandwich! The project will be formally completed and handed over early in October at a ceremony for local dignitaries and representatives of those who were involved in the scheme.

Fitzjohns Avenue area and the School Run

There is little to add to the report in the Spring issue on traffic conditions in and around Fitzjohns Avenue. The work promised by Camden in respect of residents’ parking bays and the build-outs and of bays reserved for the use of school buses has been carried out.

The pilot scheme for the school buses was operated for the summer term and will be expanded in September. We all hope that it will be successful and a sustainable service, benefiting parents, their children and those who live in or use Fitzjohns Avenue and neighbouring roads.

Victorian water mains and traffic problems

The spring and early summer saw road closures and diversions across large swathes of Hampstead. At the end of July the road works to replace the Victorian water mains moved to the centre of the village and up towards the Whitestone Pond. One-way traffic, closures and diversions were the order of the day and alternative routing of buses through Hampstead had to be introduced. This situation will continue at least through to November. Whilst it is acknowledged that the work has to be done, and that Camden and Transport for London are doing what they can to ease the burden of traffic snarl-ups, all those going to the village or passing through will be affected.

The Committee has circulated members by email with details of the impact of these closures, diversions and reroutings as soon as it has become aware of them. For those members where we do not have email addresses this has not been practical and, even if only for this reason, I would urge those members who have access to email but have not let the Society know their addresses to inform us of them – by email to admin@heathandhampstead.org.uk.

Sign-posts

The sixteen new signposts in and around Hampstead pointing the way to particular houses and points of interest are now in place – the first was erected at the Whitestone Pond. These have been developed in partnership with Camden and NW3Hampstead with a view to those locations being more easily accessible to visitors to the area. It is hoped that visitor-friendly tourist maps of the area will follow shortly thereafter.

Plaque walks

We are hoping to develop a series of walks in and around Hampstead passing those buildings on which Hampstead, English Heritage or other plaques have been placed. These walks will be led by a guide who will tell the participants about the history of the buildings or the people for whom the plaques have been installed. I shall report further on this in the next issue.

Pilgrim's Lane - a myth in the making

The July Camden History Society newsletter reported a discussion on the Jeremy Vine Show in May, following the death of Michael Foot, about naming a street in Plymouth, where he was born and had been an MP for many years, after him.

It was asserted by his nephew that Mr. Foot had been so respected and influential that he had been able to have the street in Hampstead, in which he had lived for many years, renamed Pilgrims Lane, after the nickname of his beloved Plymouth Argyle Football team. As the CHS reporter said: 'needs nipping in the bud immediately!'

Just for the record, Pilgrim's Lane takes its name from Charles Pilgrim, who owned land around there and lived in Vane House on Rosslyn Hill. The street is first identifiable on the 1814 map and the name is first used in 1862.

Democracy, local government and planning

Helen Marcus rounds up some stories in the news

The planning process is not democratic - from the horse's mouth

London Deputy Mayor Kit Malthouse made a devastating criticism of the lack of democracy in the planning system when interviewed on the BBC Radio 4 1:00 o'clock news recently. In connection with the controversy about the Chelsea Barracks site he dismissed allegations that the Prince of Wales undermined the democratic planning process by his direct lobbying against the project. Malthouse said it was a "fallacy" that the planning system was ever democratic:

"It is stitched up by developers and planning officers. Developers say: you agree to our

suggestions or we'll go to the Planning Inspectorate and you'll be overruled anyway. The problem is with the planning system not the Prince of Wales."

He pointed out that there had been a huge campaign by residents against the scheme and that the Prince's intervention in Chelsea was welcomed. As former Deputy Leader of Westminster City Council he should know!

It was extraordinary to hear someone of his experience confirming so publicly what many of us know to our cost is the case, as illustrated by the stories on the following pages

Democracy, local government and planning (cont)

A battle to preserve a garden at North End

While the Society's battle against encroachment on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) in the Vale of Health continues, the Sandy Road Residents' Association (SRRA) have won a victory against attempts by developers to destroy an MOL site in the little "village" on the other side of the Heath at Sandy Road opposite the Bull and Bush, part of the North End Conservation Area. The difference was that they had Camden on their side, refusing planning permission.

