



Thousands of hours in six years...

It was another splendid turnout for the annual general meeting held in Kenwood House. Above, the Corporation's Heath Management Committee chair Catherine McGuinness and volunteer Anne Cowking team up to blow out the six candles on the birthday cake. During the agm business session, Catherine announced that both Anne and Lesley Lander will become Freeman of the City to mark their extraordinary service to Hampstead Heath. Each one has worked on the Heath for the more than 1,000 hours.



Christmas with the Corals

Above: Heath Hands treasurer Annabel Wilson, left, joins Christmas party hosts Roger and Vicky Coral for a toast. This is the second year that the party was held in the Corals beautiful Hampstead home.
Left: Sheila MacLeod and Karen Zeigler-Smith team up to run the raffle. The party raised some £800, and benefited from contributions from Budgens and Monica's Specialist Caterers.



Sweet lady

When it comes to baking, volunteer Liz Jack is the sweetest of the sweet. She has baked five out of the six Heath Hands birthday cakes, as well as the wonderful cakes that turn up at our Christmas parties. Here she is, left, with the Now we are six birthday cake at the agm and right with Cllr Margaret Little and this Christmas's culinary masterpiece: a Heath winter wonderland complete with frozen pond in rich fruitcake, snowy white icing and marzipan.



Pictures by Michael Shaw and Nigel Sutton



Hands update

Training to feature Heath info

A training programme for volunteers who want to work in the new Education Centre on the Heath will begin on 23 February with a session designed to introduce the ecological, geological and historical aspects of Hampstead Heath.

Heath Hands has teamed with the Corporation and Rise Phoenix to apply for Community Chest funding to support the ambitious programme.

Directed by the new Community Education Officer Sam Crosby, the introductory course is designed to prepare volunteers to assist in the delivery of a new education programme. The training will also prepare volunteers to provide information to the public.

Next month will also see the transformation of the old Information Centre at Parliament Hill into a lively, colourful, inviting Heath Life Education Centre. During the half term, Sam Crosby and Rise Phoenix community artists will work with volunteers to simulate habitats in sculpture and textiles.

Future training sessions will include information on how the Heath is managed for wildlife and will include visits to areas used for teaching. The second training day is set for 2 March 2006 when participants will learn about working with children, how to identify and manage risks, learn safety procedures and gain information on child protection. The following week—on 9 March 2006—volunteers will be introduced to teaching programmes and the syllabus to be used for various age groups.

Skills training for those who wish to help with after-school clubs will begin on 15 March. All these sessions are included in the Heath Hands work programme distributed to members with this issue of *Hands Update*.

Budgens backs volunteers



Pictures by Nigel Sutton

A toast in coffee and tea sealed the agreement with supermarket group Budgens to donate all of Heath Hands' catering requirements for the whole year. Here, public relations professional Bernie Fennerty, left, and Budgens marketing manager Virginie

White (centre) join Heath Superintendent Simon Lee and Heath Management Committee chair Catherine McGuinness (third from left) for a celebration on site in the Hill Garden. Our volunteers, from left, are

Ellen Milholland, Harriet Sergeant, Diana Szalai, Sheena Beech, Francis Barry-Walsh and Sharon Ioannou. Community involvement is a special goal of Budgens which recently refurbished and re-opened its Belsize Park shop.

New map

A brand new Heath map showing all our meeting places accompanies the spring 2006 work programme and diary. The brainchild of volunteer Robin Moore working with administrator Loretta Schauer, the map makes it easier to find the meeting places for each of our work sessions. It will be particularly helpful for new volunteers and those who may not know the Heath well.





Conservation cutting would have prolonged the life of this hornbeam, left so long after pollarding that new shoots became too large and heavy. The result was a collapse that split the tree right down the middle.

Hatfield Forest hosts Heath Hands

When Heath Hands volunteers joined members of the Ecology and Conservation Studies Society for a day in Hatfield Forest, they learned even more about ancient trees. Their guide was Ade Clarke, the National Trust Property Manager responsible for the forest's conservation. Our own **Vicki Harding** was there for the fascinating walk/talk. She reports here.

Hatfield Forest was originally declared a hunting forest by Henry I in 1100, and is now Britain's best example of a medieval managed wood. Half Hatfield Forest is woodland pasture and scrub, and half is coppiced woodland.

There are 894 ancient pollards in Hatfield Forest. Pollarding was reintroduced in the 1970s after many years of neglect. The objective is to keep these wonderful trees alive as long as possible, maintaining them as a wildlife habitat for the newer generations. Retrenchment tip pruning is done every six years to mimic the trees' natural ageing process, with every tree having a 35-year management plan.

