



Hands all over the Heath

Above: Heath Hands returned to Preacher's Hill early in the season to open up the dense undergrowth. Working here are, from left, Gemma Jones with mattock, Heath ranger Ben Bewsher explaining the finer points of using the scythe to Harriet Sergeant and Liz Jack with the pitchfork.

Right: Not even snow can keep volunteers from work on the Heath. Here, newcomer Paula Chesterfield gets stuck into garden maintenance at Golders Hill Park.

Below: Kenwood's rhododendrons got plenty of tlc from volunteers when this team set to work on mulching the shrubs. They are, from left, Penny Taylor, Lesley Strange and Margaret Murphy.

Pictures by Jock Mutschler, Loretta Schauer and Michael Shaw.



Planning ahead just got easier

While the diary of working sessions (for members only) accompanying this issue of *Hands Update* covers activities for the next 12 weeks, the yellow availability form covers only six weeks. This means that members need only to commit themselves to working sessions at six-week intervals, instead of the usual 12 weeks in advance. A second yellow form will go out in mid May when members will be asked to sign up for a further six weeks of work sessions.



Hands update

Opportunity knocks for Heath Hands

Now is the time for Heath Hands to expand its programme, recruit more members and raise enough money to make it all possible.

It took trustees and their guests just three hours of concentrated briefing and discussion to arrive at these conclusions. The occasion was the Heath Hands trustees' first conference held on February 25 at Kenwood House. The 'away day' programme was the brainchild of vice-chair Stewart Purvis. Trustees, he observed, normally meet at 8am just six times a year and barely have time to cover their normal business, let alone time for strategic planning and in-depth discussion of issues.

The away day gave trustees time to consider a range of strategic planning issues facing Heath Hands and to agree expansion in line with the Heath's own requirements. It was an opportunity to look back at achievement and ahead to new activities and new goals.

It was agreed, for example, that the unfortunate closure of the Heath's Information Centre gives Heath Hands an unprecedented opportunity to move into the field of education. This is a subject dear to the hearts of those members who have teaching skills and extensive knowledge of the Heath's history, geography, flora and fauna.

Opened by trustees' chair Bobby de Joia, the conference featured major presentations from Stewart Purvis who analysed the results of January's membership survey; from treasurer Annabel Wilson who showed trustees how Heath Hands might move into the red unless income increases, and from secretary Jock Mutschler who discussed issues of recruitment, induction and publicity. *For survey results, see page 2.*



Trustees chair Bobby de Joia opens the first-ever conference staged for trustees and guests involved in the running of Heath Hands. The event was held in the Kenwood House lecture theatre.

Picture by Jock Mutschler

You said you wanted more—you've got it!

RESPONSES to the January survey made it clear to officers and Heath managers alike that work sessions on the Heath make members thirsty—for knowledge.

"More workshops, please," was a recurrent theme. The response was immediate and here are two special events for the spring/summer programme:

Ecology workshop with Dr Meg Game, the Heath's ecologist, on 11 May from 10am to 1pm, meeting in the Lido classroom at Parliament Hill.

Bat workshop with Cindy Blaney on 26 May from 4pm to 6pm, in the Highgate Wood information hut. **Bat Walk** follows at 8.30pm, meeting at the information hut.

Other special events coming up this season are:

Race for Life on 5 June: charity benefit event: opportunity for stewarding

Litter Blitz on 13 June involving the community and Heath Hands.

Note to members: Be sure to return that yellow form right away as booking for all events is essential.

Tea on the lawn
at Farm Cottages Kenwood
Sunday 18 June 2005
2.30pm - 5.30pm



Book now
By phone: 020 8458 9102
In person: West Lodge Kerwood

Adult £5 Child £2.50 Family £10
includes: cream tea, music, cake sales and children's activities

Members assess the Heath Hands experience

Are Heath Hands volunteers happy with the way things are or should they change? Here are the answers to some of the questions we asked members. Vice-chair Stewart Purvis will present the full results at the general membership meeting set for June 9 at 7.30pm in the Lido classroom at Parliament Hill.

