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Harrow Heritage Trust



Caring for the environment

Special points of interest:

- * AGM
- * Heritage Grant applications
- * Montrose gets a Brown Plaque
- * Grange Farm Heritage Project—a place to call home
- * Nature learning during COVID19

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Message from the Trustees

It may come as no surprise that the global pandemic has affected the operation of the charity and its processes. Some change has been positive. The Trust took to Zoom to have its July executive committee meeting and, we think, many enjoyed being able to attend from the comfort of home as there was no need to travel to and from the venue, find a parking place or transport papers for presentation. As more “life” moved online, we saw an increase in Harrow residents choosing to like our Facebook page creating a higher profile for the charity and its work. Another positive has been the enormous upswing in use of green spaces and nature reserves in Harrow managed by the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum sub-committee. The Forum has been busy trying to turn this interest into increasing volunteers and donations with some success. However, lockdown stopped or delayed other projects and activities. Heritage grant applications have been slow although there seem to be a number of projects in the planning stages. Lockdown was particularly good for allowing time for planning! All activities run by Harrow Nature Conservation Forum were stopped including events and courses funded by the £12,000 Postcode Lottery Grant awarded in July 2019. Postcode Lottery has extended that grant for six months but due to social distancing the aims must be altered and agreed upon. There has also been some downside to use of green spaces due to overcrowding and poor behaviour of some visitors either due to ignorance or lockdown induced mischief.

And finally, please read our special section as we say Goodbye and Thank You to three wonderful individuals of Harrow Heritage Trust.

Heritage Grants—John Orchard, Chair

The Grants committee did not disperse a payment since the last newsletter but has been active in advising on restoration and repair projects and in sending out applications for grants. For instance:

- Enquiry concerning restoration of lynch gate, war memorial and adjacent wall in local park. Appointment made to inspect and advise.
- Enquiry concerning renewal of thatch roof and windows. Grant application sent.
- Enquiry from new home owner concerning replacement/restoration of windows on a locally listed building. Email advice sent,

Financial report from the Treasurer

Incoming and Outgoing since our last Newsletter

INCOME

Donations = £904

Grants = £1660 [Our grant money is for specific projects ; not counted as net assets]

- The Orchard Project = £400
- Grimsdyke maintenance = £1260

Membership = £437

EXPENDITURE

Admin = £1154.38

Charitable = £623

- Brown plaques = £511
- Lady Gilbert's Orchard = £112
- HNCf = £1507

The financial statement for 2020 will be made available after our AGM in October.

Brown Plaques—John Williams, Chair

There is a new Brown Plaque. The HHT plaque for the former house of "Montrose" Gordon Avenue has already been emplaced. The plaque was mounted on the railings at the entrance to the linear park, Montrose Walk. It was unveiled, with social distancing, on the 15th September, Battle of Britain Day. We thought it an appropriate day to hold the official unveiling, as Sir Hugh Dowding is the most notable of the three former occupants that we have accredited. There will be a full report in the next newsletter. You can find out more about "Montrose" online on the Stanmore Tourist Board site

<https://www.stanmoretouristboard.org.uk/montrose-walk-stanmore.html>

"If the Home Defence Force
is drained away in desperate
attempts to remedy the
situation in France, defeat in
France will involve the final,
complete and irremediable
defeat of this country"

Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh
Dowding to the War Ministry
May 1940

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Martin Verden, 1927-2020

Chair, Harrow Heritage Trust, 1990–2017

It is with the greatest sadness, but warmest memories, we acknowledge the passing of former Chair, Martin Verden on March 17th. Martin was an integral player in the establishment of several local history bodies in Harrow. After joining Pinner Association he set up a meeting, along with Frank Heywood, in April 1972 to establish interest in what became the Pinner Local History Society eventually



becoming its Secretary, later President and finally Chairman. In 1990 he became Chair of Harrow Heritage Trust and spread his support and influence borough wide. This post matched his interest in preserving Harrow's heritage architecture, the enhancement of the borough and its public art and the need to strengthen the protection of the Green Belt land which the borough is so fortunate to have. The borough improvements which benefited from his hand and help are too great a number for this page but we can highlight a few. He, and Harrow Heritage Trust, spearheaded the original funding drive for restoration and improvements to Headstone Manor and backed the original Heritage Lottery Funding application. He served on the Headstone Manor Steering Committee. He took a keen interest in

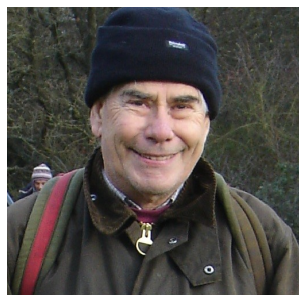
West House, close to where he lived in Pinner, and joined the nascent West House and Heath Robinson Trust in 2001 as a director working hand in hand with funding appeals launched by Pinner Association for West House restoration and for the building of the adjacent Heath Robinson Museum. The refurbished West House opened in 2010 and has a room called the Verden Gallery in recognition. The Heath Robinson Museum is located in an adjacent newly constructed building and was opened in October 2016, the first museum to open in London in 40 years.

