Of Field and Forest:
Aesthetics and the Nonhuman on Hampstead Heath

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Abstract

Hampstead Heath's eight-hundred acres of field and forest were acquired for the public in 1871. It was the first metropolitan open space in London to be acquired as a result of decades of campaigning, and is therefore central to discussions of public spaces, landscapes, and urban open spaces in Britain. This dissertation takes the Heath as its subject, arguing that its history is palimpsestic, offering a many-layered, multitudinous array of narratives that have not yet been adequately reflected in historical studies of the site. As Britain faces a new wave of privatization and threats to public space—a situation likened by some to the rampant enclosures of the nineteenth century—I argue that the Heath and its history remain central to conflicts over access to public spaces. Through the lenses of environmental history, environmental aesthetics, and multispecies ethnography, I consider the ways in which human and nonhuman agencies have shaped the landscape and its management from the eighteenth century to the present. I consider cases as diverse as how water flow has shaped the Heath, as debates rage over dam construction work taking place on the site, to the ways in which sheep, corpses, and bramble scrub have contributed to the development of a management plan for the site.

Specifically, this dissertation brings environmental history, environmental aesthetics, and multispecies ethnography into conversation, underscoring the ways in which the tools of each can contribute to a richer retelling of a landscape's many historical narratives. I draw on the work of aesthetician Arnold Berleant and ethnographer Anna Tsing to tell a fuller story of the Heath's complex history. I explore the Heath through a variety of methods: archival research; analysis of landscape aesthetics; descriptive accounts of my own aesthetic experience; participant ethnography in the form of interviews and first-hand accounts; and on-the-ground study of the Heath's landscape and natural history. In doing so, I call attention to the ways in which the many histories of Hampstead Heath are bound up with social, political, aesthetic, and nonhuman worlds, arguing that attending to their entanglement allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex forces that shape access to public open spaces in Britain today.

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Archives

The following archives were consulted in the course of this research. In footnotes, sources from the archives are indicated using the following abbreviations, and archival materials are organized by archive in the Bibliography.

The British Library, BM/BL[1]

Camden Local Studies Archive, CLSA

London Metropolitan Archives, LMA

Mansfield Archive, Scone Palace, MA

The Museum of English Rural Life, MERL

The National Archives, NA

Natural History Museum Archives, NHM

The Parliamentary Archives, Westminster, PA

[1] nb. I indicate BM/BL only when an item is rare or one of a kind; most readily available sources used in this dissertation, aside from archival material, can be found in the British Library.

Organizations and Acronyms

Organizations given here are listed alphabetically, with acronyms where needed, and these are given according to the organization's preferred acronym (i.e. The City of London Corporation opts for CoLC in their own reports).

- **Atkins Ltd.:** Design, engineering, and project management firm contracted to carry out the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project

- ***Camden New Journal*:** A local newspaper serving the London Borough of Camden

- **City of London Corporation (CoLC):** The current managers of Hampstead Heath, having managed the site since 1989

- **Dam Nonsense:** A local campaigning group opposing the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, comprised of members of the local community including members of the Heath and Hampstead Society, the pond associations, and other local stakeholders

- **English Heritage (EH):** A national charity managing heritage sites around England, including the Kenwood Estate; EH split into two organizations in April 2015, and are now known as Historic England and English Heritage

- **Greater London Council (GLC):** The London-wide authority who managed the Heath between 1965 and 1986

- **Hampstead Heath Constabulary (HHC):** The police force on Hampstead Heath since 1992

- ***Hampstead and Highgate Express (Ham & High)*:** Local newspaper serving Hampstead and Highgate

- ***Hampstead Village Voice*:** A satirical local newspaper serving Hampstead

- **The Hampstead Water Company:** A seventeenth- and eighteenth-century water supply company in Hampstead

- **The Heath Action Group (HAG):** A 1978 campaign group formed to advocate on behalf of Hampstead Heath, eventually incorporated into the Heath and Old Hampstead Society

- **Heath and Hampstead Society (HHS),** *formerly* **Heath and Old Hampstead Society (HOHS):** A local community advocacy organization, formed from the original **Hampstead Heath Protection Society**, who advise on how to maintain and conserve the Heath

- **Highgate Men's Pond Association (HMPA):** The association of swimmers at the Highgate Men's Pond, responsible for advocating on behalf of the Men's Pond and coordinating social activities with the Men's Pond staff

- **The Highgate Society:** A local conservation body and intellectual society based in Highgate, North London

- **Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association (KLPA):** The association of swimmers at the Kenwood Ladies' Pond, responsible for advocating on behalf of the Ladies' Pond and coordinating social activities with Ladies' Pond staff

- **The Kyrle Society:** A nineteenth-century social reform society devoted to providing art, books, and open spaces for the working poor

- **London County Council (LCC):** The central London authority who managed the Heath between 1889 and 1965

- **Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW):** The nineteenth-century London metropolitan authority, the first of its kind, established in 1855, and the first organization to manage the Heath, between 1871 and 1889

- **Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)** *aka* **Scotland Yard**: London's metropolitan police service

- **Mixed Bathing Pond Association (MBPA):** The association of swimmers at the Mixed Bathing Pond, responsible for advocating on behalf of the Mixed Pond and coordinating social activities with the Mixed Pond staff

- **The National Trust:** A trust devoted to the preservation of sites of historic interest or natural beauty in the United Kingdom, founded in 1895

- **The Open Spaces Society (OSS)**, *formerly* **The Commons Preservation Society (CPS):** Britain's oldest conservation body, a campaign group that works to protect public rights of way and open spaces in the United Kingdom

- **The Planning Inspectorate:** A UK government body responsible for determining the outcome of planning appeals, town planning, and local development conflicts

- **The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew:** A public body devoted to botanical research, education, and preservation, including the historic Kew Gardens, which opened in 1759

- **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB):** A UK charity devoted to the protection of birds and bird habitats, founded in 1889

- **The Select Committee on Open Spaces:** A government committee formed between 1865-1866 to assess the threat to open spaces and commons in Metropolitan London

- **Transition Belsize:** A local "Transition Towns" chapter devoted to off-grid living

- **The Water Management Stakeholder Group** *aka* the **Ponds Project Stakeholder Group:** A fourteen-person group tasked with assessing proposals for the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, comprised of local stakeholders including the swimming pond associations, the Heath and Hampstead Society, the Highgate Society, local residents' associations, and local conservation bodies

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Introduction

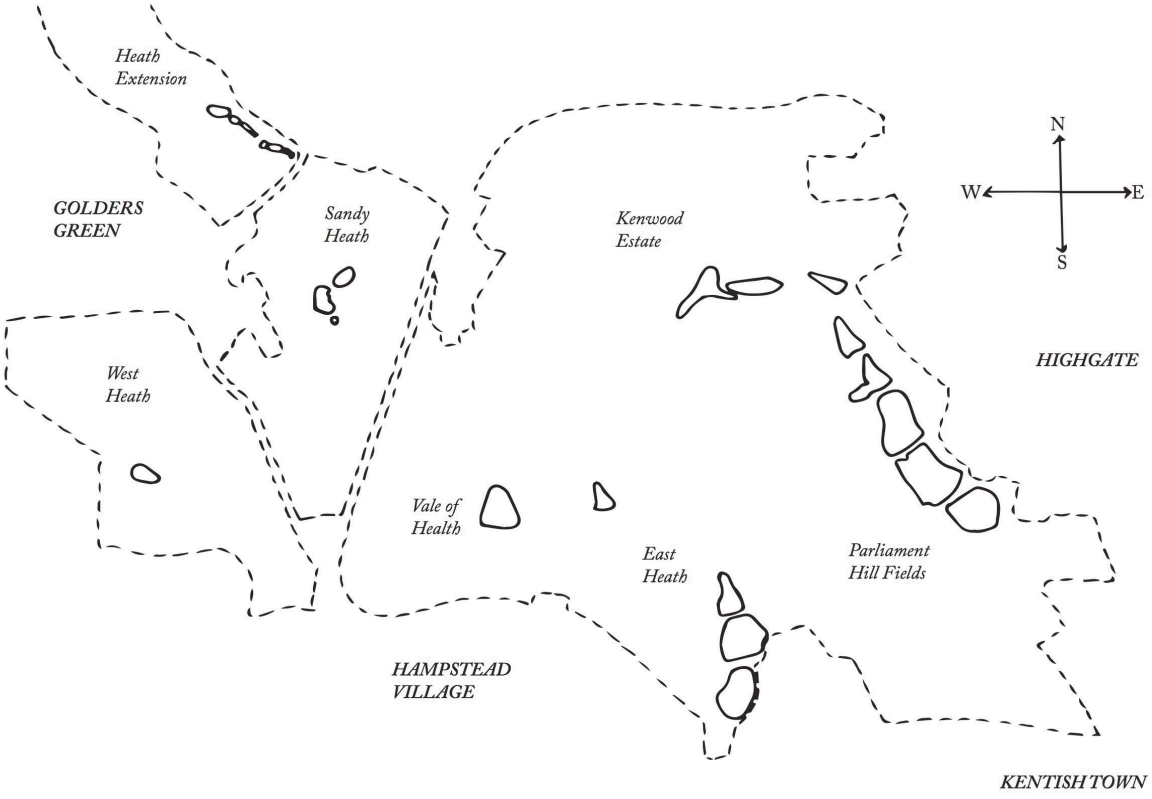


Figure 1 Map of Hampstead Heath ca. 2016

The first time I walked on Hampstead Heath was in December 2008. The ground was muddy from the winter rain, and I had not worn the right shoes. I hadn't known what to expect, but I trudged up Parliament Hill nonetheless, my white plimsolls soaked through. At the time, I did not realize two things: the first was that the southern parts of the Heath were so muddy because they sat upon damp London clay, a key factor in the development of London as a city and the Heath as a landscape. The second was that, in walking the Heath in these conditions, I was partaking in a practice very specific to this place and its history. John Keats famously walked the Heath, occasionally alongside Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Karl Marx, Charles Dickens, Sigmund

Freud, and George Orwell were all known to walk here. Contemporary depictions of the site—from Richard Mabey's accounts of plants at the rural-urban border to *Scenes of a Sexual Nature*'s cinematic vignettes of chance encounters on the Heath—are almost all premised on taking a walk on the Heath. It is a landscape that both shapes and holds its stories. So my very first walk here underscored two very significant things about Hampstead Heath: that it is not a passive landscape (I had the plimsolls to prove it); and that to walk here is to enter a history in which the Heath's *nature* cannot be disentangled from its *culture*.

Located five miles north of the City of London, straddling the north London Boroughs of Camden and Barnet, the Heath's 800 acres are set across a sandy ridge, with its lower fields turning to London clay. It is bounded by two diverted streams of the River Fleet (now driven underground), which form a series of ponds on the eastern and western boundaries of the park. Once a barren, rough heathland—a form of predominantly anthropogenic habitat characterised by low-growing shrubs like gorse and heather on free-draining acidic soil, dependent upon grazing, burning, and scrub-clearance to prevent woodland encroachment—Hampstead Heath today is characterised by grassy fields, scrubby hedgerows, and established woodland. The transition from heathland to field and forest, a change meted out over the past four hundred years, was a product of a complex array of human and nonhuman influences, from increased footfall and industrial-scale sand digging, to scenic landscaping and the removal of grazing animals, to scrub-growth and the loss of traditional heathland flora. It is a transformation that historical ecologist Oliver Rackham, in his *History of the Countryside*, might situate at the border between ancient and planned countryside.[2] The Heath, then, has been shaped not solely by human domestication, but by its array of plant, animal, mineral, and fungal inhabitants. In short,

[2] Oliver Rackham (1986), *The History of the Countryside*: *The Classic History of Britain's Landscape, Flora, and Fauna* (London: Phoenix, 2004), 5.

no single explanation can account for the changes to Hampstead Heath since the eighteenth century.

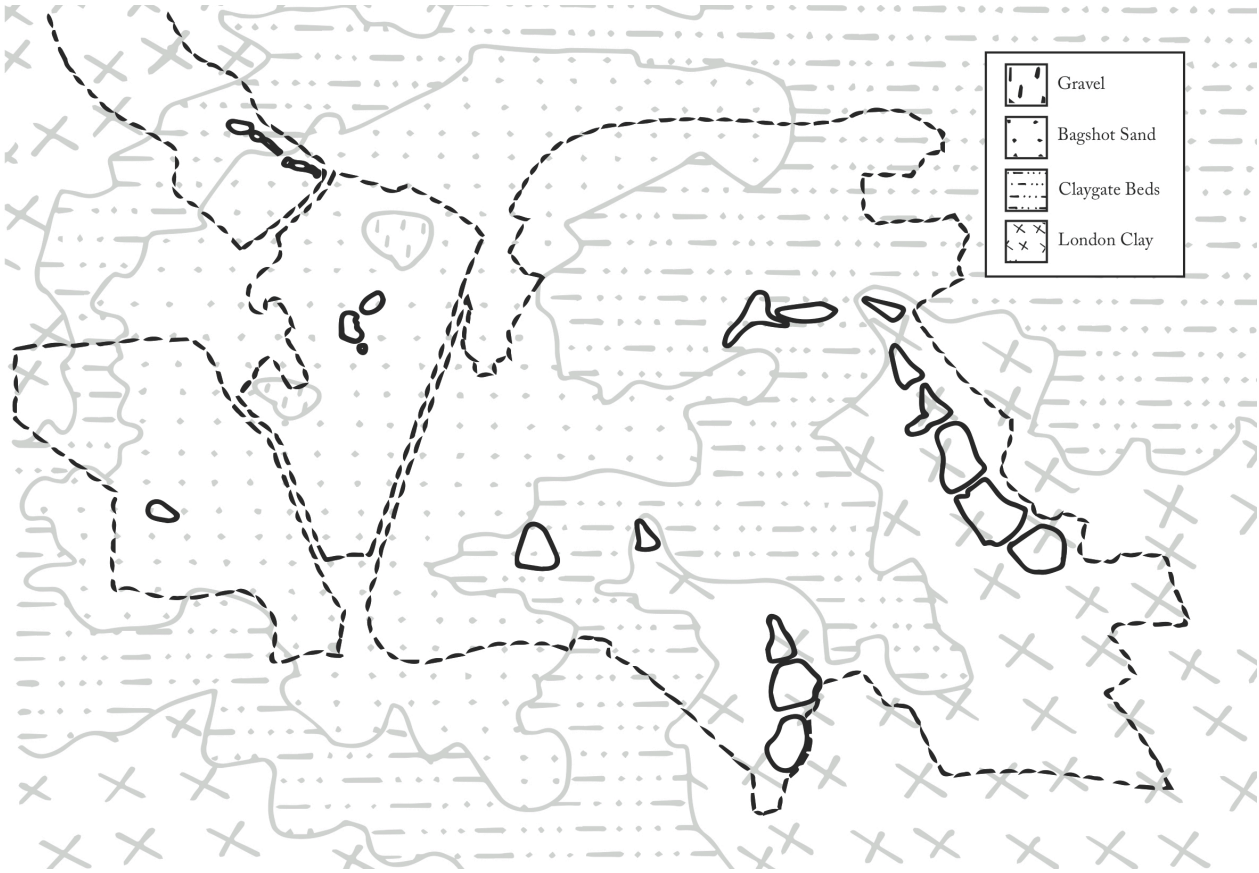


Figure 2 Geology of the Heath overlaid with present-day borders

The Heath is central to British landscape history for a number of reasons: it served as a working agricultural site and source of minerals throughout industrialization; it was the first urban open space acquired for the public during efforts to protect commons from enclosure in the nineteenth century; it has served as a gathering place and backdrop for British artistic literary culture, often preoccupied with landscape and nature, from the Romantics to contemporary nature writers; and most of all, it remains a crucial and illustrative public open space in a rapidly privatising London. As a result, it is a landscape which has not only been shaped by ideas of the English landscape and access, but also contributed to the shaping of such ideas. It is something of an anomaly among urban parks and commons: few have such a storied history, and few embody such a *rus in urbe* ideal of English countryside. The role of the site as "countryside in the city"—locals will remind you that the Heath is *not a park*—points to a complex landscape shaped not solely by ideas city and country, but by centuries of use, whether agricultural, industrial, recreational, or aesthetic. This dissertation is an effort to connect these many threads, indicating the ways in which the early efforts to use, protect, and maintain Hampstead Heath compare in important and interesting ways to contemporary efforts to preserve access to the Heath and other public open spaces in Britain.

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Near East Heath, on a well-trodden path north of the Viaduct Pond, there is a patch of rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*) that spreads its pink sprays of flowers across the green of the forest each summer. The presence of rosebay willowherb is, at first glance, unremarkable. But the story of this particular cluster of plants is somewhat more complex: prior to the twentieth

century, rosebay willowherb had not been recorded on the Heath. In fact, it was only after the growth of the railways in the nineteenth century and especially in the twentieth after the Second World War that the plant began to thrive in Britain. It came to be known as "bombweed"—akin to the North American moniker "fireweed"—for its habit of growing up amidst the burned-out rubble of the Blitz.[3] On East Heath, however, it arrived not because a bomb had been dropped there—though indeed, many were—but because rubble from East London had been used to fill in the pits left from sand digging during the War. Though industrial-scale sand digging had ceased in the nineteenth century, it was temporarily resumed during the War to fill sandbags, and this left large holes that needed to be filled in. So rosebay willowherb arrived on Hampstead Heath in a roundabout way, with the rubble of the city.

The Heath is full of stories like the rosebay willowherb: churning, spiralling happenings that don't quite make sense on their own, but when read together with the surrounding landscape can begin to form something like a narrative. Just as quickly, though, the Heath exceeds a single narrative: heathland flora begins to disappear; landowners turn the land to profit; and ornamental plants arrive. None of these stories is written in isolation, and just as crucially, none of them can be read outside the wider context of landscape history in Britain, aesthetics, empire, and contemporary spatial politics in London. All of these have shaped the Heath, such that a simple story about rosebay willowherb calls attention to far more than just its flowers. As anthropologist Anna Tsing might say, it is greater than the sum of its parts.[4]

The notion of "palimpsest" is central to the exploration of Hampstead Heath in this work. Taken from a Latin term for a parchment that has been written and re-written on, when applied to

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[3] Richard Mabey (1996), *Flora Britannica: The Definitive New Guide to Wild Flowers, Plants, and Trees* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1997), 235-237.
[4] Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 23.

landscape it indicates a place that holds "a multi-layered record".[5] The notion, taken from literary study and frequently used in geographical study, entwines an intimate knowledge of the physical landscape and its histories. Exploring the Heath, then, requires not solely a broad range of methodologies, but "involves shuttling back and forth between the whole and its parts, between the past, the present, and the future, and in the case of the environmental humanities, between the environment and culture".[6]

As a result, the chapters and themes presented here serve as a tool for making sense of the Heath, but can in no way contain it. The Heath always has more stories to tell. I tell these stories as histories, but each story contains a present happening: present-day swimmers on Hampstead Heath are enrolled in the wider history of water on the Heath; contemporary squatters and campaigners are enlisted amongst nineteenth century social reformers, such that the timelines of the Heath expand and contract, layering and spiralling themselves. This playful excess, which exceeds the text, speaks of a landscape that resists flattening and simplifying, and exercises its palimpsestic quality wherever it shows itself. Though I have attempted to tell stories neglected in many other histories of the Heath, the plurality of narratives given in this dissertation barely scrapes its surface.

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[5] "palimpsest, n. and adj.", *OED Online*, December 2015, Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/view/Entry/136319?rskey=m1Cu0q&result=1 (accessed February 23, 2016).

[6] Hannes Bergthaller, et al. "Mapping Common Ground: Ecocriticism, Environmental History, and the Environmental Humanities", *Environmental Humanities* 5 (2014): 265.



Figure 3 Parliament Hill Fields, 2012

By necessity, the Heath demands a number of disciplinary approaches from within the humanities and beyond. The reach of this exploration is primarily historical: I trace the Heath's history through archival sources, local stories, and through the changing landscape itself. In this regard, it is a work of environmental history. I ask how and why the Heath has changed over the past four centuries, and the answers I find are not simply determined by either human or nonhuman agency. Most often, it is more complex than that. It is an environmental history that highlights the ways in which humans were not the sole determinants in shaping the Heath—

though indeed we have contributed enormously—but in which "nonhuman animals, from mega-fauna to microbes, become key agents in the unfolding of history".[7]

Likewise, I find that environmental history ought not be read apart from other kinds of history: the history of landscape aesthetics, in particular, is crucial to "reading" the Heath's complexity. The Heath's material form has been shaped, in part, by ideas of English landscape ranging from the picturesque to the wildness, and as such must be situated in its aesthetic contexts. At times, I tell the story of the Heath through the lens of contemporary environmental aesthetics, drawing especially on the "descriptive aesthetics" of Arnold Berleant, quite explicitly telling stories of my aesthetic experiences on the Heath. Berleant's descriptive aesthetic approach, which seeks to describe in narrative form fully-embodied experiences of landscape, provides one avenue through which to account for my own experiences of the Heath. In this way, I also work consistently with a British history of landscape writing that draws on direct experience of a place: I walk, swim, and botanize on the Heath myself. The project then straddles both archival and field-based approaches to landscape, occupying a space between academic environmental study and popular nature writing. This "descriptive aesthetic" approach enlists the tools of nature writing, a thriving British literary culture for which Richard Mabey's first-hand studies of plants and landscapes (including the Heath) form a benchmark. As landscape historian W.G. Hoskins advocates, "to write its history requires a combination of documentary research and of fieldwork, of laborious scrambling on foot wherever the trail may lead".[8] Adding this material, present, and lived aspect to a historical account of the Heath allows me to attend to the fact that, as Ursula Lehmkuhl puts it, "environmental history has to consider the fact that human

[7] Brett L. Walker. "Animals and the Intimacy of History" in in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 55.
[8] W. G. Hoskins, T*he Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955), 14.

engagements with the natural world are not just mental or intellectual but also spaced, timed, and embodied".[9]

At times, I set to work on the Heath, building dead hedges and pruning back its overgrowing bramble. I set out into the evening on Hampstead Heath's gay cruising ground, and at other times I collect mushrooms for my lunch. I do much of this work through the lens of ethnography, deriving an intimacy with the landscape and its visitors through participant observation and interviews, drawing especially on the work of Tsing. Tsing's work with the Matsutake Worlds Research Group, in particular, emphasises the importance of collaboration across human and nonhuman communities as a productive avenue for conducting ethnographic research. In this regard, she notes, viewing nonhumans as collaborators in carrying out fieldwork can lead to new research questions.[10] On the Heath, this collaboration results in the emergence of new or previously unaccounted-for actors: sand-pits, swimmers, birch scrub, sheep, and mushroom foragers, to name just a few. Tsing's research is situated at the heart of what has come to be known as multispecies ethnography, which seeks to document the ways in which nonhumans are bound up with, impacted by, and contribute to cultural, political, and economic forces.[11] On the Heath, her approach allows me to connect historical and contemporary changes to the landscape's management with the voices of people and stories about nonhumans on the site.

So this project draws simultaneously upon three key areas of environmental study: environmental history, environmental aesthetics, and multispecies ethnography, as well as my

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[9] Ursula Lehmkuhl, "Historicizing Nature: Time and Space in German and American Environmental Historiography", in *Historians and Nature: Comparative Approaches to Environmental History*, eds. Ursula Lehmkuhl and Hermann Wellenreuther (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 17-18.
[10] Tsing, "On Collaboration", in Matsutake Worlds Research Group, "A New Form of Collaboration in Cultural Anthropology: Matsutake Worlds", *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 2 (2009): 381.
[11] S. Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich, "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography", *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 4 (2010): 545-576.

own knowledge of the landscape and amateur skill as a naturalist. In attending to the history of the Heath's landscape management, aesthetic significance, and the ethnographies of the many stakeholders who live on and shape the Heath, I underscore the ways in which the these three foci are deeply entwined. In doing so I attempt to address two key questions:

1. How are the many histories of Hampstead Heath bound up with social, political, aesthetic, and nonhuman worlds?
2. How can environmental history, aesthetics, and multispecies ethnography be brought into conversation, as a way of accounting for the complexities of a space in which both humans and nonhumans play active and entangled roles in shaping the landscape?

Just as the lives of humans and nonhumans are bound up together on the Heath, these disciplinary approaches become entangled in the process of this dissertation. Its chapters indicate some of the ways in which history, aesthetics, and ethnography can be brought together through intimate, first-person nature writing. In short, I point to a means for practicing environmental humanities research in both the archives and the field. Likewise, this dissertation explores and connects a multitude of narratives that have not otherwise been included in other accounts of the site. Without this multitude of voices, histories of the Heath fail to capture a large part of its complexity, diversity, and vitality.

Overview

This dissertation is divided into five chapters, each of which contains a historical account of the Heath and a related contemporary portrait of life on the Heath. The chapters address each section of the Heath in turn, from the original heathland acquired for the public in 1871 and the

manicured landscapes of Kenwood, the agricultural fields of Parliament Hill and the Heath Extension, to the wooded and cratered landscapes of West Heath and Sandy Heath. Maps are given throughout to situate the focus of each chapter, as well as relevant illustrations. Throughout, I refer to the Heath's habitats according to the British standard given by the Nature Conservancy in the *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey*.[12] In interviews, participants are identified by first name only, unless they are public figures or are speaking on behalf of an organization, in which case their full name is given.[13]

Chapter One critically situates this dissertation within the literature on environmental history, aesthetics, and multispecies ethnography. In particular, I discuss the ways in which Berleant's aesthetics and Tsing's ethnography might be brought together with environmental history on the Heath to better account for the ways in which the Heath's past is understood and enrolled in its present-day management. I then set the Heath in its contemporary context, outlining an ongoing conflict between the City of London Corporation (CoLC), which manages the site, and local campaigners, who have been contesting the City's Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, a plan to reconstruct the three-hundred-year-old dams on the Heath and erect massive spillways due to the risk of flooding. This first chapter confronts the contestation of expertise, power, and land management on the site, within the context of rapid privatization across Britain.[14] In particular, it focusses on the ways in which the conflict has resulted in creative community responses from members of the Heath's swimming community.

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[12] See "Chapter Two: Habitat Definitions" in Joint Nature Conservancy Council, *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey* (Peterborough, UK: JNCC, 2010). http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/pub10_handbookforphase1habitatsurvey.pdf

[13] The format for naming was specified in the informed consent forms for this study, approved by York University's Office of Research Ethics. Participants indicated their permission to waive anonymity.

[14] For example, it was announced that from 2016 Britons would have ten years to register informal footpaths to prevent them being entirely privatized or closed amidst encroachments on historic "rights of way". This is but one example of the climate of privatization in Britain today. See Caroline Davies, "Countdown Begins to Prevent Loss of Thousands of Footpaths and Alleyways", *The Guardian*, 25 December, 2015. More recently, at the time of submission of this dissertation *The Observer* reported that the café contract on Hampstead Heath was awarded to

The second chapter considers the eighteenth century history of the Heath and Hampstead as a medicinal waters spa, and considers the role of water and clay in drastically re-shaping the role of Hampstead village and the Heath for Londoners more widely. It then considers the material role played by clay and other nonhumans in the creation of the ponds and manicured landscapes at Kenwood. The chapter closes with a series of interviews and aesthetic reflections on winter swimming on the Heath, one of the practices that continues a close engagement with notions of the Heath's water as therapeutic, recreational, and a focal point for the community.

The third chapter looks at the nineteenth century history of the Heath as a source of sand, gravel, and clay for the quickly industrialising city. Through an analysis of the legal battles that led to the Heath being purchased for the public in 1871, I argue that a constellation of actors—human, mineral, animal, and plant—resulted in the acquisition of the site for the public and the Hampstead Heath Act, which mandates how the landscape is to be managed and used. Here, too, I consider a contemporary legal battle that has challenged land access and use on the Heath, looking at the case of eighty year old Harry Hallowes, who in 2007 won a plot of land next to the Heath through squatters' rights. The conflict points to a wider climate of privatization across London, which in this chapter is read alongside battles for open space during nineteenth-century metropolitan enclosures.

In Chapter Four, I consider the Heath's transition out of agriculture in the twentieth century, looking at how grass and scrub management changed when livestock no longer grazed the fields. Through archival research into a 1970s conflict over scrub clearance, I piece together

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commercial chain Benugo, despite the café being family-run for 33 years. The conflict highlighted increasing privatization and corporatization on the Heath itself, with locals concerned that the chain's higher prices would exclude members of the community from using the café. See Ed Cumming, "The Hampstead café at the frontline of the war against corporate chains", *The Observer*, 1 April, 2016. http://www.theguardian.com/global/2016/apr/01/london-parks-protest

the narrative of a debate which, in 1978, resulted in *The Times* reporting that grass and scrub on the Heath needed to be cut back because of the number of dead bodies hidden on the site. In particular, I consider the ways in which the debate points to the ambiguous status of the Heath as "countryside in the city", neither wild nor completely domesticated. Closing the chapter with an account of how the "Public Sex Environment" (PSE) is currently managed on West Heath, I indicate how management of the Heath continues to be contested, and how landscape management is used to enforce a specific, even sanitised, vision of what the landscape is for.

Last, Chapter Five explores the role of the Heath in the history of British plant study, specifically in botany and foraging. After considering the role played by the Heath in the expansion of British plant study from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, I outline two contemporary case studies: one on a 2012 foraging ban that restricted access to mushroom foraging and blackberry picking on the Heath; and another that explores the complex role occupied by a local amateur mycologist who both forages and surveys the site. Ultimately, this final chapter points to the complex ways in which history and public access are entwined on the Heath, and highlights the complexity of determining how Heath ought to be managed for the public.

I close this dissertation by returning to the case of the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, underscoring the deep entanglement between human and nonhuman narratives on the Heath's palimpsestic landscape, and indicate that any effort to address the threats to open spaces like the Heath in the face of widespread privatization requires a close attention to the histories of the landscape. Through Berleant's aesthetics, I explore the ways in which the landscape can more fully be brought to life in accounts of its histories, taking in both human and nonhuman stories in the landscape. If, as Tsing writes, "History […] is the record of many trajectories of world

making, human and not human", any effort to shape or understand human and nonhuman worlds takes place at their border.



Figure 4 Fallen tree at Kenwood, 2012

Chapter 1: Aesthetics, the Nonhuman, and Public Space

The sheer size, diversity, and complexity of Hampstead Heath—its overgrown fields, shaded forests, iron-rich ponds, and muddy corners—demand a multiplicity of ways of engaging it. Conversations with locals make it immediately evident that the Heath—at once an historical, an aesthetic, a therapeutic, a recreational, and an ecologically-rich place—invites as many approaches as it has hidden trails. No text can take in all of the Heath's complexity, but by engaging a few approaches to generate an array of narratives about the Heath it becomes possible to hold its complexity open, even if only momentarily, to forge a path. I said at the outset that three key approaches and bodies of scholarship would inform my approach: environmental history, environmental aesthetics, and multispecies ethnography. This chapter will consider the ways in which each of these approaches contributes to the dissertation as a whole, will explore the key theoretical informants of the text, and will set the empirical tone of the dissertation through an examination of the current conflict over the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, a multi-year dam maintenance project, and community responses to the construction.

The Heath invites such approaches: I first began writing about the Heath in 2010, when a walk on the Heath brought to mind a phrase from Berleant's essay, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature", in which he describes "walking through the tall grass of a hidden meadow whose tree-defined edges become the boundaries of the earth".[15] Immediately, a multiplicity of plants, animals, minerals, and other nonhumans began to insert themselves into my meditations on the Heath's aesthetics. While Berleant's account of walking through a field focussed on the bodily experience of walking, my attention became divided between my own physical experience and

[15] Arnold Berleant, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature", *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments,* eds. Carlson and Berleant (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 83.

the riotous array of natural life on the Heath that made such an experience possible. I found it was impossible to discuss the aesthetic aspects of the Heath without also enrolling others into the fold: whether it was the long grass and shaggy trees that "make picturesque" a scenic hillside; the cold water—and its fluvial source, the River Fleet—that in swimming so clearly exemplified fully-engaged, kinaesthetic experience; or the more subtle rejoinders of flowers and fruit that make for an experience of everyday beauty in the park. Likewise these actors did not enter the Heath out of nowhere: many were brought to the Heath through centuries-long processes of domestication and labour, which remain underwritten in any experience of the park today. Here, as active agents of change in the landscape, nonhumans bring a kind of unruly excess to my storytelling on the Heath. The complex history of the site bubbles up through the surface of today's fields and flowers.

When the Heath was bequeathed to the public in 1871, it was the result of ceaseless campaigning by locals in opposition to the efforts of land owners to despoil the site.[16] The political dimensions of the struggle materialized through the conventional channels: local newspapers, public speeches, legal battles. Efforts to save the Heath from development hinged not solely on the work of local campaigners and activists, but also on a more widespread national effort to preserve public commons in the face of unprecedented urban development in Victorian Britain. The Heath—as the first *de facto* urban common legally-preserved as an open space—is therefore the foundation stone of land conservation in Britain. It is and has historically been central to debates around public space in Britain, and remains crucial as debates around landscape management continue to rage on the Heath.[17]

[16] This battle is the subject of Chapter Three.
[17] The Hampstead Heath Ponds Project is the subject of the last section of this chapter. See also Introduction, fn. 13 for a discussion of current battles over privatization and commercialization on the Heath.

Even in the nineteenth century, when the threats of development on the Heath first emerged, it was understood that efforts to save the Heath involved more than simply human actors. As the famous cartoon “London Going Out of Town” by satirist George Cruikshank indicated, the manipulation of the nonhuman became a key avenue through which the struggle to either build or save the Heath was waged. In the image, hot bricks are posited in opposition to hay ricks (“Confound all these hot bricks - they'll fire all my hay ricks!” cries a hay rick), trees are caught up in the fray (“I’m mortally wounded” bemoans one tree), and the conflict is carried out between animate pickaxes and plants. It isn’t difficult to see the ways in which a struggle within the human polis—and an anthropogenic struggle at that—had repercussions and actors beyond anthropocentric limits.



Figure 5 George Cruikshank, "London Going Out of Town, or The March of Bricks and Mortar", in *Scraps and Sketches*, vol. 2, 1829. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Attending to the Heath's multiplicity of actors—both human and nonhuman—enables a sort of thinking "with" the nonhuman, rather than against it or positing it as a passive backdrop for human struggles or appreciation. Bricks, sand, pickaxes, trees, and hay ricks were a part of the struggle to save the Heath for the public. This dissertation does not discount the anthropogenic features of the Heath's creation, or the anthropomorphic aspects of its depiction here, but rather serves to correct an over-emphasis in its histories on the roles of humans as opposed to nonhumans in shaping the landscape. As historian Michael Rawson describes it,

"there is something far more human about the natural world"; the two are deeply intertwined.[18] As each of the chapters in this dissertation will indicate, today's Hampstead Heath is the product of ongoing conflict, co-production, and change resulting from geological and hydrological factors, vegetation growth, livestock grazing, and human aesthetic ideals and uses. In particular, I combine archival research on the site with aesthetic accounts of the Heath's history and current state, and ethnographic accounts of the site and its communities today, drawing on the multispecies ethnography of Tsing. By carrying out extensive fieldwork, I therefore take the Heath's histories out of the archives and into the field. In doing so, I attempt to capture not solely some of the Heath's untold past, but also create a portrait of it as a vivid, thriving contemporary community.