We were surprised to learn that 'maiden' trees now are pollarded when only the thickness of a thumb, using loppers. This is done when they are 10 to 12 feet high, the traditional height at Hatfield governed by the tallest animal (cattle). We could clearly see the 'browsing line' when looking out across the pasture. The long-term management plan is pollarding every

20 years for the next 500!

If a tree is too big for pollarding, it is *veteranised* instead as part of the process of bridging the age gap. If the ancients collapse and die before the maidens are old

We were interested to learn that 24 volunteers do *all* the coppicing, working fortnightly during the coppice season. The management plan calls for coppicing 70 hectares on a 30-year rotation. Bramble islands exist over Hatfield Forest that



Robert Deane and Vicki Harding get acquainted with the Hatfield Forest cattle.

enough to take wildlife, the wildlife will also go. The crown is first cut out so the tree grows down and to introduce decay. Sledgehammers can also be used around the base to let basal decay fungi in, while for the trunk, holes are drilled in, and chain saws used to bore up (creating 'bat boxes') and bore down (to create water pockets).

allow regeneration of oak, hawthorn etc even in areas of grazing. Grazing animals, including cattle, rabbits and deer keep the bramble in check. This means that human bramble control is not particularly required – of great interest to the Heath Hands!

Raleigh round the Heath

When 16 members of the Raleigh London Club from all over the southeast turned into Heath Hands volunteers in November, the Secret Garden in the corner of the Heath was transformed from an autumnal mishmash into a tidy, inviting setting for schoolkids' nature study. **Bobby de Joia** reports. Pictures by **Nigel Sutton**.

Here they were. Aged 20 to 30 something and all strong, fit and raring to go. After all, most of them had already been overseas, usually to developing countries, where they met the famous Raleigh challenge of both physical endurance, as well as altruism by contributing to a range of special projects from teaching to building.

These young professionals enjoy each others' company so much that they meet monthly to undertake special projects. Club members chose to work with Heath Hands because they found the programme challenging and satisfying.

Mind you, we were just a bit apprehensive for fear that these superfit, highly motivated young people might consider gardening chores a bit tame. But there wasn't a disparaging remark to be heard as they set to work under the supervision of Corporation of London rangers Justin Walsh, Ben Bewsher and the new Heath community education officer



Raleigh London Club member Lucy Travis shows fellow club members how it's done.

Sam Crosby.

"The Heath rangers provided both excellent support in terms of safety for the group while they were wielding large scythes and in terms of their expertise in the management of the Heath's ecology," commented Duncan Harvey, 28, the club's current chairman. "The group gained considerable insight in the kinds of questions that the caretakers of the Heath have to deal with to

manage the environment effectively for the multitude of different users."

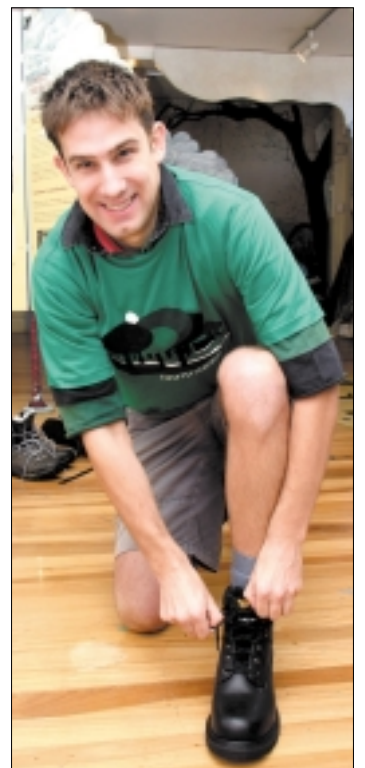
It was Duncan who spotted the Heath Hands website (www.Heath-Hands.org.uk) and decided that what we do would fit well with what his members like to do.

For Sam Crosby, the arrival of this extra band of volunteers was heaven-sent. "The work programme for Heath Hands was already planned for elsewhere on

the Heath for this weekend," she explains, "so having an extra group such as this is perfect. It means that the garden is ready for the schoolchildren who will be visiting over the next few weeks."

So now the Raleigh London Club is poised to become a corporate member of Heath Hands and has already booked in sessions for January, February and March. How did they enjoy their first effort on the Heath? Says Duncan:

"The Heath is a spectacular piece of London that Londoners should, and do, treasure. It's great that the purpose of Raleigh London fits so neatly with that of Heath Hands in order to maintain this treasure."



Duncan Harvey dons his steel-toed boots before heading for work in the Secret Garden.



A determined bunch, Raleigh London Club members head off to work in the Secret Garden.