



September 2010

Hands update

Newsletter of the volunteers on Hampstead Heath

Recognition for a job well done



Volunteers joined representatives from the City of London, friends and family at former Heath Hands' chairman Renate Shaw's Freedom of the City of London ceremony at the Guildhall in May.

Renate took over the reins of Heath Hands' management following the death of our founder Bobby de Joia in early 2008. Since being thrown in at the deep end, Renate has given over and above in her dedication to the cause, supporting Heath Hands' role on the Heath Consultative Committee, continuing to be an active volunteer at practical sessions and at events, and spending endless hours behind the scenes, right up to welcoming our current chairman Jamie Jenkins to the role at our AGM last October. It was then that Michael Welbank,

chairman of the Heath Management Committee and former chairman Bob Hall nominated Renate to receive the accolade of Freeman of the City of London in recognition of all her hard work (pictured top left).

As an extra treat (pictured bottom left) volunteers were shown around the spectacular Great Hall where coats of arms of all the Livery Companies of the city are on display. The medieval Great Hall dates back to 1411 and has been the setting for many famous state trials, including that of Lady Jane Grey in 1553.

This year's AGM will be held on Wednesday 6 October at Kenwood House. Heath Hands' annual report will be available to volunteers from West Lodge during October. Nomination forms for elected members of the executive committee are included with this newsletter.



Pictures by Loreta Schauer

A Wonderful Legacy

ALMOST A YEAR has gone by since volunteers gathered in Whitestone Garden for a memorial celebration in honour of Heath Hands founder, Bobby de Joia, where it was announced that Bobby had made us a very generous bequest.

Bobby was born in New York and recognised how the model of the volunteer group supporting Central Park could cross the Atlantic and be adapted to suit the needs of one of London's great amenities; Hampstead Heath. When Bobby had a mission she fired into action with

energy and commitment; the vision she had for the Heath must become a reality. She recruited the original committee from within the local community and from the Heath Management team and an inaugural meeting was held in 1999 at Greenmoor, the home of the de Joia's in the Vale of Health. Our Constitution was drawn up and Heath Hands subsequently became a registered charity.

In only ten years the small team that initially worked at the weekend in and around the Vale of Health has

expanded dramatically. We now have over 250 volunteers working in a range of locations throughout the week. Bobby has not just created a living legacy but has also made Heath Hands a beneficiary of her will. Sheila MacLeod, our Treasurer, has received from Amy de Joia a cheque for £50,000. There are no specific conditions as to how Heath Hands might use this gift. The Committee will be considering ways in which this can be used to the greatest benefit of Heath Hands, its volunteers, and the wider community.



Why not visit Athlone House Gardens? Look out for these signs around the Heath and discover a lesser known beauty spot where our volunteers were fortunate enough to help Heath staff at an extra work session in April.

See inside for our round up of summer events and volunteer activities.

Summer round-up

Heath Hands have been out and about spreading the word about volunteering this summer. Here's our round-up of some of the events we've attended and some of the extra activities volunteers have been getting stuck into whilst the sun was (mostly) shining. A big thank you to all the volunteers who turned up to run information stalls. It's a really important aspect of keeping Heath Hands running as a healthy, happy organisation and raising our profile amongst the local communities surrounding the Heath.



Pictures by Anne Collins, Michael Shaw and Loretta Schauer

- We thought we'd trial having a Heath Hands stall at the Kenwood Concerts this year, and were made very welcome by concert organisers IMG who set us up alongside the concession stands vying for trade on the concert evenings. We are looking for ways to make our presence brighter, bigger and more interactive next year. Of course volunteers benefited from a great view of the concert stage too (*pictured top left*).

- The Camden Green Fair in Regent's Park is a big event in London's green calendar and our stall drew the crowds as a steady stream of people took an interest in volunteering on the Heath. We joined forces with the Heath Education Team, taking advantage of their splendid gazebo for the day. As well as spreading the word about volunteering on the Heath, volunteers sold homemade jam and cakes and joined in with the fun and games of the children's activities (*pictured left*).

- It was the first year that Heath Hands had a stall at the Fair in the Square in Highgate, even though it just around the corner from West Lodge. Volunteers talked to the public about what we do and handed out membership packs to interested parties.

- Once again, thank you to the Heath Education Team for making us welcome and

lending a hand with logistics as Heath Hands attended the Day of Discoveries and Heath Green Fairs in Golders Hill Park (*pictured left and below*) and Parliament Hill. Along with sustainable play and wild food themes, suggestions for next summer's activities include plant quizzes and conservation demonstrations.

- It was litter-pickers at dawn (well 9:30am) for the annual Hampstead Heath Litter Blitz in June. Never too young to start (*pictured bottom left*) volunteer Anna Basciano recruits daughter Zoe to lend a little helping hand.

- Enthusiastic volunteers turned up to cheer on the runners and marshal the course at the Hampstead Heath Race for Life. Thank you to everyone who gave up their Sunday morning to help at this high profile event.

- Volunteers squeezed in a few extra sessions over the summer at the Ladies Pond, clearing bramble that was encroaching on the bathers and helping to maintain the planted areas at this secluded spot.





Invertebrates indicate pond health

IT WAS HAND-LENSES at the ready once again as volunteers took part in a training day for the OPAL Water Quality Survey lead by Dr Claire Ryder.

This latest OPAL (Open Air Laboratories) project combines tests for water clarity, pH, the biodiversity of fresh water invertebrates, molluscs and other wildlife to assess the water quality of our ponds and streams.

