

Hampstead Heath Survey

The London Natural History Society has for over 50 years run a survey of Bookham Common and has now started a similar venture on Hampstead Heath.

Records for the Heath go back to the sixteenth century and individuals have always submitted their records, but now they will be on a more comprehensive and regular basis.

Some meetings have already been held and some interesting flora and fauna recorded. The City of London has kindly allowed the society the use of a room near the changing rooms on the Heath Extension, and anyone interested is welcome to call in there on the last Saturday of every month (except December) either between 11 and 11.30 am or 1 and 2 pm (lunch break). A notice board on the outside of the building gives changing details of local wild life interest.

Any further details can be obtained from the President of LNHS, Colin Bolt, on 01895-638060 (home) or 0171-982 6040 (work).

Tim Neal

Give yourself a treat before Christmas

Come with us, the HGS Theatre Club, to see Frank Loesser's musical, *Guys & Dolls*, at the National Theatre. This is Richard Eyre's dynamic production starring Henry Goodman, Clarke Peters, Joanna Riding and Imelda Staunton.

The date: Monday 9th December; the time: 7.15pm; the price: £19, including coach. (These are best stalls seats obtained by booking before the summer!)

For membership details phone either Ruth Gumb on 455 6490 or Charlotte Mohr on 455 2584.



David Pickles, Trust Architect with Chris Kellerman, Trust Manager

New Trust architect takes over

David Pickles, BA DipArch RIBA, the new architect at the Trust, has now taken over from Wilfred Court. David comes to this demanding job from private practice in Camden, where he was responsible in the main for public sector housing and worked recently on the new Jewish Museum in Albert Street. He has lived on the Suburb since 1983 but has recently placed himself at one stage removed from his area of work by moving to West Hampstead. David says he is delighted to have inherited such very good systems from Wilfred Court, "who was so very thorough," but wants to introduce more information technology to speed up the processing of applications for planning approval.

Asked whether he would be able to avoid the charge that the Trust is inconsistent in its

approvals, he says, "I have looked into approvals given over the last year or two and I can find no grounds for criticism. It is likely that the problem is that, in the first place, residents are looking at the result of approvals given back in the sixties and seventies or beyond, what Wilfred called the bad old days, and secondly that they don't always realise quite how much Suburb houses differ. Each proposal is looked at by the Trust as a design problem in its own right. For example one house will take a dormer window quite naturally and another just won't. 'Asked who decides?' He says, "Each approval or rejection is a matter of informed architectural decision rather than a matter of any individual's taste, that's why we have people like Mervyn Miller on the Trust Council."

One aspect that does concern

David is what he calls the insidious increase in hard landscaping and consequent loss of gardens and hedges "People don't seem to appreciate the need for planning consents for any changes to drives and hedges. Too much hard landscaping, like paving part of a front garden to make room for an extra car, destroys the garden feel of the Suburb and we are actively trying to control it." He points out that whilst some resent the need for drawings and formal approvals, "some even think they can just ring up the day before the work is due to commence!" The Trust can be very helpful in suggesting less damaging ways of coping with the problem and in advising on more suitable materials than will be specified by someone less conscious of the delicate balance required on the Suburb. **Richard Wakefield**

Rich and varied programme for Hospice

Two young musicians came back home to the Suburb to provide a rich and varied programme of music in the Institute Hall on Saturday 5 October in aid of the North London Hospice.

Cellist Thomas Gardner used to live in Willifield Way and the pianist Alison Farrant resided in Denman Drive while studying at the Royal College of Music.



Gardner, who studied at the Guildhall School of Music, has made concert appearances on the Continent and in the UK, while Farrant's career has involved teaching as well as performing as a soloist and accompanist - specialising in the works for piano and strings.

Beethoven's Sonata in A major Opus 69 made a strong opening and if the piano tended to overwhelm the cello at first, the balance was happier as the work progressed.

The three pieces of Schumann's *Fantasiestucke* Opus 73 are in

contrasting mood, building up to the third which was performed with the necessary fire.

The one solo of the evening was Gardner's assured playing of Bach's Suite No. 1 in G Major.

Rachmaninov's powerful Sonata Opus 19 for Cello and Piano made a fitting climax to the programme, the two players obviously revelling in the brilliance of the work and its seductive harmonies.

