



Hands update

Newsletter of the volunteers on Hampstead Heath

Book now for agm

Members can use their yellow forms to book a place for the Heath Hands eighth annual general meeting set for Wednesday 3 October at Kenwood House.

The event will feature a reception starting at 6.30pm in the Orangery, an hour-long business session in the elegant lecture room in Kenwood House, followed by the organisation's eighth birthday party, with food, wine and birthday cake.

The business session will include a review of the past year, elections of Executive Committee members (trustees) and a discussion on the progress of the new Hampstead Heath Management Plan. City of London Corporation Director of Open Spaces Jennifer Adams and Heath Superintendent Simon Lee will take centre stage to update members on progress towards the new management plan and to answer questions on the recent consultation programme.

The papers (for members only) with this issue of Hands Update include nomination forms for elected members of the Executive Committee, the green diary (to keep), the autumn work programme and the yellow booking form for all work sessions and events.

Wanted: drivers

Kenwood needs more volunteer minicar/van drivers to ferry visitors with disabilities from the car park to the house. Volunteers with a current driving licence can choose their own hours. Kenwood will provide full training. Contact Loretta at West Lodge if you would like to help out.

We're always out there ...



These pretty brollies stole the show at the Tea on the Lawn event in June. Some 100 tough ticket holders showed up to enjoy their tea in the rain, protected only by these parasols provided at a discount by Homebase in the O₂ Centre. Here, Renate Shaw, left, David Heatherington and Annie Rozee set them out to dry at a special clear-up session several days after the event. For pictures of the tea party itself, see page 4.

Picture by Michael Shaw

... come rain or come shine



A highlight of all Heath Hands work sessions is the coffee/tea break which gives members a chance to chat with each other and their supervisors. Doing the honours with the serving is Kenwood senior gardener Dave Gibbons, foreground, for, from left, Renate Shaw, Annie Rozee, Terry Burton, Liz Tucker, Robin Neate (with back pack) Inga Bystram, Mercedes Neate-Saenz and Gordon Beck.

Picture by Michael Shaw

Bringing balsam to heel at Kenwood

Ian Loosemore joined Heath Hands back in 2002 and went on to become a ranger with the City of London on the Heath and then a ranger with English Heritage at Kenwood. Here, he gives us the benefit of all this experience with a rundown on how, with volunteer help, invasive balsam has nearly gone from key Kenwood sites.

From personal experience as a volunteer, I know that pulling balsam is a tedious task that sometimes feels never-ending and futile. In fact, the work that has been carried out over the past few years has made an enormous difference at Kenwood.

For the last three years, we have adopted a strategy aiming at complete eradication of balsam from key areas, where it actually threatened to take over completely from all other species.

The approach is to have Heath Hands members do the initial bulk clearance work; then members of the ranger team make follow-up visits two or three times over the summer to take out plants that have been missed or that have grown up later. This approach does seem to be working. My records show that balsam removal from all the areas on average has been 94%. The map, right, shows the areas in red where Heath Hands worked on balsam removal.

The most successful removal has been the East Valley at 99.8% and the least successful, still a very heartening 87.5% of the balsam removed from the West Drive. From 2005 to the end of last year, we actually carried away some 150 sacks of balsam. This year, we were down to just 11 sacks.

In most cases, the balsam has been reduced to very low levels and rangers have been able to mop up remaining plants without volunteer support. I am fairly confident that most of the areas shown on the map will effectively be completely clear of balsam by next year.



Ian Loosemore and Penny Taylor attack balsam and bramble at Kenwood.

Ecology, mycology on the menu

Special educational events are the highlight of Heath Hands' autumn programme:

English Heritage ranger Andrew Overall will lead an all-day workshop on fungi on 25 October, starting at 10am at Mansion Cottage. The programme will include an introduction to mycology and basic identification.

Heath ecologists Meg Game and Julie Brownbridge will lead a walk on Wednesday 26 September starting from Parliament Hill staff yard at 10.30am. Booking is essential for both events.

News in brief

Holá!

WHEN Rosa Bejarano's daughters planned to study in London this summer, their mum decided to travel with them from Seville. Not content with an ordinary sightseeing trip, Rosa launched an online search that led her to Heath Hands. So while her girls were in class, Rosa packed in regular daily Heath Hands sessions during her two-week stay.

Biodiversity

NATURE of the City is an introduction to the diverse landscapes and habitats of the City of London's Open Spaces, including Hampstead Heath. The A4-sized guide is packed with illustrations and information highlighting the wildlife that makes these sites special. It also focuses on the management that is required to maintain them both now and for future generations. Copies are free from West Lodge.



