

# Teamwork pays off on the Heath



Ian Loosemore, Margaret Murphy and Penny Taylor



Kenwood gardener Gordon McArdle shows us how it's done.



A morning's work fills this English Heritage vehicle.



Kay Doobay, Gillian Walker and Leonor Troni get stuck into scrub clearance.



Leaf collection involves, from left, Kay Doobay, Renate Shaw, Denis Ross, Penny Taylor, Lesley Lander and Rachel Stevenson.



Loading the vehicle are, from left, Andrew Coulson, Jamie Jenkins and Min-Kai Lin, a Westminster School pupil and Millennium Volunteer.

**Pictures by  
Michael Shaw  
and  
Nigel Sutton**



Lesley Lander uses her maddox to uproot stubborn bramble.



# Hands update

## Book now for visit to Coulsdon

Heath Hands members are off to Surrey on May 16 to visit Coulsdon Common, another of the Corporation of London's open spaces.

The common boasts a range of habitats including ancient woodland, punctuated by bluebells, chalk grassland which attracts butterflies and other invertebrates, glades on acidic soil with heather and gorse, as well as a pond, home to frogs, newts and dragonflies.

The common also has some interesting artefacts: 'coal posts' which mark the 1861 boundary of the London district and an enclosure marking the spot where a windmill once stood.

● *More information for members who wish to join the visit is on the booking form enclosed for members with this issue of **Hands Update**.*

## Tea party needs you...

Wanted: bakers, waiters and washers for the annual tea party set for Sunday June 13 on Kenwood's Farm Cottages lawn. The event is now a fixture in the Heath Hands calendar and draws many families who can have a lovely afternoon out for just £10 for a couple with up to three children.

The popular event features a cream tea with homemade scones, music, activities for children and a sale of home-baked cakes and goodies.

The coming season's work programme lists five more special events on the Heath. They are the Race for Life on June 6, Jazz on a Summer's Day on June 20, the annual Litter Blitz set for June 28, the Heath Open Day on July 11 and the Duathlon on September 5.



Picture courtesy of the Flora London Marathon

## Tips from the Marathon master

London Marathon director and Heath Hands trustee Dave Bedford briefs 45-year-old Hampstead artist Shaun Stanley who will run this year's race on April 18 to benefit Heath Hands. Sponsorship forms for Shaun are enclosed for members with this issue of *Hands Update* or you can register your pledge by ringing or visiting West Lodge Kenwood.

## Going for gorse, of course

**T**his spring Heath Hands volunteers have been working at three important sites for gorse.

In January, a stalwart group of five volunteers braved cold and heavy rain to coppice the gorse on West Heath just below the flagstaff. Here the plants have become old and leggy, especially where they are being shaded by encroaching birch trees and invaded by brambles.

Some of the plants were more than eight feet high, becoming top heavy and in danger of falling over. The morning's work kept us warm and produced a surprisingly large spoil heap of cut gorse. It even stopped raining long enough for us to have our coffee in relative comfort. In mid-February a much larger group of volunteers returned to the site to remove the tangle of brambles which might otherwise prevent the newly cut gorse from regenerating.

On Sandy Heath we have been working on the gorse patch behind Heath House since 2002, cutting back a small section each spring to establish a rotation cycle which will

produce stands of gorse of different ages and create a range of habitats for the birds and insects. This year

Corporation of London staff had already cut back many of the overhanging branches, letting in more light and creating an impressive dead hedge at the bottom of the sandy bank.



Our last gorse regeneration session was in early March at the Vale of Health heather site, where a large area of the neighbouring gorse was burned down in last year's fire. Tradition has it that Hampstead washerwomen spread their linen out to dry on the gorse here. Happily there are signs of new growth from a number of the charred root crowns but the more surprising thing is the number of emerging gorse seedlings. In some places there are so many that the soil is completely invisible. Apparently fire actually helps gorse to germinate by cracking its hard waxy seed coat. During the morning we potted up over 2000 seedlings .

we cleared an adjoining area where only a few gorse plants now remain, the rest having been shaded out.



Picture by Diana Antonescu

Jeremy Wright briefs Eileen Willmott

## Here's how we measure up to tree survey

Just about everything there is to know about 790 ancient trees on Hampstead Heath is now a matter of record, thanks to volunteers who put in more than 800 hours to collect data. Heath Hands administrator Lidia P'ng brings us up to date on the survey project that attracted 38 enthusiasts to do the job.

**T**here has always been a buzz of excitement about this project.

Right from the start, more than two years ago, it was clear that the ancient tree survey would attract an energetic and committed corps of tree lovers who wanted to learn about the Heath's veteran trees and their management.

Briefed by knowledgeable Corporation of London staff and trained up by meticulous co-chairs Jeremy Wright and Deborah Wolton, seven teams of volunteers digested training in tree identification (even in winter), map reading and

survey techniques, all geared to provide detailed tree-specific records. The object of the exercise was to identify and describe all the Heath's ancient trees shown on the 1870 Ordnance Survey to provide the Corporation with the information required to develop an appropriate management scheme for each one.

It was up to the teams to locate the trees in their patch, identify them, measure their girth and for each one, to record 26 important features, such as whether it forms part of the ancient hedgerow or

boundary line, whether it has been pollarded or coppiced, whether algae, lichens, moss or fungi are present, or whether bats roost in it.