Joan "Bunty" Watts, (a long-time H&HS member - many years ago she was one of a stalwart team who used to deliver H&HS newsletters by hand in their areas) lived at Bay Tree Cottage in the Sandy Road Village and had an arrangement with the owner of nos 2-3 Heath Passage to tend its garden. Over 20 years Bunty turned it into a magical enclave of flowers, shrubs, fruit trees, a vegetable patch, a spectacular vine and a pond which was enjoyed as a communal space by all the residents. Bunty died in 2004 and the owners of the garden moved away.

New owners got planning permission in 2005 for a new 2-storey dwelling at 5-6, Heath Passage. There then followed over the next few years the familiar process of acquiring adjacent properties, including nos. 2-3 with Bunty's garden, selling them on, building illegally and applying for, and being granted, retrospective planning permission. Residents have suffered a long nightmare of basement development with no redress.

Bunty's garden was neglected and from 2006, the new owners used it for parking and as a builders yard and rubbish dump. The beautiful garden was vandalised, its mature boundary hedge bulldozed and hard surface laid. An unauthorised two-metre high boundary fence with double gates giving illegal vehicular access from Sandy Road was installed, all in defiance

of planning law and Metropolitan Open Land status. Camden refused permission.

The owners/developers lodged an appeal and began a disreputable campaign to try to prove that the garden had always been a storage dump. If they could convince Camden that it had been used continuously for a period of 10 or more years for "building" purposes, it would override its MOL designation, and a planning application to build would have to be considered on different merits.

The Sandy Road Residents' Association galvanised itself to fight this move. They gathered extensive evidence proving that Bunty's Garden was in continuous use as a residential garden until 2005. A comprehensive document with a site history, chronology, maps, photos/videos, aerial photos and twenty one sworn statements, giving detailed accounts of the layout of the garden site, showed that it had never had any building materials or equipment stored in it before 2006. H&HS Chairman Tony Hillier, who formerly lived in the village, also contributed to the evidence. Among the testimonies was one brief moment of hilarity: in 2005 when a local resident visited the Garden to see if she could save any of the plants it was so overgrown that she and her friend fell into the pond.

The developer withdrew his Appeal 48 hours before the Public Inquiry was due to be held on 24th June. The campaigners' 400 page submission to the Planning Inspectorate containing hard evidence supporting Camden's legal case would have been difficult for the developer's legal team to argue against.

The Garden has been reconfirmed as Metropolitan Open Land by Camden making future residential planning consent for this site

Garden grabbing; Freedom of speech

highly unlikely. Many of the shrubs and flowers have already fought back and are thriving!

Congratulations to the residents of Sandy Road!

Garden grabbing to be curbed

It is to be hoped that additional support will in future also be found in the new government's swift response to concerns about 'garden grabbing'. The last government had designated gardens as brownfield land and therefore ripe for development. Planning Policy Statement 3, Housing, has now been selectively revised to remove gardens from the definition of brownfield.

A threat to freedom of speech?

Recent reports have been critical of badly drafted legislation in the last 10 years.

The recent extraordinary case of a Cardiff councillor who made a disparaging remark on Twitter about Scientology, calling it 'stupid', exposed an example that has seriously eroded our rights. A Scientologist picked up the Welsh councillor's tweet and complained to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales who referred it to the monitoring officer of Cardiff Council for consideration by its standards committee. All, apparently, rather trivial - and what relevance does it have to freedom of speech?

A great deal. Few people are aware of a series of statutory instruments, legislation and new bodies created, ostensibly, in an attempt to ensure that local councillors do not engage in corrupt practices, that led to this episode. Councillors are rightly expected to treat the public with respect, to ensure that they are not rude when carrying out their duties and that they are not behaving in a way that might bring their office into disrepute. But this case revealed the repressive way in which the this Code of Conduct is now being interpreted by some Borough

Councils and misused to muzzle councillors' ability to properly represent their constituents.

I believe it has also been happening in Camden. A few years ago when I called my local councillor to discuss a contentious planning application, I was astonished and mystified when she told me she could not discuss it with me. I thought she was just being difficult. But as a result of the publicity given to this case I now understand that the real reason why that happened may have been much more sinister.

Under an arcane heading of "fettered discretion", council lawyers are telling councillors that prior discussion with a constituent on a planning issue could be judged as "apparent predetermination" on their part and could result in them losing their ability to speak on behalf of their constituents or to vote at any subsequent planning meeting.