A whopping 66 per cent of members who returned their survey forms back in January told us that we shouldn't change a thing about the way work sessions are organised. This is just one of the dozens of interesting bits of information we gained from the survey that went out to all 254 members in early January. The 35% response from members is considered excellent for this type of survey.



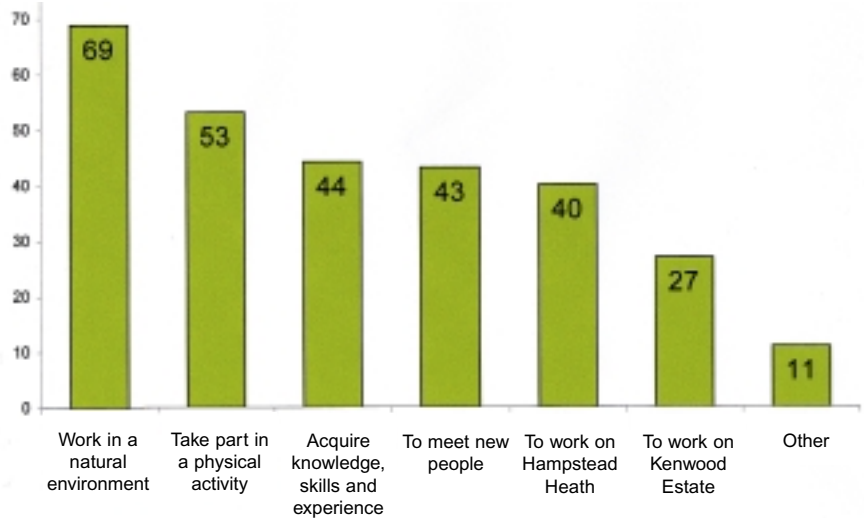
Picture by Jock Mutschler

Vice-chair Stewart Purvis will present the survey results at the June 9 membership meeting.

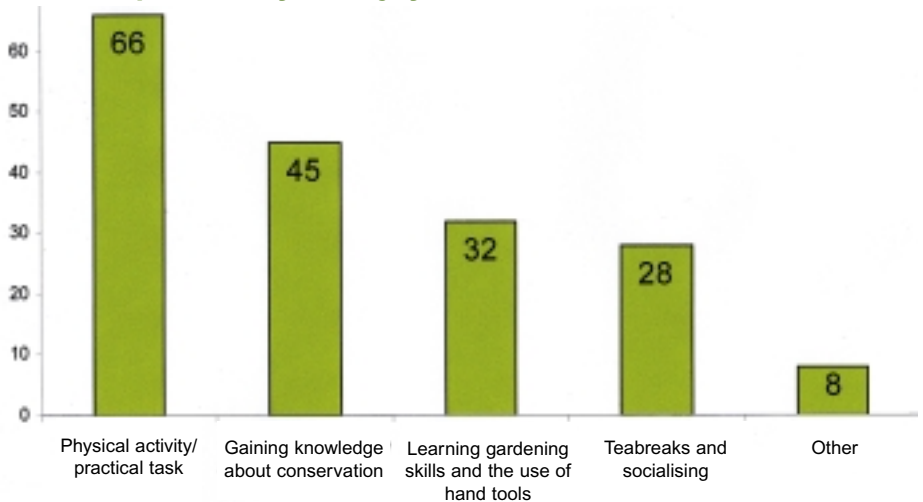
Near all (69 out of 74) of those who returned the survey said they joined Heath Hands specifically to work in a natural environment. That said, offered activities in addition to cross-Heath conservation work, 40 of our members said they would like to be part of a team dedicated to looking after a particular bit of the Heath. Another 16 would like to work with an education/information centre; 11 would like to help with school groups and others would be interested in helping with volunteer recruitment, public relations and fund raising.

Just how and when Heath Hands can or should expand its activity will be the main topic of the membership meeting on June 9. Vice-chair Stewart Purvis will be on hand to present the results of this survey and to discuss the issues arising from them.

