



September 2011

# Hands update

Newsletter of the volunteers on Hampstead Heath

## Invitation to Heath Hands' 12th AGM celebration

This year's AGM will be held on Wednesday 12th October at Kenwood House. The celebration begins at 6.30pm with a reception in the Orangery, and is followed by the business section of our AGM where we will elect our trustees. We will conclude the event by returning to the Orangery for drinks and a buffet. This year we are looking for nominations for the posts of secretary, vice-chair and treasurer, plus two volunteer representatives. We would very much like to hear from volunteer members who are interested in serving as a Trustee. Nomination forms are included with this newsletter. Booking details for the AGM can be found on the yellow booking form enclosed for members.

Heath Hands' annual report will be available to volunteers from West Lodge during October.

## Wanted: Christmas Party suggestions

While we're on the subject of celebrations, we'd like our volunteers to put on their thinking caps and give us some suggestions for this year's Christmas Party. We've been privileged in the past to have been invited to hold our parties at the Old Kitchen in Kenwood House, but due to the important renovation project beginning this year, the venue will not be available to us this coming December. Any thoughts or ideas on how the volunteers should get together during the Festive season would be welcome... contact Loretta at West Lodge.



Picture by Lesley Lander

## Volunteers visit Middle Temple Gardens

A happy and relaxed group of Heath Hands volunteers spent a wonderful morning in Middle Temple, shown around by head gardener Kate Jenrick. The volunteers' visit was arranged as a result of a London Gardens Network seminar attended by Jamie Jenkins and David Mackenzie in March, where Heath Hands was invited to share experiences of volunteering in historic gardens with other local groups.

Middle Temple, Kate explained, is one of four Inns of Court dating back to the 12th Century. The land was originally owned by the Knights Templar, but when they were abolished in 1312 the land reverted to the Crown until 1608 when it was granted to the Inns by James I...

*See page 2 for full report by volunteer Hazel Riley*



Pictures by Loretta Schauer

*See page 4 for more on OPAL Biodiversity and Climate Surveys*

## Hands Update moves online

This is our last print edition of Hands Update. Our January 2012 edition will be published online! The newsletter will be circulated to members via email and will be available on our website. A print version will be available to members from West Lodge on request.



## <sup>2</sup> *Heath Hands about town*

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### *... continued from front page - story by volunteer Hazel Riley*

We began the tour in Fountain Court, in the shade of a gnarled mulberry tree. Kate explained that it was about 80 years old, replacing one planted in 1879. Two tall Plane trees were planted around 1887, to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Kate then described how she was improving the soil and her difficulties in replanting the very shady border, although it all looked very lovely with its colour palette of blues and purples. The fountain itself is original and the sound of its water cascading down into the shallow pool gave a lovely accompaniment to our questions.

We walked past the Elizabethan Middle Temple Hall, through an arched doorway into Elm Court. Originally named Fig Tree Court, neither tree survives. The whole square had been badly bombed in the Blitz and the soil is still full of rubble. Arches covered in pale orange roses and two tone purple Sweet Peas with an intense scent (Matucana from Chilton Seeds) led on to a small lawn. Kate told us how this became 'as crowded as Brighton Beach' in the busy lunchtimes. She plans to extend the flower borders which were planted to be at their best in different seasons, one for spring and early summer, another for summer and early autumn. Everyone admired

her colourful planting combinations which are inspired more by her love of plants and respect for the history of the place than any compulsion to 'design'.



Picture by Ian Greenwood

One of the most fascinating aspects of the tour was Kate's account of working for an Inn of Court. With only one assistant to help, she has to keep the gardens looking beautiful while also providing the venue for dinners, weddings and the many events that the Inn hosts. Looking at the perfect green lawn in Middle Temple's Garden Court it was hard to believe it was often covered with a marquee and trodden by many expensively shod feet. Kate explained she has a special technique for mowing, changing the cut frequently so the grass recovers more quickly.