The Heath, as a vital site in the historical debates around public space in Britain, likewise serves as a complex lynchpin in contemporary debates around public space and understandings of who belongs to that public. Just as Cruikshank's cartoon points to the threat of the rapidly growing Victorian city, to understand contemporary struggles against further development on or around the Heath requires a broadened understanding of who the public affecting or affected by changes on the Heath might be. These actors or stakeholders can include the pond habitats that dot the landscape; the traditional heathland flora of gorse and heather threatened by mineral extraction on the Heath; the Heath's peat bog; the animals that have historically grazed the site; the rustic rural aesthetic of the landscape; the mushrooms and other edible flora found on the site; swimmers, ecologists, landscape maintenance workers, cruisers, and foragers, to name just a few. In this regard, the Heath presents a rich site through which to think of a more-than-human community, and serves as a locus for thinking about the role of public open spaces in an urban context.

[18] Michael Rawson, "The March of Bricks and Mortar", *Environmental History* 17, (2012): 848.

Public spaces in contemporary London warrant serious consideration. Development in the city rapidly escalated following the extensive privatizations of the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives; by the 1990s, in a nation that had previously been characterized by ambitious social housing developments, private development was thriving. Public lands like the Docklands in East London and former British Rail land near King's Cross have since been redeveloped privately and remain privately-managed and secured. Public parks across Britain have faced cuts in the wake of the 2008 recession, with more open spaces facing shortened opening hours, staff cuts, and increasing privatization.[19] The history of Hampstead Heath, as the first urban common saved in perpetuity as an open space, therefore presents a crucial example of how public spaces can be preserved and managed, while also indicating the wide variety of threats to the preservation of open spaces. In short, we can learn a lot from the Heath's long history as an open space. Likewise, as indicated in the final section of this chapter, on the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project—a massive dam construction project currently underway—the Heath itself is not exempt from a London characterized by constant building works.

i. History and Landscape

The first book-length study of Hampstead Heath was John James Park's 1814 *The Topography and Natural History of Hampstead*, which considered not solely the natural history of the site but also the relationship between its topography and history of ownership. But it is by no means the first study of the Heath's natural history; botanical studies of the Heath exist as far back as Thomas Johnson's 1630s botanical excursions on the Heath, and studies of the Heath's chalybeate mineral waters date from the early eighteenth century. In Park's study, however, we

[19] See, for example, Kim Thomas, "Who Runs Public Parks And Are They In Danger Of Privatisation?", *The Guardian,* 26 June, 2015; Bradley Garrett, "Cities at Night: Why Our Right To Use Public Spaces After Dark Is

find the first attempt to think through Hampstead's natural history more broadly, and as such this text serves as a foundation for the flurry of histories that followed: F.E. Baines's *Records of the Manor, Parish, and Borough of Hampstead* (1889) provides a detailed history of the region; H. Haigh Hartley's *A Handy History of Hampstead Heath and Its Worthies* (1899) provides a compact history of the site; the third volume of Thomas J. Barratt's 1912 *Annals of Hampstead* provides an incredibly thorough history and firsthand account of the Heath; and the Hampstead Scientific Society's *Hampstead Heath: Its Geology and Natural History* (1913) provides one of the most complete accounts of the Heath's geology, flora, and fauna. Likewise, a number of more contemporary studies have explored the natural and social history of the Heath: Alan Farmer's *Hampstead Heath* (1984) provides a succinct account of the Heath's history from its source as a Neolithic pasture to its use as an open space in the mid-twentieth century; local landscape historians Deborah Wolton and David McDowall have produced two historically-rich books on the Heath, *Hampstead Heath: The Walker's Guide* (1998) and *Hampstead Heath* (2007); and Caitlin Davies's 2012 *Taking The Waters* provides an insight into the Heath's swimming history. Beyond these texts, much of the Heath's history is contained in legal records, newspaper archives, and local newsletters and pamphlets.

The degree to which the cultural and natural histories of the Heath are deeply interwoven remains largely overlooked by existing texts on the site. By engaging aesthetics, the nonhuman, and concerns about public space, I explore the ways in which the cultural history of the Heath is contextualized and shaped by its natural history. While the interdisciplinary nature of this study can be broadly termed as engaging with the environmental humanities, I situate my project specifically within environmental history. Since its emergence, often traced to the intersections between historians and a growing environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s,

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Under Threat", *The Guardian*, 19 November, 2015.

environmental history has attended to the many ways in which nature or the environment have an active role in shaping human life.[20] By shifting the emphasis of historical study from human action to the role of the environment in impacting events, environmental history was generated out of an effort to attend to the reciprocal influences of nature and culture. Approaches to the field have been various, but at its heart environmental history draws on interdisciplinary approaches, reflecting Donald Worster's idea that environmental history ought to draw on the variety of tools at its disposal for understanding human-environment relations in its effort to deepen "our understanding of how humans have been affected by their natural environment through time and, conversely, how they have affected that environment and with what results".[21]

In "Doing Environmental History", Worster's account of the origins and potentials of environmental history, he advocates drawing on the natural sciences, anthropology, and a loosely-defined cultural studies, whether through literature, aesthetics, or other cultural forms. I do each of these here, in exercising not solely botanical study and survey of the landscape myself, but in working with historical surveys of the site, in making use of ethnographic methods, and in a sustained exploration of aesthetic concerns on the Heath.[22] Worster points to the use of anthropology in environmental history, but is not explicit about what this use might amount to, other than in pointing to the value of fieldwork.[23] Here, I make use of ethnography, discussed in the next section, as a means for illustrating and narrating the deep interactions between humans and nonhumans on the Heath. It is likewise a key means for attending to what Worster labels "perception, ideology, and value" in relation to an environment: that is, speaking to individuals who have a deep involvement with the Heath allows me to better understand and

[20] See, for example, the account of environmental history's emergence and aims in Stephen Mosley, "Common Ground: Integrating Social and Environmental History", *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (2006): 915-933.
[21] Donald Worster, "Doing Environmental History", *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, ed. Donald Worster and Alfred W. Crosby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 290-291.

attend to the perceptions, ideologies, and values that shape their relationship to the Heath, and in turn, the Heath itself.[24] Archival research likewise enables me to extend such study into the past. As Worster indicates, environmental history must include a study of aesthetics, literature, landscape gardening, and many other cultural factors that have shaped management of the landscape.[25]

In this project, Hampstead Heath refuses characterization as passive backdrop to the growth of the human communities that surround it, as it has been depicted in many anthropocentric retellings of its nineteenth-century history.[26] Crucial aspects of the history of the Heath prove inarticulable so long as the cultural and natural are viewed in absence from one another, and this local history must be understood within the wider context of empire and national identity that suffused both the cultural and natural.[27] By drawing on a wide variety of methods, which I address in this chapter, I'm able to account more thoroughly for J. Donald Hughes's proposal that environmental history ought to a) engage with both nature and culture; b) draw methodologically from both science and history; and c) consider both time and space in reference to its object.[28] Like Worster has argued, any attempt to understand change in an environment, according to Hughes, requires a concurrent understanding of the "reciprocal influence" of both nature and culture.[29] Likewise, engagement with the tools of both science and history methodologically enables environmental historians to overcome the gap between the

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[22] See, for example, discussions of plants in Chapters Three and Five.
[23] Worster, "Doing Environmental History", 299, 303-305.
[24] Ibid., 302.
[25] Ibid., 302-303.
[26] Dipesh Chakrabarty places the "rebellion" against the discipline of history at the publication of Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean* in 1949. See Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses", *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 204. The Heath and Hampstead Society, for example, deliver occasional lectures on the Heath's history, focusing primarily on the work of campaigners in "saving" the Heath.
[27] The intertwining of empire, nation, and environmental history has been well-exemplified in the work of Richard Grove, Alfred W. Crosby, and of course, in the literary history of Raymond Williams.
[28] J. Donald Hughes, "Three Dimensions of Environmental History", *Environment and History* 14 (2008): 319-330.
[29] Ibid., 322.

"two cultures" of the humanities and sciences highlighted by C.P. Snow.[30] And lastly, Hughes asserts that environmental history ought to proceed liberally with regard to times and spaces: the entirety of time and the entire Earth are of interest. This project draws heavily on the first proposal—the exploration of both nature and culture, which I take, following William Cronon, to be deeply interdependent—and the third, in shifting between multiple timelines and parts of the Heath.[31] Likewise, this project—in attending to the site's history through sources as diverse as parish records, legal documents, botanical studies, fieldwork amongst the site's fields and hedgerows themselves, interviews with a diverse array of community members, among others—works from Alan Taylor's assertion take both social and environmental historians benefit from what he terms a "hybrid approach" to history.[32]

In some ways, however, my dissertation departs from some of Donald Worster's key ideas about environmental history. Where Worster points to the possibility of historical landscapes "before human societies entered and rearranged them", I contest the idea that such a possibility exists on the Heath: at its heart, it is an anthropogenic landscape.[33] To even speak about it as a landscape enrols notions of human culture and experience particular to the sense of "landscape", discussed below. Moreover what has most shaped both the Heath and the human communities around it is the deep entanglement of the two: the Heath is in the middle of the city. Worster's assertion that environmental history's proper realm omits the urban, "second nature" environment of the city has been linked to a declensionist tendency within environmental history,

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[30] Ibid., 324.
[31] See William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature", in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995): 69-90.
[32] Alan Taylor, "Unnatural Inequalities: Social and Environmental Histories", *Environmental History* 1, no. 4 (1996): 6-19. For an account of the intellectual "retooling" required by environmental history, see also: Stephen Mosley, "Common Ground: Integrating Social and Environmental History"; W.G. Hoskins's *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955), of course, provides a key model for studies of the historical landscape in Britain.
[33] Ibid., 294.

which views human intervention as exclusively detrimental in the landscape.[34] On the Heath, a declensionist approach would fail to capture the long and complex history of change on the site, and I point to the ways in which this continual change is deeply linked to the growing city of London, rather than pointing to the loss of some pristine prior state of nature.[35] Where I do point to detrimental human impacts on the site—in Chapter Three, for example, when I turn to an examination of the impact of sand digging and recreation on the heathland flora, itself a product of human domestication—I do so to underscore the changeability of the landscape, and to indicate that efforts to point to an "original" Heath to conserve, as in Chapter Four, are ambiguous at best. As parks historian Sean Kheraj notes in his study of Stanley Park in Vancouver, the ideals of nature and wilderness by which the park is shaped are not fixed, and are "as much a reflection of social and cultural constructs as they are material realities".[36] The Heath similarly cannot properly be understood aside from its place in the city and through the deep entanglement of the human and nonhuman over centuries of change.[37]

In particular, I focus on the ways in which ideas of "wildness" have shaped the Heath's management, situating these ideas within the context of British notions of the countryside. As much of the North American scholarship on wilderness differs greatly from British ideas of the countryside and its "wildness", I turn instead to studies on the British countryside supplied by Williams or scholars like Oliver Rackham. Specifically, I draw on Williams's observations that understandings of the countryside and its landscape aesthetics are derived directly in response to the existence of cities and, likewise, involve an erasure of labour and social relations. As Williams explains, the fascination with the countryside is "an idealisation of actual English

[34] Martin V. Melosi, "Humans, Cities, and Nature: How Do Cities Fit in the Material World?", *Journal of Urban History* 36, no. 1 (2010): 6.
[35] See J. Donald Hughes, *What is Environmental History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 99-100, for a good discussion of declensionist narratives in environmental history.

country life and its social and economic relations", which on the Heath takes the form of an idealised pastoral landscape positioned and defined in relation to London, whether in contrast to its municipalized parks or paved, ordered streets.[38] Ultimately, I indicate that the British countryside and landscapes like the Heath are not unspoiled wilderness as in the North American ideal—troublesome as it is—but rather are palimpsests, reflecting Williams's observation that "the countryside, year by year, has been made and remade by men".[39] It is through ethnographic and historical interplay that the timeline of this project swirls and bubbles up against a linear retelling—where swimmers on today's Heath enter the story of eighteenth-century pond swimmers or where efforts to manage public sex on the Heath intersect with decades-long vegetation management plans.

In this regard, my project is situated amongst an emerging number of environmental historical studies that attend to the human and nonhuman in non-oppositional or non-declensionist ways, an effort to think of the human *in* the natural world, and to attend to the ways in which they overlap.[40] For urban environmental historians, this shift has been towards notions like *transformation* instead of *degradation*, shaped by the interest in urban processes proposed by geographers like Matthew Gandy.[41] I pursue this exploration through storytelling, and through the inclusion of multiple narratives. Each chapter of the dissertation, as I indicated in the introduction, circles through time in relation to its theme, for example, giving an account of the ponds' creation alongside the voices of swimmers who currently swim in them. My exploration is thus one of many in a wave of current environmental histories—and indeed in many areas of current environmental study—which attempt to think through the entanglement of humans and

[36] Sean Kheraj, *Inventing Stanley Park: An Environmental History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 93.
[37] Hughes, *What is Environmental History*, 292-293.
[38] Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 25.
[39] Ibid., 54.

nonhumans by giving voice to those often excluded from previous historical narratives.[42] I take a rambling, sometimes anecdotal approach to the Heath's history, akin to the work of popular environmental writers—not strictly historians—like Richard Mabey or Michael Pollan. Mabey's work in particular, in drawing on first-hand excursions through peripheral parts of London, as in *The Unofficial Countryside* (1973), provides an approach to landscape that draws together the personal, historical, and botanical.

I have arranged this dissertation in a way that captures a number of the Heath's habitats, communities, and conflicts over the period since it came into heavy use by the public in the eighteenth century. It is by no means a complete or definitive story: rather, it is an attempt to diversify the kinds of stories told about the Heath, and to find a way in which human and nonhuman stories on the Heath can be told together. In a recent essay on borderlands and contested spaces in environmental history, Peter Coates argues that it is possible to bring together what he terms "the narratives of nature and the narratives of history" to speak about human cultural and ecological change simultaneously, and that neither needs to be exclusionary. Rather, he argues, they can be told together.[43] In some sense, by telling many stories at once, this dissertation is not simply an attempt to tell cultural and natural history together, but to create a place for the stories that have not been included in previous studies of the Heath, from the geological foundations that have shaped the Heath to the squatters and cruisers who have repurposed the site. As William Cronon notes in his study of storytelling in environmental history, storytelling involves a "rhetorical razor", exercising "the narrative power to reframe the past so as to include certain events and people, exclude others, and redefine the meaning of

[40] Melosi, "Humans, Cities, and Nature", 8-9.
[41] Ibid., 12.
[42] See Karen R. Jones, "Editorial", *Environment and History* 20 (2014): 475-478, for an account of this nonhuman turn within environmental history.

landscape accordingly".[44] By telling a multiplicity of stories, I attempt to highlight the multiplicity of ways in which the Heath has been shaped. Tsing refers to this kind of storytelling as "polyphonic", and it is my hope that in the course of this exploration, these stories begin to form both harmony and dissonance with one another.[45]

These stories do not have a tidy ending: indeed, I begin and end my story with conflict over the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, an extensive and much-contested dam renovation project. Though Cronon has indicated that good storytelling in environmental history is by necessity structured around a beginning, middle, and end, and that this structure gives environmental history its moral centre, I wish to leave the current conflict open for readers.[46] Indeed, it is ongoing and cannot be summed up neatly. This openness, I think, can serve as a strength insofar as it indicates various possibilities for how we might rethink management of public spaces in London today. James O'Connor has noted two potential pitfalls of environmental history: that of the "vapid overgeneralization" of notions like the "death of nature"; and that of the danger of triviality in becoming too wedded to the particularities of one place.[47] This project does not claim to generate an overarching account of human-nonhuman interaction worldwide, but neither does it limit its scope to the particularities of the Heath. The fragmented, sometimes spotty character of this study points to the ways in which the Heath remains a site of contestation.

One of the key terms I use in this study is "landscape". Here, I take landscape to include what environmental historians and geographers might broadly refer to as a "cultural landscape":

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[43] Peter Coates, "Borderland, No-Man's Land, Nature's Wonderland: Troubled Humanity and Untroubled Earth", *Environment and History* 20 (2014): 515-516.
[44] Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative", *Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (1992): 1349, 1364.
[45] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 23-24.
[46] Cronon, "A Place for Stories", 1370.

"the entangled and hybridized middle ground between nature and culture, society and space, and the organic and machinic".[48] It is, in short, the landscape lived by the many who inhabit it, consistent with Tim Ingold's argument that "the landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them".[49] Ingold's conception contrasts with the historical approach at the cornerstone of English historical landscape studies—W.G. Hoskins's *The Making of the English Landscape*—which, broadly speaking, focusses on the physical topology of the landscape without attending to the lived experience of that place or the multitude of forces that brought it into being. Recouping a notion of landscape as complex, engaging, and productive—not simply anthropogenic but creative in its own right—I argue that a landscape, better than the seemingly endless extension of *space*, allows for the kind of embodied knowledge that walking (or indeed, swimming) can offer, a key to understanding the Heath. As Williams notes, the British pastoral is inherently preoccupied with the country walk.[50] In particular, I focus on the ways in which the Heath is a palimpsestic landscape, its history continually, repeatedly, and disruptively presenting "evidence of the interplay between humans and their environment".[51] Meaning and experience on the Heath shift continually, reinforcing Williams's claim that "country life […] has many meanings: in feeling and activity; in region and in time".[52]

In this interplay, I move between broader studies of the English landscape—informed by sources as diverse as Williams, contemporary nature memoirs and walkers' guides, and the

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[47] James O'Connor, "What is Environmental History? Why Environmental History", *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 8, no. 2 (1997): 13
[48] Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zellar, "Region, Scenery, and Power: Cultural Landscapes in Environmental History", *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 333.
[49] Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of Landscape" in *The Perception of Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 193.
[50] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 23.
[51] Lekan and Zellar, "Region, Scenery, and Power", 338.
[52] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 4.

landscape itself—and particular historical and contemporary moments on the Heath. In this way, I draw connections between themes of English rural identity, the politics of land access, and public space provided by scholars of the English landscape and the everyday manifestations of such concerns on the ground, historically and today. For example, I situate the Heath within the context of nineteenth century efforts to protect open spaces from development during a period of rapid industrialization, but likewise connect that history with contemporary conflicts. As such, I consider the link between notions of landscape management—as in the radical proposals for garden cities made by landscape gardener J.C. Loudon—and campaigns to guarantee public access to open spaces and rights of way across the country through the formation of the Commons Preservation Society (now the Open Spaces Society), Victorian walking clubs like the Sunday Recreation Movement, and other social reform campaigning bodies, all of which linked access to the landscape for the urban poor with health and moral well-being. These movements, I note, contribute to our understanding of the Heath within the context of open spaces today, as well as efforts to preserve access to them. The Heath here is not simply the Heath that locals claim inspired the poetry of John Keats during his long walks, but a politicized and highly-moralized right of the nineteenth century working poor as well as contemporary citizens: access to some swathe of the English landscape was and continues to be viewed as a fundamental right.

As each of the following chapters indicates, the Heath, still undergoing a process of negotiation of its management, is a landscape "interlocked in a process of management and constant adaptation and preadaptation", and attending to such processes can prove instructive in understanding many other contemporary efforts to protect public spaces.[53] By viewing many of the Heath's historical layers simultaneously, this study's complex interweaving of historical and contemporary case studies allows me to attend to the Heath as a palimpsest: a "multilayered

structure that emphasizes the coexistence of multiple visions and impacts of different cultures on the landscape".[54] These layers—which are not necessarily hierarchical, chronological, or mutually-exclusive—include the actual material fabric of the Heath (clay, sand, grass, water, trees, shrubs, etc.), shaped by centuries of use; the aesthetic ideals and artistic "texts" which have shaped or been shaped by the Heath; the notions of recreation and health which have shaped use of spaces like the Heath more broadly; notions of the rural, English countryside, and the wild which have been materialized in vegetation management on the Heath; and perceptions of the Heath as a public space for direct use by the local community, among other things. As Tsing indicates, a multitude of stories cannot be definitively summarised or unified.[55] In short, the narratives of this exploration do not need to sit neatly, but call attention to the ways in which the Heath exceeds orderly presentation and narrative. It is a place of rough grass, overgrown borders, and meandering paths.

ii. Aesthetics: History and Method

As I indicated at the outset, my experience of the Heath has always been linked to the aesthetic. But few studies devoted to the Heath have attended to its role as an aesthetic landscape, resulting in a failure to capture fully what it is that makes the Heath so important to the local community and British environmental history as a whole. In particular, two aspects of the aesthetic seem to be invoked by the Heath: the site itself was an historical background for many of the aesthetic movements that have shaped contemporary notions of beauty, landscape, and the natural; and walking the Heath involves a range of sensory experiences—from the fully-engaged, kinaesthetic

[53] Lekan and Zellar, "Region, Scenery, and Power", 350.
[54] Ivan Mitin, "Palimpsest", *Encyclopedia of Geography* (London: SAGE, 2010): 2112.

act of ploughing through the long grass to the disinterested contemplation of London's skyline from the top of Parliament Hill—that can and have been broadly termed "aesthetic". Turning to aesthetic theory to help capture some of the experience of being on the Heath enables me to consider both the history of the place and my own and others' sensory experience of it simultaneously. Aesthetic explorations of the natural environment, then, seem an ideal lens—but certainly not the only one—through which to begin an exploration of the Heath.

Any effort to understand the historical changes that have shaped the Heath from the eighteenth century onwards requires an understanding of the shifts in aesthetic ideals that dominated landscapes in Britain at the time. For the Heath, the picturesque is of particular importance. The picturesque style of late-eighteenth century landscape gardening, for example, shaped the manicured landscape of the Kenwood Estate on the northern end of the Heath. Notions of picturesque and rural aesthetics likewise continue to shape efforts to maintain the Heath in its "natural aspect", that is, as informally as possible.[56] This practice has involved leaving fallen trees, the use of dead hedges, overgrown shrubs and hedgerows, and minimal, extensively-planned grass mowing. Just as the experience of walking the Heath is fundamental to its aesthetic appreciation, the picturesque, a movement primarily linked with landscape painting and gardening, was derived specifically from the experience of walking in the English countryside.

William Gilpin, who introduced the notion of the picturesque in 1789, defines it according to the following criteria: roughness, variety, wholeness, such that a scene may be rendered

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[55] Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World,* 37.

[56] The Hampstead Heath Act 1871 states out the requirement that the Heath be preserved in its "natural aspect". Contemporary efforts to manage the landscape, as in the proposals from landscape architects working on the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, discussed in this chapter, note the need to maintain the "informal" character of the landscape. See Peter Wilder, "Hampstead Heath Ponds: A Critical Review of Key Issues By The Water Management Stakeholder Group" (London: City of London Corporation, 2013). http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/ponds-project/Pages/Reports.aspx

pleasing in a picture or picture-like.[57] Gilpin contrasted the experience of actually moving through a landscape with the experience of art. In nature, he notes, artifices like abbeys, castles, or villages are not needed as the eye is free to roam—as he, indeed, roamed the countryside on foot—while "when we introduce a scene on canvas—when the eye is to be confined within the frame of a picture, and can no longer range among the varieties of nature; the aids of art become more necessary; and we want to castle or the abbey to give consequence to the scene".[58] The picturesque is predicated on cultivating the "view" of the landscape, seeking to transform natural landscapes into works of artistic proportions, through attendance to the appropriate features of the landscape, both in the appreciation of "wild" landscapes and gardens, as well as in art. Rather than polarising art and nature, the picturesque depends specifically upon their union; it is with the hand of the artist that such landscapes become properly picturesque. Picturesque aesthetics, then, apply as much to the appreciation of painting as they do to the experience of rugged landscapes and landscaped gardens, both of which Gilpin considers. As he writes:

> Nature is always great in design. She is an admirable colourist also; and harmonises tones with infinite variety, and beauty. But she is seldom so correct in composition, as to produce an harmonious whole. Either the foreground, or the background, is disproportioned: or some awkward line runs across the piece: or a tree is ill-placed: or a bank is formal: or something or other is not exactly what it should be. The case is, the immensity of nature is beyond human comprehension. She works on a vast scale, and, no doubt, harmoniously, if her schemes could be comprehended. The artist, in the mean time, is confined to a *span*; and lays down his little rules, which he calls *the*

[57] See William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape, To Which Is Added a Poem, On Landscape Painting* (London, R. Blamire, 1792).
[58] Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye: And Several Parts of South Wales, &c, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Summer of the Year 1770*, 2nd ed. (London: R. Blamire, 1789), 25-26.

> *principles of picturesque beauty*, merely to adapt such diminutive parts of nature's surfaces to his own eye, as comes within its scope. Hence, therefore, the painter who adheres strictly to the *composition* of nature, will rarely make a good picture[59].

The "picture" in picturesque is the view, the arrangement, which from a certain place forms an ideal scene. Gilpin was writing around the same time that the Claude Glass became a popular accessory of scenic tourists. The Claude Glass was a small mirror used to take a real-life view and render it more "picturesque" via a filtered reflection. This distance and mediation became a crucial feature in caricatures of the picturesque, and not without reason. In Uvedale Price's influential tome on the topic, he notes that one ought to be able to enjoy the picturesque scene "from the smooth riding of our carriage", as if such a view were universally attainable.[60]

But while the visual emphasis of the picturesque provided significant fodder for current critiques of vision-centred approaches to landscape, the deployment of the picturesque in landscape gardening provided an altogether different and more complex take on the tradition.[61] The landscape garden was meant to be moved through, after all, so while the landscape painting gave the viewer a scene to read, the garden invited that viewer to partake of the action.[62] The picturesque, according to garden historian John Dixon Hunt, became a way of filtering the world "through sensibilities honed on a study of graphic representation of the world".[63] As such, picturesque scenes were painstakingly engineered in the landscape gardens of the late-eighteenth century, such that this deployment of the picturesque was somewhat different from its earlier

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[59] Ibid., 31.
[60] Uvedale Price, *On the Picturesque*, (London: William S. Orr and Co, 1842 [1796]), 75.
[61] Jeff Malpas sums up such critiques in his essay, "Place and the Problem of Landscape" in *The Place of Landscape*, ed. Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011): 3-26. It is worth noting that the picturesque has likewise been critiqued for its tendency to frame nature as distinct or as mere scenery. See Donald. J. Crawford, "Scenery and the Aesthetics of Nature", *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, eds. Carlson and Berleant (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003): 253-268.
[62] John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque,* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 120.
[63] Ibid., 5.

incarnations on travels through the Lake District. Where Gilpin had enjoyed picturesque scenes and the pursuit of their best vantage points on his travels, landscape gardeners like Capability Brown and Humphry Repton—the latter of whom designed the gardens at Kenwood, discussed in the next chapter—meticulously constructed and completely re-envisioned landscape layouts so as to provide the best vista, installed follies and other mock ruins to scenes, and engineered gardens in a manner akin to stage sets.[64] These gardens were, predominantly, scenes to be traversed.

The picturesque was not without its critics in its own time. The affected landscape and painting manuals that came to characterize the movement included instructions, for example, for how many cows would render a scene picturesque, and the popularity of the movement resulted in the rendering of follies and faux ruins throughout English gardens.[65] Elizabeth Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*, notes with sarcasm that "the picturesque would be spoilt" by her joining Miss Bingley, Mrs Hurst, and Mr Darcy on a walk.[66] While contemporary aesthetic scholars have critiqued the dominance of picturesque aesthetics in contemporary scenic aesthetics, the impact and criticism of the movement historically perhaps warrant closer attention than it has been paid.[67] At the very least, it is fundamental to understanding a landscape like the Heath, so shaped by eighteenth century landscape aesthetics. Chapters Two, Three, and Four, in particular, consider the ways in which the picturesque and similar concerns about informal or rustic landscape style have shaped landscape management on Hampstead Heath.

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[64] Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden: English Pleasure Grounds, 1720-1800, (*Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 25-55.
[65] Gilpin, *Observations on the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland,* Vol. II, (Richmond: Richmond Publishing Co, 1973).
[66] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1853), vol. I, chapter 10.
[67] Crawford, "Scenery and the Aesthetics of Nature". The matter of picturesque aesthetics will, in large part, take up much of the focus of the next chapter, on the landscaped gardens at the Kenwood Estate.

Chapter Five draws attention to the Heath's significance as a gathering place for poets and artists of the Romantic movement. Concerns around the English rural landscape, however, as mentioned in the previous section, most extensively pervade the Heath's history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While the Romantics would find a significant analogue of rural nature on the Heath, its nineteenth century significance is more closely tied to the role the Heath played in providing a vision of rural wildness in the city, especially for the working poor. The Heath thus stood in opposition to many of the more staid, ordered municipal parks of the Victorian period, and as a result marks not solely an aesthetic break from them but embodies, more broadly, an English rural aesthetic rarely seen in town. As such, studies of the English landscape and its aesthetics—particularly inspired by Raymond Williams's account of the transition in English landscape aesthetics following enclosure and the notion of a "rural landscape emptied of rural labour" —prove more instructive than studies of park design and aesthetics in Victorian Britain.[68] Chapters Three and Four, in particular, consider the role of ideas of the rural and wild in determining landscape management on the Heath, often in opposition to British municipal park aesthetics, which emphasised enclosure, tidiness, and control.

The other way in which aesthetics forms a key part of this project is in my use of environmental aesthetics, in particular, the narrative-style "descriptive aesthetics" proposed by Berleant. By offering a critique of the natural world as "the environment" out there, and instead arguing for an immersive, co-extensive notion of human and environment, Berleant's "engagement model" of aesthetics stands in opposition to "object-centred" aesthetics.[69] He stresses "deliberate attention to perceptual qualities", "sensory awareness", and attention to the full body, rather than only the senses historically deemed relevant to aesthetic enquiry (the so-

[68] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, 125.
[69] In particular, Berleant's aesthetics are posited in opposition to the "cognitive" aesthetics of Allen Carlson.

called higher senses of sight and sound).[70] Explicitly locating his aesthetics within a phenomenological tradition—he frequently points to Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and James J. Gibson—Berleant describes an immersive, body-centred notion of aesthetic experience that has been applied in both artistic and more everyday situations, particularly in two texts, *Art and Engagement* (1991) and *The Aesthetics of Environment* (1992). Perception, for Berleant, is "an active, reciprocal engagement with environment", a product of sensory embeddedness in the world and our actions within that world, moving beyond dualistic notions of the perceiving subject and an external environment.[71] Drawing heavily on Dewey, he posits aesthetic engagement explicitly in opposition to aesthetic disinterestedness, emphasising the role of the living organism in an environment, without suspending utilitarian interest in the world with which we are inextricably involved. Engagement, Berleant argues, allows for a fuller, more attentive experience of the heterogeneous elements of an environment, rather than the strictly distant or visual.[72] Like Dewey, he is interested particularly in the experience of the flow of daily life as well the rare moments that prove exceptional to that flow.[73]

His theoretical model shines best, perhaps, in his efforts at developing a "descriptive aesthetics", which narrate his own experience of both rural and urban environments, and demonstrate the ways in which one's sensory perception, knowledge, actions, and entanglement with a nonhuman world constitute a sort of aesthetic unfolding of environment.[74] Descriptive aesthetics ought to account for both engagement—that is, the world "as sensed through my feet, in the kinaesthetic sensations of my moving body, in the feel of sun and wind on my skin, in the tug of branches at my clothing, in the sounds from every direction that attract my attention"—

[70] Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 14.
[71] Ibid., 18-19.
[72] Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 70.
[73] See Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Putnam, 1958 [1934]).

and a sense of place, the "invisible dimension to environments", like memories of a previous visit to a place, remembrances, and associations.[75] In this regard, Berleant's aesthetics offer a framework through which to consider the experiences of walking and swimming the Heath, allowing me to enfold both sensory experience and the context of the place—historical, cultural, aesthetic, personal—into a narrative form. It aligns well with the first-person narratives of nature writing, as in Mabey's work. Such descriptive aesthetic approaches are "not merely self-indulgent effusions but serious attempts to enlarge the understanding of the aesthetic domain by guiding our perception through it", correcting a neglect of aesthetic experience in most historical accounts of the Heath.[76] Throughout each of the following chapters, then, I turn to "descriptive aesthetics" in tandem with the ethnographic, discussed below, as a means for bringing contemporary life on the Heath into the discussion.

What is notable about Berleant's recent work is that, while his aesthetic model is predicated on overcoming dualistic notions of subject and object (and of the appreciator and appreciated), it is only in his most recent publication, *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts* (2012), that he has even begun to engage with the idea that both nature and culture are notions which need to be entirely rethought. Specifically, he has recently argued for an ecological aesthetic that does not view human cultural life and their environments as distinct entities. Drawing especially on the work of Chinese environmental aestheticians, Berleant presents some tentative steps toward an environmental aesthetics that is less predicated on the field's original interest in pristine nature, though he still does little to account for his own understanding of what an "ecological aesthetic"

[74] See, for example, his chapter "Descriptive Aesthetics" in *The Aesthetics of Environment*.
[75] Berelant, *The Aesthetics of Environment,* 27-28.
[76] Ibid., 26.

might look like.[77] He turns, variously, to Charles Darwin, Ernst Haeckel, E.O. Wilson, and deep ecology to situate his understanding of ecology, but these are preliminary sketches in Berleant's work and require further development. In any case, his work provides a preliminary theoretical framework for both thinking through the experience of a sensorially- and bodily-demanding environment like Hampstead Heath. Here I enter him into conversation with the work presented by environmental historians, multispecies ethnographers, and new materialists, among others. In doing so, I am able to better attend to the lively array of nonhumans with whom much aesthetic experience is produced. By engaging his aesthetic approaches alongside other methods in the environmental humanities, I hope to indicate that aesthetic experience is a central aspect of any experience of environment, and likewise ought to be adequately considered within environmental scholarship more broadly.

iii. Human and Nonhuman Worlds

As I mentioned at the outset, any experience of Hampstead Heath cannot strictly be limited to its aesthetic experience and landscape history: a variety of nonhuman actors co-constitute that landscape, and therefore warrant attention in any study of the park. Academic studies of animals, plants, parks, and other nonhuman artefacts abound. While many of these texts are part of a continuing and developing conversation within and between the fields of science studies, environmental studies, anthropology and geography, and while there is considerable overlap in their areas of study and methods of exploration, the extent to which they cross over, interact, and engage one another has been limited. Most remarkably, for my purposes here, there has been no direct engagement of these areas with the field of environmental aesthetics, and environmental

[77] Berleant, "Ideas for an Ecological Aesthetics", in *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts: New and Recent Essays*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 125; Berleant, "Evolutionary Naturalism and the Abandonment of Dualism", in *Aesthetics Beyond*

aesthetics has done little to engage with developing work on the nonhuman, save a few cursory references to Bruno Latour in Berleant's recent work. With theories of the nonhuman, while their work often goes back to common intellectual roots—Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, Baruch Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze—and despite mutually-aligned, interdisciplinary projects, the strictures of disciplinarity have often acted to produce little overlap between such texts.

