



January 2011

Hands update

Newsletter of the volunteers on Hampstead Heath

Keats House celebration

Update by Jamie Jenkins

Around 30 volunteers were able to take up the invitation to a garden party on September 28th to thank Heath Hands for their help in restoring the grounds at Keats House. It was a most congenial evening. Keats House manager Mick Scott entertained us with a behind-the-scenes tour of the newly redecorated house and Head Gardener Ian Greenwood guided us around the newly replanted garden which looked especially lovely in the late summer evening light. The five new borders have planting themes derived from Keats' poetry: Melancholy, Mists and Mellow Fruitfulness, Woodland, Summer and Nightingale, the last being particularly designed to be bird friendly. A big thank you to Mick and to Michael Welbank for making such a wonderful evening possible.

Thank you to IBM

for donating £325 towards the cost of a brand new computer for West Lodge.

Our clever treasurer Sheila MacLeod took advantage of IBM's *On Demand Community Grants* scheme for former employees who now volunteer with small charities.

Operation Loose Change raises £££'s

In a highly topical vein, this year's AGM saw members focus on fundraising with our Treasurer Sheila MacLeod explaining how we balance Heath Hands' budget. This autumn volunteers found new ways to raise funds at local Heath based events including the Heath Heritage Day, and looked for grants issued by former employers such as IBM. Of course, volunteers

still found time to notch up an additional 6,139 hours of conservation work.

We are pleased to welcome our newly elected committee of Trustees. Jamie Jenkins will serve as chairman for the second year and David Mackenzie will join the committee as vice-chairman. Sheila MacLeod will complete her second year in post as Treasurer, and Anne



Picture by Michael Shaw

Celebratory cake by Liz Jack.

Collins will complete a third year as Secretary. Dave Lowe and Charlotte Harkin will both serve their third year as volunteer representatives.



Picture by Steve Charkin

Volunteer Sue Charkin, left, hands over bags of loose change collected by Vale of Health residents to Treasurer Sheila MacLeod.

The AGM also saw Heath Hands launch an ingenious new fundraising initiative **Operation Loose Change** with the catchy motto: "Look after the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves!"

The idea is to find a tin, jam jar, bowl or other suitable receptacle, put it in a convenient place and unload your small coins each day. The amount each individual could save by collecting their pennies could contribute to a great pool of coins that Heath Hands can turn into pounds. Heath Hands does all the counting and banking. All you have to do is deliver your booty to West Lodge.

Operation Loose Change has also proved to be a great way for Heath Hands to reconnect to its roots in the Vale of Health. In 1999 Bobby de Joia gathered a few local recruits around the dining table at Greenmoor and Heath Hands was founded. The small team that initially worked at the weekend in and around the Vale of Health has expanded dramatically in the last ten years, and there are now over 250 volunteers working in a range of locations all over the Heath each week.

Vale resident and volunteer Sue Charkin kindly agreed to be the collection point for Operation Loose Change

when it was launched in the Vale of Health in October. So far, we have been kept busy counting the coins and have collected a staggering £621. Not bad at all for all those pennies and silver shrapnel. Heath Hands would like to extend an extra big thank you to residents of the Vale of Health for collecting up their loose change so generously, and to all the volunteers who have dug deep and gathered up their change too. The combined total of over £800 was announced at the Heath Hands Christmas Party in December. Keep collecting those coins!

See page 4 for more on the festivities...