Her work is supported by a Garden

Committee of two; her only remit is to provide all year colour. While we were there she was awaiting delivery of the summer bedding, from West Ham Park Nurseries (which she recommends we all visit). At the moment spectacular roses grace the borders. William Shakespeare, a velvety deep red rose (pictured left) with the most intense, intoxicating scent, was a favourite. It was home to many ladybirds. There are also red and white roses to commemorate the Wars of the Roses which, in the play Henry VI, began in this garden.

Apart from the occasional use of weed killer on the lawn, Kate gardens organically. There is an underground water tank and compost heaps in a discreet position. She explained how the wall and other shrubs are a bit messy as she is waiting for the many birds nesting there to finish raising their brood. There are plans to have a bee hive on one of the roofs.

Middle Temple Garden leads down to the Embankment where a new Hornbeam hedge has been planted. Long before the Embankment was paved, the river would flood much of the garden and the soil is still full of silt.

Kate originally trained at Kew and had worked at Painswick Park in Cobham. She works here four days a week, spending a day in a community garden in East London.

## Looking after our favourite spots at Kenwood... with a helping hand from



May was particularly hot and dry this year so one important task for the volunteers was to water the newly planted saplings in the wood. Bramble and bracken were cleared around the new trees which had become difficult to spot in the undergrowth. Pictured above, on watering-can duty, are volunteers Warren Stein and Janet Ford. Of course, as soon as they'd finished watering, the heavens opened...and we've had frequent downpours ever since. We had a





# Amphibians and reptiles on the Heath

Volunteers Natasha Harris, Stephen Evans and Peter Schauer were up at the crack of dawn to monitor newts during May and June. They joined Heath Ecologist Adrian Brooker to explore the newt population of the Heath's many ponds using bottle traps which are made from old plastic bottles and a stick. It's important to leave space for air as well as water when setting the trap, so the newts can breathe. The traps are set late in the evening and are checked early the following day so that the newts can be released unharmed. We also had a go at a different method of determining the presence of newts. We met at the Hampstead ponds after dark so that we could shine a torch beam through the water to search for newts along the banks. This method



Volunteers set bottle traps along the margins of the Heath Extension Ponds.

contributed useful data as it was the first time that newts had been recorded in the Viaduct Pond.

Our grass snake survey is also progressing well, with volunteers Robert Spigel, Judith Rose, Sue Lamble, Michael Wood and Jackie Lowe monitoring three separate transects on a weekly basis across the Heath.

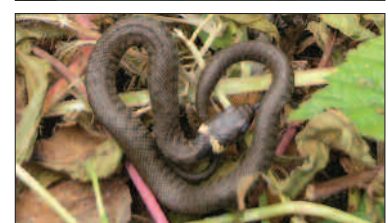
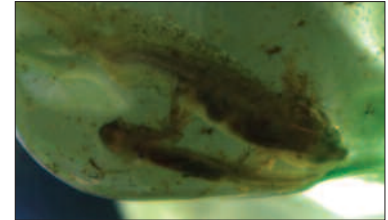
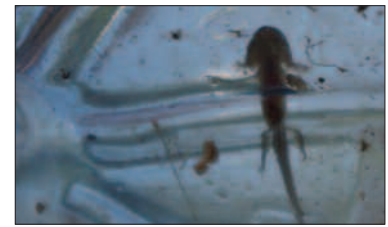
So far we are making frequent sightings of snakes, with a few favourite spots

being almost guaranteed to reveal a basking snake. Aside from the enigmatic grass snakes, a wide range of wildlife is showing up under our refuges including newts, frogs, toads, voles, a range of impressive ground beetles, insects and molluscs, and the occasional startled rat.

**From top:**

- Newts in the early stages of development are called efts and are distinguishable from tadpoles by their feathery gills.
- Common or "smooth" newts are found in several Heath ponds.
- Female common newt released from a bottle trap.
- Female common newt found under a refuge at the back of Highgate No1 Pond.
- The reptile refuges also serve as a shelter for many toads and frogs.
- Small grass snake found coiled under a refuge in the Bird Sanctuary Pond.

