

And this time the sun shone

Heath Hands struck lucky for the third annual tea party held in June on the Farm Cottages lawn at Kenwood. It was an idyllic summer's day and with the Aspidistra Drawing Room Orchestra in good form and plenty of activities for little ones, the event raised more than £1,300.

Pictures by Michael Shaw



Tea party organisers, from left, Lidia Png, Janet Cabot and the event chair Annabel Wilson



Janis Hardiman, not only organised the cake stall, but was the first through the gate with a ticket sale on the day. The helpful cashiers are Murray Cabot, left, and Guy Wilson.



Anne Cowking, left, and Janet Cabot get stuck in to setting up.



Face painting, drawing and games kept the little ones busy.



Bright blue and white checked tablecloths made this year's event even more attractive.



Renate Shaw serves up tea.



Moira Young washes up.



The Aspidistra Drawing Room Orchestra made its third appearance at a Heath Hands tea party and again delighted guests with their own brand of Palm Court music.



Residents of Cheverton Lodge in Highgate attended the event as a special summer treat.



Volunteer Mayumi Hayashi makes sure guests are served plenty of scones with their tea.



Hands update



Picture by Michael Shaw

American Girl Scouts are hands-up volunteers for a day on the Heath. All green shirted and well gloved, this group worked with senior gardener Dave Gibbons at Kenwood on a Himalayan balsam-pulling project.

How time flies... five years of Heath Hands

HEATH HANDS will celebrate the organisation's fifth birthday at the annual general meeting planned for October 6 at Kenwood House. Starting with a reception at 6.30pm in the Orangery, the business session will follow at 7pm in the Lecture Theatre, with a proper birthday party to close the evening, back in the Orangery.

Founded just over five years ago, Heath Hands held its first work session on Hampstead Heath in August 1999. There were just 24 members in the early days, with work sessions involving as few as one or two volunteers. But with enthusiastic support from the Corporation of London and an invitation from English Heritage to work on the Kenwood estate, the organisation has shown substantial growth year

With this issue...

Enclosed with this issue of *Hands Update* are three enclosures for members. They are:

- notice of the Executive Committee elections at the annual general meeting, with a nomination form (deadline for nominations: 10 September 2004)
- the new Heath Hands work programme (as a diary to keep) for September to December 2004
- the yellow availability form which should be returned immediately with your programme choices and bookings for the annual general meeting and other special events.

on year, approaching 250 members during the summer of 2004. Now, work sessions are held to a maximum of 15 participants, with some popular activities over-subscribed.

When the Hampstead-based World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts joined Heath Hands as a member organisation, work sessions took on new

meaning and projects for more than 50 participants at a time became the rule. Now up to five groups of 50 Scouts and Guides, like those in our picture, don the green shirts for a day of community service while on group visits to London. Many have so enjoyed their day on the Heath, they purchased their shirts to take home with them.

Visit Windsor with ECSS

Heath Hands plans to join the Ecology and Conservation Studies Society for a day out at Windsor Great Park on Saturday October 2. Our guide will be park superintendent and tree authority Bill Cathcart who will lead a tour of the Windsor oaks.

The joint event is the brainchild of Jeremy Wright and Irene Kettle, Heath Hands volunteers who are also ECSS committee members. Heath Hands members who plan to attend should indicate on their yellow form and plan to find their own way to Windsor.



Where's Lidia?
See page 2

Away day takes us south to Surrey

In addition to Hampstead Heath, the Corporation of London manages many other open spaces within 25 miles of the City. Here, **Andrew Coulson** discovers the management techniques used at West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons, where we were guests of the Corporation in May.

With a greeting from West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons Superintendent Mike Enfield, we set out for our first encounter with grassland management such as the Heath has not seen in more than half a century.

An essential component of the grass-management system, at Coulsdon is a flock of large, rangy Jacob sheep. Their close-fitting incisors enable them to crop grass and other herbage down to a billiard table-like smoothness, and their agility means they can cope easily with steep slopes and even with the cliffs of the Riddlesdown Quarry.

Folded behind moveable electric fences, they act as lawn-mowers at appropriate times.

We also met some Red Sussex cattle which



Volunteers at New Hill show off their newly built bench to visiting Heath Hands.



West Wickham Common keeper Robin Crowther briefs Heath Hands on grassland management.

like sheep, control grass and herbage, but unlike

sheep work best on long grass. Wrapping their

tongues around the stems, a combined bite, twist and pull ensures a mouthful.

On the way to visit downland meadows, we managed a visit to the English Heritage listed fighter pit at RAF Kenley, an important defence during the Battle of Britain.

Downland meadow management appeared to consist of alternating grazing cattle with sheep; the sheep remove incipient scrub and the grass, while the cattle tend to leave the scrub and merely keep the grass in check. It is a nice balancing act and the meadow has to lie fallow for much of the time to recover.

We visited some sites where the volunteers had been hedge-laying. Besides providing shelter for livestock, these hedges provide safe routes for dormice and other small

mammals and nesting sites for birds. In suitable terrain, we learned, a well laid hedge can house a blackbird or thrush nest every 20 yards.

Volunteers at New Hill had just completed setting up a bench at a viewpoint looking across the valley towards Farthing Downs. We also had the opportunity to see the astonishing "jungle-buster," which at a rental of £4000 a day, reduced eight acres of scrub to bare earth in 16 hours. The local residents were delighted; an open space, lost to them for 20 years had been restored in as many hours.

