



Happy birthday to us

The Heath Hands fourth annual general meeting culminated with a rousing "Happy Birthday" to us back in October, when some 60 members and guests marked the event with a supper and drinks party at Kenwood House.

Catered by member Vicky Coral, with a cake masterpiece by Liz Jack for the third year running, drinks were provided by the Corporation of London. Volunteers working on the Heath for the rest of the month were treated to birthday cake at their tea and coffee breaks.

The meeting elected a new set of officers: Lesley Lander, chair; Bobby de Joia, vice-chair; Jock Mutschler, secretary, and Annabel Wilson, treasurer. Also named as trustees were volunteers Anne Cowking and Robert Deane. Retiring officers, all of whom served for the first four years of the organisation's life, received a specially commissioned watercolour of the West Lodge by Andrew Ginner.



New chair Lesley Lander shares the cake cutting honours with retiring chair Bobby de Joia.



The meeting-and-greeting-team, from left, Ruth Vaughan, Leonor Troni and Carol Frankel.



New secretary Jock Mutschler with guest, Cllr Judy Pattison.

Not sure? Don't book!

The spring programme offers plenty of variety, but only book for sessions that you know you will be able to attend. If you have to change or miss a session, do advise West Lodge in good time. Chances are someone else may want your place. And if you want to attend a session for which you have not booked, please check with West Lodge first. Sessions really are filling up quickly these days!



New treasurer and former secretary Annabel Wilson, left, with Heath Superintendent Simon Lee and Vicky Coral who catered the party.



Corporation of London Hampstead Heath Management Committee chair Catherine McGuinness with Helen Marcus, editor of the Heath and Hampstead Society newsletter. Helen featured Heath Hands on the cover of the most recent issue.



Hands update

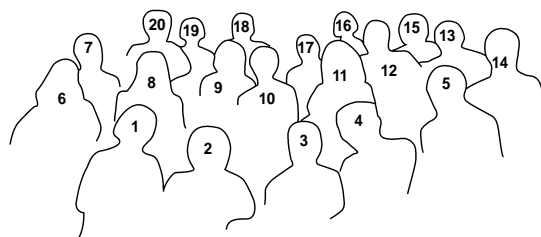
Sunday in Central Park



Picture by Sarah Cedar Miller

It was the day of the New York Marathon and Heath Hands had just breakfasted with the Central Park Conservancy in the exquisite Dana Discovery Center at the northern edge of the Park. There followed a tour of the park's North Woods with Judith Churchill (in the centre of our picture in brown). Here we are perched on the famous Manhattan schist. Outcroppings of the rock are an important feature of the park, its design and management. See page 3 for more on Central Park.

- 1 Bobby de Joia, Heath Hands founder
- 2 Moira Young
- 3 Robert Deane
- 4 Michael Shaw
- 5 Christine Cohen, deputy chair of the Hampstead Heath Management Committee
- 6 Leonor Troni
- 7 Renate Shaw
- 8 Lesley Lander, Heath Hands chair
- 9 Judith Churchill, Central Park Conservancy
- 10 Annabel Wilson, Heath Hands treasurer
- 11 Anjum Misbahuddin
- 12 Martin Humphery
- 13 Angela Humphery
- 14 Joe P'ng
- 15 Ann Raymond, Central Park Conservancy
- 16 Katy Owston
- 17 Vicki Harding
- 18 Simon Lee, Heath Superintendent
- 19 Lidia P'ng
- 20 Annette Schiemann



It all began at Birkenhead

Birkenhead Park, just outside Liverpool, inspired Central Park designer Frederick Law Olmsted, so we headed north in September as a preamble to November's New York visit. The park manager, rangers and volunteers looked after us. At Birkenhead are clockwise from foreground left: Lidia P'ng, Julie Ehlen, former Kenwood general manager (see page 2); Bernie Nolan, Anjum Misbahuddin, Annette Schiemann, Robert Deane, Vicki Harding (at rear), Heath Hands chair Lesley Lander, Coleen Ling, Mike Fox of the Friends of Birkenhead Park, Joe P'ng, Hampstead Heath Superintendent Simon Lee, Birkenhead Park Manager Martin McCoy and Bobby de Joia, Heath Hands founder.

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Lesley inspects the results of fire on the Heath Hands heather site just above the Vale of Health.

Chair Lesley faces up to charred heather

The hard work of Heath Hands' early volunteers may have gone up in smoke, but all is not lost on the heather site. Lesley Lander puts us in the picture.

Just a couple of hours after Heath Hands volunteers left the heather site back in October, the entire area was ablaze, the victim of a suspected arson attack. After a long period of enjoyable dry weather, the fire was fierce and it took the Fire Brigade more than an hour to bring it under control.

The damage was

devastating and not only to the heather and gorse within the perimeter fence. Mature Scots pine and robinia trees nearby were so badly burned that they were deemed unsafe and had to be felled immediately.

The outlook down towards the Vale of Health may now be dramatically different but nature has a wonderful way of healing

itself. Gorse will regenerate readily after fire or indeed after hard pruning as a visit to the gorse patch on Sandy Heath will show you. Here, Heath Hands have cut back sections of the gorse on a rotational basis in the past two springs, giving rise to vigorous new growth.