The Hall was full and the audience showed its appreciation in no uncertain manner at the end of the concert. **Vera Segal**

Eruv application

As many readers of *Suburb News* will know, the Eruv Committee of the United Synagogue has recently submitted a new Planning Application to the London Borough of Barnet. This new Planning Application has been necessitated by the realignment of the proposed boundary line in the south-west corner of the Eruv. In particular, it is now intended that the south-west boundary should run along Hendon Way, taking out the Claremont Estate, The Vale and much of Cricklewood Lane. Hampstead Garden Suburb, however, remains wholly encompassed within the proposed Eruv, and no revision has been made to the particularly controversial line of posts and wires along the Heath Extension on Wildwood Road.

The Council's plans for progressing the new Application are not yet clear, but it is expected that consideration of the submission will begin in the early

autumn. The scheme must be re-evaluated, in its entirety, by both the Development and Protection Committee and the Public Works Committee, and it is just possible that the issue will be taken by the whole Council, given the difficulty that has been experienced in handling such a wide-ranging matter within the confines of formal planning regulations and procedures.

Residents now have a further opportunity to represent their views to the Council, and, in the first instance, are invited to write to our Ward Councillors, Frank Davis, Mohammed Khamisa, and Roy Shutz, at The Town Hall, The Burroughs, Hendon NW4 4BG. They will ensure that any representations are made known to the appropriate committees.

Late news: It is understood that a report is now being prepared for the Public Works Committee and that this is likely to be on the agenda for their meeting on 19 November.

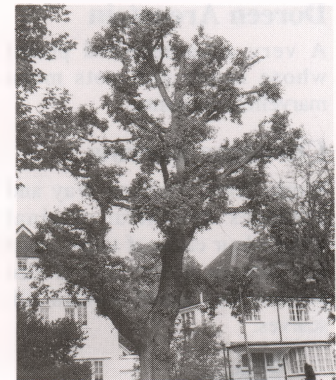
Erskine Hill Oaks to go - eventually

If you have ever walked down Erskine Hill from Asmunds Hill to Addison Way, you will know it feels different from most roads on the Suburb. The trees give it a narrow, enclosed feeling, which I have heard called spooky. In fact, Erskine Hill is no more narrow than Hogarth Hill which looks and feels like any other Suburb road. The difference lies with the trees. Hogarth Hill is lined with crab apple, cherry and purple plum, the usual street trees of the Suburb: Erskine Hill is planted with red and scarlet oaks.

These beautiful trees have been there since at least 1915, but they never should have been planted. It should have been obvious that an oak would grow too large to be maintained as a street tree without considerable pruning and management, even if, in the early years of this century, nobody worried about subsidence or the possibility of branches dropping on to parked cars, or even paving stones being pushed up by the tree roots. Possibly no one realised how large the trees would grow.

Over the years, successive generations of tree surgeons and arboriculturalists have pruned and lopped, and reduced the crowns of these oaks in order to produce a more manageable size and a safer tree. But the more work you do, the greater the likelihood of introducing fungal infection, leaving wounds which may decay, and reducing the structural soundness of the tree. An arboriculturalist will often say, "Of course we used to... usually followed by a horror story involving hacking off great chunks of tree, or chopping it down altogether, and then they sigh and tell you that they do things differently now. The story will sound as though it refers to fifty years ago. In fact, it may be as recently as five years ago. Fashions and practices change rapidly in the world of tree management, but not all practitioners keep up to date. The gang responsible for the recent butchering of a 200-year-old oak in Temple Fortune Lane will not be used again by the London Borough of Barnet.

Barnet are obliged to maintain the trees in a safe condition, and it is pointless to complain that in the past their methods may have been brutal or unnecessary. That was in the past. The current Tree Officers had nothing to do with what has been done: it cannot be changed. What we can do is to make the best of a bad situation, and make



sure that Barnet continue to maintain the trees using better and more careful modern methods.

Barnet Tree Section commissioned two independent reports on the Erskine Hill oaks, besides their own survey. They also held two meetings with some of the residents of Erskine Hill and some members of the Trees & Open Spaces Committee. It has been admitted that past tree work carried out does not meet current standards of tree surgery, and that the oaks have become structurally unsound so that over the next twenty years or so they will have to be removed. However, it has been decided that future plantings should be of an attractive lime which will grow into a tall tree and will complement the oaks while they remain. At the same time the pick-and-mix planting of purple plums and birch will be replaced with the more appropriate limes, and eventually the road will welcome an avenue of limes. It has also been agreed that any tree work will in future be overseen by the Trust's Tree Consultant.

Trees do not last for ever. Like all living things, they grow old and die in the end. But residents of Erskine Hill will continue to enjoy a tall stately avenue for years to come, and in due course the limes will, with good management, be replaced with more limes. Pity the poor residents of Hogarth Hill: in 1915 their road was an avenue of double-flowering peach.

Spencer Hudson

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