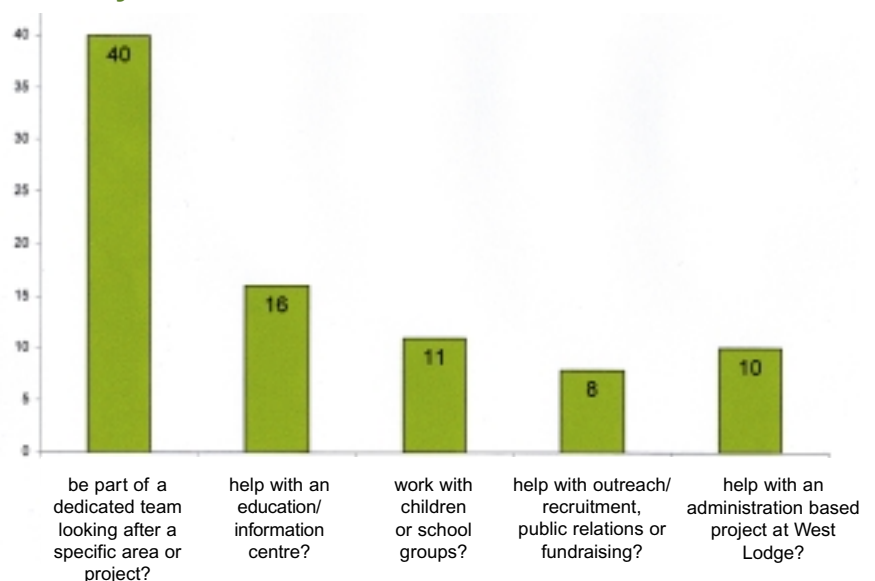
What attracted you to Heath Hands?



What aspects do you enjoy most about the work sessions?



Would you like to...



When studying is just not enough...

Volunteering is rapidly becoming an important part of student life. Here, two of our student members write about themselves and what Heath Hands means to them.

Pictures by Loretta Schauer.

Alan Fernandes writes:

I'm from Brazil and I have been living in the UK for the last eight years. I am now 31 years old and I have always been interested in ecology, nature and other related issues.

Although I do not have any scientific background, last year I decided to join Heath Hands so I could learn more about conservation in, by far my favourite open space in London, if not in the entire world – Hampstead Heath.

I am a student at Birkbeck College where I am doing a BSc in Environmental Management. My motive initially was mainly to make myself employable in a field where work is inspiring and rewarding. Now I feel like I am becoming part of the process of understanding the environment around us. One day, I hope that I will be able to use this knowledge to improve the quality of life not

only of humans, but also our fellow species of plants and animals, whether or not they are endangered.

For that reason I think that joining Heath Hands was a very important step. I just wish I had more time to dedicate to this fantastic programme of conservation of the Heath that this charity provides.

This spring break I am going to Brazil and for the first time will visit the Amazon rain forest. I will be spending two weeks in a nature reserve called Mamiraua, right in the middle of the forest. The programme there involves preservation and conservation of the rain forest, working with the locals to introduce and monitor sustainable development. I believe sustainable development is the key to solving the human and environmental crises that we face on our planet.



Niki Reynolds 'brambling' at Preacher's Hill.

Niki Reynolds writes:

Always a Londoner, I came to live in North London recently. I first learned about Heath Hands when I joined the library in Highgate and saw a brochure on Hampstead Heath which featured a piece about volunteers on the Heath.

I have always loved the open space that the Heath offers and felt that I would like to contribute to its management and maintenance, as well as learning about woodlands and other aspects of horticulture. I had just enrolled on a Royal Horticultural Society course at Capel Manor after enjoying a few years of amateur gardening at home.

I have now been with Heath Hands for three months and have made new friends. After each session I feel invigorated and much fitter. I am also

inspired by what I have learned. The practical work gives my studies more meaning. I have not looked back since joining Heath Hands.

After qualifying in horticulture, I would like to be employed in land-based work and to continue volunteering for Heath Hands at least once a week.



Alan Fernandes, left, helps plant new trees at Parliament Hill with Heath Hands stalwarts, from left, Deepa Mehta, Eileen Wilmott and Vicki Harding.

Join your friends at a
**membership
meeting**

9 June 2005
at 7.30pm
in the

Lido classroom
Parliament Hill