The contemporary attention to the nonhuman within cultural studies, feminist theory, science studies, and other disciplines in the humanities focusses especially on material forms of agency, and emerges from these earlier contexts in an effort to articulate not solely the ways in which the material world is culturally-inflected, but the ways in which that material world pushes back on cultural production and becomes, in many cases, an agential force itself. The works of Tsing specifically provide a means for considering human and nonhuman entanglements in particular places, and the ways in which narrating the stories of such places can help to encompass some of the complexities of a more-than-human world. In particular, this project draws on the ethnographic approach modelled by Tsing in two of her books: *Friction* (2005) and *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015).

Multispecies ethnography, in which Tsing is a key figure, emerged following the work of Haraway, "studying contact zones where lines separating nature from culture have broken down, where encounters between *Homo sapiens* and other beings generate mutual ecologies and coproduced niches".[78] Taking a cue from traditional ethnography's focus on the social interactions of communities, the multispecies turn widened the net of this focus to include the complex interactions of human communities with nonhumans. By focussing on the ways in which nonhumans and humans collaborate and intersect, especially in human realms, and

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the Arts, 171-179.

[78] Kirksey and Helmreich, "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography", 546.

through the collaboration of anthropological actors (including anthrozoologists and cultural anthropologists) with extra-disciplinary colleagues in visual art, science studies, and animal studies, the field has grown to include studies of fungi (as in Tsing's work with the Matsutake Worlds Research Group), insects (in the work of Hugh Raffles), and the ecologies of nuclear test sites (in Masco's "Mutant Ecologies"), among others. Methodologically, many of these theorists combine some form of participant observation with historical, scientific, and otherwise interdisciplinary studies of their chosen community. Tsing, for example, undertook ethnographic research on swidden forestry in Indonesia's Meratus mountains for her first book, *Friction*, underscoring the complex relations and "frictions" produced in environmental conflict. In her most recent book, she writes about mushroom foragers, producers, and traders, connecting their multispecies network with the work of scientists, artists, and other scholars. So while many academic studies of the nonhuman remain largely theoretical or archival (Jane Bennett's and Stacy Alaimo's, for example), multispecies ethnography as Tsing envisions it combines this theoretical lens with empirical studies in the field. In this regard, it lends itself well to the "hybrid" approach to environmental history that this work attempts to engage.

This shift towards multispecies investigation has been characterized, in part, as anthropologists' response to ecology, climate change, recognition of the "anthropocene" as a key feature of contemporary study of humans and their environments, and to broader interdisciplinarity between the natural and social sciences.[79] Tsing in particular situates her work at sites of disturbance, noting that "If we are interested in liability, impermanence, and emergence, we should be watching the action of landscape assemblages. Assemblages coalesce, change, and dissolve: this *is* the story".[80] The opportunities and risks presented by such changes

[79] Ibid.
[80] Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World,* 158.

are the focus of this study: how might changes on the Heath create not only new stories, but new potentials for changes in landscape management? Gordon Brent Ingram, whose work on landscape ecology and queer theory I turn to in Chapter Four, indicates that interdisciplinary attention to contested landscapes enables us not only to build theoretical bridges but also to highlight the risks to communities and landscapes at the margins.[81]

Tsing's recent work attends to more than one aspect of human cultural interest in matsutake mushrooms, such as their culinary uses. Rather, she is able to take in the networks of economy, identity, knowledge, and environmental management, among others, at stake in the global trade for matsutake. She describes how this ethnographic approach might lend itself to historical study:

> 'History' is both a human storytelling practice and that set of remainders from the past that we turn into stories. Conventionally, historians look only at human remainders, such as archives and diaries, but there is no reason not to spread our attention to the tracks and traces of nonhumans, as these contribute to our common landscapes. Such tracks and traces speak to cross-species entanglements in contingency and conjuncture, the components of 'historical' time. To participate in such entanglement, one does not have to make history in just one way. Whether or not other organisms 'tell stories,' they contribute to the overlapping tracks and traces that we grasp as history. History, then, is the record of many trajectories of world making, human and not human.[82]

[81] Gordon Brent Ingram, "Fragments, Edges, and Matrices: Retheorizing the Formation of a So-called Gay Ghetto through Queering Landscape Ecology", *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire,* eds. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 255.
[82] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 168.

Telling the histories of landscapes—palimpsestic ones at that—means holding these stories together in some way. Tsing's approach—fusing participant observation (she spends a good deal of time foraging for matsutake herself), interviews, and archival research as well as "all the learning practices I can think of, including our combined forms of mindfulness, myths and tales, livelihood practices, archives, scientific reports, and experiments"—provides a means for articulating the complex and often contentious conflicts taking place now on a site like the Heath.[83] Ultimately, a variety of approaches allow us to attend to the "multifaceted ways" in which nonhuman nature enters human histories.[84]

Tsing has drawn on ecological notions of "assemblage" in order to consider such effects, noting that assemblages can be viewed as "open-ended gatherings", allowing us explore the ways in which human and nonhuman lifeworlds can come together and have effects.[85] Contemporary vital or vitalist materialism has also emphasized materiality and agency to give voice to such factors. The notion of agency central to this project extends beyond anthropocentric and subjective notions of agency or power: by examining the ways in which plants, minerals, and animals contribute to the making of a place like the Heath, I am able to see more clearly the ways in which agential effects emerge from a wider web of actors than just the human. My understanding of agency here is akin to Michael Marder's "non-conscious intentionality of vegetal life", which does not insist upon personhood or subjectivity to constitute agency.[86] In no way do I purport that nonhuman agency is the same as human agency; instead I seek to overcome a notion of nonhuman nature as passive, as worked upon. Most significantly, environmental aestheticians have consistently critiqued aesthetics in which a landscape is posited

[83] Ibid., 159.
[84] Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 173.
[85] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 23.
[86] Marder, *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 154.

as a passive object of aesthetic appreciation rather than a space to move through and live with,[87] yet have done little to recoup the very activity and agency of such places. Here, I note, the landscape of the Heath resists notions of passivity: it is an unruly place in a number of ways, and has pushed back upon human intentions continually throughout its history.[88]

The issue of collaboration has been a key in understandings of agency. By viewing what Tsing terms "co-residents" of a particular place as collaborators, I am able to "draw attention to the formation of new cultural and political configurations that change the arena of conflict, rather than just repeating old contests".[89] A multispecies account of a place enrols far more than just human actors into the frame; it underscores the ways in which humans are frequently in collaborative constellations *with* nonhumans and sometimes *against* them, with infinite shades of difference between. A story of the Heath that attends to nonhuman agency resists reducing the site's history to frequently-used simplistic narratives of the noble campaigners who "saved" the park for the public or simple divisions between land owners at loggerheads with the local community.[90] The community, in the case of the Heath, becomes a lot broader.

Two key facets of this shifting notion of agency are the matters of personhood and vitality. Marder has provided a thorough critique of notions of agency that seek to ascribe personhood to plants in order to extend agency to nonhumans.[91] As Marder notes:

> It is neither necessary nor helpful to insist, as certain contemporary commentators do, on the need to attribute to vegetal beings those features, like autonomy or even personhood, philosophers have traditionally considered respect-worthy. To do so would be to render more refined the violence human thought has never ceased

[87] Donald W. Crawford gives a good account of these critiques in his essay, "Scenery and the Aesthetics of Nature".
[88] The Heath's "push back" is a key feature of the next chapter, on water and clay, for example.
[89] Anna Tsing, *Friction,* 161.
[90] Again, the Heath and Hampstead Society, for example, offer a series of talks on this subject.

> unleashing against those beings, for instance by forcing plants into the mold of appropriative subjectivity.[92]

By attending to the ways in which nonhumans overlap with or are entangled with humans allows for an understanding of agency that looks for emergent effects rather than subjective intentionality. That is to say, what *happens* in the confrontation, constellation, and collaboration of humans and nonhumans in a particular place at a particular time? Theorising agency in the abstract is of far less interest to me than considering agential effects in particular cases, as in the spread of rosebay willowherb through the northern Heath. Its annual flowering is an effect of an unwitting constellation of agencies—nineteenth and twentieth century sand diggers, Luftwaffe bombers, construction rubble and demolition crews, and the seeds themselves, among others.[93]

Likewise, some nonhumans, especially minerals, challenge the idea that effects emerge strictly from vitality. As Mel Chen notes, echoing Foucault, "the fragile division between animate and inanimate is relentlessly produced and policed", whether by language, capitalist forces, notions of the human, gender, race, sexuality, and ability.[94] Toxic substances, Chen notes, force us to reconceive notions of animacy. In the schema for toxicity, Chen writes, "two bodies are proximate; the first body, living or abstract, is under threat by the second; the second has the effect of poisoning, and altering, the first, causing a degree of damage, disability, or even death".[95] Toxicity brings into focus the transcorporeality of material entanglement between

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[91] Marder, *Plant-Thinking.* See also, for example, Matthew Hall's *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011).
[92] Marder, *Plant-Thinking*, 55.
[93] See Introduction, p. 4.
[94] Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 2. Chen provides a detailed and fascinating account of this "policing" of the boundaries between animacy and inanimacy, which extends beyond the remit of my current discussion.
[95] Ibid., 191.

humans and nonhumans, as Stacy Alaimo likewise points out.[96] Transcorporeality, of course, becomes crucial when considering the use of the Heath's iron-rich medicinal waters, as discussed in Chapter Two.

We are likewise a short step away from notions of agency concerning invasive plants or weeds. In her study of dog strangling vine (DSV), Catriona Sandilands notes that the plant "actively creates a new landscape on its own terms by chemically and physically inserting itself into prior plant/animal/insect communities".[97] The idea of plants actively changing a landscape is shared in Paul Cloke and Owain Jones's *Tree Cultures*, and in each of the accounts described here their embeddedness in a complex web of human-nonhuman relationship is crucial to making sense of their effects. Sandilands describes, for example, the ways in which DSV has thrived in large part due to humans unintentionally preparing the land for it to thrive, and, likewise, it becomes crucial to account for the complex interactions of human and plant agency in something as simple as a hiker's boot picking up a seed and transporting it from one place to another.[98] Such accounts can help to capture some of the complexity of a landscape like the Heath, in which hedgerow plants, planted to keep livestock in place, have outgrown their borders to form secondary woodland forests, dramatically altering the landscape. Rare mushrooms, like the recently discovered *Cortinarius nolaneiformis*, a species new to Britain, likely arrived on the Heath via birds or boots. Not simply nonhumans, but humans—like Harry Hallowes, in Chapter Three—demonstrate how thinking through weediness can help us to consider the ways in which the Heath disrupts the borders between the "properly domestic and cultivated" and "the wild".[99]

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[96] Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 18.
[97] Catriona Sandilands, "Dog Stranglers in the Park?: National and Vegetal Politics in Ontario's Rouge Valley", *Journal of Canadian Studies* 47:3 (2013): 109.
[98] Ibid., 107.
[99] Tsing, *Friction*, 177.

The case of rosebay willowherb likewise illustrates well this confluence of humans and nonhumans in transforming a place.

Considering the Heath as more than a passive landscape to be aesthetically appreciated, then, I am interested in the ways in which the confluence of human and nonhuman, material and vital can be attended to with more complexity, sensitivity, and creativity. Avoiding solely anthropomorphic accounts of nonhuman actors and anthropocentric narratives of the Heath's history, my study focusses on moments in which human and nonhuman concerns or impacts circulate around one another—whether in the construction of ponds or in the legal regulation of fungi harvesting—and takes an expansive notion of agency and collaboration in order to capture the ways in which they have otherwise been lost or silenced in previous accounts of the place. In this way, it is possible to account for Tsing's approach to landscape: "As sites for more-than-human dramas, landscapes are radical tools for decentering human hubris. Landscapes are not backdrops for historical action: they are themselves active. Watching landscapes in formation shows humans joining other living beings in shaping worlds."[100]

With this notion of landscape in mind, I turn to the Heath in 2015: divided by chain-link fencing and sheet metal, turf turned over and clay exposed, cranes looming over the ponds. The Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, the controversial dam maintenance project that began in early 2015, began to dramatically re-shape the Heath and its ponds. Community opposition to the project was fierce, and here I turn to one strand of that resistance: the Kenwood Ladies' Pond swimmers, who gathered together the nonhuman and the aesthetic in their efforts to preserve their pond's character in the face of unprecedented work and closures. During the lead up to the construction, I spent two months swimming with and interviewing women at the pond, and in time they came to include me in their efforts to counter the Ponds Project and preserve the

Ladies' Pond. As a result, the narrative I construct below draws on my experiences both during the course of my fieldwork and in the months afterward, when the swimmers invited me to participate in a community event organized to celebrate the Ladies' Pond and to oppose the Ponds Project. There are two key aspects of the Ponds Project conflict that mark out the themes of this dissertation: the conflict over how to manage public space, and the ways in which the swimmers' response to the proposals enacts a more-than-human notion of community on the Heath. The swimmers are one group of many in the multitudinous histories of campaigning for access to and preservation of the Heath.

[100] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World,* 152.

iv. The Dams, The Oak, and The Swimmers



Figure 6 The Kenwood Ladies' Pond, 2015

In mid-February, with cold rain pouring on the Heath, I trudged up to the Kenwood Ladies' Pond for my swim. It was a quiet day, just two lifeguards quietly minding the dock, the pond's surface awash in the grey patter of raindrops. After stepping out of the warmth of my clothes and into the cold, dark water, I swam out into the grey, soaked entirely, tracing long strokes through the icy wetness of rain and water.

Back on the dock, dry and warm again, I curled into a ball on the sheltered bench, clutching a thermos of hot coffee. In front of me sat an enormous slice of tree: a crooked half-circle of oak, thirty-six inches across. It was thick, sturdy, and damp. Atop it sat a small hand shave and a pile of sawdust. Jane, one of the lifeguards, had been at work on it.

As I sat watching the rain, a wood duck and a cormorant hopped onto the dock and came under the sheltered roof. They sat on the sidelines like me, watching. The lifeguards stood talking about the log: Jane had a plan in mind to use the oak to build something, but she wasn't yet sure what. But in any case, she wanted to honour the tree, which had been felled that week as part of preparations for the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, a massive, two-year-long construction project on the dams of the two pond chains on the Heath. A group of men with chainsaws had been here in the days before, felling the trees on the south side of the Ladies' Pond to prepare for the works. The oak, which Jane had dated to the early 1930s, was the largest of them.



Figure 7 The slice of oak, 2015

I sat in quiet fascination as Jane talked about the log. She'd counted the rings—eighty-two of them—and then found out who amongst the regular winter swimmers was eighty-two. Swimmers had gathered on the dock to count out the years of their lives in the tree's rings: "This is when I was evacuated during the Blitz"; "This is when I first came to the Ladies' Pond". The tree was becoming a symbol of sorts for the pond, representative not solely of the long life it had on the Heath, but of the lives of the many swimmers, and a means for voicing their opposition to

the Ponds Project. In time, the oak would come to represent the struggle of the swimmers to protect their pond, and a means for expressing a love for a place which would inevitably be changed dramatically by the construction. It was not lost on me that the oak is the English national tree, its hard wood representing strength and endurance.

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The Hampstead Heath Ponds Project is an extensive construction project designed to upgrade the dams on a number of the Heath's ponds. Responding to increasing floods around the country and to changes in legislation, in 2010 the City of London Corporation (CoLC) commissioned a hydrological assessment of the Heath's ponds and dams.[101] By 2011, it became clear to the CoLC that work would need to be carried out to ensure that the dams, which had not been upgraded since their construction between 1692 and 1704, would meet existing flood safety requirements.[102] In November of 2013, after lengthy consultation, the CoLC and the Heath and Hampstead Society (HHS), which has since 1897 campaigned for the Heath's preservation and been the key advisory body on its maintenance, published a joint statement indicating that they could not come to an agreement on how to implement the legislation requiring the dam works. In short, both organizations disagreed about the scale and nature of construction to be carried out on the Heath.[103] A conflict was born.

The CoLC's plan for the Heath, developed by Surrey-based engineering and design firm Atkins, involved extensive work on the dams at the Model Boating Pond, the Ladies' Pond, the Men's Pond, the Mixed Bathing Pond, the Viaduct Pond, and a number of others. The work

[101] Haycock's, *Haycock's Hydrology Report* (London: 2011), http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/ponds-project/Pages/Reports.aspx

included: raising the dams at the Model Boating Ponds, Men's Pond, Highgate No. 1 Pond, and the Mixed Bathing Pond; the construction of grassy spillways to mitigate flood risk at many of the ponds; and other extensive work to secure the dams and improve water quality in the ponds. In reality, the construction required an intensive intervention on the Heath, bringing heavy vehicles, cranes, construction fencing and crews, as well as the closure of a number of the Heath's ponds and fields, some of which were used as borrow pits for building clay.[104]

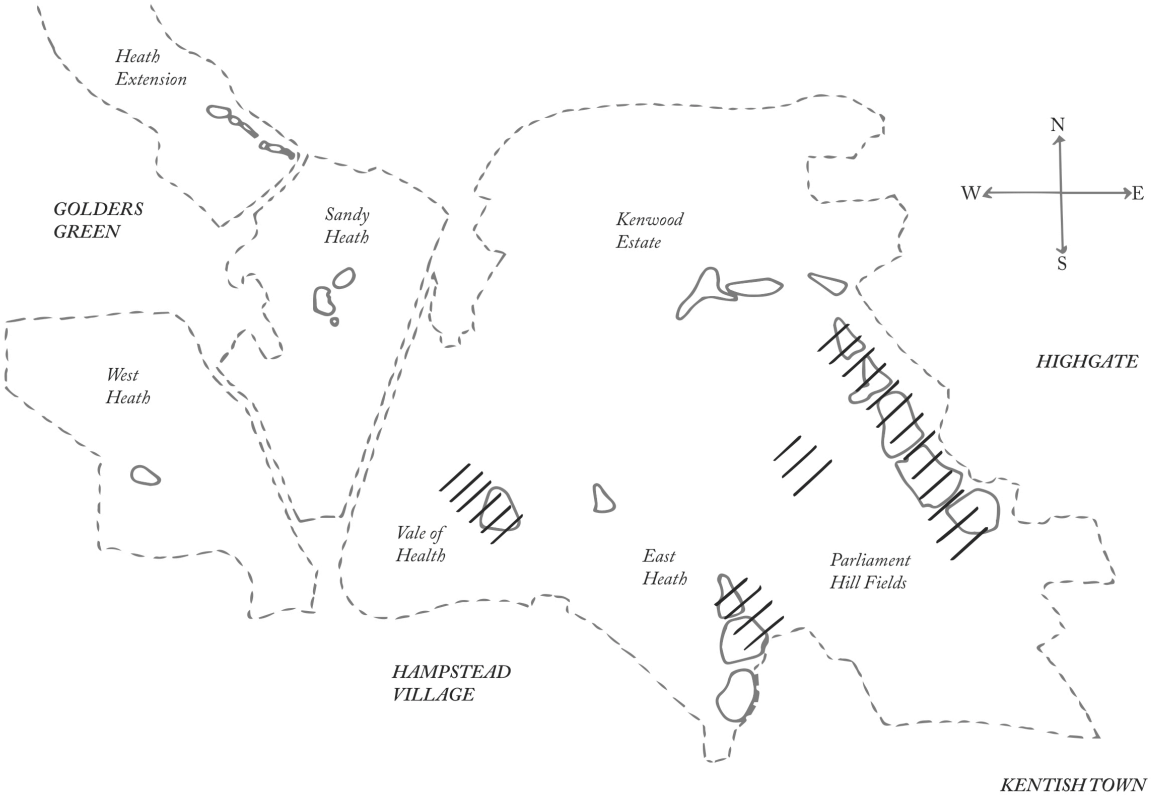


Figure 8 Areas of the Heath most impacted by the Ponds Project

[102] City of London Corporation and The Heath and Hampstead Society, "The Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Without Prejudice Joint Statement" (London: 2013), http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/ponds-project/Pages/Reports.aspx
[103] Ibid.

The proposals went through a number of iterations in negotiation between the CoLC and the Water Management Stakeholder Group, a body made up of local neighbourhood organizations, swimmers, and other Heath users and advocates like the HHS. Opposition to the project was vociferous: the HHS launched the "Dam Nonsense" campaign against the works; local papers *The Hampstead and Highgate Express* (*Ham & High*) and the satirical *Hampstead Village Voice* took a strong editorial stance against the works; and protestors sought to prevent the works through protest, campaigning, and legal action.[105] Despite objections, Camden Council, the local authority in which the relevant parts of the Heath are located, approved the work in January 2015.

[104] Atkins, *Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Preferred Solution Report* (London: 2014), http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/ponds-project/Pages/Reports.aspx
[105] HHS has since removed the Dam Nonsense website, but further related documents can be found via http://protectourponds.org.uk; See Emily Banks, "Hampstead Heath Ponds Project is a Dam 'Fiasco'", *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 15 August, 2015; Emmanuel "Mustafa" Goldstein, "Heath's Future in the Hands of Dam Nutters", *Hampstead Village Voice*, edition 21, 7.



Figure 9 A sign posted at the Ladies' Pond during the early stages of construction

As I indicated above, there are two key ways in which the Ponds Project and the response of the swimmers gather the theoretical strands of this dissertation. The first, on public space, underscores the ways in which contemporary concerns on the Heath cannot be held apart from historical concerns: landscape management has long been contentious, from the earliest struggles

to acquire the Heath for the public in the nineteenth century to the 1978 battles over scrub management that led to the creation of a strategic management plan for the Heath as a whole.

The Ponds Project was designed to address the City of London Corporation's legal responsibility to upgrade the dams on the Heath to meet the requirements of the Reservoirs Act 1975 and the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, "whilst preserving the natural aspect and state of the Heath as far as possible".[106] The dams—particularly those at the larger reservoirs of the Model Boating Pond, the Men's Pond, and Hampstead No. 1 Pond—needed to be upgraded to cope with the "Probable Maximum Flood" (PMF) risk of a one in four-hundred-thousand-year storm, a one in ten-thousand-year storm, and a one in a thousand-year storm.[107] Original proposals for the project were met with fierce opposition, and the "Preferred Solutions Report" was produced to attend to many of the concerns raised by the Water Management Stakeholder Group. In particular, the proposals sought to improve dam safety while ensuring that "the impact on the Heath will be as formal as necessary but as informal as possible".[108] This informality points to the particular kind of aesthetic sought on the Heath: the "visual rural/countryside landscape" that Heath users have become familiar with over the past century.[109]

As Chapter Four will indicate, this rural aesthetic is not historically characteristic of the Heath in the long term, and its maintenance has been predicated on intensive intervention and maintenance. The Heath, after all, is not a working agricultural landscape. Long grasses are mowed only sporadically and in rotation; scrub is cleared from the edges of woodland and hedgerows in order to preserve the pasture-like appearance of Parliament Hill Fields and West

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[106] Atkins, *Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Preferred Solution Report*, 5.
[107] Atkins, *Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Assessment of Design Flood* (London: Atkins, 2013), 13. http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/ponds-project/Pages/Reports.aspx
[108] City of London Corporation, *Hampstead Heath Dams: Why the Work is Needed* (London: City of London Corporation, 2012), https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/ponds-project/Documents/HH%20Dam%20Flyer%20%20-%20April%202012.pdf
[109] Atkins, *Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Preferred Solution Report*, 7.

Meadow; dead hedges and other Heath-sourced material are used in landscaping, ultimately giving the visual appearance of an idealized rural setting. Roads, machinery, and technology appear out of place on the Heath. Atkins, the engineering firm charged with the works, therefore proposed a series of measures to mitigate the impact of heavy construction on the Heath: using mixed-seed grasses on the spillways; using clay from borrow pits on the Heath itself to construct the dams (as the ponds would have been constructed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as will be discussed in Chapter Two); and through instating strict guidance on how heavy machinery would be used in the works. What was evident, however, is that a construction project of this scale would be fundamentally at odds with the soft, rural character of the Heath. As the CoLC explained in their own pamphlet on the works, "Landscape architects will be responsible for reconciling these works with the Heath".[110] The works, Atkins conceded, would dramatically alter the Heath during the duration of the works, but they would work to see that "reinstatement of the Heath's natural aspect takes place as soon as possible".[111] The reality of the ongoing works, despite mitigation, has certainly been disruptive: enormous portions of the Heath have been fenced off to secure borrow pits for the Model Boating Pond dam (see Figure 10), large cranes have been constructed on site, and the works have been plagued by unexpected flaws.[112]

[110] City of London Corporation, *Hampstead Heath Dams: Why the Work is Needed*
[111] Atkins, *Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Preferred Solution Report,* 5.
[112] Banks, "Hampstead Heath Ponds Project is a Dam 'Fiasco'".



Figure 10 The fencing erected around the clay "borrow pit" site, Parliament Hill Fields, September 2015



Figure 11 The clay "borrow pit", December 2015

Beyond the ecological impact of the works and the effect on landscape aesthetics, one of the key objections to the initial proposals linked directly to the matter of public access to the Heath. Early iterations of the redesigns for the swimming ponds proposed turnstile access at the gates, effectively allowing the CoLC to carry out a long-established effort to introduce fees for swimming on the Heath. The introduction of fees for swimming has, for many decades, been a contentious matter on the Heath and is viewed by many swimmers as a key part of efforts to "re-enclose" the Heath, essentially rendering a public open space into private land.[113] In the critical

[113] See Caitlin Davies, *Taking the Waters: A Swim Around Hampstead Heath*, 120. "In November 2004 the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association met in a local church. Members said the Heath was common land, as established by the 1871 Act, and didn't belong to the CoL in the first place. If charges were made for bathing then what would happen next, a kiosk selling ice cream? What if people would one day be charged just to go on the

review of proposals, the Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association clearly opposed the introduction of turnstiles: "We categorically do not want to have turnstiles, nor have pay machines in any but a discreet location".[114] Ultimately, the proposals, though not carried out, pointed to an increasing climate of privatization on the Heath, with local media reporting that the CoLC were commissioning a report on the Heath's leisure facilities and considering handing over management of Parliament Hill Lido, on the Heath's south edge, to a private leisure company.[115] The conflict emerged in the context of other open and public spaces across Britain, many of which have faced increasing privatization, and indicates how current management strategies link to long-standing debates around who owns the Heath, how best to manage it, and points to the ongoing process of negotiation between the Heath's many stakeholders, human and nonhuman. Each of the chapters in this dissertation touches on these points in the Heath's history.

The second key aspect of the Ponds Project fundamental to this dissertation is the matter of community response. Opposition to the Ponds Project, as described above, included a number of local campaigning organizations gathered under the banner of "Dam Nonsense". The Heath's swimmers, given a strong voice in the Water Management Stakeholders Group, were fundamental in both protest against and negotiation of the project.

In mid-September 2015, swimmers gathered at Kenwood House to launch an exhibit of artworks produced by swimmers at the Kenwood Ladies' Pond. The exhibit—dubbed "A Celebration"—was collaboratively organized by swimmers and Jane, one of the lifeguards, and

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Heath?" This concern, of course, was one that originally resulted in the acquisition of the Heath for the public: in mid-nineteenth century, Heath landowner Thomas Maryon Wilson attempted to introduce fees to access the Heath. See Chapter Three.

[114] "Appendix 1: Responses from the Water Management Stakeholder Group" in Peter Wilder, *Hampstead Heath Ponds: A Critical Review of Key Issues by the Water Management Stakeholder Group* (London: City of London Corporation, 2013), http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/ponds-project/Pages/Reports.aspx

[115] See Dan Carrier, "Swimmers' plea to Heath bosses: Don't hand Lido over to private company", *Camden New Journal,* 25 June, 2015.

took place in Kenwood's Orangery over two days. Featuring paintings, photographs, sculptures, and texts inspired by the Pond, the exhibit was a bold statement in the face of unprecedented change at the Ladies' Pond and on the Heath more widely: construction had begun on the Ponds Project, and the Ladies' Pond was due to be closed the following winter to carry out work on the dam and reconstruct the changing facilities on site. The swimmers were quick to explain to visitors that they ought to visit the Ladies' Pond now, as it wouldn't be the same after the works were carried out.

Outside the Orangery, Jane stood with the slice of oak and a number of other tree pieces, discussing her work with visitors. Inside, a photograph of the oak with the eighty two year old swimmer sat proudly in the middle of the exhibit, next to a drawing Jane asked me to produce for the exhibit.

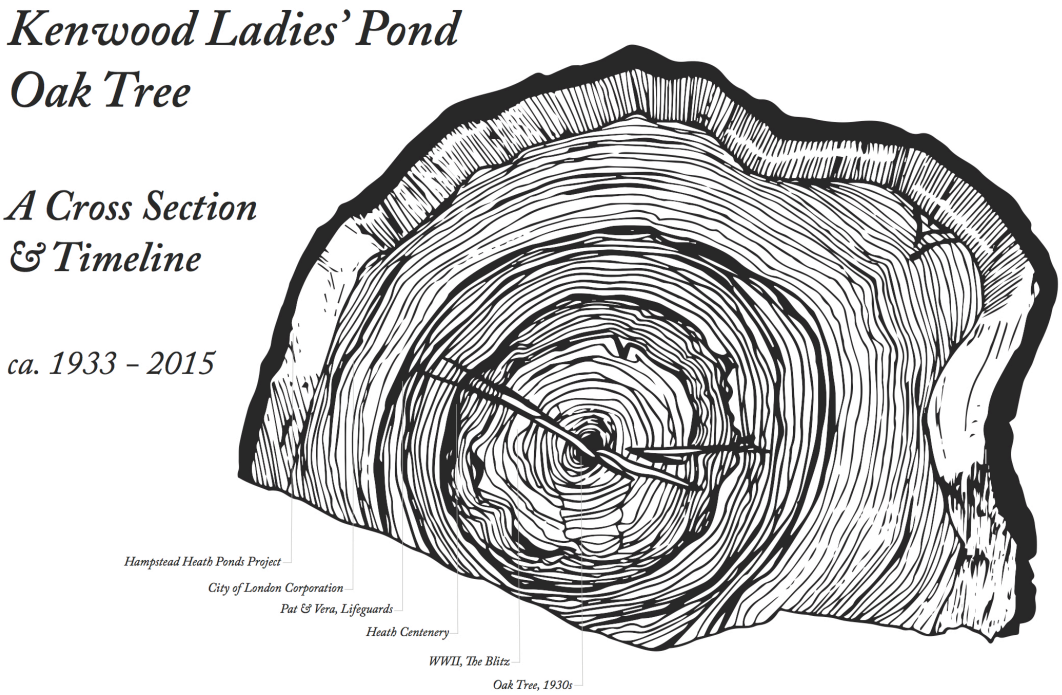


Figure 12 "Tree Map" produced for the Ladies' Pond exhibition

The work I produced—"Tree Map"—traced the history of the Heath through the rings of the oak tree, just as the swimmers had done that day on the dock. Visitors to the exhibit paused at the photograph of the oak, traced their fingers over my drawing, and then stooped in fascination at the slice of oak itself. This single slice of an oak tree produced an opportunity for thinking through the history of the Ladies' Pond and the Heath more widely, and also raised questions about whose future was at stake in the impending construction work. Visitors began to ask when the works would begin, what would happen, and many expressed a desire to have a swim right away, despite the cooling weather.

In many ways, the exhibit represented the sense of community established at the Ladies' Pond amongst the swimmers, the birds, trees, water, and other nonhuman presences. In my time spent swimming at the Pond in the winter of 2015, in interviews with the swimmers, and in archival research on the Pond, the connection felt by swimmers, for example, with the trees that line the water's edge appeared very significant. The trees, swimmers pointed out, sheltered the Ladies' Pond from the rest of the Heath. Likewise, the treed and therefore relatively inaccessible banks of the Heath's ponds support a diverse range of fungi. The loss of one of these trees—one of the oldest among them—pointed not just to a loss to the community, but also to a perceived "victory" of the City of London Corporation in reshaping and closing off the landscape. Repurposing the oak as an artwork and as a gathering point for the community served as a means of recouping a sense of cohesive, strong community, as well as an opportunity for mourning the loss to the Ladies' Pond.

I labour on the significance of the oak here not simply to underscore its importance within the human community of swimmers at the Ladies' Pond. Rather, the oak and its rings came to signify much more: as Jane worked on it, she marked out "good" years, wet years, and years when the tree had been impacted by other factors on the Heath. The relationship of swimmers' lives and the Heath's history to this oak seemed to echo Richard Mabey's assertion that "a tree's annual rings are not just a measure of its age, but a record of its whole life experience. Drought, defoliation, disease, the lopping of branches, even the clearance of nearby trees, all leave their mark in the pattern and character of the rings".[116] The oak tree—through the work of the construction crew who felled it, through Jane's work with the hand shave, and through the interpretive work of the swimmers—told of much more than just a human timeline.

[116] Richard Mabey, *The Common Ground: The History, Evolution, and Future of Britain's Countryside* (London: J.M. Dent, 1980), 24.

It also told its own history. In this way it formed one powerful narrative amongst many possible narratives at the Pond, at exactly the time it was most needed by the community. The tree, in gathering so many around it, created a sense of place which, as Cloke and Jones note, "emerges as 'local condensations and distillations of tremulous global processes'".[117] The tree spoke not just to the lives of locals, but also to the forces shaping both it and the Heath around it.

iv. Conclusion

Here, I have examined the ways in which the battle over the Heath's Ponds Project touches upon not just the matters of public access to the Heath, but also on the ways in which aesthetics and community involvement continue to shape management of the site. In doing so, I have indicated that an exploration of the Heath can likewise provide an opportunity for considering the overlaps between environmental history, aesthetics, and multispecies ethnography.

The chapters that follow unfold a series of historical studies and contemporary portraits, pointing to the ways in which Hampstead Heath is incalculably more than simple narratives might suggest. So moving from the Ladies' Pond in the face of the intensive construction of the Ponds Project, I turn to the history of water and clay on the Heath, and to a time at the ponds long before the works began.

[117] Cloke and Jones, *Tree Cultures*, 176. See also p. 87 on how trees "gather" places.