It has wider implications than just planning. If you were elected to the council, having campaigned and spoken out about any matter of local concern, you may find that it is a breach of the code for you to speak or vote on that matter in any subsequent committee meetings. You have "a prejudicial interest" in it and are therefore barred. It is shocking that a code of conduct designed to stop councillors fiddling their expenses or accepting money for support in planning applications is actually being used to restrict the freedom of councillors to properly represent their electorate.

The "prejudicial interest" policy is a dangerous threat to democracy. That a public official could rule against an elected councillor for expressing his or her opinion on a matter of public interest is direct assault on freedom of expression. The coalition partners have apparently committed to legislate to prevent use of the 'prejudicial interest' bar. It is urgently required.

Hampstead Observatory Centenary

by Doug G Daniels Hampstead Scientific Society President & Astronomical Secretary

The Hampstead Observatory Celebrates its Centenary 1910 – 2010

In April 2010 the Hampstead Scientific Society celebrated the centenary of the building of its Observatory and Meteorological Station, with an exhibition and party which more than 100 guests and visitors attended. For 100 years, the Observatory has welcomed visitors on clear winter nights to come and look through the telescope and see for themselves some of the wonders of the Universe.

It is difficult for us, living at a time when so much information is so readily available, to imagine what it must have been like 100 years ago in late Victorian and early Edwardian England. Newspapers rarely reported on scientific subjects and then as now often got it wrong. Scientific and philosophical societies had sprung up around the country during the nineteenth

century in response to the great industrial and technological revolution. They were founded to encourage an interest in science for the layman as well as the specialist, demonstrating an attitude of patriarchal benevolence stemming from enlightened Royal patronage in the arts and sciences. The Crystal Palace was built by Joseph Paxton in Hyde Park in 1851 to house the greatest exposition of industry, science and technology that the world had ever seen, and the great museum complex in South Kensington was established shortly after in the mid 1850s.

The British Astronomical Association (BAA) was founded, in 1890. There were public lectures on astronomy, and it may have been possible to borrow books from one of the public libraries which had begun to open following the Public Libraries Act of 1850. If you were an 'ordinary person' you would probably not have been able to afford to buy books or a telescope even if you could find one for sale; but things were about to change.

The founding of the Hampstead Scientific Society

At around Christmas 1898 Philip Vizard, an enthusiastic amateur astronomer living in Hampstead, heard via a friend that another Hampstead resident, Colonel Henry Heberden J.P, had a 10-inch reflecting telescope that he would gladly give away if it could benefit the public. Vizard seized on this opportunity and asked the London County Council (LCC) to accept the telescope on



Patrick Hepburn at the Observatory in 1910

Patrick Hepburn at the Observatory of the Hampstead Scientific Society, 1910

Visit the Observatory during the Hampstead & Highgate Festival - see Bulletin Board

behalf of the community; they refused. Undeterred, Vizard persuaded a few distinguished colleagues to join him and they eventually persuaded the LCC to accept the instrument and allow it to be set up in the swimming pond enclosure on Hampstead Heath on condition that the LCC would have no responsibility for its maintenance. At a public meeting on July 3rd 1899, the Hampstead Astronomical and General Science Society was formed, now simply known as the Hampstead Scientific Society (HSS).

The telescope was used at its original site for 10 years, but public interest began to decline mainly due to poor access in the dark and eventually the LCC asked for it to be removed. The HSS Secretary C.O.Bartrum asked the LCC for an alternative site for a permanent observatory and the Society was granted a license to build in the flagstaff enclosure behind the Whitestone Pond. This caused something of a public outcry with letters of objection sent to the Times in October and November 1909. Sensing the public hostility to the project the Society reluctantly surrendered the license. Then Bartrum had a brainwave. The Metropolitan Water Board had just built a grass-covered reservoir in Lower Terrace. That would be an ideal site as it was securely fenced and locked. After much negotiation the Water Board consented and an agreement was signed on July 30th 1909. The Hampstead Scientific Society Observatory and Meteorological Station was inaugurated on November 6th 1909 and became operational in April 1910, just in time for the Great Daylight Comet and the return of Comet Halley, both of which attracted much public interest.

During its long history, the Astronomy Secretaries of the Hampstead Scientific Society included many notable characters from the astronomical world. Patrick Hepburn, joint Astronomical

Secretary with Philip Vizard was also director of the BAA Saturn section in 1914. He was elected President of the BAA in 1920, also serving on the Council of the RAS. Henry Wildey joined the HSS in 1934 and was for many years Curator of Instruments for the BAA and later President of the Junior Astronomical Society (now the Society for Popular Astronomy).