² *Heath Hands takes stock*

January 2011

OPAL Water Survey... so far

Pond	Date and Time	Weather	Clarity	pH	Visible Pollution	Duckweed	Invertebrates Health Score
Ladies Pond	22/10/10 10:30am	Cloudy but no rain	12 Green	5.5	Foam on water surface	none	28
Kenwood Wood Pond (Wood bank)	12/10/10 5:30pm	Sunny	12 Clear	5.5	none	none	43
Kenwood Wood Pond (Grassy bank)	12/10/10 4:30pm	Sunny	12 Clear	5.5	none	none	38
Hampstead No2	30/09/10 11:40am	Sunny	12 Clear	6.5	none	Least Duckweed	18
Hampstead No1	30/09/10 10:30am	Sunny	12 Clear	6.0	none	Least Duckweed	37
Heath Extension No3	17/06/10 11:45am	Sunny	6 Brown	6.0	none	Common Duckweed	13
Heath Extension (nearest Ikins Corner)	17/06/10 11:00am	Sunny	5 Brown	6.0	Road less than 20 metres away	none	17
Sandy Heath largest pond	10/06/10 12 noon	Cloudy but no rain	12 Brown	5.5	none	Greater Duckweed	2
Sandy Heath small pond	10/06/10	Cloudy but no rain	0 Brown	5.5	none	Greater Duckweed	6
Bird Sanctuary	14/05/10 12:45pm	Cloudy but no rain	6 Green	5.5	none	none	27
Bird Sanctuary	14/05/10 12:30pm	Cloudy but no rain	8 Green	5.5	none	none	18
Orchard Pond	14/05/10	Cloudy but no rain	6 Green	5.5	Algal bloom	Common Duckweed	7



Picture by Loretra Schauer

Identifying indicator species for the pond survey.

Dragonfly, Alderfly or Damselfly larvae would each score 10 points. Mayfly larvae, Pond Skaters and Water Shrimps each count for 5 points, whereas Water Snails and Water Slaters only count for 1 point.

We also found many intriguing invertebrates that were not indicator species for the survey – often very tiny, these mystery creatures would need to be researched in more detail to be identified accurately. Surveying at different times of year, and with differing levels of sunshine, can affect the number and variety of invertebrates caught in the nets. The key would be to return to the ponds throughout the year to build up a representative picture.

The water survey is ongoing, but if pond dipping isn't your cup of tea, how about getting involved in a survey of the Heath's hedgerows instead? OPAL have now launched a biodiversity survey that looks at all types of hedgerows from neatly trimmed privet to ancient boundary lines.

THE SURVEY COVERS a description of each pond and it's surroundings, the types of vegetation present, and any nearby signs of pollution. The pH, colour and basic clarity of the water is tested on a scale of 0 to 12, with 12 being the clearest.

The main part of the survey focuses on pond dipping for particular indicator species. The presence of each species is given a numerical value which is totalled up to give a 'health score' for each pond. For example, finding cased Caddisfly larvae,

Brrrrrr! It was all systems go for the Kenwo



The Kenwood volunteers were out again in force to complete the next phase of the woodland regeneration project which began in February this year. Kenwood Gardeners Dave Gibbons and Michael Johnson were on hand to give advice on how to choose the right depth to plant the saplings and how to "heal in" the roots which is essential at this time of the year. Any trapped air pockets would fill with water which would then freeze and damage the delicate new roots. The rush was on to get as many saplings firmly in the ground before November's big freeze began.





Developing an ecosystem - autumn tasks at Highgate Wood

A volunteer's experience of woodland management sessions.

IN THE DECADES when the City of London builds stunning new towers, and as it adjusts its wealth creation to a new order of global finance, the many brambles and seedlings in the fenced off compartment in the north of Highgate Woods slowly grow wilder.

Our September group of volunteers is cutting pathways through the three year growth of brambles, freeing up self-seeded and planted saplings. The very same brambles that provide mouth-watering harvests of blackberries are being scythed away to allow sunlight and space to penetrate the soil layer. The work will allow a greater variety of plant and animal species to make their homes in this freshly gladed wood. As saplings establish and grow, the wood will be home to trees of all ages. Three hours of work feels arduous. Images of people in fields scything all day makes me wonder how my body descended from theirs.

The previous week's work was easier. The cover of brambles was younger and thinner and we were able to pull

their roots from the soil. The brambles are piled up on dead logs - nourishing habitats for fungi, mosses, insects and small mammals. This compartment was managed in past ages as a Hornbeam coppice with Oak standards; it holds many mature trees. The perimeter hedge of mixed shrub and tree species has reached a maturity and is now being staked and laid. The taller trees, Hazel and Hawthorn, are cut diagonally near their base and then bent; their stems now extending along the line of the hedge. Less than half their bark is stripped away - the tree continues to live. New shoots seek out the sunlight and grow upwards forming a thick living hedge. This is skilled work and the Woodkeeper generously gives each volunteer a closely supervised opportunity to lay a hedge. A cut too deep and the hedge is instantaneously deprived of ten years growth.