Chapter 2: Water and Clay

[nb: an extract from this chapter was published in Prova 3: The RCA Humanities Research Forum Journal (London: Royal College of Art, 2016)]

Walking down London's Fleet Street today will tell you very little about its nomenclature. At Ludgate Circus, surrounded on all sides by a mixture of Georgian and contemporary architecture, one is struck by the concrete and press offices, traffic, and the inevitable downhill tug towards the River Thames, the fluvial gravitational centre of London. But a tiny note on Google Maps might catch your eye as you are drawn towards Blackfriars. *River Fleet*, it reads. For at this point, the now subterranean, near-extinguished Fleet runs beneath the street and out into the Thames. It is, of course, why Fleet Street is so named. To walk here three-hundred years ago was to be struck by "the filth of all hues and odours" that characterized its flow, but today it trickles unseen beneath London's busiest streets.[118]

Ascending the landscape some three hundred feet, five miles north, lay the Fleet's source. In Hampstead Heath, a series of springs, creeks, and rivulets together form a wellspring that has fed London—and slaked its thirst for increasing sources of clean water—for centuries. A 1543-44 edict authorized the construction of "pitted, trenches, and dytches", the erection of "heddes", the laying of pipes, and the making of vaults to channel these waters for London's use.[119] Construction didn't progress immediately, but by the early-eighteenth century the construction of

[118] *Tatler*, Oct 17, 1710, quoted in Thomas J. Barratt, The *Annals of Hampstead*, vol. 1, (London: L. Leventhal, 1972 [1912]), 71. B.W. Clapp, in *An Environmental History of Britain*, describes the state of the Fleet as follows: "The more numerous inhabitants of London were just as careless and from an early date severely polluted the Fleet brook, which entered the Thames where Blackfriar's Bridge now stands. In 1307 the Fleet was no longer navigable. 'By the filth of tanners and such others [it] was more decayed, also by the raising of wharves, but specially be a diversion of the water made by them of the new Temple for their mills standing without Barnard's Castle.' John Stow writing at the end of the sixteenth century reported that the Fleet Brook had had its last thorough scouring in 1502; a further scouring in 1598 failed to improve its condition 'so that the Brook by means of continual encroachments upon the banks getting over the water, and casting of soilage into the stream, is now become worse cloyed and choken than ever it was before'". B.W. Clapp, *An Environmental History of Britain Since the Industrial Revolution*, (London: Longman Group, 1994), 71; incl. quote from Kingsford, *Survey of London by John Stow*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 12-13.

the Hampstead and Highgate ponds—as reservoirs for the use of the City—is assumed to have taken place. The ponds on Hampstead Heath form two distinct chains, both of which border the edges of the park. Beyond these two chains, there are located throughout the park a number of other smaller ponds, altogether totalling some 30 bodies of water. The source of these waters is, in large part, the reason for Hampstead's flourishing in the first place.

In this chapter, I will focus on the Heath in the eighteenth century, considering the history of water—and the intimate relation between water and clay—on the site. Specifically, I will briefly present the history of the Heath's two main pond chains, the Highgate and Hampstead ponds; the role of mineral springs in changing the fortunes of Hampstead from rural village to destination spa; and the creation of ponds and redesigned landscape gardens on the Kenwood Estate. In exploring the spa, I argue that the Heath's water played a vital role in shaping the future of the site, emphasising health and recreation as key factors in the spa's growth (and its demise). In the Kenwood gardens, I consider how both water and clay were employed in drastically changing the landscape and prioritizing aesthetic concerns while, adjacent to the Estate, the spa and recreation boom in Hampstead was rising and falling. Lastly, emphasizing the palimpsestic history of the site and its contemporary usage, I will close the chapter with a contemporary consideration of swimming on the Heath, exploring the way these same concerns—health, recreation, and aesthetics—are still vital on the Heath and still deeply connected to the waters of the site.

These three examinations draw on two of the key themes of this dissertation: the relationship between aesthetics and the Heath's landscape, and the role of nonhumans in the production and experience of that landscape. The first case study, on the spa that first

[119] Acts Concerning the Conduits in London, 1543, 35 Hen. VIII, c. 10.
Note: 'Heddes' refers to 'heads' of water, i.e. reservoirs.

popularized the Heath and Hampstead, considers the role of nonhuman factors like iron-rich mineral waters in shaping the site's history. Ultimately, I indicate that not only the waters—but the Heath's fresh air and landscape—were a key in establishing the enduring association between the Heath and leisure. The aesthetic is explored in the chapter in two ways: in the role of eighteenth century landscape aesthetics in shaping the gardens at Kenwood, and in the experience of the Heath described by contemporary swimmers on the Heath. In the cases on Kenwood and the swimming ponds, drawing on Tsing's analysis, I indicate how a much wider constellation of nonhuman actors emerges: not simply water and clay, but livestock, birds, and other forces become crucially important, all taking an active part in shaping the landscape and the experience of those engaged with it. The chapter as a whole traces the shifting roles of water in the Heath's history, from its uses in medicine, to landscaping, and to recreation. Read alongside the first chapter, on the dams conflict, this indicates that the landscape on the Heath cannot be understood one-dimensionally, and points to the multitudinous narratives that make up the landscape and its history.

i. Rivers and Wells

The growth of London meant that the sylvan countryside surrounding the city was enrolled in sustaining its growth, whether through agriculture, water, sand, or labour. The village of Hampstead and the land on which it was situated, the Heath, was able to meet many of London's needs. Hampstead village and the Heath were able to provide agricultural goods, the land which proved inarable was sequestered for hunting, sand, and gravel extraction, and the villagers provided sources of labour. The village was particularly famous for its laundresses, who stretched the washing of London's aristocracy out to dry on the thorny, fragrant gorse, making,

as historian Caroline White put it, a "wide part of the Heath appear as if an army were about to picnic there".[120] But most crucially, and in a move which most completely changed the fortunes of the village, London came for Hampstead's water.

First it was the Fleet. Fresh water was of crucial importance to the growing, filthy city below. The edict which authorized the construction of dams and ponds to capture that water—which was delayed by over a century, for reasons unclear to historians, but likely to do with the complexity of construction—resulted in the construction, around 1692, of the Hampstead ponds.[121] It is at this time that the Hampstead Water Company incorporated and took over the water supplies of the region, dramatically altering the sleepy stream that wound its way through the Heath by constraining its flows into the very ponds that remain there today.[122] Surveys indicated that by 1704 the Hampstead and Highgate chains of ponds had been built.[123] But exact dates for the construction of each individual pond are difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain. As local historian Caitlin Davies notes, discrepancies in mapping and poor record-keeping construct a confusing picture of the landscape at this time:

> [M]odern historians insist nothing happened until 1692 when the springs on the Heath were leased to the Hampstead Water Works Company and it made, or possibly enlarged, four ponds as reservoirs, some as early as 1703. These became the Hampstead Ponds. A 1748 map shows two ponds on the Lower Heath, another map fourteen years later shows four, and by 1810 this was down to three. The company also leased a farm at Millefieldes (later known as Millfield) and started work on

[120] Caroline White, *Sweet Hampstead and Its Associations* (London: Elliot Stock, 1900), 195.
[121] A 1914 Parliamentary report, however, notes that "four reservoirs were formed" in 1589. H.C. Monro, *Return as to Water Undertakings in England and Wales*, (London: Wyman and Sons, 1915), though this report is not cited in any existing history of the Heath and its source is not obvious. In any case, the timeline for the construction of the ponds has been usually agreed as having taken place *by* 1700.
[122] John James Park, *Topography and Natural History of Hampstead, in the County of Middlesex* (London: White, Cochrane, and Co.: 1814), 74 fn.

another seven reservoirs, which became the Highgate Ponds—although some may have already existed in the seventeenth century.[124]

In any case, it is at the turn of the seventeenth century that what was a calm stream winding its way into the city was made into a series of dammed reservoirs, inaugurating a centuries-long retreat of the Heath's waters into enclosed and controlled flows, both above ground and below. It marked the beginning of the era of dams and ponds on the site, which continues to shape conflict on the Heath today. Disappearing with the Fleet were its water-cress beds, from which locals could pluck the aqueous delicacy, and, as prolific historian Barratt would have it, "its early romance and later malodours".[125]

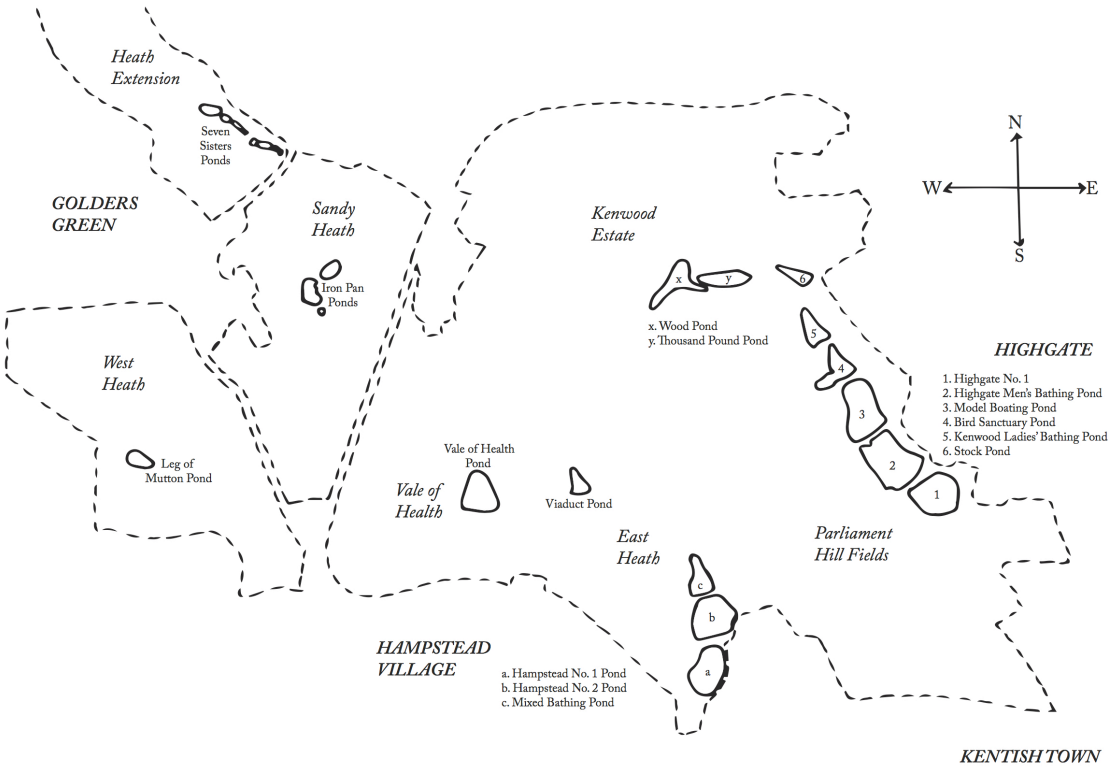


Figure 13 Ponds on Hampstead Heath

[123] Alan Farmer (1984), *Hampstead Heath* (London: Historical Publications Ltd., 1996), 15.
[124] Caitlin Davies, *Taking the Waters: A Swim Around Hampstead Heath* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2012), 28.
[125] Barratt, *Annals of Hampstead*, vol. 1, 72. Barratt describes buying "water-cress in Gospel Oak Fields frequently as a boy".

Roughly around the time the Fleet was dammed, the discovery of chalybeate springs—iron-rich waters, filtered through the sand and clay—on the Heath led to a complete shift in Hampstead's desirability as a site for leisure, recreation, and enjoyment of the therapeutic waters. No longer a rural backwater to be utilized solely for fresh water, Hampstead village and the Heath on top of which it was growing became a destination.[126] The earliest inklings that Hampstead's springs might be of interest for more than just water supply came around 1697, and by 1698 efforts to exploit the waters commercially had begun.[127] Local historian John James Park noted that by 1698 Hampstead gained a reputation for the medicinal qualities of its iron-rich waters, and by 1707, taking the waters at Hampstead had become a popular escape along the lines of Bath or Tunbridge Wells.[128] The wells in Hampstead were developed amidst a climate of growing popularity of spas throughout Britain: while water had since antiquity been associated with healing, the discovery of springs (often alongside efforts to secure sources of fresh water for growing urban areas) led to a boom in the construction of purpose-built spas.[129] Bath had been popular since the mid-sixteenth century, and nearby Islington Wells (Sadler's Wells and New Tunbridge Wells) had grown in popularity in the decade prior to Hampstead's fame as a spa.[130] Hampstead, then, "witnessed a scramble for profits" in the spa industry.[131] This scramble took two primary forms: investment in local amenities, like dance halls, taverns, and other recreations, as I mentioned earlier, and the cultivation of a reputation for Hampstead's waters, largely by endorsements from local physicians. Likewise, the beauty of the surrounding landscape became a

[126] The springs at Hampstead can be found in a number of locations, most notably where chalybeate water seeps out between layers of clay and sandy soil. Two wells remain today: one, now decommissioned, at Well Walk in the village, and one, still flowing, on the Heath near Cohen's Fields.
[127] Phyllis Hembry, *The English Spa: 1560–1815, A Social History* (London: Athlone Press, 1990), 103.
[128] Park, *Topography and Natural History of Hampstead*, 50-51.
[129] This coincided with a rise in tourism in the eighteenth century and a revived interest in antiquity.
[130] Hembry, *The English Spa*, 100.

crucial focal point, as the aesthetic pleasures of Hampstead Heath came to be viewed not solely as a reason to visit the spa, but also as one of the key aspects of the spa's effectiveness: alongside the water, the clean air and rolling hills of Hampstead were part of the medicinal water treatment.

The intermingling of medical authority and commercial investment was crucial to the success of spas like Hampstead. Unlike many of Britain's other spas, the water at Hampstead was administered as a drink, not a bath. This meant that the waters could be prescribed and sold both on- and off-site. By 1698, advertisements for flasks of Hampstead's water, delivered daily to Fleet Street and elsewhere in London, were commonplace; some stated not simply the means for attaining such flasks but also that they had "been approved by the most eminent physicians around London".[132] So while taking therapeutic waters had been commonplace in Britain for nearly a century, at the end of the seventeenth century, pamphlets on the benefits of waters appealed to medicinal and scientific rather than spiritual or theological knowledge.[133]

Dr. Gibbons, the first physician to endorse the waters at Hampstead, claimed they were "full as efficacious" for the treatment of all manner of ailments as any chalybeate waters in England, and continued to drink several glasses per day until his death in the early-eighteenth century.[134] It was under Dr. Gibbons's recommendation that Hampstead became recognized for its waters. Visitors were supervised by physicians and instructed to take the waters in the morning, advised in their diet, encouraged to enjoy the array of mild entertainments on offer, and encouraged to walk on the Heath, enjoying its clean air as a respite from London. So the

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[131] Ibid., 102.
[132] Park, *Topography and Natural History of Hampstead*, 52fn.
[133] This shift is crucial in the growth of the spa industry in Britain. Christopher Hamlin notes that in the pre-modern era, the powers of waters were legitimized on religious or spiritual grounds. In the 17th and 18th century, however, this shifts towards scientific study and medical knowledge, lending doctors and their spas legitimacy in an increasingly scientific age. Hamlin, "Chemistry, Medicine, and the Legitimization of English Spas, 1740-1840", in *Medical History* 34, supplement S10, ed. Roy Porter (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of medicine, 1990), 68.

entanglement of medical, environmental, and commercial factors in Hampstead's growth in this period is obvious.

By the 1730s, Hampstead had become so popular and busy that it had begun to attract an "undesirable" crowd. This shift was in part due to the village's proximity to London and rapid growth, and in part to its popularity with Londoners who came for gambling, dance halls, and other recreations. Coachloads of "disreputable characters" were arriving in Hampstead to take in gambling, bull-baiting, and horse-racing on the Heath. As Barratt writes, "Nothing could be well worse, or more out of harmony with Hampstead's pure air and natural beauty, than the fever of gambling, dissipation, irregular marryings, the loose pleasures which had characterized the place, while Hampstead Wells and Belsize were in the hands of unscrupulous speculators".[135] While the early popularity of the waters had been in response to the region's therapeutic qualities, the provision of entertainment at Hampstead and nearby Belsize resulted in the flight of health-seeking crowds from the spa, as dance halls, races, and gambling drew a wider crowd, underscoring a class-tension that would characterize public-use of the Heath for the following centuries.

In 1734, another medical authority, village physician John Soame, weighed in on the waters' efficacy in print and attempted to reclaim the spa's reputation. He appealed to prior medical professionals, like Gibbons, to whom he credits much of his knowledge of the waters; established a long-term association with the site (Soame noted that he had resided in Hampstead for several years as a physician); demonstrated the qualities of the waters through

[134] Chalybeate waters were used in the treatment of a huge number of ailments, including melancholy, stomach illness, and hysteria. See below for a full list of the claims made on the Hampstead waters.
[135] Barratt, *Annals of Hampstead* Vol. 1, 238.

experimentation; provided clear instructions for the use of the waters; and established the quality of the waters by diminishing the qualities of other spas in the region.[136]

The growth of scientific study of therapeutic waters in Britain emphasized the waters' peculiar and unique powers, and was deeply linked to the growth of the spa industry. As historian of science Christopher Hamlin notes, early-eighteenth century physicians' accounts of waters as having "special qualities" maintained that the peculiar mixture of each spring's water could not be sustained for long outside the setting of the spa, thus necessitating the construction of an entire industry to sustain access to the waters at their source.[137] That is, notions of the waters' medicinal qualities implicated local amenities like accommodation and recreation; bottled waters, taken from their source, would lack the very qualities propounded by physicians. This was likewise furthered by physicians' recommendations that waters be taken within the context of the spa and its recreations, "that the amenities of the spa—scenery, food, peace, amusement—were as much part of the effect as were the material effects of the waters".[138] A visit to the Hampstead spa was more than just a trip for medicinal water, but a visit to the entirety of the landscape: the hillsides and clean air, especially.

Soame's study of Hampstead was a model of its kind, combining scientific study with salesman-like descriptions of Hampstead. He cited the waters as a cure for all manner of malady, including gout, leprosy, kidney stones, sterility, miscarriage, scurvy, indigestion, cholic, etc.[139] He then went on to extoll the virtues of its locale, asking his reader "where is there a finer and more pure Chalybeat Water than Hampstead Wells? And for Air, where have you a more balsamic, dry, and clean Air than at Hampstead? And for Exercise, where have you a finer

[136] John Soame, *Hampstead-Wells: or, Directions for the Drinking of Those Waters* (London: F. Clay and D. Brown, 1734), vii.
[137] Hamlin, "Chemistry, Medicine and the Legitimisation of English Spas, 1740-1840", 70-71.
[138] Ibid.

Country, better Roads, and Pleasanter Views than at Hampstead?"[140] Though hyperbolic at times, the enlistment of the Heath's natural beauties, of medical efficacy, alongside the village's commercial amenities (which Soame recommends as part of his prescription), helped revitalize the medical and commercial success of the village, indicating a complex web of actors in the rise of Hampstead in the eighteenth century.

Likewise, Soame's means of experimentation and instructions for administration of the waters worked to establish his authority not merely as a familiar local physician but as a seemingly objective scientist. As medical historian Roy Porter notes, medical professionals commandeered the reputations of mineral waters, establishing a complex, performative regimen for both demonstrating their efficacy and establishing the best method for their use.[141] Soame's lengthy discussion of the medicinal claims for the waters functioned to establish his position as the most qualified physician for the spa while also providing an explicit account of the powers of the waters. Since chalybeate waters tended to be mild in taste and non-purgative, unlike stronger sulphurous waters, they were less likely to be convincing in their effectiveness.[142] Soame's text detailed at length a series of experiments performed upon the waters, noting that his experiments—and their successful replication by others—demonstrated the full force and vigour of the waters:

> To prove this Assertion, and shew the Strength of this Water, they will retain their Spirit and Chalybeat Quality, for some Years, in Bottles, either seal'd up at the Spring-head, or Oyl put on the top of the Neck of the Bottle, and so cork'd down;

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[139] Soame, *Hampstead-Wells*, 35-41, and Appendix.
[140] Ibid., 35.
[141] Roy Porter, "The Medical History of Waters and Spas", in *Medical History* 34, supplement S10, ed. Roy Porter (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1990), xii.
[142] David Harley, "A Sword in a Madman's Hand: Professional Opposition to Popular Consumption in the Waters Literature of Southern England and the Midlands, 1570-1870", *Medical History* 34, supplement S10, ed. Roy Porter (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1990), 52.

> and when you open this Water, and pour it into a Glass, it will sparkle and knit up, as well as any of the German Spaw Waters, and will be as brisk as a Glass of Champaign, or Herefordshire Cyder. This Experiment has been try'd by the ingenious Dr. Stephens, myself, and several other Gentlement of the Town, and it has answered in every respect as here related. As for the New Tunbridge Wells, I have not heard that any one, who has made the like Experiment, cou'd find, that those Waters would answer in any respect to the Hampstead Waters: the Reason seems to me very plain, for there is so quick an Avolution of the volatile and spiritous Particles of this Water, that in a few Minutes after it is remov'd from the Well, it turns cruddeled and foul.[143]

Soame's experimentation, then, demonstrated the powers of the waters and denigrated the waters of another nearby spa. As Hamlin notes, "the vast proportion of scientific activity on mineral waters was undertaken to promote one spa or denigrate another", as only one in ten spas were said to be successful.[144] Soame himself, as a local physician, would benefit from the continued success of this particular spa, and this fact remains inscribed in the very fact that his book served not solely as experimental evidence of the waters' efficacy, but as a guide for making use of the waters *under a physician's supervision*. Inseparable, then, were the commercial and medical interests of the spa.[145]

Apart from the commercial investment and medical authorities that encouraged the spa's growth, the waters themselves were obviously a key factor in Hampstead's growth. Physicians and historians have offered varied opinions over the physical constitution of the chalybeate

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[143] Soame, *Hampstead-Wells,* 29.
[144] Hamlin, "Chemistry, Medicine and the Legitimisation of English Spas, 1740-1840", 69.

waters at Hampstead—Soame, in 1734, reported the waters to be a sulphuric chalybeate, while Dr. Bliss, in 1802, contended that they were a simple carbonated chalybeate. But it is crucial to note, as geologist F.W. Rudler remarked in 1902, that "the chalybeate springs that rendered Hampstead at one time famous as a fashionable spa were entirely due to local geological conditions".[146] While the clear, free flowing Fleet wound its way through the region, the deeper mineral springs of Hampstead acquired their orange, ferruginous quality from the iron-rich sands through which the waters filtered on their way through London clay, and thus owed their powers to the geology of the Heath.

Part of Soame's efforts to promote the spa relied upon distinguishing Hampstead's waters from the waters of other spas. The exact powers of the water were repeatedly been framed in terms of vigour, potency, and force. The strength of the water, for Soame, appeared largely down to the quality of its carbonation, which he attributed to a vital force insofar as it bubbled, frothed, and seemed to transgress the expectation that water ought not to move once it has been contained. Soame referred to the tendency of the waters to pop the corks off bottles as a sign of its vigour, and as what sets it apart from non-therapeutic waters. The waters, here, were given medical, purgative, or laxative agency in their allopathic deployment, and likewise spoken of in terms of vitality. Ingesting the waters indicated, on some level, that the waters would retain some force or power that would, when mingled with a human body, produce the desired outcome—see above, for Soame's list of ailments treated by the waters—indicating that eighteenth-century Hampstead was co-produced by commercial and medical forces bolstered by the enrolment of this aqueous agency. This particular agency was what set the Hampstead waters apart from

[145] Though it may be worthwhile to note, here, as Hamlin does, that "We may well be misunderstanding the role of the medical practitioner, and the relations between doctor and patient, for if the accounts of the pompous spa doctors are correct, their patients must have been uncommonly gullible". Ibid., 67-68.

others, so it is crucial to read Soame's accounts of the waters' powers in the context of the spa as a particular medical and commercial entity. The rise of Hampstead as a spa was contingent on a belief, advocated by Soame, that the waters would have some intended effect specific to Hampstead, one of many spas in competition at the time. The waters, then, did have a very material impact on Hampstead: in attracting visitors to the site.

What is of particular interest, however, is that—given little but anecdotal evidence that the chalybeate waters were actually effective in treating the ailments listed by Soame—this co-production of Hampstead as a spa town enlisted far more than the waters. It also enlisted the therapeutic powers of the Heath and its environs more widely.[147] The waters themselves, as mentioned earlier, acquired their iron-rich quality from the sand and clay soil of the Heath. Consider also, for example, Soame's assertion that the "balsamic, dry, and clean air" of Hampstead was a key to effective treatment, and the fact that visitors to the spa came for more than simply the water, but for fresh air, recreation, and walks on the Heath.[148] The notion of the Heath as a major recreation ground today is thus intimately tied to the spa industry, with much of the village growing up around the spa industry. There was an intimate relationship between the commercial fortunes of the village and the nonhuman forces—the waters, the air, the geology, the Heath broadly-speaking—in the growth of Hampstead in the eighteenth century. Of course, the village's attraction as a retreat from London began in earnest some decades prior to the discovery of the chalybeate waters and the rise of the spa. But it was only after the discovery of the chalybeate springs that Hampstead truly grew. Amenities for leisure travellers—including

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[146] Rudler, "*The Geology of Hampstead, Highgate and the Neighbourhood"* in Hampstead Scientific Society, *Hampstead Heath: Its Geology and Natural History,* London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913, 43.
[147] Harley notes that physicians throughout the spa boom in England doubted the powers of the waters, and remarks that the relaxation and fresh air of the spa, in any case, could account for the effectiveness of the cure. Harley, "A Sword in a Madman's Hand", 54.
[148] Soame, *Hampstead-Wells*, 35.

dance halls, taverns, and hotels—sprang up to meet the demands of visitors to Hampstead, and what was a fairly quiet village grew into a destination for the upper classes.

Thomas Barratt notes that Hampstead's distance from trade made it a destination for wealthy Londoners, who "coveted its picturesque quietude and pure air", establishing homes in Hampstead and around the Heath, leading the region to slowly outgrow its "agricultural character".[149] Some entertainments had sprung up by the mid–seventeenth century to cater for the upper classes who took to Hampstead to escape the city, the most whimsical of which was the Great Hollow Elm at Hampstead. Though its location on the Heath is no longer known, and few records of the tree survive, visiting the elm was "a summer-day custom" for the leisure classes at Hampstead.[150] A hollowed trunk with a winding staircase, lit by carved out windows, the tree featured an octagonal turret, capable of accommodating up to twenty at a time. The views from the top of the tree are said to have stretched across Middlesex, though only scant illustrations and poetic references to the tree now remain.[151] So while the water would most drastically shape Hampstead's fortunes, the tree was one of the first known destinations for leisure and recreation on the Heath. So Hampstead's growth and development as a destination for Londoners was at the outset linked to nonhuman factors—the medicinal waters, the Great Elm, the air—and their deep entanglement with the human community at the site.

The village's shift in reputation—from a quiet agricultural village on the hill to destination for the health and entertainment of the wealthy—was not without its consequences. The carriages carrying wealthy visitors to Hampstead from London along heavily forested roads became a target for highwaymen and thieves. The Northern Heights, as Hampstead and nearby Highgate were known, with hills and woods towering above London, became famous for

[149] Barratt, *Annals of Hampstead*, vol. 1, 75.
[150] Ibid., 169.

attracting the lowest denizens of society—Dick Turpin, Britain's most notorious highwayman, is said to have been such a regular at the Spaniards Inn in Hampstead that he had his own key—as well as the moneyed landowners who took to the region for its clear air and hunting. The tension between Hampstead's desirable position above London, lending it clean air and distant views, and the region's forests' suitability for highwaymen and footpads was not entirely resolved by its shift in popularity. Coaches bringing visitors from London were often forced to carry armed guards, and the scenic landscapes of the Heath—prescribed by spa physicians for relaxation—were presided over by the rotting corpses of gibbeted highwaymen near Jack Straw's Castle, on the northern edge of the Heath.[152]

The significance of the waters themselves, however, ought not to be underplayed, despite the success of speculators in profiting from other entertainments in the village. While this chapter will primarily focus on the Heath's ponds in the following sections, the significance of the chalybeate springs warrants some sustained attention. By considering the intermingling of commercial, medical, aqueous, and mineral forces specifically, the case of Hampstead's chalybeate waters illustrates the extent to which cultural and natural forces in the region have been, by and large, inseparable. The waters themselves are entangled with far more—air, landscape, plantlife, and social or cultural factors—in shaping the site. Water has not been a passive participant in Hampstead's situation, such that we might take to heart historians Deborah Wolton's and David McDowall's assertion that "water flow shaped the Heath".[153]

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[151] Accounts of the Elm can be found in Ibid., 168-169; and White, *Sweet Hampstead*, 31-32.
[152] Ibid., 156-157.
[153] Deborah Wolton and David McDowall, *Hampstead Heath: A Walker's Guide* (Richmond: David McDowall, 2006), 25.

ii. The Grounds at Kenwood

As I mentioned earlier, the eighteenth century saw the development not solely of the spa industry at Hampstead, but the flourishing of the Northern Heights stretching between Hampstead and Highgate as a site for villas in the manner of country estates, just within reach of London. Chief among them is Kenwood (Caen Wood), which now sits on the northeast of the Heath, bordering Highgate. While the Estate at one point encompassed some 230 acres, sections of it were sold and built upon or added to the Heath throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such that just 112 acres of the estate now remain fenced and managed by English Heritage as part of the Kenwood Estate. I will return to the topic of land acquisition at Kenwood in Chapter Four, but for now it suffices to consider those 112 acres, which encompass the landscaped grounds of the Estate. The Estate provides an interesting counterpoint to the rest of the Heath, because it is effectively a country estate within the borders of Hampstead Heath. Moreover, major redevelopment of the site—with the construction of its two ponds and the redesign of its landscaped gardens—followed shortly after Hampstead's boom as a spa town. The roles of water and clay in the redesign of Kenwood contribute to an understanding of the Heath as an aesthetic object, shaped by specific eighteenth century aesthetics concerns. In turning to Kenwood, then, I underscore the significance of aesthetic experience of the Heath, among other factors, to the history of the site.

The house at Kenwood, originally presumed to have been built in the seventeenth century for John Bill, the King's printer, was purchased by William Murray, the First Earl of Mansfield, in 1754.[154] Murray commissioned an extensive remodelling of the house by Robert Adam between 1764 and 1779, when it was not so much a country estate as a villa in a working farm

[154] London County Council, *Survey of London: The Village of Highgate*, vol. 17, eds. G. Gater and W.H. Godfrey (London: Joint Publishing Company of the LCC and London Survey Committee, 1936), 126.

landscape. After Murray's death in 1792, his nephew, David Murray, the Second Earl of Mansfield, inherited the Estate and carried out extensive remodelling of the landscape and grounds. In 1793, he commissioned proposals for the garden from Humphry Repton, and while Repton was not retained for the duration of landscaping on the site, some of his proposals were carried out and crucial in achieving the idealized picturesque landscape English Heritage is currently in the process of restoring at the site. The Second Earl died just three years later in 1796, but during this short span drastically altered the landscape around Kenwood: in constructing a new road, effectively extending the grounds to the north; in demolishing a number of structures on the west, consistent with Repton's recommendations; in constructing new offices, stables, and outbuildings to the east; and in extending the grounds of the landscaped pleasure garden.[155]

Today, the gardens are managed by a team of six gardeners who draw on fairly limited archival research carried out by English Heritage, who in turn primarily focus on the preservation of the house, to replicate the garden as it was "historically". In practice, this means working to restore the gardens to the plan and vision provided by Repton. Not everything Repton proposed was realized, but in any case, his plans provide the most cohesive vision for the garden. As most of the records for the garden are in the Mansfield Archive at Scone Palace, the gardeners rely largely on existing land surveys, past English Heritage records, and their own knowledge and improvisation to maintain the site.[156] Occasional research helps the team to round

[155] See, for example, the misnamed "Pritchard Plan" of 1793 for a glimpse of the site prior to alteration by the 2nd Earl. J. Prickett, Land Surveyor Highgate, "Plan of the Grounds about Kenwood house; including gardens, pleasure grounds and two ponds", 1793, drawing. British Museum BH/FF10/British Framed PIV.

[156] As an aside, it is interesting to note that improvisation and experimentation are approaches that have characterized the Estate's gardens throughout its history: as English Heritage's gardening staff today work to combine patchy historical records with their own skill in the reconstruction of a "historical" site, gardening records from the 1790s-1840s demonstrate extensive experimentation in farming and gardening methods on the site. The Third Earl of Mansfield in particular took great efforts to correspond with his gardening staff, and letters from the 1810s indicate that experiments were common and carried out in collaboration between landowner and staff,

out their picture of the gardens, but in many ways it is a collaborative effort that draws not solely on the expertise of a wide range of people (gardeners, local historians, volunteers, researchers like myself) but also on the existing representations of the garden across a huge span of time periods. So what you see at Kenwood today is not simply a replication of Repton's vision, but a palimpsestic, tangled vision of the site from the mid-eighteenth century through to the twentieth.

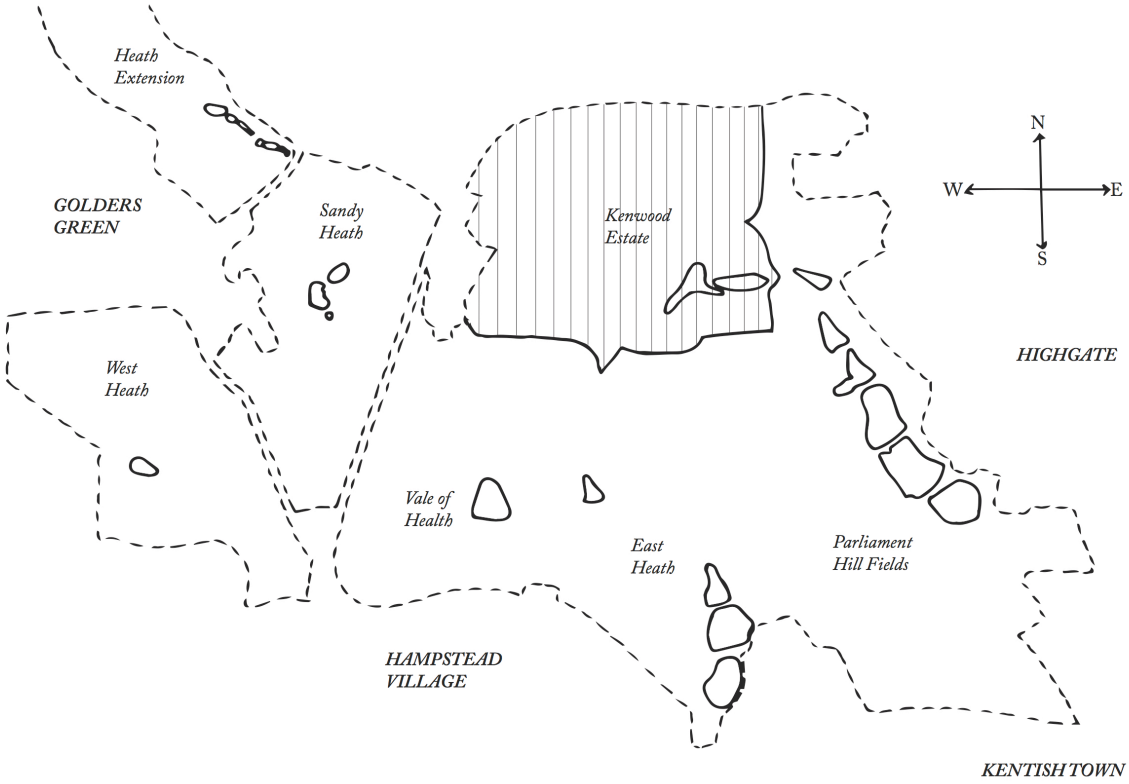


Figure 14 Kenwood within the borders of the Heath

The construction of the ponds at the site in the mid-eighteenth century and the later redesign of the garden in the 1790s both involved intensive geological intervention in the

whether in feeding pigs boiled garden waste to see if it was suitable, the construction of wooden tubs from the Estate's woodland for use on the site, or exploring the best materials for general maintenance of the Estate's buildings and gardens. Edward Hunter to David William Murray, 3rd Earl of Mansfield, 1818, MA Box 108, Bundle 8.

landscape, altering not only the flora on the site, but changing the topography itself. Here I will discuss two key interventions in the landscape at Kenwood: the construction of the ponds, which relied upon a confluence of human and nonhuman agency; and the reconstruction of the gardens in the wake of Repton's proposed redesign, which fused this extensive human and nonhuman labour with aesthetic ideals of the picturesque garden. Drawing on both Tsing's analysis of entangled, more-than-human agencies in the production of landscapes, I point to the ways in which the creation of the landscape at Kenwood cannot simply be understood as the execution of Repton's plans: clay, cattle, sheep, trees, and other nonhumans all had an active role in shaping the gardens at Kenwood. In this sense, Kenwood is a site of multiple stories and narratives, all of which are crucial to gaining a fuller picture of the origins of the landscape as it appears today.

