

# BOOKS ON WHEELS

"She screamed, as the gleaming claws reached down through the attic roof . . .", is a typical sentence that you might treat yourself to in the Mobile Library. There are 2,500 - 3,000 books carried in the larger Library van.

The Library staff know their customers, and fill the shelves appropriately. Their best guide to books wanted are the customers' comments and requests. Of all the stops in the Borough of Barnet, The Orchard in Hampstead Garden Suburb has the customers who most know what they want. There is an unusually high number of reserved books on this site. People can obtain most books, even from the British Library.

The range of books includes fiction and non-fiction, classics, biographies, and a wide selection of Large Print books. Many of these are classified with a big capital letter as: M, W, or R, for Murder, Western, or Romance. There are two amiable ladies who read only whodunits, and the Oxford Book of Villains is frequently perused.

Some people select their books by choosing directly from the Returns shelf, based on the logic that if someone else has enjoyed it, then it must be good. Many of the customers recommend books to the librarians: and they want to know by the following week what the librarian thought of it.

The stock is topped up frequently. Every lunch time the van returns to its base at Childs Hill to restock the shelves: which also keeps the librarians in close touch with their clients' needs. The Library carries tapes and CD's and is currently trying out how popular video hire is at £1 or £2 per week. The answer seems to be: very popular.

The stories on tape, as well as the Large Print books, are a very important part of the service. The Library is part of the Mobile and Housebound Division of Barnet. It offers the sole means of access to reading matter for people who cannot reach the usual public libraries, especially those without relatives or carers.

The service started in 1947.

Thirty-five of the sites that the lorries visit in Barnet are Day Centres, Residential Homes, and Sheltered Housing. The Orchard is included in the round because of historical habit, lively demand, and above all, need.

The vans are an important information source, and the staff ensure that they have leaflets from Help the Aged, British Telecom, RNIB, and Social Security, as well as theatres; because many people cannot visit Post Offices either. Visually impaired people are well catered for. The new van has a listening bay where they can hear a story or music on tape. The news is that Barnet are currently compiling a spoken catalogue on cassette of all the spoken word tapes in Barnet Libraries. This will enable people to choose for themselves directly what they wish to borrow.

Martyn Kempson, the Controller of Libraries, Arts, and Museums for Barnet, described the aims of the Mobile Library Service as giving people as much individual independence and choice as possible. Mr Kempson said, "We do not provide for any particular group: we think of catering for minorities of one."

The new Mobile Library van calls at The Orchard on Wednesday mornings. It is 22 foot, as compared with the 29 foot, twelve-year-old model. It is an improved design, with a platform lift for wheelchairs, and plenty of grab rails inside the van for those who are less steady.

The staff are usually fully qualified librarians who positively chose to do this work. They need particular training to drive the vans, but they do not need special licences as both vans are under the HGV size. The books are held in shelves raked back at a 20-degree angle. They remain in place during the journeys, unless the lorry hits a



Jackie Norman

bump. If it does, the librarian has to go inside and pick all the books up.

The new lorry carries about 1,100-1,500 books. The service is tending to use more paperbacks, which do not last as long, but are cheaper, and have the advantage of providing a greater turnover of new authors and new books. Plus they are lighter to hold, and more can be fitted into the Library.

The atmosphere in the Mobile Library is very welcoming: everyone has time for a chat and discussion about books. The Orchard site used to be frequented by a little black kitten, which would visit the Library even when it had grown into a cat. It would lie under the

bottom shelf and try to play with people's legs.

In the time of great financial pressure on local libraries, it is encouraging to see the support given to this Mobile Library by both Barnet and its customers.

The times of the Library visits to The Orchard, between Willifield Way and Hampstead Way are:-

**Monday**  
10.00 am to 5.00 pm

**Wednesday**  
10.00 am to 12.30 pm  
(New van with platform lift)

**Friday**  
10.00 am to 12.30 pm  
*Monday mornings are the most busy.*

Jackie Norman



## Playgroup Summer Fete

On June 11th the Hampstead Garden Suburb Playgroup celebrated its Annual Summer Fete at the Free Church Hall, Northway.