Now in November we are cutting Holly near where the Romans moulded and fired their pottery. The Holly has grown thick in recent years and is blocking sunlight from the



Picture by Cindy Blaney

Volunteer Angela Durkin turns her hand to coppicing. Autumn volunteering weeks were held at Highgate Woods during September, November and December. Plans are afoot to include more regular sessions at the wood.

ground flora. With nothing more than a simple handsaw, a ten year old stem becomes timber. We are practicing the forester's art of stripping the stems of branches and sorting them into poles of various sizes for future use in staking the laid and dead hedges. In the spring bluebells whose bulbs have lain dormant for many years will send out new flowers.

The vision for Highgate Woods is a rich allegory for how we might manage a sustainable planet and society. Nature is doing the really

difficult work; designing such a variety of species - each exquisitely adapted to a planetary niche. The volunteers simply intervene, modifying conditions to allow a complex variety of ecosystems to flourish.

Highgate Woods has been a workplace for humans probably since pre-history. The Roman potters, the rooting pigs, the coppiced Hornbeam fuel for the brewery, the gravel for the road-makers and the Oak beams for the carpenters have created a complex ecosystem.

Woodland regeneration project



Pictures by Loreta Schauer

Here volunteers have planted native tree saplings such as oak, beech, and cherry in "gaps" in the canopy in an effort to rebalance the age profile of the ancient woodland. The ground was covered in a dense undergrowth of brambles and bracken which needed to be cleared if the saplings were to stand a chance of getting any light. The tree guards will protect saplings until they establish a stable root system, and help prevent tender shoots being nibbled by wildlife. It was a frosty chilly day, so the teabreak was particularly appreciated; a chance to have a hot cuppa and to thaw out the many frozen fingers.





Picture by Anne Collins

Gathering a crowd; Heath Hands join forces with the Heath Education Team to promote volunteering at the Heath Heritage Day at Parliament Hill in October.



Picture by Susan Ashton

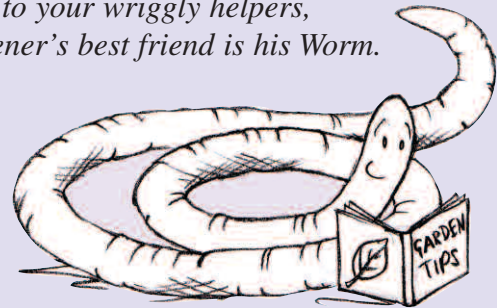
Herbal treatment; Volunteer Andrew Coulson prunes back vigorous rosemary bushes at the Hill Garden in November.

Some seasonal advice by volunteer Liz Tucker

The Worm in Winter

*Don't abandon your worms over winter,
Don't leave them to starve in their bin!
They turn all your waste into compost,
Neglecting them would be a sin.
Give them food – not potatoes or onions –
Exactly as much as they need,
And they like shredded newsprint for bedding,
So the worms have got something to read.*

*If winter is icy and snowy
Don't leave them to freeze by your path!
Wrap the bin in a warm plastic jacket,
And find them a place by your hearth.
For the work that they do is essential,
As all of the experts confirm.
Be kind to your wriggly helpers,
A Gardener's best friend is his Worm.*



Deck the halls...

Volunteers braved the Siberian winds and sub-zero temperatures in December to gather for Heath Hands' Christmas party at the Old Kitchen in Kenwood. Along with a raffle and silent auction the event raised £1,250, in addition to the money raised through Operation Loose Change featured on page one. Thank you to all the volunteers who contributed food, raffle prizes and who helped out on the night. Budgens' generous sponsorship of all the wine for the evening ensured the event went off with a sparkle.

Top: Heath Hands chairman Jamie Jenkins and volunteer Liz Jack cut the cake. Our thanks to Liz for yet another stunning Christmas cake creation.

Bottom left: Nick and Cath Gladding were the top bidders in this year's silent auction. They will enjoy a weeks stay in Michael and Renate's fabulous apartment in Switzerland.

Bottom right: The party was organised by volunteer Louise o'Keeffe who we would like to thank for co-ordinating such an enjoyable and successful evening.



Pictures by Michael Shaw