Kenwood has two ponds—Wood Pond, built first, and Thousand Pound Pond, built by Lord Mansfield and so named, presumably, for its cost of construction—both of which sit at the south-eastern end of the gardens. The exact date of their construction is unknown, but from surveys and records it can be assumed that they were built some time *after* the Highgate and Hampstead Ponds and *before* the Robert Adam's 1764 renovation of the house; that is, between 1745 and 1764.[157] Only small fish ponds in a formal garden are shown on Rocque's 1745 map of London (Fig. 15). As historian Alan Farmer points out, John Wootton's 1760 painting, *View from the Terrace at Kenwood,* indicates that most of the landscaping at Kenwood was carried out before 1760.[158]

[157] A full version of Rocque's 1745 map of London: An exact Survey of the City's of London Westminster, ye Borough of Southwark and the country near ten miles round; begun in 1741 and ended in 1745, by J. Rocque; and engrav'd by R. Parr, 1746, (Hampstead), is available online at The British Library. Robert Adam refers to the ponds in his description of the grounds. See London County Council, *Survey of London: The Village of Highgate*, 114.



Figure 15 Detail from J. Rocque, "An exact Survey of the City's of London Westminster, ye Borough of Southwark and the country near ten miles round; begin in 1741 and ended in 1745, by J. Rocque; and engraved by R. Parr, 1746 (Hampstead). © Courtesy of the British Library.

Like the Hampstead and Highgate ponds, and most waterways of this time period, the ponds here were constructed through *puddling*, a method of pond and dam construction using clay, lime, or chalk to form an impervious base. This in itself is unremarkable, but at Kenwood the geology of the site makes this prospect of puddling somewhat more challenging: the ground at Kenwood is primarily Bagshot sand and Claygate Beds, with London Clay suitable for puddling appearing some half a mile south.[159] So the clay for these ponds would have been hauled some distance, increasing work in an already labour-intensive process.

Methods for clay puddling, practiced as early as in the construction of Neolithic dew ponds on the Sussex Downs, were widely debated throughout the early-twentieth century, around

[158] Alan Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 45.

the time the methods gave way to newer technologies like pond liners.[160] The debate gives some insight into how this ancient practice may have been carried out on the Heath. Pond historian Edward Martin notes that areas rich with clay would naturally begin to pool water after rainfall, often demarcating the space at which a pond might be built.[161] What is remarkable in the case of the Kenwood ponds is that they are not built atop clay but upon claygate beds—essentially a mixture of fine sand and clay, which was porous—so it is a given that pure clay would have had to be collected and transported from the London Clay beds, and the quantity of clay required would have been enormous. In any case, once the site had been selected, the pond would be dug out and a layer of finely-puddled clay would be laid over the base. This would then be trampled down, either by men or by livestock, and another layer of clay would be applied and trampled. Following this, stones would be strewn across the clay, so protecting the impervious clay bottom. Transport of the clay to Kenwood would have required carts and oxen or horses. The uphill journey from the nearest clay deposits compounded the work.

It is important to note, here, three key forces that influenced the construction of these ponds: human agency in selecting the site and supervising the construction; the local geology in shaping the kind or amount of labour required to achieve the ponds' construction; and the labour of livestock in carting and trampling clay. The involvement of livestock, in particular, is worth pausing over. Beyond carting the clay to the site, some pond scholars note that cattle-ways have

[159] See Figure 2, in the Introduction, p. 3.
[160] Debates around the construction of dew ponds resulted in extensive discussion and experimentation on clay puddling methods. See Arthur John Hubbard and George Hubbard, *Neolithic Dew-Ponds and Cattle-Ways* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905); Walter Johnson, *Folk-Memory, or the Continuity of British Archaeology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908); Edward Martin, *Dew Ponds: History, Observation and Experiment* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1914); and Alfred J. Pugsley, *Dewponds in Fable and Fact* (London: Country Life, 1939). A more contemporary account of puddling methods, with detailed instructions, can be found in The British Trust for Conservation's guide, *Waterways and Wetlands* (London: The British Trust for Conservation, 1976). NHM.
[161] Martin, *Dew Ponds*, 102.

long resulted in "unintentional" ponds where cattle have over time trampled the clay.[162] But the active engagement of livestock in sealing the clay bottoms of ponds has sparked considerable debate: it is contended, in Alfred Pugsley's 1939 text on ponds, that the layer of fine stones placed over the clay was so placed to prevent livestock from puncturing the puddled clay with their hooves.[163] Edward Martin, in 1914, notes much the same, quoting a Dorset pond constructor A.J. Hogg on the process. The base of the pond, he writes, is:

> covered with about 9 inches of clay, dry enough to allow of being rammed or beaten into a solid mass, upon this another 9 inches of clay is firmly rammed; this producing a solid lining impervious to water of some 18 inches in thickness, over the whole of the sides and bottom of the pond. A final coating of stones or other hard material is added, to preserve the clay from injury by too deep penetration of the feet of the cattle using the pond.[164]

But Martin himself goes on to question this, noting that one pond in Sussex was reported to hold *more* water after horses were driven into the pond to clean their hoofs, thus indicating that trampling the base of the pond helps create a more impervious membrane.[165] In his own experimentation, he found that a flock of sheep, having trampled down a fence to access his experimental pond, had made many holes in the clay with their cloven hoofs.[166] The British Trust for Conservation, conversely, notes that while large animals like cattle might break through the surface if the clay is not thick enough (18 inches at minimum seems a benchmark), "sheep, on

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[162] Ibid., 17; and The British Trust for Conservation, *Waterways and Wetlands*, ed. Alan Brooks (London: British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, 1977), 7.
[163] "In the past, puddled bottoms of clay or certain kinds of chalk were much favourited, and this method is still used by the Smiths. The clay seems to have been put on in layers with either lime or soot to prevent the boring of earthworms. Above this softer impervious layer it is necessary to have a harder layer of flints or rubble to prevent the hoofs of animals breaking the puddled layer." Pugsley, *Dewponds in Fable and Fact*, 32.
[164] Martin, *Dew Ponds*, 91-92.
[165] Ibid., 105.
[166] Ibid., 143.

the other hand, may actually improve the lining because their treading helps to seal any small cracks which form".[167]

I labour this point because though the extent to which livestock were employed in the Kenwood ponds' construction remains ambiguous, they would certainly have been engaged in carting the clay and were certainly enrolled in the maintenance of the landscape after Repton's redesign. It is possible they carried out much of the labour of puddling. Because Kenwood had cows and sheep throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is vital to consider that the process of pond construction did not exclude them—they may well have been vital to it.[168] The achievement of aesthetic goals in the landscape garden thus relied directly upon their labour, indicating that any understanding of the landscape requires an understanding not solely of the human agencies involved in shaping them. Repton, likewise, included sheep and cattle in the garden because they added to the scenery. Animals, then, laboured on the site not solely in the physical transportation of material, but in their presence as decoration; the two are not separable. It is worth taking stock of the myriad nonhuman agencies that push back upon achievement of the landscaped garden, and while this chapter takes water and clay as starting points, the role of livestock, grassland, and other agencies in the achievement of the ideal Kenwood landscape ought not be underemphasized. Acknowledging these nonhuman agencies allows for a more nuanced understanding of how picturesque aims like Repton's were in fact carried out, and provides a more complex picture of the scenic landscape garden as a site of both human and nonhuman labour. As Tsing says of matsutake picking, "it is haunted by labor".[169] The Heath resists efforts to simplify narratives about its landscapes; as each case study in subsequent

[167] The British Trust for Conservation, *Waterways and Wetlands*, 81.
[168] In addition to the difficulties presented by the clay's location, and the labour carried out by livestock, it is worth mentioning, at least as an aside, that pond construction required the addition of lime to the clay in order to prevent the destruction of the pond base by worms. Martin, *Dew Ponds*, 109-110.

chapters will demonstrate, the constellation of agencies involved in the co-production of the landscape exceeds the simple categories of human intervention, or even my own focusses of water and clay (or later, grassland and hedgerows, among others).

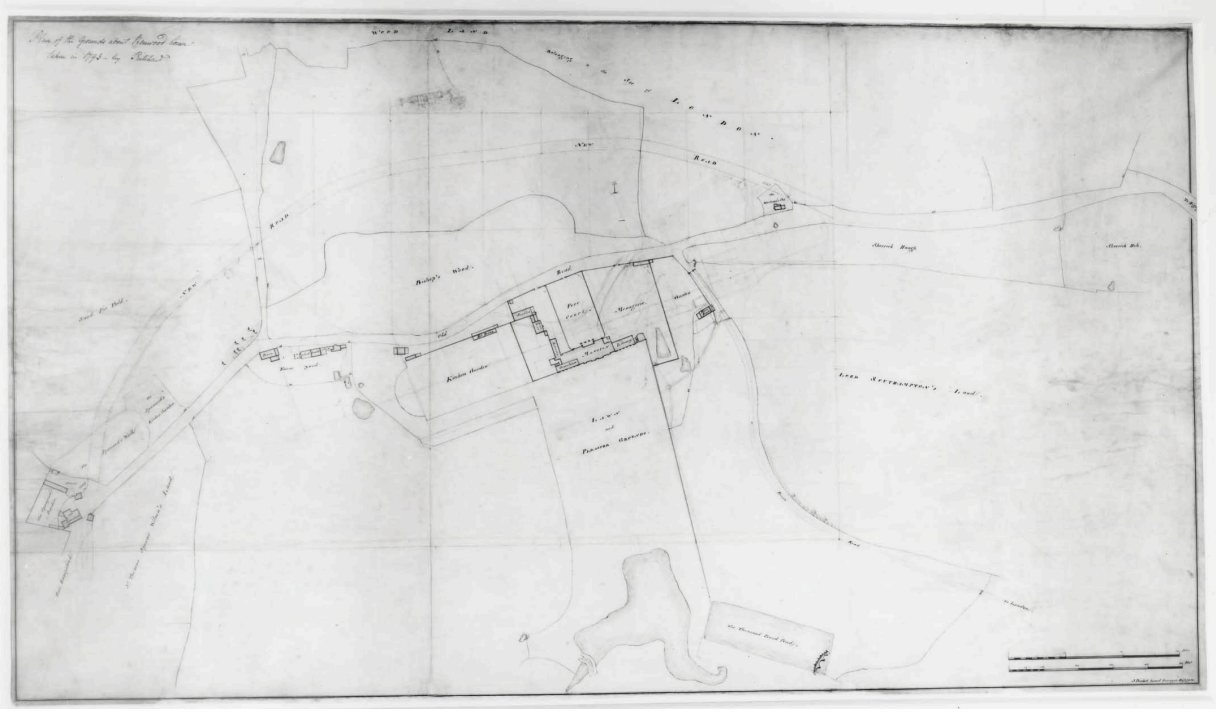


Figure 16 Pritchard (J. Prickett), Land Surveyor Highgate, "Plan of the Grounds of Kenwood house; including gardens, pleasure grounds, and two ponds", 1793, drawing. © Trustees of the British Museum.

The creation of the landscape at Kenwood as English Heritage envisions it today has drawn on the labour not solely of livestock, but also on extensive design, negotiation, and experimentation, all within the context of picturesque landscape aesthetics. As I indicated above, the grounds at Kenwood are being restored to what English Heritage views to be Humphry Repton's plans, but this is at best an act of interpretation: only some of his ideas were carried out, but the images provided by his *Red Book* of designs for Kenwood provide an instructive link between the practice of landscape gardening and the aesthetics which it sought to achieve.

[169] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 78.

Landscape gardening in eighteenth century Britain was deeply related not solely to landscape painting, but to aesthetic theory more widely. Picturesque aesthetics were preoccupied not solely with painting, but with the degree to which landscape ideals in painting and gardening were interrelated.[170] Specifically, advocates of the picturesque sought landscapes (and paintings) which demonstrated qualities of stylized informality, whether through qualities of roughness, variation in the landscape, aged ruins or follies, and other features which undermine the uniformity of a surface. Simply-put, picturesque landscapes ought to be "picture-like", though even the earliest advocates of the picturesque acknowledged the reciprocity of the painting and gardening. Humphry Repton followed in the footsteps of Lancelot "Capability" Brown, and both of them were landscape designers responsible for rejecting the formality of previous, French-influenced landscape gardening styles for the relaxed style of the English landscape garden, drawing on picturesque ideals. Repton was famed for the flair of his presentation style, which, mirroring aesthetic theory's understanding of painting and landscape gardening as interrelated, made use of painted proposals for his landscaping commissions.

By 1793, when Humphry Repton had arrived at Kenwood, the pleasure grounds and ponds were well-established and part of a fairly unimaginative landscaped garden: laid out with strict rectangular borders (see Fig. 16), much of the Estate was devoted to farm land, and the grounds around the house in particular were taken up by a busy kitchen garden and farm. Repton's designs would seek to alter this drastically, and much as in the construction of the ponds decades earlier, two key factors were relevant in the achievement of Repton's aesthetic goals: the need to re-shape the very ground on which the Estate was built (through the movement

[170] See, for example, Uvedale Price, *On the Picturesque: With an Essay on the Origin of Taste, and Much Original Matter* (London: William S. Orr and Co., 1842 [1794]).

of hillsides, the use of plants, and the reconstruction of buildings and roads); and the presence and use of sheep and cows as both scenic additions and as a means for maintaining the grounds.

When Repton made his 1793 proposals to redesign Kenwood, he did so with picturesque landscape ideals in mind. In the first pages of the *Red Book* he developed for Kenwood, however, he noted that the Estate was a peculiar case in the effort to achieve picturesque scenery, because it was neither a suburban villa nor properly a country house. His design was intended to "possess all the advantages of the Country" while keeping in mind its proximity to the city, requiring not solely great changes in the structural features of the property, but also to the very borders of the property itself, as Repton sought, somewhat unsuccessfully, to expand the Estate. Nearly all of this was proposed with scenery in mind: Repton referred at times to the views out of windows from the house; to views over the London skyline; and to the best angles from which each section of the design might be appreciated.

The *Red Book* was, in a way, preoccupied with vision more than anything else. Repton arranged his proposals in a series of pop-up style paintings, which would open to reveal the proposed changes to the gardens. Though the style has its novelty, its "big reveal", pop-up quality and showmanship, what is most crucial to note is that Repton proposed his landscapes via landscape painting, which underscores the deep link between picturesque gardening and the picturesque more broadly-speaking.[171] The landscape and the painting are both objects of picturesque appreciation. But while he presented his work through painting, there is a sense in which the picturesque garden did take into account aesthetic experience more broadly than just visual experience. This does not mean to say that the visual was subordinated to the other senses, but rather that in the garden it became possible to put the body in service of achieving the best

[171] Repton argues that the two are deeply interrelated, especially in their reliance on perspective. See Humphry Repton, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (London: T. Bensley, 1805), 6.

possible view. In particular, Repton engaged the other senses through attention to how one ought to move through the landscape. In this sense, his designs underscore the importance of a full-body, multi-sensory aesthetic akin to Berleant's, even if his ultimate goal was the achievement of ideal views. As John Dixon Hunt notes, the picturesque garden is meant to be moved through, inviting the viewer in.[172]

Repton spelt out a series of walks, and advocated moving through the landscape so that vision might best be served. Movement was a key to Repton's approach to the landscape; he objected strongly to the overuse of ha-has with which "imaginary freedom is dearly purchased at the expense of actual confinement".[173] As he wrote in preface to his detailed summary of walks through the garden, "In disposing the Walks of a pleasure ground there are two objects to be considered, first that they should conduct the stranger to the most interesting points of view, and secondly that they should be the line of communication to some natural object of pursuit".[174] So the immersive experience of the garden is intended to privilege the visual aspect of the estate—in fact, the entirety of the landscape is put in service of this goal.

Specifically, Repton proposed the detailed construction of specific sightlines, some of which required intensive restructuring of the geological underpinnings of the site—literally the ground itself—but likewise in the deployment of plant and animal agencies to accomplish his desired aesthetic goal. He advocated, for example, the installation of a bridge and plantings between Wood Pond and the Thousand Pound Pond, in order to conceal the nine-foot difference in level between the two ponds:

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[172] John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque,* 120.
[173] Repton, "Preface", *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 13. A ha-ha is a ditch cut into a landscape so that landowners could divide their land, often keeping livestock out, without marring their extensive views with fencing. A ha-ha was used to give the illusion of a landscape extending at a greater distance than it did in actuality.
[174] Repton, "Walks", *Red Book for Kenwood (Middlesex)*, 1793. Mansfield Archives (MA), Scone Palace, Perthshire.

> The different levels of the several ponds would easily be concealed, partly by plantations, and partly by digging to alter the shape without decreasing the surface of the ponds; but as the mind is ever ready to admit Utility as one great source of beauty, so when we reflect that these ponds contribute to the existence and happiness of so many thousand human beings, it is a delightful circumstance to reflect, that they can become ornamental to the sequestered scenery of the most beautiful and interesting of all Villas.[175]

What is interesting is that Repton referred to a contract held with the Hampstead Water Company, who had leased the ponds at Kenwood for some time. Repton asserted that the fact that the water was used by locals made the prospect of the ponds even more beautiful! Repton was generally opposed to the signs of farm labour appearing in the landscaped garden, but presumably the relative invisibility of using the pond's water (in contrast to established agriculture) provided no obstruction to the appreciation of the landscape.[176] Consistently, despite William Gilpin's famous treatise on the picturesque specifically advocating the exclusion of signs of labour, utility could be viewed as an asset to the landscape in that the fact of ownership and use of the landscape mirrored aesthetic mastery in the form of the picturesque.[177] As visual cultural theorist Simon Ryan notes, the picturesque is "inherently appropriative", and therefore picturesque scenery is improved though use.[178] The relationship between the very minerality of the site—the clay that rests at the foundation of the ponds, the water that fills them—was and is

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[175] Ibid., "Private Approach".
[176] Repton, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 95.
[177] See Gilpin, *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty* (London: R. Blamire, 1792), 3, 53; and Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 59, 88.
[178] Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye*, 59. In landscape, of course, views on utility contrast wildly to concerns about utility and aesthetics in the arts; landscape history is a deeply interwoven history of ownership, use, and aesthetic concerns. See Ryan's brief discussion of the picturesque, ownership, Repton and landscape gardening, 72-73.

deeply entangled with notions of beauty in the landscape. The role played by mineral deposits on the Heath within aesthetic concerns is also discussed at length in Chapter Three.

Repton further proposed that trees be cunningly deployed in the reshaping of the view from Kenwood over London:

> By extending the terrace as proposed across the deep valley, we shall acquire a view totally unlike any other at Kenwood, and indeed superior in splendour to most others in the kingdom. I do not presume to introduce the preceding drawing as an exact portrait of the scene, because it is so crouded with great objects, that it is far beyond the pencils power to represent them free from confusion, but the sketch may serve to demonstrate the effect of planting out the foot path on one side, and of introducing the hanging wood by taking away some trees on the other; while the valley may be opened to display in its full force a terminating scene the most magnificent that can be conceived. But it is obvious that if <u>that</u> could be made to appear (which indeed is almost literally the fact) that the domain of Kenwood extends to the suburbs of the metropolis, it would add greatly to the importance of the scene, and this I have attempted to describe, partly by planting a skreen to exclude the red houses of Kentish town, and partly by introducing some ornaments no incongruous with the superb coup d'oiel; which I consider as a specimen of the sublime, or epic stile in Landscape Gardening.[179]

Deploying trees to screen out the view of Kentish Town and its working-class housing functioned roughly in the same manner as a ha-ha without actually confining the space, giving the illusion that Kenwood continued as far as the eye could see, virtually to London itself. This proposition, which indeed is visible today in the mature woods south of Kenwood, is one of the

earliest examples of a preoccupation with views from the Heath, and recalls Williams's description of "avenues opening to the distant hills, where no details disturbed the general view", with the signs of rural labour made invisible or aestheticised as picturesque.[180] Because heathland is characteristically sparse, only through the management of the surrounding woodlands can vistas be managed. In this case, Repton advocates encouraging woodland growth, drastically altering the open skylines of the landscape. I'll return to this matter in Chapter Four, on grass and woodland management in the twentieth century.

In other sections of the *Red Book*, Repton discussed the use of picturesque sheep on the hillsides, and at one point explicitly enrolled livestock as agents in the maintenance of the landscape:

> The increase of the pleasure ground shewn by the foregoing map, might be very objectionable, if we were also to increase the expence of labour by which it must be preserved; but at Kenwood it is possible to remove the present confined boundary, and at the same time lessen the quantity of lawn to be kept by the scythe; this I propose should be done by introducing sheep, which will enliven the prospect, while the shrubberies may be protected by a very slight fence, provided by large cattle from all the ground distinguished by a green was on the map.[181]

So while livestock were crucial to the construction of Kenwood's ponds, even more so than at the other Heath ponds, they were crucial too in the maintenance of the landscape envisioned by Repton. Sheep and cattle remained on site at Kenwood until the mid-twentieth century, and were crucial in the continued maintenance of grass habitats on the site.

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[179] Repton, *Red Book for Kenwood*, "View from the Terrace".
[180] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 125.
[181] Ibid., "The Lawn".

The redesign under Repton, not all of which was carried out, underscored not solely a deep reliance between humans and nonhumans, but also a profound entanglement between them in coproducing the site—from carrying out the labour in building the landscape to maintaining it through grazing. The reliance upon nonhumans is saying nothing new; it was a working farm.[182] But it was under Repton that it became evident that the aesthetic enrolled far more than human agency, and that the ideals by which the garden was reshaped deeply relied upon the totality of the environment—animal, vegetable, and mineral. The construction of both Wood Pond and Thousand Pound Pond, followed by the landscaping carried out under Repton, deployed mineral and animal agency not just in maintaining the surface of the landscape, but in moulding the ground itself. As much as water has shaped the Heath, clay held the landscape in place. And that labour itself required more than just water and clay, indicating that efforts to understand the Heath's landscape in any straightforward manner uncover a complex interweaving of agencies.

Today, the grounds at Kenwood provide a somewhat simplified picture of its history: there are no sheep or cattle, and the farm buildings have been converted into a café. The grassland, now maintained by a series of machines intended to replicate the historical grass management regime, is somewhat smoother and more anodyne than in previous times; no one, save a few gardeners, is at work, and the landscape isn't producing much of anything beyond English Heritage's marketable "history". But the ponds remain, as do the vistas, now grown in and looking remarkably like the paintings in Repton's *Red Book*, albeit with a much larger city on the skyline.

Moving towards the city today, in the following section I consider some of the Heath's ponds, a contemporary case in which water, clay, animals, and aesthetics are likewise

[182] Repton, in his *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, generally objects to uniting a working farm and landscaped garden, and in his proposals for Kenwood goes to great lengths to disguise and house

intermingled on the Heath. Stepping away from the archives and drawing on ethnographic work at the Kenwood Ladies' Pond, I point to the ways in which the roles of leisure, health, aesthetics, and nonhumans can be understood in relation to the Heath's water today.

iii. Swimming the Heath

> "Winter ice has its own particular music. The Pond has so many faces. The skeleton of the trees on a clear winter day and the mirror face in the water creates a parallel universe. The Pond is a stage for the changing scene"[183].

> "It's so nice to be free of children and dogs and men. They're all things that seem to take up more attention than I want to give them. Now I'm older, I can do things like that. I can say, 'No, I've got a limited time.' None of us know when we're going to die, but I've got a limited time left and I want to do what I want to do. And that's swimming here"[184].

> "There is a clearness in feeling cold, hearing the duck noises and looking across the dark water to the clutter of leaves floating at the far end. My senses are concentrated and shed everything except the present, what is seen and heard"[185].

In Chapter One, I discussed the recent controversy over the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, a massive construction project that is and will drastically reshape the landscape of the Heath, much

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the working buildings. See *Observations*, 90-95.
[183] A Ladies' Pond Lifeguard, quoted in Ann Griswold, *The Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond* (London: Association of Users of the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond, 1998), 34. BM/BL.
[184] Val, *Interview,* 15 February, 2015.

as it was drastically reshaped in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and, as we shall see, in the centuries that followed. Prior to the beginning of the Ponds Project construction, however, I spent two months swimming and interviewing swimmers at the Kenwood Ladies' Pond, one of the three designated swimming ponds on the Heath today. I swam the Heath myself, and conducted interviews with eight of the winter swimmers, seven women and one man, beginning with a series of simple questions—"How long have you been swimming?", "Why do you swim?", "Is there anything specific about the Heath that leads you to swim here?"—and allowing them to expand and stray from the questions as they talked. In doing so, I found myself not only finding profound similarities in the language they used—many described the meditative quality of swimming, and nearly all discussed kingfishers—but also negotiating the intricacies of this enclosed community, comprised for the most part of women much older than myself, many of whom were reluctant to discuss the ponds for a variety of reasons: avoiding controversy with the Ponds Project; wanting to maintain a sense of personal privacy at the pond; and wanting, in some sense, to keep the ponds secret.[186] Here, I explore their and my experiences of the Heath's ponds and situate the Heath's current pond communities within the historical context of water on the Heath more broadly: as linked and deeply related to the Heath's identity as a site of leisure, health, and aesthetic experience, manifested through the intimacy of human and nonhuman factors that have shaped the site. Methodologically, I draw on both the ethnographic work of Tsing and the descriptive aesthetics of Berleant, seeking to give voice not solely to an analysis of the ponds and swimming, but also to the immersive experience of swimming on the Heath.

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[185] Griswold, *The Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond*, 67.

[186] The swimmers: Hannah, has been swimming the Ladies' Pond for at least sixteen winters; Liz, has been swimming the Ladies' Pond for two winters; Val, has been swimming the Ladies' Pond for fourteen winters; Dagmara, has been swimming the Ladies' Pond for one winter; Nicky, has been swimming the Ladies' Pond for eight winters; Jane, a lifeguard and swimmer who has been swimming the Ladies' Pond for ten winters; Rachel, Chair of the Mixed Pond Association, has been swimming the Heath for twenty winters; Viv, has been swimming at the Men's Pond for eight winters.

Nesting descriptions of my own experiences swimming the Heath with analysis, I work on the basis of Tsing's assertion that a multitude of stories can serve as interruptions to a singular narrative.

Just a kilometre away from Kenwood's Wood Pond and Thousand Pound Pond, the Ladies' Pond is women's-only, lifeguarded, and open seven days a week, every day of the year. The Men's Pond is just a short walk from here, and fulfils the same function for the Heath's male swimmers. The Mixed Pond, located in the Hampstead chain of ponds, is open during the summer and serves a younger, more diverse community. The Heath's ponds have been used for swimming since at least the beginning of the nineteenth century, but it was only in the middle of the century that swimming saw a boom, with the introduction of bathing costumes, city baths, and the opening of the Serpentine Swimming Club in Hyde Park. The Heath's ponds, especially the Mixed Pond, had been informally used for some decades—though there is some indication that the nineteenth century landowner, Lord Wilson, had occasionally charged bathers, as he did with other visitors to the Heath—but it was only amidst calls to improve access to and safety of swimming that the London County Council officially opened the fully-staffed Men's Pond in 1893. The Ladies' Pond came much later, in 1926, as demand for a women's-only swimming place boomed.[187] Like the rest of the Heath, the ponds have been central to campaigning efforts on the Heath and are considered an incredibly valuable asset to the community, as reflected in the efforts of campaigners to protect them from the impending dam works. Here I wish to consider just what it is that makes these ponds, all of which were constructed in the late-seventeenth century, so valuable. Ultimately, my discussions with swimmers pointed to the roles of both swimming and the Heath in their lives: as dynamic, kinaesthetic, and therapeutic. Our discussions indicated that the ponds, in providing a community of not just humans but

nonhumans, provide perhaps the best, and certainly most immersive, means for experiencing the Heath's landscape.

When prompted to discuss their experience of swimming, all of the swimmers I met pointed to the immersive, fully-sensory experience of being in the water. While in Repton's redesign of Kenwood the focus was on aesthetic experience for the walker, swimming provides an aqueous counterpart for aesthetic experience. In his essay, "The World from the Water", Berleant writes that "swimming is the most intimate of water experiences".[188] While swimming might be a mode of intimacy with water, it is also the most poignant of kinaesthetic experiences: one feels one's body most when moving through the water, the fluid environment sliding against the skin in ways that air—barring very cold or very hot environments—does not. Touch, more than the other senses, is emphasized by swimming, though sight, sound, smell, and taste play a role. Likewise, the intimacy of swimming is, in part, an intimacy with an environment: one enters into it tactually in a more discernible way than in walking a landscape, and does so with little between the skin and the water, save perhaps a swimsuit. It is this intimacy, perhaps, that is underscored by the decision of so many Heath swimmers to forgo neoprene boots and gloves, let alone wetsuits, in order to more fully gauge their experience of swimming in the cold.

While swimming is not exclusively an aesthetic endeavour, few come to the ponds in winter for an athletic dip. There are a handful of indoor pools nearby, but none of the swimmers I spoke to would consider going to them. Because the cold accentuates sensation—cold on the skin, the dull ache spreading through the body, making it comparatively difficult to carry out each stroke—cold-water swimming requires a focussed attention to sensation and the body, exceeding the everyday. One swimmer, Liz, told me that she doesn't actually like swimming as a

[187] Caitlin Davies, *Taking the Waters*, 28-35; 37; 46.

sport, but that it is the ponds that keep her swimming: "It's not clinical, like a swimming bath would be. There's something slightly wild about it. I saw an enormous terrapin, must've been there about fifty years, basking on a lifebuoy, and I know there are crayfish in there. There's something about it being a real environment. A bit of murkiness and mystery".[189] She described the pond in words used by nearly all the swimmers: wild and mysterious. It is, arguably, a deeply-focussed aesthetic practice. Tactile sensation becomes acute; light, birdsong, and muddy fragrance seem as if distilled. As one swimmer, Nicky, explained, "Swimming here is meditative: in the summer it is a more lingering meditation, in the winter it is a more focussed meditation, because you have to contend with the cold, which is quite painful". It is in this meditative exercise that one luxuriates in the sensation of water, in having the senses drawn fully to the small focal point—one's body in the middle of the pond— in an accentuated experience of unity between body and environment.

Cold-water swimming is not explicitly a pleasurable aesthetic experience—indeed, it isn't meant here as such. Berleant's engagement aesthetics offer an understanding of aesthetics less premised on beauty or pleasure—though they are not excluded—than on sensory immersion and attunement to sensation. The heightened experience of swimming here might likewise be understood through Deweyan aesthetics, upon which Berleant builds, most specifically in the narrative unity experienced between stepping down into the water, swimming, and re-emerging to welcome the endorphin-rush that follows the cold. As Dewey notes, aesthetic unity is achieved

[188] Arnold Berleant, "The World from the Water" *Aesthetics and Environment: Variations on a Theme* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 62.
[189] Liz, Interview, 15 February, 2015.

in the consummation of an experience, in a sensory experience held together by some pervasive quality.[190]

This unity of experience is mirrored by the sense of unity between body and environment derived from swimming. The pain of the cold—which distils the experience—means that a sort of continuity emerges from a kind of adversity. As swimmer Hannah described, one submits oneself to the test of the water, as if it were some exercise in both pain and pleasure. In doing so, one becomes fully present, such that Hannah also described swimming as 'mind ironing', something that clears the mind as in meditation.[191] Indeed, the water itself leaves the body cleansed.

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Bright is the only word to describe it. Like staring directly at the sun, except instead of warmth flowing over your body, it's a sharp cold. Three degrees Celsius, thin sheets of ice floating a few feet away: the Ladies' Pond in February.

Moments earlier, in the thick humidity of the changing room, another long-time swimmer remarked that the moment before getting in the water is not the fun part; it's the instant in which we all think, "Why on earth am I doing this to myself?" And she is right. Lowering myself down the ladder and into the icy darkness, I ask myself why.

The week before the ice formed, I met with Viv, a fit-looking man in his forties who has swum at the Men's Pond for eight winters. We met in the warmth of a café, tea and coffee warming our hands as we chatted about the icy cold of the ponds. Without fail, Viv told me, he questions himself before every swim. "Why the hell am I doing this? Why do I do this? What is it that makes me do this?" he asked. "A lot of the people who swim on the Heath will concede

[190] John Dewey, *The Later Works, 1925-1953,* in *1934: Art as Experience*, vol. 10, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 43-44.

that the vast majority of the population think we're completely barmy, and we'll concede that they've got a point".[192] I agreed, and in the moment that I approach the ladder and step down into the icy black, I know I'm not alone.

On a sunny day, a few weeks later, Liz, a fellow Ladies' Pond swimmer asked the same question of herself as we chatted before her swim. The way she put it, swimming in winter doesn't quite make sense: "I am so not the kind of person who goes and swims in cold water. It's sort of got a nutty fruitcake element to it. I mean, why would anyone go and swim when the water is two degrees and where there are little icebergs floating around you? Why would you do it? Well, why would I? There's something of an addiction, there must be something about what it does to the body".[193] Liz had retired to the neighbourhood a couple years earlier and taken up winter swimming almost by accident, swimming week after week as the temperature dropped, eventually finding herself amidst the ice in the middle of December. Because so many people think winter swimming is a wild proposition, I'm unsurprised to find out that this is how many of the regular swimmers on the Heath got their starts.

"Around four or five years before I started swimming all year round, I would extend my seasons if you like, further and further, and I started to go into October, and I knew people who continued, because the further I went, the fewer people who would still be there," Viv told me. "And then I'd come up here in the winter, and I'd look at the pond, and think 'This is my park as much as anyone else's, this is my environment, this is nature, which is my brother, my sister, my friend,' and I'd look at the water and think, 'I should be a part of it! I should be in there. There's nothing to stop me except my own inhibitions or my own fears.' And then one year I just sort of

[191] Hannah, *Interview*, 15 February, 2015.
[192] Viv, *Interview*, 13 February, 2015.
[193] Liz, *Interview,* 15 February, 2015.

went for it. And it was a year when it was extremely cold, and there was a lot of snow. So if it hadn't been a baptism of ice and snow, it would've been a baptism of fire".[194]

Ice and fire seem apt in describing the sensation of winter swimming. The cold makes its way up my body as I lower myself down the ladder, but that's not the part I worry about. It's when I finally push off from the dock, submerging my chest, that I feel the sudden pain and short, sharp breath—what doctors call cold shock response. The initial pain in my chest spreads out slowly, into my arms, legs, fingers, and toes as they contract in the cold, but as I move, tracing broad circles in the water with my arms, the pain begins to subside. It turns to numbness. This numbness will only disappear once I've climbed out of the water, after a few seconds on the dock, when the fire appears: warmth spreading across my skin, red as a flame, as my body counteracts the chill of the pond.

