



The Big Society In Big Wood

The idea of trudging off to Big Wood on a cold damp November morning to chop down trees was not my idea of fun, but a promise is a promise, even one made in a moment of weakness.

So I turned up on that grey morning for an event officially called Big Wood Biodiversity Day and unofficially called Chop Down The Hazel Day to find a big surprise. The place was packed. The Residents Association had hoped to find a dozen or so volunteers willing to do a bit of coppicing in one corner of the wood. In the event more than double the numbers turned up.

There, spread out in a grotto surrounded by oaks were men women and children, young families mixing with the older RA lags, all with axes and saws

in hands, looking for something to chop. It was a scene right out of history. Indeed, as Paul Frainer, the Barnet Council Aboricultural Officer, on hand to give expert advice, told me, in days of yore villagers would trudge into this very forest on coppicing duties; the smaller shafts of the hazel would be given to the Kings Men to fashion the arrows for scything down the French or whoever we happened to be at war with at the time.

These days the task is more prosaic. Left to itself, fast-growing hazel sprouts freely in the gaps between the mighty oaks, filling the gaps in the forest canopy. With no sunlight getting to the forest floor, wildflowers and their attendant grubs and creepy-crawlies never get a chance and

the forest floor becomes what it is now - a dead zone.

So the task was straightforward: Chop it back, which means chopping the hazel trees as low as you can go without a power saw. The volunteers went about the task with gusto and soon we were in little clusters, dad on the saw, mum with the axe, children scampering around collecting branches and begging for a go with the more dangerous of the ironmongery. Even the dogs joined in; sensing their duty to contribute, they patrolled the dark hinterland around our little camp to ward off the trolls.

"I was apprehensive about inviting residents to participate, I worried about how many would turn up," said Sally Lewis, the Maid Marian of this happy

band. "But it was a good turnout, and there were so many young families. It shows that people really do value the wood."

That they do. All kinds of feelings of community pride and togetherness swelled in my breast, along with the blisters in my hands. The only sour note in the entire morning was when one of the dogs made off with Mr Frainer's lunch.

Spurred on by this show of community spirit, the Residents Association have promised more such events in the future, the plan being to coppice their way in stages around Big Wood. "The plan is to very gradually go through most of the wood on a rotational basis," Deborah Calland, one of the stalwarts of the trees and open spaces committee, told me. "Its something the whole family can be involved in."

She's right there, and the sense I got from that morning's work was that the folk who turned up saw themselves as taking ownership of their wood. Say what you like about the Big

and DWL have, so far, agreed to move the worst offender. I have recently had confirmation that the 770mm is an internal, not legal, requirement, Camden use a 450mm minimum, so I am continuing that battle. In the meantime my colleagues are noting other offenders.

TONY GHILCHIK

RA fights giant street lights

The RA's Consam Committee has been talking with LB Barnet and David Webster Lighting, their PFI lighting contractor, for many years over new lighting in Suburb streets and since February last year, along with the HGS Trust, on the specific proposals now being implemented.

The intention is that all the street lights, including those in twittens and across the Heath, which are more than 7 years old are being replaced.

Agreement was reached that the new style lampposts with lanterns attached to the top of the post would be suitable for the Suburb, with the proviso that any replacement posts needed in the few roads which are not being fully replaced will match the old style in the rest of the road. The new posts are designed to be mounted at the rear of the pavements in roads without trees, but at the front of the pavements where trees would cast excessive shadows.

The RA Council minutes on the website show that Consam have not yet been fully successful over lamppost heights. The problem being that DWL have difficulty in achieving their required lighting levels using 6 metre high posts in roads exceeding 14 metres wide (back of path to back of path) even when using additional posts.

The RA is against using 8m posts anywhere in the Suburb

other than in those wide roads with large houses set well back from the road and where the higher posts would not tower over the houses, such as in the wide section of Winnington Road.