Left: Grass snakes found under the refuges can be slow to react on cooler days, but if it's hot and sunny they are able to move off extremely quickly and can be tricky to catch on camera.



Pictures by Adrian Brooker, Peter Schauer and Loretra Schauer



## and from students of Westminster School



Pictures by Michael Shaw

special treat in June when Kenwood Head Gardener Paul Jackson escaped his office to lead the work session. Regular volunteers were joined by three students from Westminster School, who, having finished their exams for the summer, spent a day getting their hands dirty helping with conservation work. Right, volunteer Fanny Mitchell tackles invasive species in the Sphagnum Bog in July, and volunteer Louise O'keefe lends a hand with some seasonal pruning.





## Many 'hands' collect lots of data

Volunteers met in May to find out more about the Heath's hedgerows, and to take part in the OPAL Biodiversity Survey. Heath Ecologist Dr Meg Game was on hand to help identify hedgerow species including two distinctly different types of hawthorn. Volunteers brushed insects from the hedges and used spy pots to take a closer look at what was found. The Biodiversity Survey was taken up by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts when they visited the Heath on five occasions over the summer. The girls also took part in



OPAL's Climate Survey which examines wind direction at cloud level using a compass, a pen, and a mirror, and then at ground level using bubbles and a stopwatch. The international group of girls took part enthusiastically despite being caught on several occasions in monsoon-like downpours... welcome to a British summer!

A big thank you to Heath Hands volunteers, Anne Collins, Moira Young, Lesley Lander, Angela Durkin, Rachel Mackenzie and Pat Whiting for helping to lead the survey groups on the day.



Pictures by Loretta Schauer and Anne Collins

Volunteers Diane Game, Harriet Sergeant and Mary Charras plan their approach to the OPAL Biodiversity Survey.



International Girl Guides contribute to OPAL surveys of the Heath.

## Future Friendly Awards

Heath Hands has been shortlisted for this year's Future Friendly Awards. **We need your help!** Winners are selected by an online vote taking place between 27th July to 21st August 2011 so please rally everyone you know to vote for us on the Future Friendly website! If we get through to the Awards Final in our area we will win a £1,000 bursary. A panel of expert judges will then select one national winner to receive the **top prize of £10,000 in funding** to help support their project, to be announced at the Future Friendly Awards event in London this September. Vote for Heath Hands now: <http://www.futurefriendly.co.uk/vote>

## Animal Adoption Scheme

You are now able to support Hampstead Heath's Golders Hill Park zoo and learn more about its star species via the new animal adoption scheme.

It is one of only two free zoos in London registered with BIAZA, the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums, with a growing collection of rare and exotic birds and mammals such as laughing kookaburras, ring-tailed lemurs and ring-tailed coatis.

The zoo is managed by charitable trust by the City of London, and plays an important role in the interpretation and education of the habitats and wildlife of Hampstead Heath.

For more information: 020 7332 3322  
[www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/goldershillpark](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/goldershillpark)



## Heath Hands Ambassadors



Picture by Anne Collins

The green shirts were out in force over the summer representing Heath Hands at the Highgate Festival in June, and at the Kenwood Concerts throughout July (pictured left). Thank you to everyone who helped staff our information stall. Heath Hands will also have a presence at the Affordable Art Fair this year when it comes to Hampstead Heath in October. We are looking for volunteers who would like to get involved in educating visitors about the practical management of the much painted historic Heath landscape.



### CAPTION COMPETITION WINNERS

**Liz Jack** – “One lump or two?”

**David Mackenzie** – “Has anyone actually seen the elephants?”

**Tom Walters** – “The decision to allow London Zoo to exercise their elephants on the Heath meant more work for Heath Hands.”