He, with his wife Joanne, so often his co-conspirator in these great endeavours, lent their expertise to commissioning quite a few public works of art for the borough. Harrow benefited from two in the final years of Martin's service; the Seed at Stanmore Place and On Our Way in Pinner Memorial Park. Martin was a devoted family man raising three children with Joanne; Julian, Laura and Oscar, and leaves 8 much adored grandchildren. It was with the spirit of a family man that he sought to engage the young people of the borough in their own rich heritage, both in the built and natural environment. If there was an unveiling or opening, local school children would be invited. He championed projects which connected the younger generation with the past and related preservation of what is good and important to a groundwork for a better future for them and the borough. He served the borough until stepping back from duties in 2017 at the age of 90. In his retiring remarks he spoke of the good that comes from the work of volunteers of energy and enthusiasm working to bring to life projects that residents and visitors can enjoy and benefit from for years to come. Few among us will be able to match his contribution. The Trust owes so much to Martin and extends its condolences to Joanne and his family. We hope that they know that Martin's memory will live on in the tangible positive difference he made.

John Hollingdale

Warden and Naturalist, Stanmore Country Park, 1992–2020

John, who died May 17th, became warden of Stanmore Country Park in 1992. He stepped down in 2019 to become the resident naturalist, a title that he chose himself with his usual twinkling good humour. Interested and knowledgeable about all aspect of nature, he was a keen moth and butterfly recorder. In 1992 the open grassland areas of the Park, important for butterflies and other wildlife, were disappearing



under scrub and saplings. Following a management plan drawn up by the London Ecology Unit, John began a process of opening up the site. His overall aim was to join the isolated open grassland areas together using glades or wide grassy rides, so that the invertebrate populations of each open area were no longer isolated and in danger of local extinction. In this he succeeded and the opening up of areas has an added benefit of making the site much more attractive to human visitors.

For example, as one walks down the new nature trail towards 40 Acre Field the skyline of London opens up before you - because John cut down trees to create this open connecting ride. John continued to work tirelessly to improve the site, doing everything from picking up rubbish to cutting back bramble and scything grass along paths. He led many guided walks around the site and helped design the nature trail installed in 2013, part of the Green Grid scheme designed to get people walking and exercising in the open air. John was also active in the Herts & Middlesex Branch of Butterfly Conservation, acting as a committee member for 31 years and as treasurer for 20. Since 1997 he collected records of all moths seen in Stanmore Country Park, sending the records to the Country Recorder. He ran moth evenings on Stanmore Country Park. These events, run twice every year, were free and open to everyone: members of the general public and experts alike clustered round a ultra-violet lamp and examined the weird and wonderful moths and other insects that flew in before releasing them all back into the wild. It was many people's first experience of moth identification and he always made it interesting for young and old alike. John was furthermore active in the Harrow Natural History Society, and led many walks for its members in Stanmore Country Park and other locations.

Betty Brown

Bentley Old Vicarage Nature Reserve 1987–2017

Betty Brown, who died in April, was a founding member of a small group taking care of Bentley Old Vicarage Nature Reserve in 1987 after she semi-retired as a crystallographer at HRC. The group, originally called SHAWL – the Small Holdings and Wildlife Group – had the aim of developing the space into a plot for both rare and preferred trees and shrubs as well as small animals and pollinating insects. She and they



achieved that goal as that is an apt description of the site now. This small wood north of All Saints' Church in Harrow Weald has long been a favourite of local dog walkers and was also used for many years by visitors to the Bentley Day Centre next door.

Betty organized working parties that met every month to develop and maintain the site, picking up litter, trimming back undergrowth from the paths, and warmly welcoming visitors as they walked through. In addition to all her physical work maintaining and improving the site for both regular visitors and disabled people from the next door Bentley Day Centre, Betty acted as minutes secretary and later took over as Chairman. She also acted as chairman of the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust Harrow Group, and was, until her illness, an active member of the Harrow Natural History Society. We will miss her warm personality and help.