Robin Moore

Here's to Robin

HEATH Hands member turned Heath ranger Robin Moore has returned to the United States, where he plans to build on his Heath experience. Robin completed 200 hours as a Heath Hands volunteer before taking up his full-time ranger position. He also served as the organisation's secretary.

Every little helps

● Deborah Wolton donated a heap of designer gear to Heath Hands which raised £72 from delighted members. Gifts of unwanted upmarket collectibles and small items of furniture are welcome. Our eBay agent can sell them to help support Heath Hands.

● Rather than accept a fee for his talk to the Hendon Horticultural Society, veteran tree survey mastermind Jeremy Wright put in a good word for Heath Hands. The result was a donation of £20.

● Moira Young, Alan Brennink and Bobby de Joia, ran a Heath Hands stall at the South End Green Association's (SEGA) festival in June. Sales from postcard books, Deborah Wolton's guide book for walkers and Hampstead Heath maps raised £97. The three also gave away 150 Heath diaries, for the City.



Picture by Nigel Sutton

Rachel and David Mackenzie make friends with a Scarlet Mormon in the new Butterfly House.

Where volunteers can take a flutter

When City of London staff at Golders Hill Park thought up a way to save a redundant greenhouse, little did they realise that they could create a marvellous new volunteering opportunity for Heath Hands. Bobby de Joia meets two volunteers in the new Butterfly House.

Volunteers David and Rachel Mackenzie are the first Heath Hands members to have a look inside the greenhouse-turned-Butterfly House at Golders Hill Park.

They were immediately smitten by the array of tropical plants and the amazing display of butterflies as they mature from pupae to winged adult. Now their enthusiasm for the project is expected to attract more volunteers to help visitors enjoy the Butterfly House during its opening on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Semi-retired creative writing teacher David Mackenzie has already spent more than a year volunteering with Heath Hands and particularly enjoys talking to visitors on the Heath. Now wife Rachel, a literacy

teacher, is also keen to help visitors enjoy the new Heath feature. They spent several sessions learning the ropes with staff.

It took a year of intensive planning, renovation, planting, sourcing, research, and study, but horticultural team leader Adam Green, with the blessing of Golders Hill project officer Patrick Hegarty managed to transform the old greenhouse into Hampstead Heath's first Butterfly House. "We want to have 8 to 12 different species and about 80 flying butterflies here at any one time," explains Adam. He sought help from London Zoo experts for advice on keeping the beautiful insects and is now ready to pass on his knowledge to volunteers who in turn can help introduce visitors to the new facility.

Volunteers will learn all about the life cycle of butterflies, learn how to attach the pupae to dowels in the 'emergence' case so that they can be watched as the extraordinary change takes place. The pupae are actually ordered from special farms both in the UK and in tropical countries where the sale of pupae provides a sustainable income for farmers, as well as protecting the insects' natural habitat.

Over the next few months, volunteers will learn how to keep the temperature at a daytime optimum of 27C to 28C and about 75% relative humidity. They will learn to sweep down spider webs—ever so gently—and keep an eye out for an unwanted build-up of ants. They will prepare the fructose solution for the hanging feeders and

prepare plates of bananas and citrus fruit for the large 'Owl' butterflies that are particularly fascinating for children. Then of course there is the whole question of the balance of flowering food plants so that the exotic creatures can feel right at home.

All of this is just the beginning. There is the entire field of butterfly identification to get on with and for volunteers, this is likely to be as fascinating as bird or tree identification. The opportunity to work with visitors is the biggest challenge, however, and will develop over the next few months as school groups begin to book in to this newest of Heath offerings. Plans are already afoot to set up tables and benches just outside the House especially for visiting school groups.

Action where green shirts gather

There were special events galore to keep Heath Hands busy over the summer. The annual litter blitz brought out former Downing Street communications boss Alistair Campbell, pictured here just behind Hampstead Heath Management Committee chair Alderman Bob Hall and Bobby de Joia. At the Hill Garden, right, Annie Rozee (in Heath Hands shirt) and Gillian Walker chat up visitors to the Open Squares Weekend.



Picture by Clive Totman



Picture by Ian Greenwood



Mops and brollies but the show goes on ...

There was more rain than sun at the annual fundraising tea party on the Kenwood Farm Cottages lawn, but some 100 tough ticket holders managed to enjoy themselves—and help raise £1,500 for Heath Hands.

Michael Shaw took these pictures, reading clockwise from right: Anne Collins and the gallant Robin Neate, have a go at mopping up after the third cloudburst; UCL student Melissa Chodhury brightening things up with a spot of facepainting; the Aspidistra Drawing Room Orchestra, making their sixth appearance on the lawn; volunteers Jo Cumper, left, and Francesca Floris serve residents and their activities organiser Hannah Quansah (right), from nearby Cheverton Lodge; Liz Duffield and Dhanjisha Variava help serve guests.