But for now I swim a steady breaststroke, counting my strokes as I move towards the second white buoy from the dock. When I reach the ladder again, the lifeguard leans over and smiles, "You swam longer today!" Indeed, in the weeks before I'd wound my way between the two ladders, doing only a minute or two in the cold. I've grown self-conscious about swimming for so short a span after learning that Hannah, one of the most ebullient swimmers I've met, hasn't swum fewer than a hundred-and-twenty strokes this winter, regardless of the temperature. But after sixty-five strokes, my body is screaming to get out: months of acclimatising to swimming in the cold have taught me to listen to my body and not to stay in longer than it tells me. When I have stayed in, a rippling cold sets in to my torso and doesn't leave for the rest of the day; so it's a fine line between the elation that follows a good winter swim and spending the day cold.

[194] Viv, *Interview*, 13 February, 2015.

"It's the element of submission and triumph," Hannah explained as we sat in the grass overlooking the Bird Sanctuary Pond. "A bit like labour. If you trust your body, you have to submit. Not many Western women are trained to do it or to understand it that way, but I think it's very similar in a way that it requires a huge level of trust in the body, and the capacity to listen to what the body is telling you, and a trust in the veracity of what your systems will tell you. Like if you start to feel the burn on your feet you know you're too cold and you need to get out. Having the confidence that your body's actually going to signal when it's too much is part of the process of learning to swim in the winter. Because if you slather yourself in vast amounts of neoprene, in a sense you're still trying to keep control. Your mind is still not letting you submit your body to the test of the cold water on a regular basis".[195]

I've come to know my body's signals, in part by counting my strokes and in part through paying close attention to the creeping numbness that stretches through my limbs as I swim. If the pain stops and the numbness sets in, it's time to get out, even if it seems like I've just acclimatized. As one swimmer remarked, the numbness means death. Every swimmer has their own way of knowing. Dagmara, a first-time winter swimmer from Poland, pays close attention to her body, despite swimming some thirteen minutes in three degree water. I asked her how she times her swims and she told me she just *knows.*[196] Val, who at 74 has winter swum in the Ladies' Pond for 14 years (and in the summers for thirty), told me much the same: "I stay in as long as my body will let me. My body will tell me how I feel. I have this little place on my thumb, for some reason, that gets a tingling, so I know it's time to turn back. It just starts there, I

[195] Hannah, *Interview*, 15 February, 2015.
[196] Dagmara, *Interview*, 1 February, 2015.

don't know why. I don't think about it, I don't have to think about it. I do it".[197] Being in the water, it seems, is about being in your body more than anything else.

Rachel, who has swum at the ponds for over twenty years, described the peculiar ability of swimming to put her in touch not just with her body but with the landscape. "You're right in the middle," she told me. "You go swimming around and there are ducks and you see the kingfisher occasionally, and you feel a part of it, you don't feel separated from it". Like Liz, Rachel doesn't swim for the sake of swimming, but to feel in touch with world: "I go to see what's happening in the natural world. And it's just fantastic, watching the seasons come and go, and being aware of the seasons. Being aware of leaves forming, the different kinds of flowers you get, and that's, to me, *very* exciting. And a huge privilege, living in a great big city".[198]

As I spoke to the swimmers, our conversations circled around this idea: being in the middle of nature, watching the seasons unfold, feeling fully a part of the natural world by submerging oneself in it. Repeatedly, they pointed out that central London is just a few miles away, but that here the buildings and traffic seem distant. Instead, the electric blue flight of kingfishers catches their attention, along with the ducks and fish that populate the murky waters. Through being in the pond, often daily, the swimmers gain a sense not simply of their bodies in relation to the landscape, but of their place within a wider human and nonhuman community.

A felt closeness to the natural world, especially to birdlife, is common to all the swimmers. There is a unity not solely with water, but also with nonhuman animals, as in the Kenwood redesign's deep interweaving of minerals and animals. In his memoir about swimming the Heath's ponds, *Pond Life*, literary critic Al Alvarez returns to the birds again and again. Early in the spring, he writes, "Today the only birds on the water were a pair of grebes (newcomers?),

[197] Val, *Interview*, 15 February, 2015.
[198] Rachel, *Interview*, 29 January, 2015.

but over on the far edge was my old friend the heron, the first time I've seen him this year".[199] The birds in Alvarez's text are either newcomers and old friends like the other swimmers at the pond; indeed, what brings the text to life is the sense in which the characters that populate it are long-time members of the community, with new or unknown swimmers and birds upsetting the social order.

The role of birds in inviting both conversation and community is worth underscoring. Every swimmer I meet shares the story of their first kingfisher sighting, as if it were a rite of passage. The kingfisher, *Alcedo atthis*, famed for its colourful plumage and quick flight, has a nesting site between the Ladies' Pond and the nearby Bird Sanctuary Pond.[200] For Nicky, like many others, the rarity of the kingfisher and the ability to be in such close proximity to them is a crucial feature of pond life. "The first day that I swam here," she told me, "a kingfisher dipped down into the water, in front of my nose, and I was completely hooked".[201] She went on to tell me about a swim in which she swam alongside a kingfisher, a cormorant, and a heron, all fishing in the same water. Swimming deepens the felt closeness between swimmers and the birds, such that specific birds become part of the local community at the ponds, and are felt to be a bond within the swimming community *and* between swimmers and the landscape.

"A lot of conversations revolve around the bird life up there," Viv told me, "and we become quite protective of the bird life, so every year there'll be coots or moorhens which'll have chicks. And there'll be a sadness when we hear that one other chick has been lost, which happens. I think there was a duck that had about eight to begin with, or ten, and as the weeks went by it went down to eight, then seven, then six, but it's part and parcel of nature. And being in nature. I don't think I'd be as aware of that and of the passing of the seasons, and all of the

[199] Al Alvarez, *Pond Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 12.
[200] Atkins, *Hampstead Heath Ponds Project: Shortlist Options Report: Appendices* (London: Atkins, 2013), 70.

impact and implications of that, had I not been swimming at the ponds. I would have been a bit more dead to it. So I've become alive to those nuances and those details of the passing of the seasons, both in terms of the animal life, mostly the birds, but also the trees and stuff like that as well. Which is very enriching I think".[202]

The daily routine of swimming and the act of immersion in the same water result in a bond not solely between swimmers and the birds, but between members of the human community gathered at the ponds. As Viv explained, "I think the pond, the Heath in general but the pond in particular, and swimming at the pond year round combines the appreciation and the involvement with nature. Which is really paramount and really important, but it combines that with a sense of community as well. So I think there's a kind of sense in which the one follows the other".[203] Swimmers point to some sense of shared experience—of immersion in the same water as the birds and fish, but also one another—and a very specific sense in which each pond forms a sort of ecosystem unto itself: the sky and trees frame the swimmer's view, such that once you are in the water, there is only the small universe of the pond and its inhabitants, with the body as a central point. Swimmers in the changing room and lifeguards on the dock populate this environment as if there were no outside—indeed, the gates around each pond encourage this sense of separation—such that each pond becomes its own isolated community, overlapping only slightly, like the bubbles von Uexküll used to describe lived experience of the world for both humans and nonhumans. The magic of the Ladies' Pond, as Liz put it, is "to do with the environment, really, the trees and the birds and the solitude. This sort of mystic place. And just being women, because it's relatively little in life that one does without there being men".[204]

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[201] Nicky, *Interview*, 29 January, 2015.
[202] Viv, *Interview*, 13 February, 2015.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Liz, *Interview*, 15 February, 2015.

As in Alvarez's *Pond Life,* the balance of the pond communities hinges on this sense of enclosure from the outside, and at the Men's and Ladies' Ponds, the gender-segregated seclusion. The winter swimmers at the Ladies' Pond get to know one another, as well as the lifeguards, but there is a sense of order instilled by the repeated and continual presence of the long-time swimmers. As Hannah told me, "Over time you become part of the community. And there is this huge community of incredibly unusual, idiosyncratic, able, intelligent women. Self-directed women".[205] When I met with Val, who has swum at the pond since the 1980s, a handful of other swimmers stopped to chat and she introduced me to them. The lifeguards, too, form part of the rhythm of the place: they get to know the swimmers, some more than others, and are active community members themselves. One lifeguard, Jane, organizes regular swims on quarter days, with women gathering with flowers for their swim at the spring equinox. As dam works begin at the ponds, Jane asks swimmers to come by and do woodwork with her on the felled trees from around the pond, so that the wood might become *even more* a part of the community, while the swimmers might share their stories with one another.[206] As Hannah explained, "There's a huge sort of solidarity here, in a way that, we don't live on streets where you know your female neighbours and have tea with them in the way that our grandmothers did".[207]

What is remarkable, however, is the way in which the ponds suspend the distant social order of the city: Londoners are renowned for their ability to never speak to one another, to avoid eye contact, to trundle along in their days as though they were not passing by thousands of other people. Most big cities are like that, but especially here. At the pond, such rules do not apply. Liz explained: "You get women wandering around with no clothes on, all shapes and sizes, and there's no 'body beautiful' thing at all. Nobody cares what anyone looks like. And people, I

[205] Hannah, *Interview*, 15 February, 2015.
[206] See Chapter One.

think, are very open—one has wonderful conversations in the changing room. Lots of women of different ages and different backgrounds, but united by doing this really peculiar thing that I can hardly explain. It's a very warm experience".[208]

Viv, at the Men's Pond, echoed this sentiment. "I think there's some kind of common bond which is formed between a lot of people who are from quite disparate backgrounds, because of the fact that they swim in this cold water, which is usually cold, the whole year round". Social class—which pervades most things in Britain—becomes less of an inhibitor. "You'll have justices of the peace and people who sweep the road and drive taxis, which are traditionally considered to be very different backgrounds, very different walks of life". Swimming, as he told me, provides the slip through which community is formed: "There's something about the fact that we all swim in that water the whole year around which really does draw us together".[209]

I wonder about this bond, as I return to the pond again and again, getting to know more of the swimmers. Some of the swimmers point to occasional spats—whether or not to turn on the changing room lights seems a hot topic—but between the swimmers and lifeguards, birds and fish, there seems a bond, slippery as it may be, formed in water. As Viv told me, "We want it to be as wild and free as it possibly can. And that's something that we all share. And I think that's been born partly out of our experience of being as in the wild as we possibly can, which is stripped off and in the water, with all the pikes, and the germs, and the ducks".[210]

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[207] Hannah, *Interview,* 15 February, 2015.
[208] Liz, *Interview*, 15 February, 2015.
[209] Viv, *Interview*, 13 February, 2015.
[210] *Ibid.*

With all the pikes, and the germs, and the ducks: the pond landscape is neither anodyne, passive, nor neutral. It is not merely a therapeutic backdrop for swimmers to while away their cares. It is, rather, a vibrant and active community produced daily through the presence and actions of myriad humans, birds, fish, insects, microorganisms, minerals, grasses, trees, and more. As Tsing writes, "Once we include pests and diseases, we can't hope for harmony; the lion will not lie down with the lamb".[211] These are stories that disrupt straightforward telling. In considering this place, it is wise to take care not to slip into an idealized vision of the pond and its community/ies without tensions, or without the risks of narrative anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. The swimmer in the middle of the pond, after all, has been the central point from which this section has flowed, so it is crucial to attend to the pond's nonhuman residents, too. I am reminded by Viv's mention of germs that, in 1987, the ponds had to be closed due to dangerously high levels of E. coli bacteria, which entered the pond environment from polluted water being dumped (presumably by a local resident) in a nearby ditch.[212] Here, human and nonhuman agency produced a situation in which the ponds had not simply potency, but also toxicity, the flipside of the Heath's springwater's supposed medicinal qualities during its period as a spa.

Or perhaps consider the rumours that the pike who populate the ponds, who we're told are routinely fished out, don't passively swim alongside us, and attend to the case described by Ann Griswold in her history of the Ladies' Pond:

> Vera recalls the lovely warm day when she was watching a woman dipping her toes off the deck. Vera warned her: 'You shouldn't do that, you're tempting the pike,' but the woman took no notice. A while later the woman suddenly screamed and hopped up onto one foot. There was blood all over the deck and the woman's toes were badly

[211] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 255.
[212] Griswold, *The Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond*, 29.

> bitten. Vera bathed and bandaged her foot, and sent the dabbler off to the Royal Free for a tetanus injection. Later in the winter about 13 large pike (some 1.5 kg each) were fished out of the Pond and transferred to others.[213]

It is crucial to acknowledge the ways in which nonhumans push back against any idealized understanding of their presence in the ponds. Swans do not populate the ponds in order to be aestheticized—indeed, the swans on the Heath are considered part of Britain's population of "wild" mute swans, *Cygnus olor*—and fish do not exist in the ponds to lend the environment an air of authenticity. The fish population in the ponds is rather varied: roach, bream, pike, and perch have all been found here, and are regularly fished out and transported to other ponds.[214] So a more robust sense of the complexity of human-nonhuman relations at the ponds, and on the Heath more widely, is demanded.

Likewise, it is crucial to consider who makes up the human communities at the ponds. Access to the ponds is free—charges are encouraged by the City of London Corporation but generally derided by the community, many of whom view the Heath as commonly "owned"—so as Viv pointed out, pond users span economic and class barriers, though there is little in the way of racial diversity, diversity in age, and diversity in geographic origin. How far swimmers travel for their swims varies greatly—a study carried about by Deborah Wolton in 1990 indicated that over ninety per cent of Heath visitors travelled no more than thirty minutes—but the bulk of swimmers live locally.[215] Hampstead and Highgate are predominantly white communities, with a high proportion of residents aged over 60, and with the majority of working residents employed

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[213] Ibid., 22.
[214] Ibid., 53.
[215] Deborah Wolton, *Hampstead Heath: A Visitor Survey*, (Dissertation, University of London, 1990), 32.

in professional jobs.[216] In Hampstead, especially, the proportion of residents employed in the financial sector is staggering, giving weight to a popular perception of Hampstead as now being home to bankers and the super-rich. But the neighbourhoods to the south of the Heath, while not significantly more ethnically diverse—Kentish Town is actually less diverse than Hampstead or Highgate, according to the 2011 census—are more economically diverse, and urban planning decisions to stagger community housing amidst residential developments mean that while the ponds are economically diverse, they aren't necessarily diverse in terms of race or age.[217] No statistics are kept specifically regarding racial diversity at the ponds but anecdotally, the fact that the ponds are regarded as "white and middle-class" has been brought to my attention on multiple occasions. Multiple swimmers pointed to a broader range of users at the Men's Pond than at the Ladies', specifically highlighting the contrast of orthodox Jewish swimmers with gay men who in summer sunbathe on the lawn outside the pond.

None of this serves to undermine the validity of aesthetic experience at the ponds. After all, as Berleant points out, "There is no simple sensation, no pure sensory perception, no experience of any kind that is not thick with associations, meanings, structures, and feelings"[218]. Rather it is worth interrogating the associations, meanings, structures, and feelings that inform or shape these perceptions. In unpacking the experiences of swimmers and the pond communities, we can, as Tsing advises, "turn to the beasts and flowers, not just as symbols and resources, but as co-residents and collaborators".[219]

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[216] Office of National Statistics, 2011 Census Visualisation Tools (accessed 28 May, 2015), http://data.london.gov.uk/census/themes/.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Berleant, "The Aesthetic Politics of Environment" in *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 181-182.
[219] Anna Tsing, *Friction,* 172.

For example, what does it mean to say "You're right in the middle", as Rachel did?[220] As I indicated earlier, there is a sense in which this section has been structured around the perception of the swimmer in the middle of the pond, but I think what is more rightly to be understood from this approach is that, if we start from sensory perception, there is an opening to environment in a way that is irreduceable to anthropocentrism. Many of the swimmers spoke about feeling a sense of unity when swimming in the ponds, as though immersion in the middle of the environment presented the perceptual possibility of greatly reducing the distance between the swimmer and their environment. We can view the process of cold-water swimming as an experience wherein "to emphasize the aesthetic in experience is to engage in openness, connectedness, cooperation, and to allow vulnerability".[221]

Swimming might be termed a practice that links "humans and nonhumans in creating a social-natural landscape," to borrow a notion from Tsing.[222] Participating in the pond community results over time in a biographical connection between humans and the landscape: many of the swimmers feel not only that they are cold-water swimmers, but that they are swimmers *in this place*, that this place in particular has an impact on their swimming. Swimming affords the swimmer an intimacy and engagement with the landscape that for Berleant, produces a sense of community, "a certain mutuality, a reciprocity of person and place, which gives us a sense of belonging".[223] Swimmers actively collaborate with nonhuman collaborators like birds, plantlife, fish, and water in constructing a sense of *place* in the ponds, actively experienced through immersion. So the description of a felt unity or bond with the ponds underscores Berleant's

[220] Rachel, *Interview*, 29 January, 2015.
[221] Berleant, "The Aesthetic Politics of Environment", 187
[222] Tsing, *Friction,* 200.
[223] Berleant, *Living in the Landscape*, 109.

assertion that "it is in these continuities that unify people and environment that community arises".[224] Stripped off and in the water, community is felt close to the skin.

iv. Conclusion

The experiences described by swimmers on the Heath underscore the continuing significance of the Heath to leisure, recreation, and aesthetic experience. In this sense, exploring the ponds today is a way of connecting with long-established uses of the Heath, from the spa that boomed with the discovery of chalybeate waters to the efforts to create an ideal picturesque landscape on the site. Each of these cases, to differing degrees, points to the palimpsestic character of the Heath: water and clay, like many of the pairings that title the following chapters, reappear, reshape, and reconstitute the landscape at a multitude of places and times. Now, turning from the focus of leisure and aesthetics, I turn to Chapter Three, *Sand and Weeds*, to consider the ways in which the Heath has been put to use in industrialization and shaped by efforts to acquire the site for the public in the nineteenth century.

[224] Ibid., 149.

Chapter 3: Sand and Weeds

"But let them meddle with Hampstead Heath, and may all they deserve follow, and follow quickly!"[225]

If you walk north from Whitestone Pond—a contemporary, minimalist water feature near the Heath's highest point—ducking along the tall brick wall and onto Sandy Heath, the ground becomes pitted and trenched beyond the trees' edge. Small hills and scooped-out valleys make up this tiny, triangular spit of land, abutted by main roads on each side. The ground is closely-packed sand and gravel, covered over with leaf mulch and stray fragments of gorse, which has been restored to this part of the Heath. As you reach the base of the path, the shallow "Iron Pan" ponds stretch across the middle of Sandy Heath, forming part of the boggy ground that has settled in the deepest hollows of this bit of the woods. These ponds are evidence of industry: small, iron-rich puddles that speak to the landscape's intensive use as a quarry in the nineteenth century. While the eighteenth century brought medicinal spas, recreation, and aesthetics to the Heath, the nineteenth century brought industrialization and a fierce political battle.

What is remarkable about Sandy Heath is the abruptness of its landscape. This abruptness has at times been linked to its picturesque beauty, but while the hills of Hampstead Heath to the south remain undulating, graceful, and sloping, Sandy Heath's pock-marked surface seems aggressive, and indeed it is.[226] Formed through extensive sand and gravel extraction, the landscape of Sandy Heath not only helped build up the growing city around it, but was a key battleground in the making public of Heath lands. In this chapter, then, I will shift focus from the

[225] Theodor Alois William Buckley, "Hampstead Heath", *Household Words* 4 (27 Sept., 1851): 18.

popularization of the Heath in the eighteenth century—and the aestheticization that went with it—to efforts to conserve the Heath for public use in the nineteenth century, focussing on the period between 1829 and 1889.[227] These efforts are deeply related to the growth of London during industrialization and the role of the Heath as a site for natural resources. I focus on the period in which poor housing stock, pollution, and crowding led to a series of calls for healthy recreation and fresh air for city dwellers, and in which there was a parallel, pressurized demand on green spaces in the city: industrialization made the city's commons even more valuable as building land, so just as the urban populous needed fresh air and recreation, common land was harder to access and more financially-valuable than ever. Lastly, I turn to a contemporary battle for access to and preservation of the Heath, indicating that the struggles to acquire the Heath for the public are not irrelevant today.

I will begin with a discussion of the legal conflict that catalysed efforts to acquire the Heath for the public. In so doing, I will consider three things: the industry for sand digging on the Heath and related battles with copyholders for rights to use the land on which they lived; the continuing growth of the Heath as a site for recreation and the context of British conservation of open spaces out of which recreation for the working classes developed; and the ways in which landscaping on the Heath was deployed in the nineteenth century to "parkify" the site. Such efforts, I note, point to a particular kind of "wild" or unruly aesthetic, a theme that I'll pick up again in Chapter Four. Specifically, in this chapter I will use Richard Mabey's notion of weeds as "gatecrashers of society", as plants that overrun our efforts to contain and manage them, to highlight the ways in which plants, landscape design, and even use of the Heath disrupted efforts

[226] Rudler, "Soils and Scenery", in Hampstead Scientific Society, *Hampstead Heath: Its Geology and Natural History* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913), 44.

to regulate access to the site or constrain it as a municipal park. In this sense, the Heath is again subject to more than human design and management. Sand, plant "improvers", and donkeys all shaped the site. I show how efforts by copyholders to preserve their access to site and efforts by campaigners to conserve it as an open space shared a common goal: the productive use and enjoyment of the Heath. As I will demonstrate, these campaigns were led by the same groups of people and cannot be understood apart from one another. Lastly, I will turn to a contemporary case—Harry Hallowes, an elderly squatter who acquired land adjacent to the Heath through adverse possession in 2007 and Athlone House, a Heath-side property under threat by developers—to demonstrate the ways in which concerns about public and private access to the Heath still apply and deeply relate to London's contemporary crisis around the loss of public spaces. By reading Hallowes and Athlone House alongside the historical efforts to control access to the Heath, I underscore the ways in which the Heath as a public space both fosters and is fostered by a notion of weediness or unruliness, and point to the ways in which struggles to preserve access to public open spaces like the Heath are far from complete.

i. A Foundation of Sand

Sand digging on the Heath was not peculiar to the nineteenth century, but increased rapidly during the middle of the century and was a key point on which efforts to conserve the Heath turned. Because much of the northern sections of the Heath were made up of Bagshot sand and gravel, the land was agriculturally-unproductive and used primarily as common land for grazing livestock and digging for building strata throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Heath, for centuries, had thus been viewed as a resource common to its copyholders, tenants

[227] This period marks the time between the first legal attempts to build on the Heath and the year in which Parliament Hill Fields was acquired for the public; in short, the period in which the battle to "save" the Heath was

whose rights to the land were laid out in the court rolls of each manor. Typically, these rights included the right to take fuel from the land, dig for building strata, and use the land for recreation. Throughout the nineteenth century, however, a series of conflicts sparked and fizzled over the rights of copyholders to make use of the land, a legal harbinger of the far greater conflict to come.[228] Specifically, sand digging and brick making on the Heath were used by the Manor of Hampstead's landowner, Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson, as a means for both monetising and despoiling the landscape, generating outcry amongst copyholders. Both sand and clay on the Heath, then, are deeply linked to the expansion of London into the suburbs—through the construction of cheap housing stock, railway tunnels, and roads—in the nineteenth century. In this regard, not only the Heath was changed and shaped by geological factors, but also the surrounding city, which was quite literally built from material from sites including the Heath.

Hampstead Heath in the early-nineteenth century had rather different boundaries to today's Heath: the tract of heathland, with its sandy soil and acid grassland, extended beneath what is now much of Hampstead village and included the parts of the now-preserved space known as East Heath, and much of today's Heath's west side. By today's maps, East, West, and Sandy Heaths were all part of the Manor of Hampstead (see Fig. 17). In 1821, Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson, the eighth Baronet of Hampstead*,* came into possession of the Manor of Hampstead, among other properties throughout England's southeast.[229] The banalities of property ownership, here, are crucial to the Heath's history. It was Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson's inheritance of the Manor and the legal consequences pursuant to his father's death that spurred

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fiercest and most linked to the wider open spaces conservation movement in Britain.

[228] See Hoare v. Wilson, Observations on Behalf of the Plaintiffs for the Hearing of the Cause, *(*2 June, 1868), in PA FCP/1/64, esp. pp. 30-43, for a historical overview of the rights of copyholders for cutting turf, gorse, heather, removing sand, gravel, loam, etc. See also Barratt, *Annals of Hampstead*, Vol. I, 204.

[229] For clarity, I will refer to Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson, the eighth baronet, as Wilson throughout. For the seventh baronet, I will use 'the elder Wilson' or 'his father'.

on the decades-long effort to prevent development on the Heath and, eventually, would lead to its bequeathment to the public.

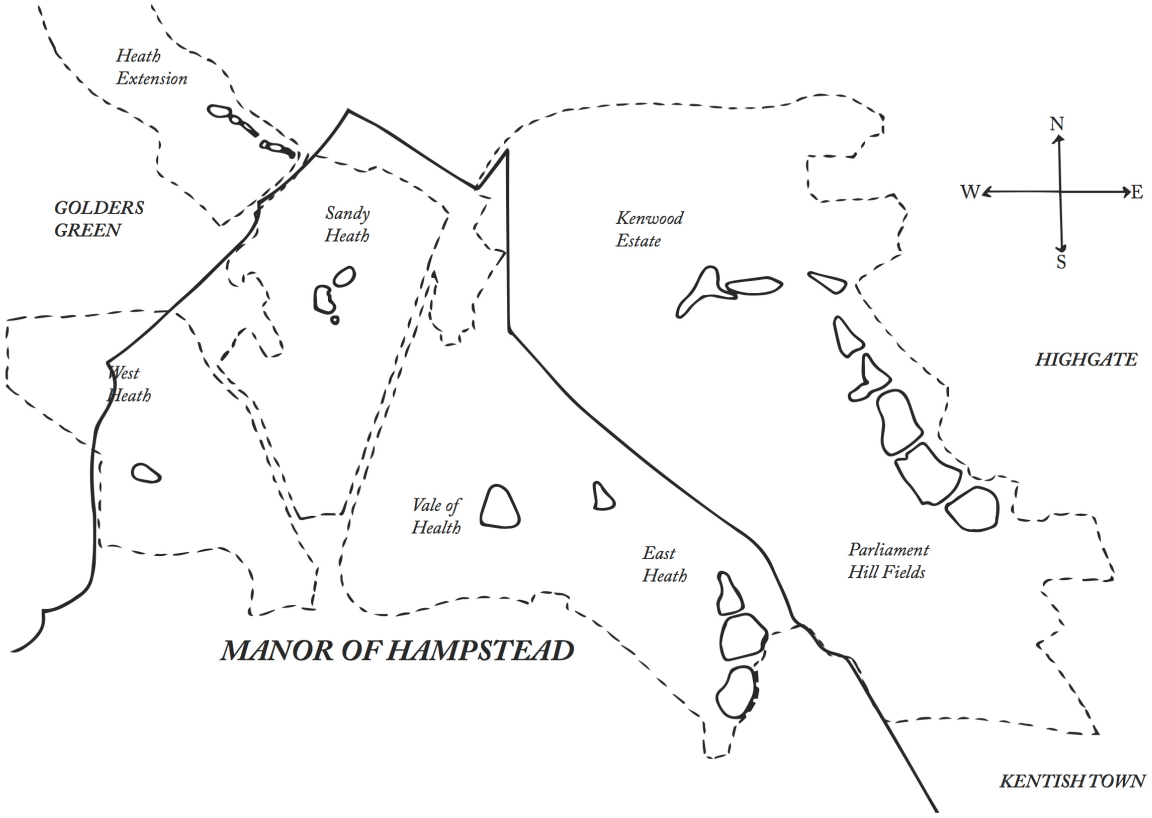


Figure 17 Manor of Hampstead in relation to present-day Hampstead Heath

The Heath under Wilson amounted to 240 acres (around East Heath, Sandy Heath, and West Heath), but he also owned 356 acres of land near Finchley Road to the west, as well as 60 acres of farmland just east of the Heath, south of Kenwood, near Parliament Hill. While Wilson owned land throughout Kent, Sussex, and Middlesex, the Heath and these 60 acres of farmland, unlike his other properties, were at the heart of the coming conflict and would be the decisive case in the formation of a conservation movement in Britain.[230]

[230] Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 61.

By the early nineteenth century, London had grown extensively and Hampstead was no longer a quiet village. The spa boom in the eighteenth century saw the construction of hotels, dance halls, and other amenities, such that by the early nineteenth century, the land around Hampstead and Highgate was much in demand for both recreation and for wealthy landowners seeking villas near to the city. This demand was, of course, largely in relation to the Heath. Romantic poets and artists like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, and Leigh Hunt lived in the area and were known to walk the Heath regularly. As Britain industrialized rapidly in the early decades of the nineteenth century, open spaces near to London were more desirable than ever for two competing reasons: the provision of fresh air and recreation, and their prime locations for development. By the 1820s, air pollution was already a concern for urban Britons, and the nearness of the Heath to London made it desirable not simply for its wealthier residents, but as a crucial amenity for the growing population of poorer Londoners.[231] While the Heath had for centuries provided crucial grazing land and fuel for copyhold tenants, the site was now in a period of transition: many of its residents still made use of the natural resources on the Heath in the early-nineteenth century—diaries of the Heath keeper in the 1830s note the removal of furze and scrub from the Heath by locals—but the Heath had quickly grown valuable as a refuge from a rapidly developing city.[232] While the nineteenth century was a time of rapid industrial growth, it was likewise the century in which recognition of the need for parks and open spaces for the

[231] The Smoke Prohibition Act came into effect in 1821, though it did little to improve matters and indicated merely that "Parliament was against smoke", as B.W. Clapp puts it in *An Environmental History of Britain Since the Industrial Revolution,* 32. Likewise, Britain's urban population grew enormously between the late-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, with 50 per cent of the population living in urban areas by 1851. I.G. Simmonds, *An Environmental History of Great Britain from 10,000 Years Ago to the Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 149.

[232] See I.G. Simmonds, *An Environmental History of Great Britain,* 131, on the importance of heaths in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See also: E.E. Newton (ed.), "A Few Extracts from the Diary of a Heath Keeper, 1834-39", *The Hampstead Annual*, volume eds. Greville E. Matheson and Sydney C. Mayle, (London: Sydney C. Mayle, 1902), 126-134.

broader population truly took hold.[233] This was in part linked to a growing recognition that workers would require air and exercise for health reasons, and also, as I'll discuss later, to a social reformist connection between recreation amidst natural beauty and moral improvement.

The climate of urban growth, then, meant that much of Wilson's land was ideal for development; ideal except that his father's will specified that he could only grant short agricultural leases of twenty-one years. Before his death, the elder Wilson had specified that his son could grant seventy year building leases on properties in Charlton and Woolwich, but had expressly denied such rights to the Hampstead properties, specifying instead that his son could neither sell nor build upon the land in Hampstead.[234] As London expanded around him, Wilson recognized the value of the land and in 1829 sought to remedy the terms of his inheritance.

In his first attempt to secure building rights at Hampstead, he introduced a Bill to Parliament seeking to enclose the lands used commonly by copyholders, securing them for the development of villas. His proposal was the first among many that sought to capitalize on increasing land value in the rapidly growing city: commons were chief targets for either construction or natural resources, both of which provided a hefty income for landowners. Wilson's Bill requested permission to grant building leases of up to ninety years, noting that sites within the Manor of Hampstead would be "eligibly situated for building on" in part because of the new road, present-day Finchley Road, being built.[235] Wilson also sought power to grant licenses for road-building, brick- and tile-making, or the extraction of stone, sand, and gravel for

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[233] See Simmonds, *An Environmental History of Great Britain*, 174; and Hazel Conway, *People's Parks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[234] See Sir Thomas M. Wilson Bart, Will and 12 Codicils 5 September 1806, proved 16 October, 1821. Copy. PA FCP/1/64.

[235] An Act to enable Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson, Baronet and other Persons successively entitled under the Will and Codicile of the late Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson Baronet to grant building Leases of his Estates in the Counties of Middlesex and Kent, part of the Estates devized by the said Will and Codicils And also to grant Licenses and make Agreements to and with the Copyhold Tenants of the Manor of Hampstead in the County of Middlesex for

use "upon such customary or copyhold land or ground within and part of the same Manor".[236] On much of the land this would not have been a problem, except that in the schedule of properties to which the Bill pertained, Wilson listed the Heath:

> The Heath and other Waste Land or Ground in the Manor of Hampstead in the Parish of Saint John Hampstead aforesaid, whether occupied or not, and which may be hereafter approved or otherwise exonerated or discharged from the Customs of the said Manor, by or for the sole use or benefit of the Lord or Lady Lords or Ladies thereof for the time being.[237]

In the Bill, Wilson not only made explicit his intentions to build on and monetize the Heath; he made a clear affront to his copyholders, many of whom valued not just their right to make use of the resources on their copyholds themselves, but who valued the preservation of such resources in the face of widespread despoliation of land around London.

When copyholders and other residents at Hampstead, most of whom treated the Heath as common land for villagers, became aware of the Bill—historian Alan Farmer suggests that Lord Mansfield, who would go on to fiercely oppose Wilson, alerted copyholders—a petition was generated and submitted to Parliament, leading to outcry in the press.[238] On 16 June, 1829, the *Morning Herald* criticized the Bill, hoping "this attempt to deprive 'tradesmen' of the pleasure of fresh air, will be defeated", while *The Sun*, going further, accused Wilson of "choking up and suffocating the prettiest, the healthiest, the most picturesque spot for miles about London, with a coarse, unsightly mass of bricks and mortar".[239] The public outcry is perhaps best summed up in George Cruikshank's satirical illustration, *London Going Out of Town (The March of Bricks and*

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encouraging the improvement of their Copyhold Tenements by Building or otherwise (H.L.), 28 April, 1829. Nos. 290-95. PA HL/PO/JO/10/8/841.

[236] Ibid.

[237] Ibid.

Mortar) (Fig. 5), discussed in Chapter One, which depicts animate hayricks and trees under attack by a frontline of bricks, terraced houses, and building tools. In the illustration, one tree remarks to another, "Our fences I fear will be found to be no defence against these Barbarians who threaten to enclose & destroy us in all 'manor' of ways", an obvious reference to Wilson's efforts to enclose the Manor of Hampstead.[240]

Opposition to the Bill was of such strength that Wilson withdrew it, but renewed his efforts in 1830 with an amended Bill, omitting the "Heath clause". Essentially, he sought to build on the 60-acre site between East Heath and Parliament Hill, hardly a satisfactory compromise to locals. On 31 March, 1830, *The Morning Post* noted that "building round the Heath will effectually destroy its beauty and value to the copyholders, give great facility to further partial encroachments, and insure shortly the final inclosure of the Heath".[241] As in the eighteenth century, the perceived beauty of the Heath was a crucial factor in shaping the fate of the site. This second Bill was defeated, largely on the basis of opposition by the local community and the clear intention set out in his father's will that Wilson ought not to build on the site.