Meadway is the main problem. 8m posts would be acceptable on the short stretch of Meadway between Meadway Gate and the Hampstead Way roundabout as this would require only three posts rather than seven of the 6m posts, would still fall below the required lighting level standard. The standard is, itself, an issue - a little brighter than the current level, but residents are divided on whether the existing lighting is bright enough.

However 8m post would be out of place along the rest of Meadway, which should be lit with 6m posts - even though it would require 40 posts rather than 28 taller ones and that, even so, the light level at the Meadway/Grey Close/ Litchfield Way roundabout may not quite reach the target level.

We understood that this had been agreed but Barnet/DWL then requested a contribution of over £28,000 to cover the extra cost involved. However, we believe DWL/Barnet should bear any extra cost of ensuring their lighting proposals are in scale with the surrounding buildings in our Conservation Area.

We are getting detailed plans for each street as they are

prepared, with residents getting a copy for their section of the road. There is some flexibility on the exact placement of the posts outside their house and small changes have been made following requests.

The placing of some posts too far, in my view, from the kerb was an issue I've taken up with DWL. Their standard is to set the columns 770mm from the kerb. There are a few at the southern end of Hampstead Way much further in than this

Oaks under threat again

Oak trees up to 180 years old are again threatened by applications to fell them because of alleged damage to the Tea House sold by the Institute to a developer two years ago. The trees are in

the plot occupied by an electricity substation on the corner of Northway and North Square and in the garden of the Friends Meeting House. The RA and the Trust are fighting to save them.



Trees committee chairman Tony Ghilchik, left, is joined by protesters David Mathews, Richard Sowerbutt, Deborah Calland, Barry Millington, Peter Falk, Janet Elliott, Leonie Stephen, Eva Jacobs and Jill Purdie.

wine they have promised will be served at the end.

CHRIS STEPHEN

THESE FIRST TWO HOUSES
BUILT ON THE
HAMPSTEAD
GARDEN SUBURB
WERE VISITED BY THE
LORD MAYOR OF LONDON
IN 1907. IN THE JUBILEE
YEAR 1957 AND FOR THE
CENTENARY IN 2007

The third enamel plaque to be placed on the wall of the Suburb's first houses records the visit in 2007 of the third Lord Mayor of London on the occasion of our 2007 centenary.



At a reception in Fellowship House Eddie Caplin, chairman of the Centenary committee and Janet Elliott unveil a benefactor's board recognising the generosity of major donors to the fund for the centenary year.

NIGEL SUTTON

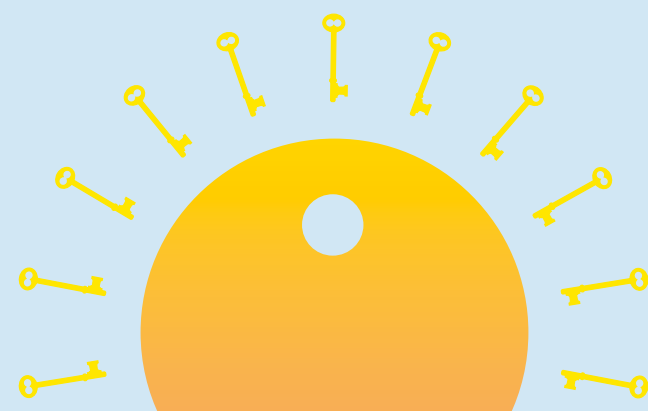


CLEAR SKIES AHEAD

With us, your future is in safe hands. We have the expertise to get results, whatever the climate. That is why 73% of our clients come back to us.

For more information please contact the Hampstead office on 020 7431 8686

KnightFrank.co.uk



Quote "SN" for a free lesson or 10% off your first term

Piano With Tim

GBSM ABSM DIPMUS

Children (6+) & Adults.
Home visits by arrangement. ISM/EPTA registered

"Learning the piano should be fun, for everyone involved - pupil, parent and teacher."

07816 959 215 | info@pianowithtim.com
www.pianowithtim.com