Work with Young People, Sarah Butterworth, Chair

Before Lockdown the WWYP committee had an opportunity to lend a bit of support to the project below. I hope you find this report interesting and informative. Our thanks go to Blanche Fitzgerald for compiling this report.

A Place to Call Home – Grange Farm Heritage Project

The Grange Farm Estate Heritage Project, a partnership of Harrow Council's Housing Services team, Harrow Arts Centre (HAC) and Headstone Manor and Museum (HMM) was set up in response to the significant changes taking place on the estate that was being redeveloped. A series of arts workshops were created to give young residents living on Grange Farm (based in South Harrow) a sense of ownership and belonging over their local area. As part of the project, we helped fund a photography workshop teaching residents how to capture shots of their locality with donated disposable cameras. HMM and HAC collaborated on an object handling workshop whereby participants were able to see an original architectural model of the Grange Farm Estate as it looked when first built. A discussion was held afterwards to help residents to understand more fully about the local history of the estate aided by studying local maps, and being given the opportunity to view and respond creatively to these.

Whilst building works continue to take place on the estate, local steering group and the partner organisations involved aim to record the legacy and history of the whole estate, including its resident diversity, community and the buildings that used to be on the site and will be when the regeneration is completed. Their aim is to gather together a collection of archival evidence to put onto the hoardings including the wonderful photographs taken by the children on the estate we helped to support. Watch this space for further updates!

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."

Margaret J. Wheatley

Membership

Membership stands at 60 but is not static. Did you know anyone can join as an Individual but also Charities/Groups and Businesses can join too as Affiliated or Corporate members. At present these include; Pinner Association, Harrow Hill Trust, Bernays Memorial Hall and, new this year, Harrow Striders. **Harrow Striders** run walking sessions in the nature reserves and are wonderful at combining that with litter picking. Find out more about them here:

<https://harrowstriders.co.uk/>

Currently we have an opening for a Membership Secretary. If you would like this non-demanding opportunity to contribute please get in touch.



Harrow Nature Conservation Forum—Chair, Steve Bolsover

The covid-19 emergency and the lockdown has had a number of effects. On 24th March we stopped all organized activities including working parties and guided walks. The ban on travel caused Harrow residents to turn to local parks. Visitor numbers at all our sites increased but at most of the sites behaviour has been generally good, although we put out a number of barbecue fires. However visitor pressure at Bentley Priory has been enormous and there has been significant bad behaviour: many fires, lots of fishing in the lake (illegal both due to covid regulations and because it was during a closed season for that location), dogs attacking wildfowl, masses of trash. The wardens have been discouraged by the lack of support from police or the council. The police made occasional visits during lockdown, when assembling in groups or fishing was a police matter, but after lockdown regulations eased they were not interested. Community officers will come out but they are too few to attend regularly. The focus on behaviour at Bentley Priory has helped with recruiting those in the area who care and we can report that Glen Lewis (till August) Rose-Heather Mikhail, Daniel Katz, Shaan Knan and Martin Fairley (Assistant Wardens) have been active in support of the warden, Peter Peretti. Sue Kabel, Deputy warden, has resigned due to pressure of work.

For many years Claire Abbott and Rosemary Etheridge at Pear Wood have been trying to get funding for a new fence along the Wood Lane frontage to prevent fly tipping. Ray Fox's team at the council were having to clear up dumped electrical cable sheaths from a dangerous bend on Wood Lane at weekly intervals. In April a new metal fence was installed, funded using the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy. We are very grateful to the ward councillors for agreeing this expenditure.

We have recruited new wardens. Shelini Kotecha and Josh Kalms have been appointed as wardens at Wood Farm, taking over from David Winton who retired in January

On the 19th of May as the government issued new guidance about working we resumed working parties under strict new protocols to prevent virus transmission. These have been running without incident since late May.

The covid-19 emergency severely impacted the "Nurturing Nature Enthusiasm" series of one day courses funded by the Postcode Lottery Trust. Before the lockdown we had run three courses including two well attended sessions of "Identifying Winter Twigs". Then we had a four month pause due to the pandemic. The Postcode Lottery extended the grant till January 2021. Now we have been able to have online Zoom insect and pond life tutorials from the experts. These have been recorded and can be shared multiple times. We have also run some practical sessions for small groups. Numbers are limited to 5 individuals and an instructor but we have been able to run them several times for different small groups including family groups. We are very grateful to Postcode Lottery Trust for their support and understanding in the unusual circumstances we are all experiencing.



15 came to the first Winter Twigs course



10 the following week in February



Pond life + social distancing in August



Family groups form their own "bubble"