After over a decade, Wilson renewed his attempts once more in 1843. He submitted a Bill much the same as his 1830 Bill, and this too was rejected. He tried again the following year, seeking instead to sell the property outright, but when this was rejected he turned to the one route available to him. Wilson could not sell the land and could not grant building leases, but this did not prevent him from building on the sites himself, so long as he could finance it. Here, the ground itself became crucial in Wilson's plans: he would produce bricks himself from the London Clay on the site, and use these to construct a park of twenty-eight villas on the 60-acre

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[238] Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 64-65.
[239] *The Morning Herald* and *The Sun*, cited in Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 64.
[240] See Chapter One, Fig. #

plot of land which became known as "East Park". The industry for brick making in London—which largely rests upon clay and so was the site of many brickyards—thrived in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as demand for housing boomed, such that historian I.G. Simmonds notes that "the kilns surrounded the capital with a ring of fire and smoke".[242] The plentiful sand on the northern sections of the Heath likewise proved crucial in the construction of roads and tunnels in the rapidly growing city. Turning the Heath into a brickyard and quarry, of course, signalled the start of much further despoliation of the landscape, and pointed to the deep interrelation between the geology of London and its rapid growth in the nineteenth century.

Wilson moved forward with his plans at great expense to himself, constructing a road, the Viaduct Bridge and a few rudimentary buildings, but his plans were fiercely opposed by copyholders and other locals. Further, his efforts to build at the site were delayed and complicated by the topographical realities of the site itself: the plentitude of springs at Hampstead and the marshy clay soil resulted in multiple collapses of the Viaduct's foundations, and the construction consequently took three years. Historians are quick to point out that, for this reason, the bridge was long known as "Wilson's Folly".[243] The difficulty presented by the Viaduct's construction may have been the final indication that developing the site on his own was far too great a challenge, and in 1853 Wilson returned to his efforts at Parliament.

In 1855, the introduction of the Leases and Sales of Settled Estates Bill presented a new hurdle for campaigners. The Bill would enable heirs to estates to petition a judge to alter the conditions of a will in situations in which it would be beneficial to the heir. Through the work of Heath campaigners, however, a clause was added to the Bill stating that "the Court shall not be at

[241] "Hampstead Heath Inclosure", letter to the editor, *The Morning Post*, 31 March, 1830. Signed "A Constant Reader".
[242] Simmonds, *An Environmental History of Great Britain*, 135.

liberty to grant any Application under this Act in any Case where the Applicant, or any Party entitled, has previously applied to either House of Parliament for a Private Act to effect the same or a similar Object".[244] The clause, often read as directly targeting Wilson, was carried in 1856, and despite attempts to overturn it in subsequent years, was upheld in large part due to the advocacy of Heath campaigners led by John Gurney Hoare.[245]

While these legal efforts continued, the importance of acquiring the land for the public to secure it in the long-term became apparent. With the formation in 1855 of the Metropolitan Board of Works, Greater London's first municipal body, raising significant financial capital to acquire land for the benefit of London finally became a possibility. By the 1860s the Heath was one amongst many battles for public access to and preservation of commons. The government's Select Committee on Open Spaces submitted a report in 1865, attempting to prevent enclosure of London's commons, resulting in the Metropolitan Commons Act of 1866, a subject to which I will turn in the next section.[246] By this time, however, lords of the manors were quick to assert their perceived property rights, and many began to enclose or despoil commons around London.[247] Wilson was among them, and in 1866 he entered into a contract with the Midland

[243] See Farmer, *Hampstead Heath,* 72; and C.W. Ikin, *Hampstead Heath Centenary: How the Heath Was Saved for the Public* (London: Greater London Council, 1971), 11.
[244] An Act to Facilitate Leases and Sales of Settled Estates, 1856. Public Act c. 120, clause XXI. PA HL/PO/PU/1/1856/19&20V1n257.
[245] Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 79.
[246] The Select Committee's report is, in many ways, a remarkable document: it contained some of the only verbatim accounts of interviews with Wilson and other landowners in London, a remarkable assessment of the state of open spaces in London in the mid-nineteenth century, and above all, took a radical stance on the role of public space in the city. The two key recommendations of the report were i) to repeal the ancient Statute of Merton, which gave landowners the power to enclose land, and ii) to prohibit the enclosure of land within the metropolitan area. Second Report from the Select Committee on Open Spaces (Metropolis); Together with the Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix. Ordered by the House of Commons to be Printed 20 June, 1865, 7. 390 MERL SR OSS/P2/B/5 (1).
[247] Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 91.

Railway to provide sand for the rail line from Hampstead to Edgware in the expansion of the North Metropolitan Railway.[248]

Once again the failure of Wilson to develop the Heath and its surrounding lands through Parliamentary means had resulted, instead, in his concerted effort to despoil the site, "to turn the Heath to account", as he put it.[249] Despoiling the site was a means of discouraging campaigners from preserving it for its natural beauty and for public use, while likewise allowing him to make a profit from the natural resources on the site. As campaigners developed plans to purchase the Heath for Londoners, Wilson intensified sand and gravel extraction on the site, dramatically altering the landscape. Lord Eversley, the Chairman of the Commons Preservation Society, described the sand extraction as intensive "to the extent of destroying its herbage and heather. This digging for sand was, in fact, being carried out to a degree that threatened to interfere with the natural features of Hampstead Heath. Dangerous pits appeared in all directions, and the surface of the Heath was most seriously injured".[250] As a result, in 1866 the campaigner and Hampstead local Hoare brought suit against Wilson on behalf of the copyholders, arguing that the sand pits on Sandy Heath were a danger to the public, being unfenced and some twenty feet in depth. Ultimately, the suit challenged Wilson's attempt to undermine the rights of his copyholders by despoiling the landscape himself, and argued that Wilson's accelerated sand extraction and sale of sand to the Midland Railway contractor ignored the rights of copyholders to make use of the land's resources in common and for purposes on the site, a proviso Wilson himself had noted in his 1829 Bill. Reactions to the digging were passionate indeed, with nineteenth-century historian F.E. Baines recalling the conflict: "'Look' said Henry Halford

[248] See Affidavit of James Wickes, in Hoare v. Wilson, Affidavits filed on the part of the Plaintiffs by Mr P.H. Lawrence of no 6 Lincoln's Inn Fields Their Solicitors, 30 PA FCP/1/64.
[249] Wilson, in an interview quoted in Second Report from the Select Committee on Open Spaces (Metropolis), 155.

Vaughan […] to me one day as we watched the railway-contractor taking sand from below the terrace, "They are carting away our very climate'"[251].

The suit argued that Wilson's excessive sand digging presented not only a danger to the public—"the pits had been dug so deep, and their sides so precipitous, as to be dangerous"—but impeded on the established rights of copyhold tenants to make use of their land and its resources.[252] This was a point that had to be argued and which Wilson contested fiercely. There was no written code of custom for the Manor of Hampstead, as the Court Rolls were burned in a fire in 1684 and customs had not since been written down. In absence of a code, Hoare and the other Plaintiffs asserted that all copyholders had enjoyed rights of pasturage, estovers, taking of sand and gravel, etc., and recreation.[253] Wilson denied such rights, arguing that copyholders had never held the right to enjoy the Heath through recreation, to dig for sand, gravel, loam without a license from him, or to cut heath, gorse, or bushes for use as fodder, fuel, or other agricultural uses.[254] Rather, he controversially argued that "as Lord of the said Manor I have a legal right to destroy or otherwise deal with the pasture heath gorse herbage and trees upon the said heath and to sell and carry away for my own profit the sand gravel loam and other like materials which form part of the soil of the said heath and to inclose and build upon the said heath without regard to such *pretended rights* of the Plaintiffs or other Copyholders of the said Manor".[255] So sand, clay, gravel, and herbage were at the centre of efforts to both enclose and protect the Heath:

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[250] Lord Eversley (George Shaw Lefevre), *Commons, Forests & Footpaths: The Story of the Battle During the Last Forty-Five Years for Public Rights Over the Commons, Forests and Footpaths of England and Wales* (London: Cassell, 1910), 34-35.
[251] F.E. Baines, *Records of the Manor, Parish, and Borough of Hampstead, in the County of London* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1890), 505.
[252] Hoare v. Wilson, Observations on Behalf of the Plaintiffs for the Hearing of the Cause, 1.
[253] Ibid., 4-5.
[254] Wilson quoted in Re-Amended Bill of Complaint, 4-5, in Hoare v. Wilson (1866), in PA FCP/1/64a.
[255] The Answer of Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson, in Answer to the Said Re-Amended Bill, 9, in Hoare v. Wilson, (1866), (Ch.), NA C 16/350/H273. Emphasis mine.

through Wilson's despoliation of them, and through the copyholders' efforts to assert their rights to use them in a measured way.

Sand and gravel played a key role not simply in efforts to preserve the Heath; they also profoundly reshaped the topography of the site. Sand deposits spread across the northern sections of the Heath known as Sandy Heath, at a depth of up to twenty feet in the nineteenth century, though today this is considerably reduced due to extensive exploitation.[256] The sand is of a fine grain, varying in colour from orangey-yellow to white, deposited at the site some fifty million years ago by the Great Bagshot River, which ran across south-west England.[257] Eocene sand deposits such as this support a range of heathland flora, including gorse and heather, so it is due to the sand that the Heath was, and in some places still remains, a heath.[258] These plants were the first to dwindle under intensive sand extraction and footfall, and were key to copyholders' complaints about exploitation of the site. A few hundred yards south of Sandy Heath, gravel and clay appear, providing a further resource for mineral extraction, particularly in the construction of gravel pits and brickyards. Wilson exploited these, too, in efforts to financially benefit from the Heath's natural resources while meeting the demands for road- and house-building material for the fast-growing city. As mentioned earlier, sand and clay on the Heath played a key part not only in reshaping the landscape of the Heath, but of London broadly-speaking.

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[256] See Geology Map, Introduction, Fig. #

[257] "Sand on the Heath", UCL Earth Sciences: London's Geology [accessed 22 April, 2015], https://www.ucl.ac.uk/earth-sciences/impact/geology/london/heath/geology/sand; and Park, *The Topography and Natural History of Hampstead*, 45-46.

[258] Rudler, "Soils and Scenery", in Hampstead Scientific Society, *Hampstead Heath: Its Geology and Natural History,* 42.



Figure 18 “The effects of sand and gravel extraction at Sandy Heath, north of Spaniards Road”, Photograph 25x20 cm, 1866. © By Permission of the Camden Local Studies Archive.



Figure 19 Sandy Heath, 2015

While Wilson intended his despoliation of the Heath to undermine efforts to preserve it, the rapid extraction of sand from the site gave further strength to local efforts to save it. Sand and bricks were deployed by Wilson as agents of destruction in the landscape, but likewise crystallized and sustained the arguments of the copyholders. Dickens noted the strength of such agents, writing that "though bricks and mortar, those friends to fresh air, when they develop themselves in the form of healthy, lofty lodging-houses in crowded cities—those enemies to it, when they trench upon our few beautiful fields—are rapidly doing mischief".[259] One recalls, again, Cruikshank's satirical illustration of animate bricks and pickaxes, chiefly underlining that

[259] Buckley, "Hampstead Heath", 16.

the landscapes under contestation could in no way be perceived as anodyne or passive in the struggles to preserve them.

The case came to an unexpected but fortuitous end when Wilson died in May of 1869. His brother, Sir John Maryon Wilson, entered negotiations to sell the Heath to the Metropolitan Board of Works and in 1871 the Hampstead Heath Act was passed. While Thomas Wilson had grossly inflated the price of the Heath—valuing it between £5000 and £10,000 per acre, based on mineral extraction—Sir John was generally viewed to be more reasonable. On 13 January, 1872, the Metropolitan Board of Works took possession of the 220-acre Heath for the more reasonable sum of £45,000, providing the first foundation of what would later expand to become Hampstead Heath as we know it today.

Today, wooded Sandy Heath remains an almost lunar landscape, with dramatically-cratered sandy slopes, some twenty feet high, and very little herbage beyond trees. Images from the nineteenth century show a barren industrial waste, with scarcely a tree (see Figs. 18, 19), but today's woodland shows the scars of sand digging: deep trenches in the ground, a low variety of flora, and gorse planted only in patches as part of recent conservation efforts. The former gravel pits on East Heath left behind deep cuts along the route of a mile-long Angle-Saxon boundary bank—an even earlier intervention in the landscape, made some thousand years ago to mark borders between territories—and what is now a filled-in, turfed athletic field.[260] The flatness of the athletic field marks a start contrast with the rolling hills nearby, an indication of the site's stark transformation in the past century. What at first appears a bucolic countryside analogue in the city is in fact the result, at least in part, of intense mineral extraction.

The landscape has changed dramatically over the centuries. In this regard, the history of mineral extraction on the Heath points to the difficulty in assessing exactly *what* the Heath ought

to look like today, and how best to manage the site. Such concerns occupy much of the following section and also Chapter Four. Likewise, the battle to acquire the Heath as a public open space has shaped use of the site interminably: as an open space, it is widely viewed as protected from use as a major source for mineral extraction. But both the sandpits of the Second World War, as discussed in the Introduction, and the clay borrow pits for the Ponds Project indicate that the management of the site is, to a large degree, a matter of negotiation (Figs. 10, 11). Here, on that note, I shall turn to the matters of how to preserve access to open spaces, the use of "landscape improvements", and desirable plants on the Heath.

ii. Open Space in the City

If you enter the Heath from South End Green, wandering up the pathway lined with London plane trees, you come to a gravelly patch of field, where foot and vehicle traffic have rubbed the ground raw. Most days, the field stands empty or plays host to a few vehicles, but on bank holidays, this bit of the Heath comes to life not with plants or wildlife, but with lights, sounds, and mechanical wonders.

The bank holiday fairs on Hampstead Heath have been a staple since the 1850s, so even prior to the Heath's transfer to the public in 1871, it served as a key open space for Londoners from all ends of the city. With the opening of the North London Railway and Hampstead Heath station in 1860, travel to the Heath from London's busy east end was easier than ever, and working-class families came in droves. But the popularity of the Heath as a destination cannot be read entirely apart from its role in negotiations around London's open spaces: in the midst of Wilson's efforts to restrict access to the land, his agents haphazardly applied fees to visitors on non-fair days, fairground tariffs were introduced, and the fair itself was deployed as a means of

[260] David Sturdy, "Mark of Mellitus", *Hampstead and Highgate Express,* 10 March, 1978, 12.

"turning the Heath to account". Wilson and his agents were one prominent example among many landowners in London who were seeking to enclose commons, and given Wilson's long effort to enclose it, the struggle for the Heath was viewed as a special—and crucial—case in efforts to preserve public open spaces for health, recreation, leisure, and the enjoyment of all.

The 1865 report of the Select Committee on Open Spaces provides remarkable insight into the use of Hampstead Heath as a recreational site throughout the nineteenth century. The growth of Hampstead as a destination spa in the eighteenth century popularized the Heath and led to the development of all manner of recreations in the village: from dance halls to taverns, donkey rides, cricket, and country walks. By the mid-nineteenth century, though the waters had fallen out of use, the Heath was well-known. Prior to the opening of the rail station, omnibuses brought groups from London, and school children made frequent visits to the Heath. An interview with Wilson's agent for managing the Heath, Frederick J. Clark, indicates that Wilson had been in the habit of charging fees for groups visiting the Heath.[261] So the use of the Heath was established enough that the application of fees enabled Wilson to stake some claim to the space being privately managed, rather than it being a common to which the public freely had access. The Select Committee, of course, pressed Wilson's agent on the matter, and he ultimately admitted that the fees were "very seldom enforced".[262] The threat of fees, instead, can be understood as an effort to underscore the privacy of land so prized by the public.

The opening of the railway in 1860 further contributed to Wilson's efforts to enclose the Heath: by allowing free-for-all access to the site as a fairground (for which stall holders paid a

[261] "With reference to any games being carried on, and the right of the public of the Heath, I may say that every one may be refused admission to the Heath except either on payment or by permission. With reference to Marylebone and other schools, a letter is written to the steward four or five days before the meeting is held on the Heath, and a charge is made of 2 s. 6 d. for every van containing children; for every cart, a charge of 6 d.; for every booth, a charge of 2 s. 6 d.; and for cricketers, a charge of 10 s. in the year for the club […] for every horse, 1 s; for every cow, 1 s.; for every donkey, 4 d. a year; something for every tea-table; 1 d. for every post; and so on". Examination of Mr. Frederick J. Clark, 4 May 1865, Second Report from the Select Committee on Open Spaces (Metropolis); 44.

fee), copyholders' claims to the site were disrupted by streams of other visitors making use of the site. Alongside intensive mineral extraction at the sandpits and brickyards, the "unending invasion by the populace", as Thomas Barratt describes it, radically changed the landscape, with increased footfall and numerous donkeys further nudging out the site's heathland flora.[263] While donkeys had, according to one parliamentary enquiry, been pastured on the Heath in small numbers "from time immemorial", the number of animals brought for fairground games on the Heath by the 1860s was regarded as a nuisance.[264] Efforts to regulate their presence had begun as early as the 1830s—with the Heath keeper levying fees for donkeys and attempting to compile a census of donkey owners—and can be read alongside efforts to apply fees for use of the Heath more widely, from recreational use to the right to hang laundry.[265] But by the time of the Hampstead Heath fair, donkeys were of such a number and such an established presence on the Heath that, at one point, a local writer asserted that "the donkey is as truly the indigenous animal of Hampstead Heath".[266] It is worth remarking, of course, that while donkeys have been painted as a nuisance during this time, much of the Heath's flora could more rightly be viewed as suffering under the footfall of the hundreds of thousands of human visitors to the fair. Likewise, as Chapter Four will contend, one of the greatest changes to the Heath's flora alongside human foot traffic has been the loss of grazing by pastured animals, as opposed to over-grazing. Further, the opening up the landscape to wider use by the public was, paradoxically, a way to assert the very privacy of the land: Wilson was able to simultaneously charge fees for use of the Heath while allowing untrammelled use of the site to overwhelm its natural character. The sparseness

[262] Ibid., 47.
[263] Barratt, *Annals of Hampstead*, Vol. III, 256.
[264] Hoare v. Wilson, Observations on Behalf of the Plaintiffs for the Hearing of the Cause, 55-56.
[265] E.E. Newton (ed.), "A Few Extracts from the Diary of a Heath Keeper, 1834-39".
[266] Buckley, "Hampstead Heath", 16.

of the fairground site today is a reminder of this long heritage, as the grassland on this stretch of Heath has not recovered and now serves primarily as a parking lot.

The battle to acquire Hampstead Heath for the public has, at times, been characterized as Britain's first great conservation battle, seeking to protect common open spaces for the health and recreation of the public in the face of rapid industrialization.[267] Indeed, the Heath was at the core of early campaigns to preserve common spaces for Britain: early proposals for green spaces by J.C. Loudon were in direct response to Wilson's attempts to enclose the Heath, as the Heath was among the few conventionally-used green spaces amongst rapidly-developing housing land. Many of the campaigns that sought to acquire land to expand Hampstead Heath as an open space in the late-nineteenth century are still relevant today. The Heath's case was amidst many other battles to save London's commons, but was the first to go to court.[268] The Kyrle Society and the Commons Preservation Society, propelled by campaigners like Octavia Hill, John Stuart Mill, William Morris, and Lord Eversley, gathered initially around the conflict over the Heath, and would go on to lead the campaigns for open spaces in Britain. These early campaign groups remain today, in the Open Spaces Society and the National Trust, both of which are enormously relevant to the current preservation of open spaces in Britain.[269] The links between social reformers, the anti-industrial artistic Arts and Crafts Movement, and land conservation were strong and bled directly into later campaigns for rights of way and land access across Britain, so the protest-spirit that went into preserving the Heath carried over well into the twentieth century, and, arguably, continues today. So beyond situating the enclosure of the Heath in the wider context of enclosures and urban expansion and industrialization across Britain, we must consider

[267] Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 84. See also Melanie L. Simo, "John Claudius Loudon: On Planning and Design for the Garden Metropolis", *Garden History,* Vol. 9, Issue 2 (1981): pp. 184-186 especially, for an account of conservation issues at the time of Wilson's despoiling of the Heath.
[268] Farmer, *Hampstead Heath,* 102.

the Heath as an early benchmark in British land conservation, protecting common access to and protection from development for open spaces.[270]

Recreation on the Heath or any other metropolitan open space then, cannot be understood apart from the matters of public space and land access. The rise in the Heath's use took place amidst a climate of concern over suitable recreation and fresh air for the growing population of urban working poor. The popularity of the Heath's fair—in part due to the closure of a number of other popular fairs—followed several decades of concern about how the city might best grow to provide adequate "breathing places", as Loudon described it, for city dwellers. The Heath, as we have seen, was at the core of that concern.[271] The introduction of the Ten Hours Act, which restricted the work day, and the growing Saturday half-holiday movement, a key movement in securing leisure time, were part of a climate of social reform in Victorian Britain. The formation of the Commons Preservation Society in 1865 coincided with the Select Committee on Open Spaces, which took evidence on not just Wilson's attempts to enclose the Heath but on all the other commons under threat in London at the time, indicating the strength of concern around access to open space in the rapidly industrializing city. As construction in the city boomed, the Statute of Merton, England's first statute—which in 1235 secured the rights of landowners to enclose land traditionally used as commons—came under contention. Essentially, it gave landowners a legal means to close off commons. Though the statute came into effect in the

[269] See David Evans, *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1992), xxiii, 41.
[270] Charles Dickens wrote extensively about the campaigns to prevent the enclosure of Hampstead Heath, and noted that the momentum gathered in saving the Heath could be channelled to saving open spaces and forests in Britain more widely: "We have uttered our opinion—now let the public of London utter theirs. The same spirit which crushed, on the instant, all attempts to enclose Hampstead Heath, can effectually dissipate all designs against the suburban forests, if it be firmly, wholesomely, and temperately manifested. The Commissioners of Woods and Forests may, perhaps, think they are acting quite poetically in saying with Milton, in 'Comus,'—'To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new;' but 'fresh fields and pastures new,' obtained by the destruction of the only metropolitan forest, would be a metamorphosis which the London public would never cease to deplore". Charles Dickens, *Household Words* 3 (10 May, 1851): 160.

thirteenth century, it was only in the rapid industrialization of the eighteenth and nineteenth that enclosure became a major threat to urban commons.

In a Report published in 1866, the Select Committee in particular underscored the crucial relationship between individual open spaces like the Heath and Wimbledon Common and the matter of public spaces as a whole: after gathering evidence on a number of London commons, the Committee recommended not solely that enclosure of land within the city be prohibited, but advocated repealing the Statute of Merton. Primarily, the final report of the Select Committee advocated clarity in the matter of public spaces, and urged for access to sites that had, by way of custom, been used by the public:

> The rights of the public at large are vague and unsatisfactory, for while it is generally acknowledged that a right may exist to traverse any of these places at will in all directions, and that no action for trespass would lie for such traversing, and even 'that a *serviettes spatiandi* over open ground which has in some measure been devoted to public use, is also intelligible and known to the law,' yet the legal authorities appear most unwilling to admit any general public right to exercise and recreation upon any of these spaces, although such right may from time immemorial have been enjoyed, contending that it must be limited to some certain defined body of persons, as the inhabitants of a particular parish, or the tenants of a particular manor.[272]

The report was made amidst a climate of growing recreational use of sites like the Heath—one witness for the Select Committee reported that on Easter Sunday "50,000 persons came to

[271] See Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 112. See also J.C. Loudon, "Hints for Breathing Places for the Metropolis, and for Country Towns and Villages, on fixed Principles*,* in *The Gardener's Magazine,* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green: 1829).
[272] Second Report from the Select Committee on Open Spaces (Metropolis), iv.

Hampstead Heath from all parts of the Metropolis"—and growing campaigns to acquire common lands for the public.[273] So the Heath's role at the forefront of British land conservation is as one space among many being fought for in a quickly growing London.

Concurrent with the fight for London's open spaces and commons was the growth in municipal parks. The Victorian park is one of the most enduring features of the London cityscape, following the creation of Victorian cemeteries in their provision of green space, recreation grounds, and fresh air for the crowded city. Outside of the city, this development was mirrored by the growth in popularity and provision for the English seaside.[274] The mid-nineteenth century also saw the development of the Saturday half-holiday movement, seeking another day for recreation for Britain's working classes, and the establishment of the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain Act (1867), which sought to remedy the polluted water supply of the crowded city. The Heath, with its reservoirs, discussed earlier, was of course at the centre of calls for clean, fresh water for Londoners, not just fresh air. Campaigns to improve conditions for the working poor, led by social reformers like Octavia Hill, were likewise deeply concerned with generating appropriate channels for recreation and exercise as a means of warding off immoral behaviour.[275] So the matters of land access, recreation, and class were intricately linked: the Commons Preservation Society, as I have indicated, was founded in 1865, and sought, in part, to secure space for recreation and channel the growing population into "suitable" forms of recreation. The Open Spaces report itself demonstrates this same interconnection of access to space with health, well-being, and morality:

> The long continuance of the practice of the inhabitants of London to resort to open spaces for recreation, and its decided tendency to promote their health and happiness,

[273] Ibid.
[274] Conway, *People's Parks*, 23-27.

> and to draw them away from pernicious amusements, appear to your Committee sufficient reasons, apart from the mere legal questions of the case, why the Legislature should decline to sanction any measures which may indirectly deprive the public of the advantages they have so long enjoyed, and the necessity for which is daily increasing.[276]

Recreation, then, was a means for warding off immoral behaviour, with desirable activities like cricket-playing and fairs being sanctioned in contrast to the more unsavoury dog-baiting and cock-fighting that had taken hold of Hampstead during the village's heyday in the previous century. Ultimately, a country walk and a bit of fresh air was viewed as crucial to the moral fibre of London's citizens. Loudon, in "Hints for Breathing Places", refers to this as "the duty […] of government to devise some plan by which the metropolis may be enlarged so as to cover any space whatever with perfect safety to the inhabitants, in respect to the supply of provisions, water, and fresh air, and to the removal of filth of every description, the maintenance of general cleanliness[277], and the despatch of business". In this sense, the campaign for open spaces in London was intricately linked to the issues of Victorian social reform, land access, and the garden cities movement that took hold near the end of the century.[278]

The entanglement of London's open spaces with social reform points to the ambiguity in how such public spaces might be used. Campaigners—whose legacy has lived on the form of organizations like the Open Spaces Society—not only helped to acquire such lands for the public, but entered into the process of negotiation that has shaped use of these sites well into the present, in assessing what the "natural" landscape of the Heath might be and in aiming for

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[275] Ibid., 27.
[276] Second Report from the Select Committee on Open Spaces (Metropolis), vii.
[277] Loudon, "Hints for Breathing Places", 686.

"moral" recreations. These themes will re-emerge and be questioned in Chapter Four. In her study on matsutake mushrooms, Tsing asks "What emerges in damaged landscapes, beyond the call of industrial promise and ruin"?[279] She points out that in the many efforts to devise strategies for managing contested landscapes, some actors go under the radar and perhaps shape landscape and its histories in crucial ways. For her, this includes mushroom pickers. Following the 1871 acquisition of the Heath, it might likewise be said that rogue humans and nonhumans—those who perhaps break the mould of suitable landscaping or "suitable recreation"—play a significant role in negotiating the site's management. As such, I turn to the Heath's "weeds".

iii. Weeds and the Heath Landscape

Amidst the debates around access to the land and Wilson's repeated attempts to extract natural resources from the Heath, questions around how to manage the site—its heathland flora impacted by recreational use and ravaged by sand digging—began to emerge. Whether the Heath was developed for villas, as Wilson desired, or conserved for public recreation, as campaigners hoped, decisions around landscaping would need to be taken. Here, I wish to consider two phases of conflict around landscaping on the Heath: the first, in opposition to Wilson's use of landscaping to better prepare it for his proposed villas; and the second, in efforts to determine how to manage the Heath in contrast to other urban parks and commons. This second conflict lays the groundwork for further discussion of the Heath's semi-rural landscape aesthetic in Chapter Four. In this case, Richard Mabey's notion that a weed—as a "plant out of place" requiring a far more nuanced understanding of both plants and places—is put to work, insofar as unexpected plants come to be viewed as "weeds" on the Heath. In this regard, then, I consider

[278] The link between the Heath and the garden cities movement is tangible in the Hampstead Garden Suburb, for which sections of the land around Wylde's Farm was divided between the Suburb and Hampstead Heath Extension.

the idea that the ways in which certain plants are cast as desirable or undesirable are deeply linked to understandings of the Heath as different from other municipal park landscapes. On the Heath, the idea of the weed helps us think through the notion that "how and why and where we classify plants as undesirable is part of the story of our ceaseless attempts to draw boundaries between nature and culture, wildness and domestication".[280]

During the mid-nineteenth century, as part of Wilson's effort to "parkify" the site to prepare it for development, he began to plant trees, including hundreds of willows, firs, and Turkey oaks, all of which would alter the landscape of the Heath dramatically. In response to these "landscape improvements", Theodor Alois William Buckley wrote some years later in Charles Dickens's journal, *Household Words*:

> We are again upon the Heath, on our way home; and innovation has been at work. The evening is getting darker; but it does not prevent us noticing a number of infantile trees, cased in with wooden hurdles, like those of the Park plantations. Who planted them? Had he any business to do so? They are an eyesore. Where will they end? Did not some one say that somebody —we forget, and do not care who—tried to enclose Hampstead Heath? If he does so, may his heirs find a quick road to their inheritance! Who could he have been? […] It must have been some tailor, who had suddenly become a director of railways, or some half-fledged baronet, the second of the family, who, having a half title to his own property, fancied that no title at all might suffice for appropriating that of the public. Whoever he was, may his dreams

[279] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 18.
[280] Richard Mabey, *Weeds: In Defense of Nature's Unloved Plants* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 5.

> be redolent of Smithfield, may nightmare tread with donkey hoofs on his chest, and may visions of angry laundresses scald his brain with weak tea![281]

Wilson's efforts at landscape improvement, of course, took place amidst widespread destruction from sand digging and gravel extraction. He remarked, when asked about the damage caused by his industrial-scale sand-extraction, that "I have myself planted several hundreds of other trees on the said heath".[282] His efforts at landscape improvement—equally derided by locals—can be read as part of the same effort to enclose the Heath for his own benefit.

It is in these early complaints—many of which appeared in Dickens's *Household Words*—that a key characteristic of the Heath comes to the fore: it is not and has never been a public park, both legally- and practically-speaking. It is unfenced and commonly-owned, and was legally (until the mid-twentieth century) available for livestock grazing. Parks, in the British context, typically feature a fence and a style of landscaping well-suited to municipal management (i.e. lawns, borders, shrubs, and water features). The development of nearby Regent's Park—a shining example of John Nash's garden suburb design— led to parallel proposals for the Heath to be landscaped in a similar style, proposals which were fiercely opposed for the "parkification" and "beautification" of the Heath.[283] On the Heath, then, typical landscaping rules did and do not apply. Plants and gardening styles that were highly prized in parks were derided as eyesores on the Heath, "weeds" perhaps, springing up unwanted where they did not belong. In this sense, weeds are not a static category, but rather undesired plants, plants out of place. Wilson's plantings on the Heath were early examples of this. The Heath, rather, emerged as a very specific semi-rural open space in contrast to the flat-turfed commons or landscaped parks in other parts of London. This semi-rural aesthetic—itself an ambiguous

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[281] Buckley, "Hampstead Heath", 18.
[282] Wilson quoted in *Re-Amended Bill of Complaint,* 6, in Hoare v. Wilson, (1866), (Ch.), PA FCP/1/64a.

aesthetic ideal that still dominates landscaping decisions on the Heath—is of course not straightforward, and I will return to the subject in Chapter Four. But within the context of how to avoid "parkifying" the site, the semi-rural appearance of the Heath owes some debt to the roughness and variety of the picturesque, and to the movement's interest in sightlines unimpeded by fences or barriers. All of this would come to shape opposition to intensive landscaping and redesign on the Heath.

With the growth in recreation on the Heath as fairs and use of Heath became widespread, decisions around how to manage the landscape came to the fore. As we've seen, Buckley derided Wilson's planting of trees on the Heath in the 1850s, and the use of tree planting to enclose sections of the Heath for development was discussed frequently in the legal battles between the copyholders and Wilson and in the Select Committee's transactions. But after the Heath was handed over in 1871 and when the Heath was expanded to include further properties—the nearby fields of Parliament Hill Fields in 1889, with farmland forming Golders Hill Park, the Heath Extension, and Kenwood being added later in 1898, 1907, and the 1920s, respectively—the matter of how to care for the landscape became of crucial concern.

Much of this debate took place against a background of growth for public parks across Britain. While London's Hyde Park, one of the long-established Royal Parks, had been open to the public since the seventeenth century, it was in the nineteenth that the many municipal parks that now pepper the city were devised. These parks sprang up to meet the needs of the growing city, assuring the right of public access for recreation while many traditional recreational spaces—commons like the Heath—were under threat of development. Many of these parks were designed with the landscape garden—its spaces for walking, and quiet enjoyment of nature—in mind as growth in parks for healthy and suitable recreation coincided with the popularity of the

[283] Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 73-76.

English landscape garden. In a sense, the public park was a means for putting the enjoyment of nature within reach of the working classes, not just landowners with extensive grounds. But in the case of public parks, gardening style also provided a means for determining, to an extent, one's comportment in the space, which served the goal of regulating "suitable recreation".[284] In her study of nineteenth century parks, Hazel Conway cites Repton as the single greatest influence of park design at the time.[285] As such, the gardens incorporated aspects of the picturesque in miniature: the use of walks to guide park users through the landscape, the planting of beds for visual interest, and the intermixture of lawns with plantations of trees. In contrast to Repton's commissioned estates, however, municipal parks were quite visibly contained: gates and railings kept parks "literally and symbolically a world apart" from the everyday.[286] The fences—not to mention gatehouses, park rules, and in some cases park keepers—maintained an orderly sense of what was appropriate in the public park. This was not an acceptable solution for the sprawling, semi-rural landscapes of the Heath.

While other Victorian parks featured the hallmarks of regulated municipal spaces—wrought-iron fencing, gates that closed at night, clearly marked pavements, and well-tended flower beds—the Heath was not to be understood as a park and its landscaping suggested as much. Without fences and unkempt, the overflowing plantlife and seemingly wild fields served, in some sense, as a challenge to the more staid Victorian ideals of the orderly municipal park. As Buckley noted, the busy and rolling Hampstead fields played host not solely to "the many respectable working men who come out with their families", but also to "a large stock of the real riff-raff about". The large fields and long grass, he noted, provided a change of scenery for

[284] Conway, *People's Parks*, 93.
[285] Ibid., 76.
[286] Ibid., 223.

them.[287] The reality was that, from 1860, the sheer number of people visiting the Heath was so high as to be unmanageable. The heathland flora of gorse and heather was trampled out and the wildness of Sundays on the Heath—which was so sprawling it allowed visitors to engage in all manner of activities, from donkey racing to romance—was so notorious it was immortalized in both theatre and song.[288]

The Heath's rustic appearance ran counter to many of the Victorian instincts around parks and recreation. The unbridled plantlife served as a mirror to the use of the site: just as efforts to domesticate and "parkify" the site were decried, so were efforts to enclose it and prevent its use by the general public. Octavia Hill, nearly a decade before the formation of the Hampstead Heath Protection Society in 1897, wrote of the ways in which the Heath required a different treatment than the parks:

> The late Metropolitan Board, in deference to popular feeling, left Hampstead Heath unfenced, and in the main wild and undisturbed. Cannot our new representatives realise in time that they will earn the gratitude of Londoners by doing the same with this great trust handed over to them? Cannot they understand that what people who go as far as Hampstead seek is, not the formality of the London park, not the wide roads, not the kerbstones, not the gas-lamps, not the levelled footpaths, but something of a freer space, where the wild flowers and meadow slops may be seen in their natural condition?[289]

The wild flowers of the freer space tell of a landscape in which the conventional attitude was reversed: the "weeds" or undesirable plants of the Heath were, as I indicated above, the

[287] Buckley, "Hampstead Heath", 15.
[288] See, for example, the song "Hampstead is the place to Ruralize", (London:1861), by Watkyn Williams, a popular song in the late-19th century, or Albert Chavalier's "'Appy 'Ampstead" (London: Reynolds and Co., 1895).
[289] Octavia Hill, *Daily Graphic,* 31 January, 1890.

ornamentals brought in to domesticate the site, not the rough grasses and wildflowers that overgrew their boundaries.