Over the years, many members contributed work to the various observing sections of the BAA. Mars has always been a favourite subject for study and the Society has an archive of drawings and images made at the Observatory spanning a century. Quite a few students who went on to become professional astronomers had their first introduction to the science at the Hampstead Observatory.

In 1974 two HSS members, Paul Cass and Roger Kellerman, made a significant contribution to astronomy when they helped to select a new site for the 98-inch Isaac Newton Telescope, by monitoring sky conditions for a year in Madeira and Hawaii.

The meteorological station

From the very beginning, the Hampstead Observatory



Clement O Bartrum B.Sc. F.R.A.S.
Secretary of Hampstead Scientific Society 1903 - 09



Above: Sir Samuel Wilkes President of the HSS 1902 to 1909

Below: The six inch Cooke refractor



also featured a meteorological station. This now has the distinction of being the only such establishment to boast an unbroken record of daily observations spanning a century from one site. Maximum and minimum temperature, relative humidity, rainfall and hours of sunlight are all measured. For many years the readings were taken manually twice daily and relayed to the Met. Office. In September 2000, the Met. Station became fully automated and readings are now relayed hourly by computer via a telephone link. Just 3 individuals have run the Met Station since its foundation - Eric Hawke, Robert Tyssen-Gee and the current Meteorological Secretary, Philip Eden the well-known meteorologist, author and broadcaster.

No one knows what happened to the original 10-inch reflector: there is nothing relating to it in the Society's records. The instrument used today is a fine 6-inch Cooke refractor that was donated by a generous member, George Avenell, in 1928. It has been modified with a modern equatorial mounting featuring a remote controlled guiding system. When the Observatory was built in 1910, London was lit mainly by gas lamps and there was little or no local street lighting so the Observatory enjoyed a dark location and visitors would have been treated to the full glory of the night sky. Now light pollution is a major problem and it is becoming difficult to observe faint objects. But the Cooke is a first-class instrument suitable for an urban location. Under average conditions it gives excellent views of the moon and planets and is superb for double stars.

Altruism continued

The Hampstead Observatory is still at the same location and still open to the public three times a week during the winter months. The Hampstead Scientific Society is a registered charity. It is

probably the only observatory open to the public on such a regular basis and admission is free. Crowds still gather when there is a bright comet or an eclipse to be seen. Halley's Comet was disappointing in 1986, but 800 visitors saw it, while in 1997 over 650 visitors were very impressed by comet Hale-Bopp and in June 2004, 500 turned up to witness the transit of Venus. The Hampstead Observatory still carries on the altruistic intentions of its founders – to allow the public free regular access to an astronomical telescope and to promote the study of astronomy. Last year more than 1000 visitors took advantage of this facility and it is our sincere hope that they will continue to do so throughout the next century.

A full account of the Hampstead Scientific Society can be found in: Hampstead Science 1899-1999, A History of the Hampstead Scientific Society. Edited by Philip Eden. Published by the HSS.

Philip Eden also contributed an article to the Heath & Hampstead Society Newsletter about the history of the HSS, celebrating its Centenary. (May 2000 Vol 31 No. 2)

For more details browse the HSS website. www.hampsteadscience.ac.uk/astro



*Doug G
Daniels
President &
Astronomical
Secretary*

Bulletin Board

Rededication of Hampstead War Memorial

Following a concerted effort by local people to get the Hampstead War Memorial repaired and restored (see Newsletter January 2010), it was rededicated on August 25 with mounted officers from the Royal Horse Artillery, the Kings Troop in attendance.

A generous bequest

The work was finally made possible thanks to a gift of £11,000 from the estate of a former RAF serviceman, the late Richard Waller, administered by the trustees, two local fellow-ex-servicemen Alex Rudelhoff and Brian Keys. The surface of the monument has been cleaned and the wooden benches have been replaced with stone structures.

Designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield, the memorial was unveiled by Major General Sir Charles Townshend KCB MP in 1922. Originally sited in the middle of the road at the junction of North End Way and Spaniards Road, it was relocated to its present position in front of Heath House in 1953 on land donated by a member of the Guinness family, then owner of the house where, with two new panels calling to memory the dead of both World Wars, it was unveiled by Field Marshall Viscount Alanbrooks, Lord Lieutenant for London.

