

# OUT & ABOUT

## Anyone for...rewilding?

JUDY MARCUS

When walking in the Heath Extension, I often see Heath Hands volunteers in their fluorescent lime green jackets working. They always seem quite jolly and carefree.

I've had a vague interest in joining this local conservation group for years, hoping for a collaborative experience helping rewild the Heath extension. I made enquiries at the Heath Hands office who suggested I attend a lecture entitled 'Autumn' that weekend by way of an introduction and so, a few weeks ago, I pitched up at the assigned point on Parliament Hill.

The lecturer was Heath Hands Leader Avi. Attending was a large group of would-be volunteers and those interested in meeting local friends of a similar mindset. Avi took us around the Heath illustrating her lecture with real-life current examples, especially emphasising hedgerows.

I learned a hedgerow is a line of closely planted shrubs and planters trained to form a barrier. A 'relict' or lapsed hedgerow is left to expand on purpose.

As Avi explained to the group, hedgerows are a corridor for

wildlife; collecting populations of animals and insects – some of which are marked endangered. Hedgerows use lines of hedgerows to commute; successful populations of vole and shrew, field mice and moths are maintained under cover of these shrubs.

The hedgerows on the Heath extension look rather plain and we take them for granted but they are actually carefully designed. The thought-through project is to extract the most benefit for both insects and animals from cultivating them.

Avi explained their hedgerow maintenance strategy. They can't be trimmed frequently, like you might trim your own hedge; they are trimmed once every two years. This is to stop secondary woodland saplings' growth which changes its nature. Coppicing encourages new growth and Avi described 'hedgelaying' – whereby stems are part-cut then laid flat on the right side on the floor.

We were also shown how different layers of the hedgerow are used differently. The understorey allows Shrub bats and hedgehogs to breed and hibernate. Grass snakes bask among leaf litter and marginals. Tall grass 'buffer zones' are for chicks' nesting material.

Ivy-flower grows higher up (we sampled the smell: nice – like honey). When budded, ivy looks different to the ivy we see in our hedges. Berries are developed for birds and nettles for butterflies.

And we can benefit too: hawthorn berries make jam and ketchup, crab apples make jelly, rosehips make cordial with 20 times the amount of vitamin C of an orange. Experienced people in the group offered preparation advice and included an animated discussion on making sloe berry gin.

We were put into pairs to identify the autumn harvest. My partner Veronica, an art journalist,

said it was nice to walk with a purpose, learning about the environment and connecting with the countryside. I collected sloe berries to experiment with making sloe-gin. As asked, we tried not to over-forage which would negatively impact on the future harvests.

When home, I put the sloe berries into a sealable bottle with some gin and stored it in a dark cupboard turning it every few days. Ideally the gin should end up as a fuchsia-coloured liquid. Mine was on the murky brown side and none of my family was willing to try it... Maybe next year?

All this said, do I still want to join the rewilding gang? I believe there is some ditch clearing alongside the hedgerow



Photo: Adrian Marcus

maintenance to be done. The jury is still out, but I can definitely appreciate the benefits and recommend you give it a go.

To find out more about what Heath Hands do, visit their website at [heath-hands.org.uk](http://heath-hands.org.uk).

## Temple Fortune Club delighted with Trophy Day fund raising

PHYLLIS ELLIS

Centenary Trophy Day at Temple Fortune club raised over £2,800 for the North London Hospice this year.

Temple Fortune Bowls, Tennis and Squash Club is located just outside the Suburb, but many of its members are Suburb residents. The Bowls section holds a charity trophy day each summer and this year, being the club's centenary, all members made an extra effort to raise as much as possible for the Hospice.

The raffle is the main money raiser and is generously supported by many local small businesses particularly in the Market Place and Muswell Hill. All food served is provided by bowls members and the delicious spread includes a glass of fizz.

There were eight local bowls clubs supporting the event: Bishopswood, Bounds Green, Cockfosters, Finchley Victoria, Friary Park, North London and Parliament Hill, with 12 teams participating in total. The weather was kind – warm, dry and a little overcast. There were welcome drinks on arrival and an opportunity for old friends to catch up and then the fun, but competitive, match began. The competition was initially a round robin followed by an exciting final between a team from North London and one from Temple Fortune which, after an extra end was won by the Temple Fortune Team. At the end of the match, there was a celebratory glass of fizz followed by the food, which I am told is the big attraction that draws the teams.

After lively conversation over supper, the fantastic prizes are drawn and then the happy participants make their way home.

The Club's Bowls section was delighted to make so much money



The winning team, Brian Gallagher, Mike Alford & Howard Bloom (Photo: Simon Waldram)

for the Hospice, which we know had struggled with less funding coming in during the pandemic.

Temple Fortune is an active friendly club, which welcomes people who want to play casually

and competitively. The club is current holder of the North London President's Cup. New members are always welcome and the club has a car park. Have a look at our website: [templefortuneclub.co.uk](http://templefortuneclub.co.uk).



Avi and I



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## Hallowe'en Spook in Big Wood

Some of you may have come across this rather friendly fellow in the woods just before Hallowe'en. Apparently his name is Henry... (Photo Shelley-Anne Salisbury)