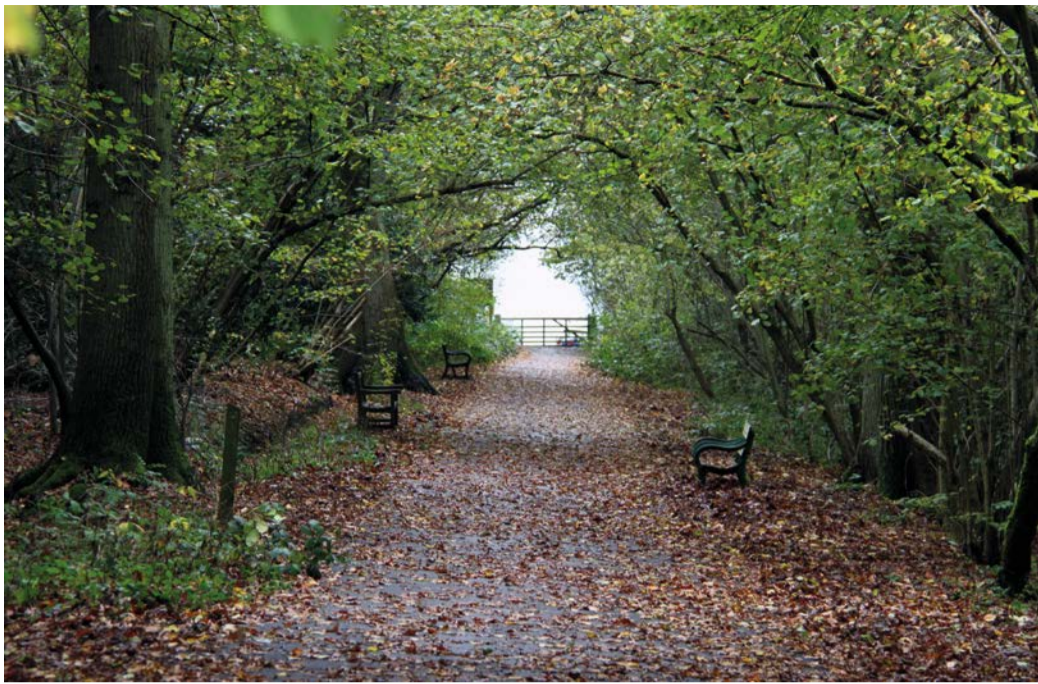


Friends of Big Wood Association formed



A Volunteer Group has been working closely with the London Borough of Barnet to manage and preserve Big Wood over the last few years. This group was re-formed and managed by a Barnet Green Spaces Department employee, Paul Frainer, who was experienced in the management of ancient woods.

Unfortunately Paul left Barnet three years ago and although, to begin with, he continued to give occasional support this gradually ceased as he got more involved in his new Essex area and the Volunteers therefore continued to work to his plan without much Council involvement.

Barnet have recently advised us that budgets are being further reduced for their Green

Spaces Department and their work in the wood is likely to be limited in the future to health and safety issues.

The Volunteers decided to form a Friends of Big Wood Association to help safeguard the future of this fantastic ancient woodland in our midst. We have been working closely with Barnet, to whom ownership of the land was transferred some years ago, by organising work days to create nine new glades, clear invasive species and plant over 90 oak saplings.

We have also agreed a new five year plan to 2021 with the Council, but most of the work will have to be carried out by us because of the cuts described above. If we want to safeguard

and preserve this wood for the future, we need a partnership with the Council, and the local community to become more actively involved.

The objectives of the Friends of Big Wood Association is to carry out most of the new management plan by continuing to hold monthly work mornings but we also plan to erect some more nest boxes, plant some more oak saplings and wild flowers as well as signposting the perimeter of the wood to prevent the very small minority of house owners who try to extend their gardens into the wood.

In addition we want to monitor changes; updating the recent surveys on birds, fungi, bats and the flora in the wood.

We are organising guided walks in the wood, including an early morning bird walk which took place on April 11, and a floral walk on May 6. Other walks are planned later in the year to learn about the various trees in the wood, and also a bat evening stroll. We also arranging to hold 3 to 4 evening meetings a year to discuss progress and invite an expert speaker to give a talk followed by drinks.

The inaugural meeting of the new Association took place in January at Fellowship House to discuss the Constitution of the Association and confirm the Committee for the first three years. There then followed a fascinating talk from a member of the Woodland Trust, where it was pointed out the vital need to plant more trees.