It was an exhilarating and fruitful day for which many thanks must go to Mike Enfield and our guides Shaun Waddell and Robin Crowther.

Summer at The Hill

Lesley Lander writes:

Last year's programme of gardening sessions at The Hill Garden and pergola on the West Heath was such a success that we returned during our normal summer break this year, with even more volunteers than before.

I had never visited the pergola until I started working there with Heath Hands and I fell in love with it immediately. It is a wonderful, romantic place, sadly underused by the public. The kitchen garden planting is beautifully designed, packed with small trees, shrubs and perennial border plants and set against the stunning architecture of the pergola. The Hill Garden contains many unusual specimen plants.

Gardener Ian Greenwood of the Corporation of London has his work cut out to keep the gardens in good condition. This year's damp and warmth has meant more than the usual competition from weeds and our work

sessions have concentrated on weeding, deadheading and pruning to keep everything looking at its best.

Tuesday morning is now our regular gardening slot. In our autumn programme, we shall continue our work at The Hill and will also hold sessions in the gardens at Golders Hill and Parliament Hill.



Lesley Lander does some judicious rose pruning at the pergola.

Lidia leaves West Lodge

Off for a well-earned rest, administrator Lidia P'ng has left Heath Hands after two years of superb service to the organisation. Lidia took over as administrator soon after the Heath Hands move to the West Lodge Kenwood and is responsible for much of the development which has taken place since then.

As an IT professional, Lidia created and maintained the highly sophisticated membership database which links with all our work programmes and can be interrogated for a range of useful information. She leaves a well-oiled administrative machine. Lidia started her break with a month-long visit to her native Poland and plans a three-month trip to the Far East with husband Joe, whose family is in Singapore.

Heath Hands' new administrator is Loretta Shauer, who was expected to take up the post in late August.

In brief



Camera shy? Not Michael

Meet Michael Shaw whose pictures are a stunning record of Heath Hands activity. His results always capture the essence of our events. This means that he is rarely in our pictures. This shot of Michael at work is by Renate Shaw.



West to Chiswick: Some 20 Heath Hands volunteers were the guests of English Heritage when they visited the Grade I listed Chiswick House grounds early in the spring. Their first port of call was to look at the work of the Goosefoot Volunteers who cleared brambles around this neo-classical temple.

Picture by Lidia P'ng

Picture by Lidia P'ng

Picture by Nigel Sutton

Picture by Lidia P'ng

It's a mum-daughter thing

How do you make friends thousands of miles from home? Bobby de Joia talked to volunteers Nancy Long and her mum Mary Jo who find Heath Hands a haven for like-minded people.

A self-confessed 'internet junkie,' with a passion for animals, gardening and the outdoors, American Nancy Long had already done her homework before she boarded a jet to join her parents on assignment in London. She knew that she wanted to have a good look at Hampstead Heath and join the volunteers in green shirts that she had read about.

Nancy, then 19, arrived in London last September. Dad Steve was already hard at work as the American Embassy's computer specialist and Mum Mary Jo was settling in to their Fitzjohns Avenue flat while awaiting her own US Foreign Service posting, Nancy knew that her immediate future was with the organisation that would take her to the Heath on a regular basis.

It took just a few hours. Nancy arrived bleary-eyed and weary after an overnight flight. Mary Jo coaxed her out on to the Heath by mid-morning only to run into Heath Hands hard at work on the East Heath. Nancy was ready to sign up on the spot.

In the event, daughter's enthusiasm was infectious and Mary Jo was lured into Heath Hands as well.

"I've done a lot of volunteering in my day," says Mary Jo, "but nothing to do with the outdoors. I enjoyed it right away. What a great way to meet people. And for me, it was a great way to meet English people. Americans tend to hang out with Americans when they are overseas because it's like having family away from home. At



Picture by Michael Shaw

Mary Jo Long at work at Kenwood



Picture by Nigel Sutton

Nancy Long in Whitestone Garden on the Heath

Heath Hands I have met some wonderful people. That with joining a local church in Hampstead has made living here very special."

Has Nancy got what she wanted from Heath

Hands? Not only has she developed skills with hand tools ("I just love using the scythe") but she has developed her own network which has led to dog walking jobs ("only one at a time... they need

individual attention.") and a two-month house sitting job in Hampstead. A real bonus came when she landed a summer job as a gardening assistant at Winfield House, the American ambassador's

residence in Regent's Park. "I did a lot of work on the roses," she reports, "and I have the scratches to prove it."

All this in addition to her studies as a student with the University of Maryland London programme. Her long-term goal is to be a scientist.

She also has artistic skills and delights in making miniatures. It all started when she wanted to design a bookcase for herself. She found that she could build it in miniature more easily than drawing a plan. That has led to miniature house-building project, complete with all the furniture.

"Just walking on the Heath is like belonging to a big club," says Nancy, "because everyone who goes there loves it. There would be no point to walking on the Heath if you didn't like being there, so everyone who is there has something in common."

What litter? We blitzed it!



The Corporation of London's third annual Litter Blitz brought out well over 100 volunteers—from organisations including Heath Hands—to individuals who joined in to give the Heath that extra sparkle at the start of the summer season back in June. Here, a Highgate Society member (foreground) joins Heath Hands regulars and 63 visiting American Girl Scouts, to back up Heath Hands chair Lesley Lander, front right. The volunteers collected dozens of bags of litter on the day, closing the event with a picnic lunch at Kenwood, courtesy of the Corporation of London.

Picture by Michael Shaw