Armed with pond dipping nets (or a sieve-on-a-stick), ‘Opalometers’, plastic trays and wellies our group set off to investigate the Orchard

Pond and the Bird Sanctuary Pond on the Highgate side of the Heath. Water slaters (not to be confused with skaters), beetle larvae, water shrimps, worms, fleas, mites, water bugs and damsel fly larvae combined to give the Bird Sanctuary pond a score of 27, and a rating of ‘quite healthy’. As the seasons progress and things warm up, we’ll be surveying these ponds and other ponds around the Heath again to take a snapshot of pond life throughout the year. OPAL are currently running a number of national surveying projects. Last year volunteers

took part in the air quality survey which looked at lichens as indicator species. Both the water and air quality projects are ongoing, so it’s not too late to get involved. Contact Loretta for more details, and to get your survey packs, or go directly to the survey section of the OPAL website to find out more, and to view our results so far on the national map.

Next on the agenda is a biodiversity survey looking at hedgerows – perfect for Hampstead Heath! The survey will be launched in September so watch out for news.



Angela Durkin, Harriet Sergeant, Susan Nettleton, Judith Rose and Heath Ecologist Adrian Brooker join Dr Claire Ryder from Imperial College to investigate what lurks beneath the surface of the Heath’s ponds.

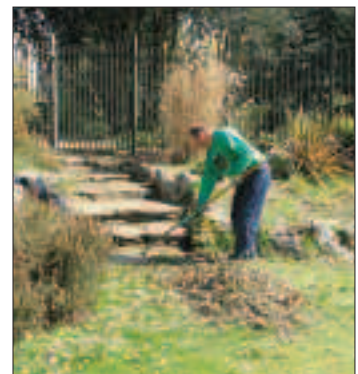
Pictures by Dr Claire Ryder and Loretta Schauer

Athlone House Gardens

Have you been to Athlone House Gardens yet? It’s a small strip of the Heath above Cohen’s Fields which boasts a woodland walk topped by an idyllic garden replete with rhododendrons, rockery and a little lily pond. It’s

pretty quiet most days, and feels as if you’ve discovered a secret spot on the Heath. In April volunteers joined Ranger Team Leader Dermot Sullivan for a spot of sprucing up to prepare the garden for summer visitors. Half the group set

to weeding and edging borders and paths, which had succumbed to grass and a coating of leaves. Others set off to the wooded area to help construct a protective barrier for wildflowers. If you haven’t been there yet, it’s well worth a visit!



Spring clean: Alan Davis teases out grass and weeds from between stones.

Picture by Loretta Schauer

A big THANK YOU to Waitrose!

Our fundraising efforts received a boost in July from Waitrose who donated £430 through their Community Matters scheme.

Hampstead Heath 2011 Calendar

Special offer open to Heath Hands Volunteers.

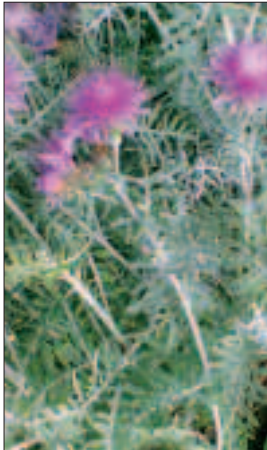
Hampstead Heath will have it’s very own calendar for 2011, including some stunning pictures of the Heath throughout the seasons. Calendars go on sale in September priced at £9 each, but if you buy yours from West Lodge, £2 will go directly to Heath Hands!

Place your orders with Loretta at West Lodge.



*Mystery solved
by volunteer
Anne Collins*

The other week working under the Pergola in the dry garden, I asked Ian Greenwood, what was that fluffy pink plant with the grey spiky looking leaves. He said everyone was asking, but he did not know. Curiosity aroused, I looked in my plant books at home and searched online, but could not find an exact match. Later in the week I was at Kew Gardens and I approached Joanne Everson, Rock Garden Team Leader, for



assistance. She looked at my poor quality camera phone picture and identified it as a possible *Centaurea*. She gave me her card and asked Ian to contact her with a better photo. Her manager Charles Shine later identified it as an Italian endemic, *Centaurea Gymnocarpa* or Velvet *Centaurea*. Now the Golders Hill gardeners have to propagate it for future use in dry areas.

Grassland recovery

Photo story by Larry Phillips



Before: How it looked before we started - an overgrown area of former grassland near the Vale of Health pond.



After: The final result - a restored patch of grassland.



Working: The process of clearing scrub - saplings, turkey oak and birch are removed.



Resting: Robert Deane communing with the pain of a fallen tree.

Butterfly House Update

At present, the largest butterfly we have in stock, about 2-3 inches across, is called the Owl. When at rest its wings are normally folded and on each brown speckled wing is a marking like a large eye. The speckles act as camouflage at a distance, but if a small bird or snake approaches closely, it will probably think twice before attacking. When the butterfly is in motion you can see brighter colours on its inner side: either blue, or blue and gold,

depending on the exact species. The colours are formed by light reflecting from the scales on the surface on the wing.

These butterflies often lay eggs on banana leaves, as this is their food plant; caterpillars eat the leaves, and adult butterflies like to drink the juice of soft bananas. Usually, this is as far as it goes; we order new pupae every week from a supplier. However, this year the conditions must have been particularly good for this species, as a number of eggs

have hatched, gone through four stages (instars) of caterpillars (the final stage about 3 inches long), eaten large quantities of banana leaves, turned into pupae, and then new butterflies have emerged. With a bit of luck, maybe some more eggs will hatch this year.

These photos show a mating pair, the empty cases of the first two instars, and the final caterpillars, well camouflaged on the central rib of the leaf.

Story and photos by volunteer Liz Tucker