The woodland in spring is a magical place as the woodland flowers start to appear. The pictures show a glade which has been cleared to encourage the wild flowers whose seed has remained dormant in the soil with wood anemones, solomon's seal and the beginnings of bluebells, and another of yellow archangel and wood anemones.

England's trees are also now rousing themselves again after the long winter. Only there are not enough of them. It is said that last year we felled more trees than we planted. We already have fewer trees than almost any other country in Europe. Our tree cover stands at about 13% compared to the European average of 38%. According to



Big Wood glade

the Woodland Trust we planted less than 1,000 hectares last year compared to the government target of 5,000 hectares. In fact the government's manifesto commitment to plant 11 million trees during the life of this parliament seems completely out of reach.

The situation with ancient woods (defined as continuous woodland for at least 500 years) is even more critical. Only 2% of our land is ancient woodland and many sites are threatened by proposed government building plans. Big Wood's continuous woodland history can be traced back 1000 years.

Yet trees are so important to us. They absorb carbon dioxide and improve air quality. A walk through Big Wood can be an enriching experience. Not only is the air quality so good, but the wood is a haven of calm, and you can forget that you are on the outskirts of a city of 12 million inhabitants.

More information can be found about the Friends of Big Wood by visiting our website at www.friendsofbigwood.com, where there is a contact email address. We are asking interested Suburb residents to become members of the Association for just £15. We need some annual funds to do all the planned work and commission surveys. At present we have 70 members but we would like to increase this number to over 100 households.

Wood anemones



HGS Art Fair



MALCOLM BRAHAMS

HGS Art's first public event, an Art Fair held at Fellowship House over the weekend of April 1 & 2 attracted nearly 700 visitors. The show presented the works of HGS Art members who include painters, photographers, sculptors, makers and designers of fused and stained glass, arts and crafts people using fabrics and other materials, a potter, a jeweller and a film maker. For further details take a look at our HGS Art website www.hgsart.co.uk.

In addition to the adult gallery and table displays in two rooms HGS Art had organised an Art competition for children aged 6-16 on the theme of Spring, and during the Fair held

an art workshop for children who visited Fellowship House with their families which was run brilliantly by Vera Moore and Linda Cook, and supported by Cass Art.

It was exciting and gratifying to experience such a feeling of a community coming together and enjoying itself in glorious weather. From the moment the doors opened at 11am until they closed at 5pm there was a buzz and a rush of people, many of whom told us they had never before been inside Fellowship House; they were impressed by its facilities as well as the exhibits.

Everywhere, people were viewing, buying, or greeting

neighbours and friends, smiling and chatting, scoffing cake and sipping tea and coffee cheerfully served by Ruth and her amazing team of ladies from Combat Stress both inside and out on the terrace in the sunshine, and who raised over £850 for their charity, Combat Stress. Some exhibitors donated money from their sales to the North London Hospice and other charities.

HGS Art is a new organisation but already has more than 60 members, with more joining all the time. The idea was conceived last summer by a group of local artists to support and further all forms of Art, and education about it in the Suburb. Core founder members were Diana Brahams (Chair), Professor Michael Baum (membership and much else as well as a key exhibition organiser), Alex Halfin (secretary), Gail Philipp (social), Morris Cohen, Valerie Cowan (appointments and social), Mary Davis (now membership), Ellen Gilbert (who hosted the first social event), Alfred Lester, Bill Asprey, Barbara Jackson, Hanan Baradon, Esbe and Ilana Krasnik. The attractive HGS Art logo was designed by

Esbe who also developed the HGS Art website while Ilana has charge of social media. Jeremy Clynes, whose wife Kochi Okada is a jeweller, agreed to be the treasurer, and with his help HGS Art set up a bank account.

Links were quickly formed with other like-minded groups in Finchley and East Finchley. The website took shape and a Facebook page was set up. A 'Show and Tell' was held in the Free Church on a Sunday afternoon last year to enable members to meet and see each other's work which proved to be as varied as it was impressive; it is recorded in a film by Malcolm Brahams 'Restoring Art to the Heart of Hampstead Garden Suburb' available on YouTube. This has been followed by 'Artists at Home'.

A few weeks later we enjoyed a lecture by Michael Baum (one of a series of four) titled 'The Picture of Health', which was



TONY BRAND

held in Fellowship House, and members and their partners' met at a social event held at the Brahams' house where the next talk will be given by an HGS member, Ruth Jacobson, on the work of Chagall in the evening of June 22.

There are plans for a further Art Fair in the autumn, more talks, visits to museums and collections. The future looks exciting.

HGS Art would like to thank everyone who made the Art Fair such a success.

DIANA BRAHAMS



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