This latest rededication service was conducted by Revd Canon Paul Conrad, Vicar of Christchurch, Hampstead. It was attended by Hampstead Councillor Linda Chung who had been instrumental in getting the restoration organised, and there were readings from Baroness Garden of Frogmal and John Goldsmith, Chairman of the restoration committee.



Camden Civic Society Children's Competition

Camden Civic Society recently held its third competition for local primary school children to encourage them to think about their area and its environment and how they can make improvements. It is run with Camden Council's Children, Schools and Families Directorate. The contestants have to write a letter to the Mayor of Camden about *My Local Neighbourhood : What is Good? What is Bad? What can be made Better?* The winners and their friends were invited to the Mayor's Parlour to receive their prizes. 318 pupils participated from 12 Camden primary schools from across the whole borough.

'Good' things were parks and special open spaces; shops and markets, restaurants and cafes; good friends and neighbours; play, leisure, swimming, games facilities and clubs and recycling.

Hampstead Heath featured high on the list, some in quite lyrical descriptions: '...serene lakes with gently quacking ducks sailing by and laughing and weeping willows crying their green hearts out but never reaching the ground.' Entries included an 'illuminated manuscript', coloured headings, drawings, and a poem.

'Bad' things included litter, rubbish, dog-mess, bubblegum and spitting on pavements; graffiti, pollution, noise and smoking; road danger and traffic, cracked pavements/ potholes in roads; adult and youth anti-social behaviour and crime including drugs, drunkenness, gangs, and concreted-over gardens.

It is a most interesting study and an excellent way in which to get children involved. Notably, the issues, good or bad, singled out by the children were little different from those which civic society members regularly campaign about.

Bulletin Board (cont)

Burgh House



Support the Friends of Burgh House *Honorary President Piers Plowright*

The Friends organisation has been re-launched with former Camden Mayor and Frognal ward councillor Dawn Somper as chair, and an enthusiastic new committee. They will be planning an exciting range of new events and activities to provide interesting and varied entertainment for its members.

For more information or to join the Friends tel: Burgh House on 020 7431 0144 or contact Dawn direct at dawn@somper.co.uk

Museum News Rebecca Lodge was appointed the new Curator of Burgh House Museum in June. She has been Collections Manager at Chiddingstone Castle, Kent.

The shop is stocking a new range of *I Love* tote bags, colour-in kids bags with drawings by Ken Pyne, and Burgh House picnic blankets – essential Hampstead Heath accessories!

Rudyard Kipling at Burgh House

Between 1933-1937, Rudyard Kipling's daughter, Elsie Bambridge, lived at Burgh House with her husband, Captain George Bambridge. She reported that the house was a "source of happiness" to her father. His last outing in 1936 was to Burgh House to see his daughter.

Burgh House Museum, Buttery, Bookstall

Exhibitions, talks, concerts and classes
Burgh House, New End Square NW3
www.burghhouse.org.uk Tel: 020 7431 0144

*Open Wed - Fri, & Sun, 12 - 5.00pm
(Saturdays by appointment)*

Camden Shares

**Would you like to find tradesmen
you could trust?**

**Based on recommendations from
local people?**

Camden Shares is a network of individuals, organisations and groups sharing resources, knowledge and skills. It operates on a system called timebanking, where for every hour put in, members can take an hour out. It is proposing to set up a scheme, based on a successful model run by the Belsize Residents Association, Tradesmen you can Trust.

We need volunteers in local communities to receive recommendations from residents in their local community and tabulate them appropriately. The work would involve you part-time for two months of the year (January and February) only. Local organisers of the Trust Tradesmen scheme could, for example, receive places on training courses, use of a meeting space or free tickets to local cinemas and theatres. Support and guidance would be given by Camden Shares and by the coordinator of the Belsize Residents scheme, Dr Peter Woodford.

If you are interested and/or wish to discuss the possibility of becoming a local organiser for the scheme in your district, please email gavin.atkins@hcct.org.uk

or Peter Woodford at
drswoodford@blueyonder.co.uk.

You stand to benefit from the list yourself, as well as through membership of Camden Shares.

Hampstead & Highgate Festival

24 September to 3 October 2010

Inspired by Diaghilev

A feast of arts events has been assembled for this year's Festival including music, theatre, film, spoken word, dance and the visual arts. Free lunchtime concerts at Hampstead Parish Church; art competition for local schoolchildren sponsored by the Catto Gallery; an exhibition about the dancer Tamara Karsavina; film at the Everyman; a special family programme; Night Skies at the Hampstead Observatory, jazz and walks on the Heath.