It was a rewarding task, with volunteers recording many 200 and 300-year-old oaks; some may be much older. The survey also identified impressive specimens of beech, horse chestnut and poplar. But, with 26 characteristics recorded for each, there was a massive amount of material to collate and analyse. So at West Lodge, we set about designing a computer database to handle it. After a short training session in the autumn, several volunteers gave their time to enter the data, completing the task by early March.

Now the entire database can be imported into the Corporation's MapInfo mapping system and printed on detailed maps for verification. Then the project can move on to even more detail.

"The Heath Hands work on the project has been outstanding," commented Heath Superintendent Simon Lee. "The data will form the basis of our management plan for each tree and of course forms the basis of planning for the next generations of trees on the Heath."

### Where are the oldies?

Listed here are the Heath areas covered in the survey of ancient trees, along with the numbers of trees surveyed:

Parliament Hill Fields	24
South Meadow area	91
Cohen's Fields	102
Vale of Health area	138
Priors Field area	34
West Heath	91
Sandy Heath	99
Heath Extension	135
Golders Hill Park	79



Picture by Deborah Wolton

Volunteers were amazed at what they found to record. An early survey team, above, including from left, Yvonne Charras, Eve Cunard and Judith Rose. Other volunteers who worked on the project were Heather Allan, Diana Antonescu, Joanna Cadisch, Shane Clarke, Robert Deane, Justine Emmett, Carol Frankel, Elizabeth Giles, Andrew Ginner, Sarah Graham-Brown, Maggie Greene, Henrietta Harben, Vicki Harding, Nigel Hathway, David Hetherington, Valerie Insall, Liz Jack, Irene Kettle, David Kitchen, Anna Lambe, Patrick Lambe, Lesley Lander, Frances McGrane, Katy Owston, Lidia P'ng, Wendy Richards, Sarah Rubin, Barbara Smith, Ros Sweetman, Ruth Vaughan, Michael Walsh and Marlene Wardle, as well as Jeremy Wright and Deborah Wolton.

In brief

**Rob returns**



Picture by Lesley Lander

Former Kenwood gardener Rob Kenwick is back on the Heath, now wearing Corporation of London green as a new ranger, and renewing his working relationship with Heath Hands.

**Bird Logbook**

Everyone is welcome to record their bird sightings or other interesting natural history items in the new Bird Logbook based in Mansion Cottage, Kenwood. If the cottage is closed, just ring the bell and ask for the book. For details about the book, ring Andrew Ginner on 020 7973 3893.

**Visitors lend a hand with litter picking**



Visitors from Grace College in Indiana, pictured here with Heath Hands chair Lesley Lander (in the hat, back row) spent a morning with Heath Hands at Parliament Hill where they cleaned up around the Lido and on Kite Hill. In our picture are front row, from left: MaryAnn Barlow Heath Hands member, Karen Broombaugh, Megan McEvoy, Che Parson. Back row from left are Matt Carter, Jan Bell and Jay Bell.

**New look for Mansion Cottage**

A refurbished, reinvented Mansion Cottage, complete with new displays and a garden shop, was scheduled to open at Kenwood at Easter. Information officer Andrew Ginner has issued a call for volunteers and wonders whether Heath Hands members would like to lend a hand. Ring Lidia P'ng on 020 8458 9102.

**Report features Heath Hands**

Heath Hands feature in volunteer Rory Graham's report on the involvement of disabled people in ecological work on Hampstead Heath. An Earthwatch Millennium Volunteer, Rory produced the report as his project for Earthwatch. He wrote: "Heath Hands is a welcoming and inclusive organisation which invites anyone to join in their work. The Camden Society for People with Learning Disabilities teamed with Heath Hands to work together, in particular on the Whitestone Garden. I particularly enjoyed working with these volunteers. I am qualified in psychology and have previous experience in working with people with learning difficulties."



Picture by Michael Shaw

**Party raises £££ and smiles**

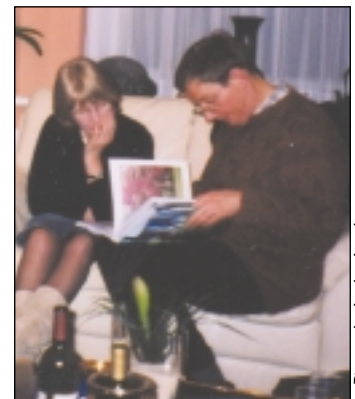
Guy and Annabel Wilson hosted the elegant Christmas party for a third year. And although the order of the day was good fun and good food, the event raised nearly £1,000 for Heath Hands running costs. Below: Bobby de Joia, Heath Hands founder, shows off the plaque presented to her by chair Lesley Lander during the party. The plaque, now installed in West Lodge, reads: "This plaque is in appreciation of the role of Bobby de Joia, founder and first Chair of Heath Hands, 1999-2003".



Picture by Michael Shaw

**Picture perfect at post-New York gathering**

Nostalgia was the order of the day when Heath Hands got down to some serious picture sharing at an informal winter gathering in the home of volunteer Leonor Troni. The object was to see each other's pictures of the November three-day New York open spaces visit and trade stories of the visit. Pictured right are Katy Owston and Robert Deane, checking out an album of photographs.



Picture by Lesley Lander