Fire is even used as a management tool for heather on moorland to

produce tasty new shoots for grouse to eat. In this case, however, the plants are generally much older than those near the Vale.

All may not be lost for our heather. Conservation Supervisor Danny Murphy has examined the roots of some of the first heather planting, dating from 1999, and says that the fire may not have killed everything.

In any case there will be plenty of work for Heath Hands on the site in 2004. The perimeter fence will be replaced where it was destroyed by the fire and we may have our work cut out to prevent bramble from encroaching on the soil that the fire laid bare. We hope that this spring will see new green heather shoots emerging from desolation.

Thanks from Julie

From Liverpool comes a thank you note from former trustee Julie Ehlen, now project director at the Bluecoat Arts Centre.

Fellow trustees presented her with a book on one of her favourite museums, the Guggenheim in New York. She writes:

"The book is spectacular and will sit nicely on my Eames coffee table in my art deco house...It was very kind and thoughtful and it will always remind me of the dynamic Heath Hands. I am so proud of the work you have done (at

Kenwood) and know that you will go from strength to strength..."

Still running

John Brassington, who at 62 ran the 2001 London Marathon to raise funds for Heath Hands, is still going strong. He did Chicago with his two sons and thought he was on his own in Athens this past November when much to his surprise he spotted one of his sons among the runners. "It would have

In brief

been quite something to come into the magnificent old Olympic Stadium at all," he writes, "but to finish with my son was special."

Royal visit

Some 15 volunteers from London's Royal Parks visited the Heath in October, with another Simon Lee, this one head of Education and Community Development for the Royal Parks. Guided by Andrew Ginner, information liaison officer at Kenwood, Conservation Supervisor

Danny Murphy and ecologist Meg Game, they visited the Vale of Health to see Heath Hands working on gorse management.

That grim gift can help Heath Hands

Let Sarah Green, our eBay agent, dispose of your unwanted Christmas gifts. Or those bits of designer gear you know perfectly well you will never wear again. Deliver to West Lodge or ring Lidia at West Lodge to arrange collection.

Heath walks

A good way to learn even more about Heath history, habitats, flora, fauna and management is to join the Heath and Hampstead Society walks held the first Sunday of every month except January. All start from Burgh House, New End Square, Hampstead. The next walk, on Heath Management, is on February 1 at 10.30am. On March 7 at 2.30pm Michael Hammerson will lead a walk on Heath History and Archaeology, and on April 4 at 10.30am, Alix Mullineaux will lead a walk on the Birds in Spring.



Warm weather and autumn colours set off this rustic bridge in Central Park's North Woods. In our picture are, from left, Moira Young, Robert Deane, Heath Superintendent Simon Lee, Christine Cohen, deputy chairman of the Hampstead Heath Management Committee; Vicki Harding, Anjum Misbahuddin, Leonor Troni, Bobby de Joia, Katy Owston, Judith Churchill, Martin Humphery, Annabel Wilson, Renate Shaw, Lesley Lander, Annette Schiemann and Lidia P'ng.



Martin Humphery and Vicki Harding admire the impressive Jumel Mansion where George Washington set up headquarters during the American Revolution.

Central Park...

The Central Park Conservancy made sure that visiting Heath Hands got the most out of a three-day programme that began with breakfast on Sunday morning and ended with an extraordinary guided tour of Ground Zero at dusk on Tuesday.

Arranged by the conservancy's Judith Churchill, co-chair of her organisation's tour committee, Heath Hands were treated to a unique programme which both informed and entertained. By Sunday evening, when we relaxed at a special reception in the home of Sarah and Victor Kovner (frequent London visitors who first suggested that Hampstead

Heath might take a leaf from Central Park's book) we were feeling at home.

We got down to the work of understanding how the remarkable conservancy works, and how it won the contract to manage Central Park at a Monday morning seminar chaired by the president, Dr Regina Peruggi. So we were ready to see some of New York's other open spaces by Tuesday and were treated to 18 different parks. Our guide here was the city's Assistant Parks Commissioner Jack Linn, who with 20 years of service behind him, knows everything there is to know about New York's parks.



Heath Hands chair Lesley Lander with new friends Noel and Yvonne Holland, volunteer members of the Central Park Conservancy.

Pictures by Angela Humphery, Michael Shaw and Leonor Troni



Vicki Harding and Robert Deane with Migdalia Bernal at New Diamante Garden, a pocket park wedged between buildings in Spanish Harlem.



A reception hosted by New Yorkers Sarah, left, and Victor Kovner in their home just off Central Park, gave Heath Hands an opportunity to meet Central Park Conservancy and New York Parks Department staff. Here, the Kovners are with Christine Cohen of the Corporation of London and volunteer Katy Owston.



New York City Assistant Parks Commissioner Jack Linn, right, gave up a full day to show Heath Hands his parks and open spaces from Fort Tryon Park in the north to Ground Zero and Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan. Here, he expounds on the topography of Morningside Park.