Once again this year the Fete was sponsored by local estate agent Hotblack Dixon & Co, to whom the Playgroup extend thanks and gratitude for all their help and support leading up to the event.

A brilliant summer sky ensured a good attendance as shouts of delight were heard throughout the afternoon from the many children who ventured onto the Bouncy Castle, tried their luck at all of the games or splashed Playgroup teacher Sharon O'Connell with wet sponges.

The Fancy Dress competition gave the three judges a difficult time with costumes including a ripe tomato, a moon monster, a Royal Air Force Tornado and Laurel and Hardy. This year the winner of the 3-5 year group was Joe Heard, a scary Moon Monster, who can now dance around the planet with his Bop Box Walkman. Winners of the 6-10 year group were brothers Tom and James Hall, better known as Laurel and Hardy. They won a Nature Trail Kit and can go on joint bug hunts armed with camera, torch and petri dishes.

The Raffle prizes were numerous thanks to the very generous donations from the local community. Wine, books, plants, manicures, pedicures and beauty makeovers were just a few of the winnings. As a break from the many events, the Playgroup parents provided a magnificent buffet with dishes from Iran, India, Singapore, Holland and England.

The Playgroup provides a creative play environment which helps to nurture social skills for children aged 3 to 5 in the Suburb. The Playgroup meets every morning from 9.30 to 12.30 Monday to Friday at the Free Church Hall, Northway, NW11.

For further information contact Cornelia Schraa on 081-458 7998.

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## The Future of Hampstead Heath

The future of Hampstead Heath is the subject of a wide ranging consultation being undertaken by the Corporation of London, who took over responsibility for running the Heath five years ago. A 42-page draft Management Plan sets out the Corporation's policies for the Heath in two sections, the first containing a series of general policies, the second specific "opportunities for enhancement".

A summary of the draft Management Plan was published as a supplement to the Hampstead and Highgate Express on 3 June, and a copy of the summary was distributed to every Suburb household during June. The summary says where a copy of the draft plan can be obtained, and gives details of the public meetings and an exhibition. There will be a public meeting about the draft plan on Thursday, 14 July at 8 pm at the Institute and an exhibition at the Lido complex, Gordon House Road, daily from noon to 6 pm until the end of July. The Corporation has asked for comments to be submitted by the end of July.

The general policies in the first section are intended to reflect the Corporation's existing approach to management, and include a continuing commitment to public consultation. The policies cover every aspect of the Heath's management including trees, hedgerows, ponds, footpaths, vehicles, litter, fairs, signs, cycling and dogs. Some have already proved controversial, notably those involving the selective thinning of woodland.

Existing hedgerows will be protected and some lost hedgerows will be reinstated. Golders Hill, the Hill and Sandy Heath (the wooded area between Wildwood Road and Spaniards

Road) will continue to be managed as at present. The pergola at the Hill will be repaired and opened to the public. Fairs will continue, but will be controlled so as to minimise their physical and ecological effect.

The second section sets out specific "opportunities for enhancement". Suburb residents will be most interested in the proposals for the Heath Extension in section H (on the back page of the summary). The draft plan aims the reintroduction of sheep grazing (abandoned in the 1930s), while recognising that there will be practical difficulties, including the need for fencing and a secure night shelter, and worrying by dogs.

If the hedgerows are to be made stock-proof, the Corporation states that some trees would have to be removed to allow hedgerow shrubs to grow. If the hedges are not to serve an agricultural function, the Corporation suggests either leaving them as they are or letting them thicken out, which they argue is better in terms of nature conservation and of enhancing the separation between fields. The Trees and Open Spaces Committee of the RA favours the latter option.

The other changes proposed for the extension involve

coppicing a few of the hazels in the woodland to the east of the ponds and establishing hedges, or a narrow woodland belt, along parts of Wildwood Road and Hampstead Way. It is proposed to retain the horse track, although the Trees and Open Spaces Committee wonders whether sufficient use is made of it to justify this.

The RA is considering the issues raised by the draft Management Plan and is formulating its comments. These will probably not be finalised until after the public meeting on 14 July. The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust is also looking at the draft plan. Copies of the RA's comments may be obtained by writing to Colin Gregory or Spencer Hudson (addresses in the Yellow Directory).

Colin Gregory

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