Highlights include a recital by Dame Felicity Lott and Graham Johnson; and Simon Callow

Tickets from Hampstead Theatre Box Office: 020 7722 9301 or online at the Festival website: www.hamandhighfest.co.uk

Contact: Gwenneth Bransby-Zachary : 020 8761 6565 : info@hamandhighfest.co.uk

**Birkbeck Free Public Lectures Autumn 2010
Institute of Environment,
43 Gordon Square, WC1**

***Seas for Life Our oceans, their
biodiversity and their future***
Ocean ecology and conservation.

Lectures take place on six consecutive Friday evenings from 15 October 2010 starting at 6.30pm. Doors open at 6.00pm. All are most welcome to attend.

Full details on the Ecology and Conservation Studies Society website:
<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/environment/prospective/ecss>.

Enquiries to: Jeremy.Wright@walkern.org.uk
(tel: 020 7485 7903)

Hampstead Film Society;

Autumn and Spring Programme

Hampstead Town Hall,

Interchange Trust, 213 Haverstock Hill.

The Society aims to enrich the neighbourhood's film culture by bringing together a wide and diverse range of world cinema, documentaries and must-see movies throughout the year.

Tuesday evenings @ 7pm:

12th October *Precious* (Lee Daniels, 2009)

26th October *The Innocents* (Jack Clayton 1961)

9th November *Still Walking* (Hirokazu Koreeda, 2008)

30th November *Divided We Fall* (Jan Hrebejk, 2000)

7th December *The Colour Of Paradise* (Majid Majidi, 1999)

14th December *Tulpan* (Sergei Dvortsevov, 2008)

Membership fee: £15.00 Adults
£10.00 Concessions/ Students/ Over 60
£6.00 for day membership
Admission fee: £3.00 per film for members/
£5.00 for their guests.

For more information: Tel: 020 7692 5811
Email: tim.wilmott@interchange.org.uk
www.interchange.org.uk/movies
Hampstead Town Hall Centre, 213 Haverstock Hill, London, NW3 4QP

Heath Walks 2010-11

Walks are held on the first Sunday of every month except January. Most start from Burgh House, New End Square, London NW3 1LT - (for directions see www.burghhouse.org.uk).

The house is 10 minutes walk from Hampstead tube station, but weekend closures will apply to this part of the Northern Line for much of the period covered by these walks – please check the latest position with Transport for London (020 7222 1234 or 'live travel news' on www.tfl.gov.uk). Parking in the immediate area is difficult, especially in spring and summer.

Starting times are either 2.30pm or 10.30 am, depending on season and subject matter.

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

You will be invited to make a minimum donation of £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 sbod, can walk reasonable distances and are accompanied by an adult taking full responsibility for them.

Please note starting times and meeting points

Further information from walks organiser, Thomas Radice, Tel: 020 8455 1025; mobile: 07941 528 034 or email: thosradice@gmail.com

3 October 2.30pm (meet at Burgh House) Practical Conservation led by Rupert Sheldrake, biologist, author and advisor to the H&HS Heath Subcommittee

7 November 10.30am (meet at the Kenwood Kitchen Garden entrance, Hampstead Lane) Habitats of the Heath led by Linda Dolata, official volunteer guide, Kew Gardens

5 December 10.30am (meet at Burgh House) Hampstead Heath Management led by Meg Game, Ecologist, City of London

2011 (No walk in January)

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

6 March 10.30am (meet at Burgh House) Trees of the Heath after the winter led by Lynne Leveson

3 April 10.30am (meet at Burgh House) Birds of the Heath in Spring led by John Hunt of the H&HS Heath Subcommittee



Hampstead Heath Calendar for 2011 - Special offer for Society members

The City of London will be producing an official illustrated Hampstead Heath Calendar for 2011 available for purchase from September.

It will be approximately 33cm x 23cm in size, somewhat larger than A4, but within the 'large letter' postal format, printed using vegetable based inks on paper from well-managed forests.

The calendars can be bought from the City of London outlets: Heathfield House, Parliament Hill Staffyard, the Lido and the Parliament Hill Tennis Hut.

They cost £9 each, but members of the Heath & Hampstead Society can buy them at a discounted price of £7 by using the Hampstead Card.