This is an interesting twist, for on the Heath, the plants that thrived with the loss of the traditional heathland flora (the meadow grasses, the hedgerows, the scrub) were not the plants despised as weeds. Such derision was reserved for the ornamentals, and this was largely due to their association with municipal parks and a wider fear of the Heath being parkified. But it is important to note that, alongside efforts to parkify the Heath, both mineral extraction and increased footfall with recreational use had a dramatic impact on the Heath's flora and themselves changed the landscape dramatically. The rather modest list of plant species given in the earliest flora of Hampstead Heath, Thomas Johnson's 1629 *Iter Plantarum*—detailing a landscape dominated by typical heathland plants like bell heather (*Erica cinerea*), common cotton grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), bilberry (*Vaccinum myrtillus*), and a small number of wildflowers—spoke of a very different kind of Heath.[290] In 1913, the Hampstead Scientific Society's *Hampstead Heath: Its Geology and Natural History* included a vegetation survey carried out by the botanist Arthur George Tansley noted that, with foot traffic, true heathland had been converted to grass-heathland, consistent with the grassy, meadow-like Heath we know today.[291] By the time of that survey, the true heath no longer existed, and its characteristic species were rare. By 1912, on the northern sections of the Heath near to Sandy Heath where the soil had been sufficiently disturbed by mineral extraction and filled in with humus, species like common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), dock (*Rumex sp.*), and common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) thrived. Where such heath-grass habitats came to dominate, gorse and heather were

[290] Thomas Johnson, *Botanical Journeys in Kent and Hampstead: A facsimile reprint with Introduction and Translation of his Iter Plantarum 1629, Descriptio Itineris Plantarum 1632*, ed. J.S.L. Gilmour (Pittsburgh: The Hunt Botanical Library, 1972), 65.
[291] Hampstead Scientific Society, *Hampstead Heath: Its Geology and Natural History*, 105.

lost and, Tansley noted with surprise, many species of rough grass persisted despite heavy foot traffic. In particular, he listed grassy species like wood soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*) and purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*), one of the species that has been associated with the loss of true heathland to heath-grassland.[292] So the changes that came with increased footfall on Hampstead Heath meant the loss of the *heath* itself: instead, the landscape was replaced with equally admired, rough meadows.[293]

The species that were truly derided as weeds, of course, were not those that overran the heath habitat itself—and human intervention, as we have seen, was the greatest factor in that change—but rather the plants brought in to "improve" the rough appearance of the site, to make it more parklike. The trees planted by Wilson, which we have already seen derided as eyesores, were particular targets. Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) was viewed as inferior to English oak (*Quercus robur*), which had thrived in the woodlands on the north of the Heath. Common rhododendron (*Rhodedendron ponticum*), which thrived in the woodland around Kenwood, was viewed as creating further shade, preventing the growth of other ground cover and younger oak seedlings and as such was viewed by the turn of the century as a weed species.[294] Trees planted ornamentally, especially in avenues, including the tree of heaven (*Ailanthus sp.)*, limes (*Tilia sp.*), and willows (*Salix sp.*) all changed the previously spare look of the Heath dramatically.[295] The persecution of such plants—mostly non-natives—has, as Peter Coates points out, in some cases been viewed as a form of botanical xenophobia, but it is just as crucial to set such views within the context of landscape improvement and the association of such plants with the effective

[292] Ibid., 102-106; London Biodiversity Partnership "Habitat Action Plan: Heathland" [accessed 17 January, 2016], http://www.lbp.org.uk/londonhabspp.html#heath
[293] The Hampstead Heath Flora Index compiled in Bellamy, et al's *Hampstead Heath Flora* was of particular help in detailing historical changes to the Heath's species makeup. Joyce Bellamy, Paul Canneaux, Stuart Carruthers, Ian Greenwood, Tony Hilton, Sally Prothero, Jane Smart, Robert Smith, Gareth Stanfield, Les Willis, and Lucy Yuill, *Hampstead Heath Flora: Habitat Handbook No. 1*, London: Greater London Council, 1986. NHM.
[294] Hampstead Scientific Society*, Hampstead Heath: Its Geology and Natural History*, 97.

parkification of a landscape like the Heath.[296] The particularities of species only tell us a small fragment of the story. Campaigners fought most fiercely to keep the Heath unmanicured, rough-hewn, and semi-rural in its aesthetic, and this was mostly down to landscape maintenance and the opposition of ornamental planting.

This opposition to ornamental plants was not the only thing that set the Heath in opposition to municipal parks. In remaining unfenced and, once handed over to the public, being relatively unregulated, the Heath presented a direct challenge to the notion of the Victorian park. It was and remains a space in which the overgrown could be celebrated. The celebrations of a summer Sunday might have seemed in opposition to the quiet rurality of a landscape like the Heath, but they also drew on some of its unruly character. Perhaps, after all, Buckley summed it up best, writing against the domestication of the landscape, whether by enclosure or parkification:

> Sit down amidst the furze, low enough to have no forms around you; its dark, rough, broken outlines standing out boldly against the clear blue sky above, or, perhaps, perched on the root of one of the cedar firs, from which the gravelly soil has gradually receded by a series of Lilliputian land-slips, with a larger and more noble prospect before you; and, while we revel in the clear, healthy air around us, we think with pain upon any prospect of change. Scarcely can we realize even in idea this beautiful wilderness hedged, ditched, drained, furrowed, and submitted to all the other useful cruelties of agriculture. Still less do we think of its appropriation to forming select parks and paddocks for villa mansions. Little thankful should we be for regular, correct pathways, neatly laid down with powdered sea-shells, getting dry

[295] McDowall and Wolton, *Hampstead Heath: The Walker's Guide*, 23.
[296] Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes Since Ancient Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998): 109.

> after every shower, and always looking unpicturesque, orderly, and public requested-not-to-walk-on-the-grass-ified.[297]

While its long history of management and use underscores the fact that the Heath is not wild in its strictest sense, Buckley's overture to wilderness is a telling one: the Heath provided a kind of unruly, unmanicured landscape that, after 1871, was freed from agricultural and industrial use. In this sense, its rugged appearance, save efforts to "improve" it, was left to run wild: literally, it was not fenced in, mowed, or paved over. The ruggedness of its paths, of its grass, and of its hedges was a key part of the Heath's character, and as I'll indicate in Chapter Four, would continue to present a challenge to landscape managers and the wider public. Here, however, I turn to one further case—a contemporary one—to highlight the ways in which unruliness is a vital characteristic of the Heath, and how such unruliness extends beyond the realm of plants and bank holiday fairs to the peculiar case of Hampstead Heath's famous squatter, Harry Hallowes.

iv. Harry Hallowes and Who Belongs

Just south of Hampstead Lane, a long wooden fence stands amidst overgrowing brambles. The fence marks the border between the Heath and Athlone House, an empty Victorian mansion and its grounds built in 1871, which once played host to an RAF intelligence base and an NHS care home. The house features an eclectic mix of architectural styles in the Italianate and Gothic, and sits amidst a mixed woodland, a well-established part of the scenery surrounding the Heath. If you follow the property's fence through the brambles and over a small wooden pallet serving as a makeshift bridge, however, a small gate appears. Beyond the gate is a small garden, with plastic deck chairs, buckets, ladders, and other small but useful items strewn about. Beyond the garden is a simple tent tucked into the trees. This is the home of Harry Hallowes, who in 2007

[297] Buckley, "Hampstead Heath", 17.

made international news by successfully acquiring these two acres of land through adverse possession, *squatter's rights*.

Hallowes's case quite rightly made international headlines: exceptional in a period of austerity and ever-increasing property values in North London, his case harkened images of a more unruly, past Britain, of a Britain that has been all but eroded by intensive privatization, high costs of living, and a wider effort to "tidy up" cities. And Hallowes, quiet and unassuming, stood as a placeholder not simply for what was and continues to be lost in London's rapid regeneration following the 1980s, but for the unruliness of the landscape itself: as if by accident, his small home grew up in the bushes, weedy and unkempt, at odds with the increasingly sterile gated communities nearby.

Here, then, I wish to consider the ways in which Harry Hallowes's case presents a contemporary challenge to the climate of rapid, often unseen, privatization and development in London. By considering his case alongside the parallel case of Athlone House's redevelopment, now under judicial review, near which his tent is sited, I consider the possibility that contemporary efforts to understand the losses of public and open spaces across London are well-served by an attention to the history of sites like the Heath. Here, again, Mabey's notion of weeds comes in handy: Hallowes, like many plants categorized as "weeds", seems remarkably out of place in the expensive, increasingly unattainable Highgate neighbourhood in which he has squatted. He "gatecrashes" not only Highgate's orderly landscape, but its property rights and wealthy cultural identity. But more than metaphorically resembling an unwanted—yet thriving—weed, Hallowes challenges the status quo of the Heath and Highgate more broadly, in providing a human disruption to the narrative of expensive residential developments and privatization. Without reducing a human story to that of a "weed", here I wish to underscore the ways in which

his story can be viewed as connecting with the history presented in this chapter in two ways: in its relationship to rights of access to the Heath, and in Hallowes's own rough-around-the-edges presence in contrast to increasing efforts to privatize, ornamentally landscape, and otherwise develop the Heath and its surrounding land. In this regard, I argue that the efforts to eliminate Hallowes's squat present a contemporary, human parallel to historical efforts to parkify the landscape itself: tidying away unruliness in an ever-more sterile vision of London as a city.

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London and the Heath faced enormous changes in the 1980s. With the economy in recession and Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives in power, London's political landscape changed dramatically with the dismantling of the Greater London Council (GLC), which from 1965 had governed London and its many local councils as a whole. This left the future of the Heath uncertain; it had, since the sixties, been managed by the GLC Parks department. With public spending greatly reduced and no single body in place for London as a whole—under Thatcher, local councils were given far more authority—it was not immediately evident who ought to manage the Heath. Likewise, the era significantly transformed Britain's housing market: with the introduction of "Right to Buy" legislation in 1980, which gave council housing tenants the right to buy their houses but forbade local councils from ploughing those profits into constructing new council housing, London faced a housing crisis and a stark increase in homelessness.[298] So both the Heath's future and the future of London housing stock faced uncertainty in the 1980s.

Harry Hallowes's time on the Heath began with these changes in the background. In 1987, one of the gardeners at Athlone House, which was then a National Health Service care

[298] Anna Minton, *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First Century City*, Reissue (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 115.

home, told the then-transient Hallowes of a spot at the end of the garden on which he could feasibly camp. No one used that part of the garden, his friend told him, so his presence there would go relatively undetected. Hallowes, a labourer from Sligo, Ireland, who had until then managed with a series of odd-jobs, jumped at the opportunity for some peace and quiet and pitched a small tent at the end of the garden. He lived there for seventeen years undisturbed, as the UK government changed to New Labour, as the Heath's management passed to the City of London, and as housing prices in Highgate and Hampstead sky-rocketed throughout the late-1990s and early-2000s. Then, in 2004, planning proposals for Athlone House and its garden emerged from a development company who purchased the site, Dwyer Investments.

When Dwyer purchased the house and the land, two parallel struggles emerged: local opposition developed in response to Dwyer's application for planning permission for the house; and Hallowes's own legal battles began when Dwyer attempted to remove him from the property. Initially, Dwyer sought permission from Camden Council to build condominiums on the site, which was given on the condition that they restore the house itself. When the condos were built and the developer then attempted to renege on the deal, fierce opposition in the community emerged to save the house and prevent further redevelopment adjacent to the Heath. As a letter on behalf of the Highgate Society explains, restoration of Athlone House was "a fundamental condition" of consent for the development.[299] Looking at a long and unprofitable battle, Dwyer sold the house itself to an anonymous buyer in 2005, leading to a further, lengthy battle to prevent demolition of the original house and the construction of a new one. In June 2015, the proposal was deemed by the Planning Inspectorate to be an "inappropriate

[299] The Highgate Society to Charles Thuaire, Camden Council, January 8, 2014. http://www.highgatesociety.com/media/docs/-Athone%20HS%20Response-Final.pdf.

development", and is now facing a judicial review by the High Court. The extensive gardens of the site were given over to Hampstead Heath as part of the "Athlone House Gardens".

The developer's efforts to evict Hallowes from the site were likewise confronted by Hallowes's solicitors, Maurice Evans, filing for adverse possession—squatter's rights—of the two acres on which he had lived for over eighteen years. According to UK property law, a person can claim adverse possession after twelve years on a given site. The claim went to court in 2007 and, on 23 May, Hallowes was granted the deed to the two acres on which he lives. He has since lived there in relative quietude, and now in his eighties, relies on friends to deliver food and water. Living without electricity, it is a quiet life amidst the trees, but Hallowes is an avid reader and spends his days on the site. After his death, the property will join the "Athlone House Gardens" as part of the Heath.[300]

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Hallowes's case connects two crucial eras in relation to privatization in London: the 1980s Thatcher era, as mentioned above, and the contemporary wave of redevelopment and privatization facing London. Contemporary London has faced intensive redevelopment as public lands have passed to private investors in the past three decades, such that author and journalist Anna Minton has compared the climate of London property management as "increasingly replicating the patterns of the 18th and 19th century landlords, at a time when parallels with the inequalities of the Victorian period are also increasingly being drawn".[301] In this regard, such privatizations strongly recall the conditions of the very era in which the Heath was acquired. Now, in recent decades, amidst massive private and often foreign investment, public money has

[300] BBC News, "Tramp wins rights to prime land", 24 May, 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/6687931.stm.

increasingly gone into funding private developments, often through "Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organizations", known as quangos.[302]

The scale of private development in London is staggering. The Canary Wharf development, for example, began slowly in the 1980s and is now one of the city's thriving business and finance sectors, featuring office blocks, shopping centres, and private housing complexes on what used to be London's docks but is now entirely private, and often gated, land. Privately-owned lands now extend around many of London's tower blocks and business quarters: in 2011, Occupy protesters found themselves unable to protest in seemingly-public Paternoster Square, outside the London Stock Exchange, as it is private land, meaning they had no right to public assembly and protest there. The Heygate Estate, one of London's largest and most notorious council estates housing 3000 tenants, was demolished in 2014 to make way for the development of Elephant Park, a private housing complex with just 79 social housing units, while the once-public Battersea Power Station continues to undergo work in the creation of the Malaysia Square redevelopment plan.[303] Following the privatization of the British railways in 2001, the King's Cross redevelopment has seen extensive construction and change under the guise of regeneration, including a privately-managed swimming "pond" available for use by the public by appointment and at a price of six pounds per visit. The redevelopment is now policed by private security guards. Minton, in *Ground Control*, argues that this wave of privatization and the consequent efforts to control access to parts of the city directly mirror the nineteenth

[301] Anna Minton, "The Privatisation of Public Space" (London: Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, 2006), 3.
[302] See Minton, *Ground Control*, for detailed accounts of both the Canary Wharf and Olympic sites.
[303] Minton, "What I Want from our Cities in 2015: Public Spaces That Are Truly Public", *The Guardian,* 30 December, 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/dec/30/what-i-want-from-our-cities-in-2015-public-spaces-that-are-truly-public-boris-johnson-london.

century's wave of enclosure, specifically in the turning of public lands and rights of way into private property via a process called "stopping-up orders".[304]

It may be easy to view this climate of privatization as primarily impacting central London, with leafy Highgate and Hampstead staying relatively the same. But with the wave of investment in business and finance sectors, Hampstead has also faced its own, albeit highly-privileged, wave of change. Hampstead is home to Britain's "Billionaire's Row", the second-most expensive street in Britain, where intensive private, often anonymous foreign investment have left entire rows of mansions unoccupied, driving up prices for housing as enormous swathes of housing stand empty. In 2014, *The Guardian* exposed the derelict state of many's of the street's mansions at a time when homelessness is rife.[305] So both the case of Harry Hallowes and Athlone House warrant contextualising against a background of intensive privatization, soaring costs, and an acute housing crisis across the city. These shifts, likewise, impact the Heath, with the City of London Corporation increasingly attempting to monetize spaces like the swimming ponds and cafés. At the time of submission of this dissertation, the City of London Corporation came under fire for awarding the contracts for its on-site cafés to a large corporation, despite the fact that the cafés had been run by local families for decades.[306]

The proposals for Athlone House, in particular, crystallized a concerted local response not unlike that of the nineteenth century: with the initial Dwyer deal falling through and the new anonymous buyer submitting proposals to construct an entirely new house, local campaigners organized under the banner of the Athlone House Working Group. They filed a series of objections to the proposal with Camden Council, responsible for planning permission at the site,

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[304] Minton, *Ground Control*, 19, 21.
[305] Robert Booth, "Inside 'Billionaire's Row': London's Rotting, Derelict Mansions Worth £350m", *The Guardian,* 31 January, 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/31/inside-london-billionaires-row-derelict-mansions-hampstead.

with the planning application appeal finally being rejected in June of 2015. Among local objections to the proposal was the assertion that the proposed house was an "unconvincing hybrid genuflection to the great 17th and 18th century country houses, further devalued by 21st-century oligarchal-grandiose overtones".[307] In particular, it was claimed that the new house would lead to "substantial harm" to Hampstead Heath: through its large physical footprint and through its impact on the heritage assets of the region. That is, it would damage the Heath "by intruding an over-dominant and intrusive building into views from it".[308] The Planning Inspectorate's final decision to deny an appeal for planning permission to the site states that "Athlone House makes a clear and positive contribution to the distinctive character and appearance" of the Highgate Conservation Area in which it is located, noting that "The site in its natural surroundings is best appreciated in views from Hampstead Heath" and that "views from the Heath are of particular interest because of its importance to London as public open space".[309] The proposed house was deemed undesirable in direct relation to the views of it from the Heath. Local papers, meanwhile, decried the neglect of the house by its owners, who have remained relatively anonymous under the name Athlone House Ltd., though they are widely believed to be the M. A. Kharafi and Sons, a company owned by the Kuwaiti billionaire Nasser Al-Karafi until his death in 2011.[310] The conflict cuts to the debates about which vision of Hampstead Heath and its surroundings ought to be preserved or maintained. What is evident is that the house is

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[306] Ed Cumming, "The Hampstead café at the frontline of the war against corporate chains".
[307] The Highgate Society to Charles Thuaire, 4.
[308] Ibid., 6.
[309] C.J. Ball, "Appeal Decision for APP/X5210/A/14/2220872
Athlone House, Hampstead Lane, London N6 4RU", (Bristol: The Planning Inspectorate, 8 June, 2015).
[310] Imogen Blake, "Reports reveal pigeons and vermin plague Highgate mansion Athlone House", *Hampstead and Highgate Express,* 26 September, 2014.
http://www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/environment/reports_reveal_pigeons_and_vermin_plague_highgate_mansion_athlone_house_1_3782194; Sanchez Manning, "Athlone House war is won after 11-year battle", *Hampstead and Highgate Express,* 28 April, 2011.
http://www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/environment/athlone_house_war_is_won_after_11_year_battle_1_878833.

deployed, here, as forming part of the scenery of the Heath, and as such is subject to similar debates around aesthetic suitability: like the Heath's overgrown hedges and grasses, campaigners seem to wish for its surrounding buildings to retain their historical characteristic. Constructing a modern house on the site would, in some sense, be akin to "parkifying" the Heath.

At its heart, however, the conflicts at Athlone House and Harry Hallowes's squat underscore the enormous extent of inequality in London. Even within the wealthy communities of Hampstead and Highgate—home to the campaigners in the Athlone House Working Group—there is deep concern about the extent to which the super-rich are re-shaping the area. Athlone House is just one of many local properties facing such battles over redevelopment. At one end of the spectrum, private investment and development of the area, often from foreign investors, is deemed undesirable to the status quo of the area, and this is often packaged in the form of objections to ostentatious, palatial proposals for property development. At the other end of the spectrum, however, Hallowes's case presents a challenge not solely to the existing social order of Hampstead, Highgate, and the Heath, but warrants consideration of who or what is deemed acceptable in contemporary London.

Hallowes came to the site amidst high-levels of homelessness in Britain, at a time when squatting was a thriving movement in the city. The squatting movement in the UK was directly linked to housing shortages after the Second World War.[311] But in 1968, the movement re-emerged with vigour partly in alignment with anti-war campaigns (against Vietnam) and nuclear disarmament campaigns. Organized squatting campaigns emerged at this time, as well as advisory groups for squatters around London.[312] By the mid-1980s, then, there was a well-

[311] Lucy Finchett-Maddock, "Squatting in London: Squatters' Rights and Legal Movement(s)", *The City is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present*, eds. Bart Van Der Steen, Ask Katzeff, and Leendert Van Hoogenhuijze, (Oakland: PM Press, 2014): 213.
[312] Ibid., 214.

established squatting culture in London, especially in response to the wave of housing shortages under Thatcher.[313] Increased cost of living in the 1980s further exacerbated this.[314] But while much of the squatting that grew out of the 1970s and 80s can be linked to autonomous and activist movements, Hallowes's situation is not immediately reducible to an intentionally political or activist act. Rather, Hallowes has stated his indifference to both politics and financial gain: early on in the process he described his desire to "live here quietly, minding my own business for as long as I can".[315] While it would be simple to reason away Hallowes's circumstances by highlighting the employment crises of Britain in the 1980s or, perhaps, the price of housing, it is more crucial to attend to the fact that Hallowes himself opted to live in the tent on the site *even after* options to return to the "moneyed economy" and social housing because available. Hallowes himself, it seems, was even reluctant to engage in the legal processes necessary to claim adverse possession of the property, and only did so when he faced eviction. Hallowes was quite deliberate in his choice to stay on the site, so it is inadequate to read his story solely through the lenses of homelessness or displacement.

Rather, by reading Hallowes's case alongside Richard Mabey's notion of weeds as "gatecrashers" of society, it is possible to consider the ways in which his case exceeds the acceptable bounds for what is deemed suitable for the landscape on and surrounding the Heath. Hallowes challenged the acceptable protocol for both the Heath (on which it is illegal to camp or live) and in the wealthy communities of Hampstead and Highgate.[316] In *Weeds,* Mabey describes

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[313] Carolyn Teich Adams, "Homelessness in the Postindustrial City: Views from London and Philadelphia", *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (1986): 527-549.
[314] Finchett-Maddock, "Squatting in London", 223.
[315] Jeremy Clarke, "Squatting on a fortune", *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 March, 2005. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1485517/Squatting-on-a-fortune.html
[316] The communities around the Heath have long held concerns about migratory or transient communities living on site. In 1984, the Heath and Hampstead Society bemoaned the presence of caravans on East Heath, which the GLC were unable to remove (despite it violating Heath by-laws) due to restrictions by the GLC's 'Ethnic Minority Unit'. In the article, chairman Peggy Jay noted that "This has been a tragic episode and one that must never be repeated.

weeds as wild nature that refuses to be contained in its appropriate social category. "Weeds," he writes, "occur when this tidy compartmentalization breaks down. The wild gatecrashes our civilized domains, and the domesticated escapes and runs riot".[317] Or, as Tim Cresswell has put it, "Weeds (real or figural) are furtively mobile fugitives that colonize available waste ground".[318] Echoing Mary Douglas's description of dirt as "matter out of place", weeds challenge not just the spaces they colonize. Weeds challenge the notions that nature can, in any sense, be reigned in, that the social compartments by which we order plants as *good* or *bad* are watertight, and as such challenge our efforts to domesticate landscapes themselves. Landscapes—which only ever emerge as such by way of culture—then lie in an uneasy space between the cultural and the natural. Weeds undermine this dichotomy. Harry Hallowes, in a sense, presents a similar challenge. Having opted for a life off the grid, when his situation was publicized he faced enormous pressure to re-enter the normal economy, with social services visiting him in an effort to improve his living standards and supply him with a pension.[319] Despite the efforts to remove him, and despite the ongoing conflicts at Athlone House, Hallowes continues to occupy the site today.

As we have seen in section three of this chapter, the plants deemed "weeds" on the Heath may be surprising: they are among the cultivated plant "improvers" brought in to domesticate the Heath's landscape. It is possible, too, to view the rejection of such parkification alongside the more recent rejection of proposals like the one for Athlone House. Just as in the nineteenth

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One social problem is not solved by creating another. The issues are far beyond the distress caused to local residents. Admittedly the trebling of the local crime rate, harassment of old people and children, and an outbreak of shoplifting have not endeared the travelling to local people. The basic issue here is the irresponsible intervention of one GLC department in the duties and responsibilities of another. As a token of apology we are asking that the Ethnic Minorities budget be used to pay the enormous bill for cleaning up the mess the travellers left behind". Peggy Jay, "Chairman's Report", *Heath and Old Hampstead Society Newsletter*, Autumn (1984), 4-5. CLSA.

[317] Mabey, *Weeds*, 21.

[318] Tim Cresswell, "Weeds, Plagues, and Bodily Secretions: A Geographical Interpretation of Metaphors of Displacement", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 2 (2010), 335.

century, locals did not want a manicured Heath, locals today broadly oppose changes to the scenery surrounding the Heath. Likewise, though, I want to undermine the metaphor of "weed": as Mabey notes, it would be glib to compare displaced plants and displaced humans outright, but there is a sense in which the cultural response to weeds mirrors the current cultural response to squatting.[320] While squatting was a civil offence throughout the time Hallowes camped on the site, the existence of adverse possession or squatters' rights meant that, in practice, squatting was a grey area which in some cases resulted in legal possession. Since 2012, squatting has been considered a criminal offence in the UK, so cases like Hallowes are relegated to the history books.[321] Hallowes, then, calls attention to the right to public space, undermining efforts to delimit who is desirable in the space. On the Heath, efforts to neatly categorize ecological and social actors break down.

v. Conclusion

Reading this contemporary case against the background of London's current wave of privatization and against its nineteenth century history of land management, it is evident that struggles to determine who has access to the Heath and how that access should take shape cannot be neatly or simply viewed as complete. Just as the nineteenth century saw a wave of outcry over whether locals could access the Heath, whether the working classes ought to make use of it, and whether landscape "improvements" ought to be carried out, the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries still require us to be concerned with who can make use of the Heath and how, and whether, the current wave of changes being wrought in the city are indeed improvements. In this chapter I have highlighted the ways in which a wide array of actors—from sand to donkeys,

[319] Clarke, "Squatting on a fortune".
[320] Mabey, *Weeds*, 17.

campaigners to government committees, ornamental plants to squatters—shaped and continue to shape the Heath in its transition into and management as a public open space. In particular, I have indicated the ways in which the landscape and its surrounding communities have pushed back on efforts to manicure and reign it in, pointing to an aesthetic on the Heath that exceeds the boundaries of a municipal park. In the following chapter, I follow this discussion by turning to a twentieth century conflict over landscaping on the Heath, and indicate that the aesthetic ideals which shape the site are ambiguous and require ongoing negotiation.

[321] Finchett-Maddock 214-215.

Chapter 4: Field and Woodland

"The unique quality of the Heath is that everyone considers himself sole proprietor of it."[322]

Despite the sandy heathland's importance to the establishment of Hampstead Heath as an open space, the landscape Londoners associate with Hampstead Heath today isn't usually the dry, craggy stretch at Sandy Heath. Neither is it the heathland gorse that once covered its lower slopes. Rather, many people enter the Heath from one of the wide, grassy, hedgerowed fields that now buttress the original, earliest heathland from the neighbouring suburbs. The Heath, here, is pastoral—not sparse and stark, as heathland can be, but idyllic, quaint, *rus in urbe.* Walking north along Parliament Hill Fields, one finds ponds shaded by leaning willows, grassy, rolling hills broken only by bramble-hedges and the occasional shady tree under which to lounge on a rare sunny afternoon. Northwest, on the Heath's other side, the Heath Extension retains its character as a field: flat, grassy, turned over in late summer to hay-making. Wylde's Farmhouse—once a working farm, but mostly known as a nineteenth-century gathering place for Hampstead artists and intellectuals—still stands on the Extension's southern edge. And at West Meadow, the grassy fields west of the Kenwood Estate, the grass still grows long around the Kenwood Dairy, creating a rural, idyllic scene that was, of course, completely intentional. The Dairy was built to enhance the idyllic characteristic of the property and provide a hobby for the second Earl of Mansfield's wife, Louisa.

Here, I wish to outline briefly the histories of these idyllic landscapes: the acquisition of the neighbouring fields to expand Hampstead Heath in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

[322] Alan Powers, "A Childhood Memory of the Heath in the Early Sixties", *Heath and Old Hampstead Society Newsletter* 2, no. 4 (Summer 1972): 3. CLSA.

centuries, their transitions out of grazing in the mid-twentieth century, and the difficulties presented by the aesthetic of a "rural idyll" in a constantly changing landscape of field, hedgerow, and woodland. I will consider how debates over the Heath's rural and wild aesthetic came to shape the Heath's management in the twentieth century. Specifically, I will consider the case of scrub management in the 1970s, following decades of shifting landscaping strategies following the Second World War, noting specifically the gap between efforts to "restore" the traditional heathland and efforts to maintain the once-agricultural fields without livestock. By tracing a conflict involving local community organizations, Heath management, and the local press, I will unpack the ways in which aesthetic notions of "rurality" or "wildness" carry over into landscape management on the Heath, and the ways in which notions of something sinister or unwanted by some local advocacy groups—dead bodies, crime, sexual activity—play a key role in such conflicts. Lastly, I will consider the ways in which similar landscaping concerns—around grassland and scrub management—contribute to efforts to manage the contemporary "Public Sex Environment" (PSE), a well-established cruising ground on West Heath.

In Chapter Three, I explored the nineteenth century battles to acquire Hampstead Heath for the public. In particular, I noted the ways in which the Heath was characterized as different from other municipal parks and open spaces: in its rustic, unkempt appearance; in its history as a site shaped not by design but by multiple land uses; and in its open, accessible quality as a public space. Building on those arguments, this chapter explores the ways in which the Heath's "wild" aesthetic, British landscape conservation, and local power struggles contributed, eventually, to the establishment of a Hampstead Heath Management Plan, a document designed to set out the ideas and obstacles which shape land management on the Heath. I argue that notions of "wildness" deployed in the Heath's landscape management are deeply related to ideas of English

countryside, and therefore related to English ideas of landscape conservation, which seek to maintain a landscape in a particular stage of its natural succession. In the case of the Heath, exactly which stage to conserve—the traditional heathland, which we have already seen had been lost; the post-industrial landscape of the quarries; the livestock-grazed fields; the well-used recreational grounds; or the untrammeld succession from grass to woodland—was the focus of intense debate. In piecing together the conflict through archival research, I demonstrate the degree to which the "aesthetic ideal" of the Heath is changeable, open to negotiation, and deeply linked to the wider English landscape tradition, and to rural aesthetics that Williams has argued are inherently linked to the surrounding city and the erasure or idealization of labour. Likewise, drawing on Tsing's observations of local conflict in her ethnography, I highlight the ways in which the "friction" produced by the Heath conflict produced not solely new actors in relation to the landscape—dead bodies, "invasive" sycamores—but also led to the creation of the Management Plan, itself a contentious proposal. As Tsing has argued, frictions between actors can serve as "a reminder of the importance of interaction in defining movement, cultural form, and agency".[323] The conflict on the Heath produced new possibilities and ways of thinking about the Heath. Lastly, the contemporary case study on the Hampstead Heath Public Sex Environment considers the ways in which the use of Hampstead Heath as a "cruising ground" and efforts by some local groups to police the site underscore the notion of "wildness" on the Heath: both in terms of landscape management but also in terms of how the site is used.

The chapter is structured in four sections. The first section sets out the historical changes which resulted in agricultural lands being added to Hampstead Heath, and the ways in which the eventual removal of livestock from the fields resulted in a new and unplanned-for need to

[323] Tsing, *Friction,* 6.

manage the landscape. The second section outlines the 1978 conflict and highlights the ways in which debates over wildness, conservation, and local power struggles resulted in the need for a coherent management strategy for the Heath. The third section considers the ways in which unexpected actors were enrolled into the 1978 conflict: dead bodies and crimes join unruly birch trees and sycamores in shaping the arguments in favour of a landscape management strategy. Lastly, the fourth section highlights the ways in which similar concerns about wildness, unruliness, and conflicts between stakeholders come to bear on the contemporary management of the Hampstead Heath Public Sex Environment, and how management of vegetation is not only a means for regulating the landscape, but for regulating social behaviour on the Heath. This section is intended to contribute to a fuller understanding of who the Heath's stakeholders are, who and what practices contributes to an understanding of the Heath's landscape aesthetics, and to underscore the ways in which the Heath presents a diverse and unruly response to efforts to narrate its history.

i. The Transition from Grazing

The portion of sandy heathland itself, as discussed in the previous chapter, was not agriculturally productive. Rather, the land had historically been turned over for mineral extraction, grazing, and common use by copyholders. Copyholders pastured all manner of animals on the "waste", as historian Park referred to it: horses, cows, asses, pigs, and geese.[324] On the neighbouring fields, however, the grassy meadows provided somewhat more. John James Park, writing in 1814, noted that Hampstead farmers depended on the supply of hay from these fields, and in the latter parts of the nineteenth and early half of the twentieth century, much of this land would be let to large-

[324] Park, *The Topography and Natural History,* 128

scale dairy producers like the Express Dairy Company.[325] But as the movement to protect Hampstead Heath from development continued through the nineteenth century, many of these fields were the target of campaigners' work: Parliament Hill Fields was added to Hampstead Heath in 1889; the Heath Extension in 1907; and Kenwood in sections between 1923 and 1928.[326] Much of the campaigning to acquire these border lands argued that the beauty of the original Heath itself relied upon the "adjacent fields included in the prospect" and to the "free circulation and freshness of air" they provided.[327] As Hampstead Heath grew with new acquisitions, the original heathland fell out of direct use for natural resources by copyholders and was no longer used as a common for local livestock.

[325] Ibid., 133-134. The Express Dairy Company let fields at Kenwood well into the twentieth century. The company's historic signage still sits above the Tesco Express store in Hampstead Village.
[326] Farmer, *Hampstead Heath*, 142-143.
[327] Thos. Eccleston Gibb, *New Park for North London: A Plea for the Extension of Hampstead Heath and the Preservation of Parliament Fields* (London: Maclure and MacDonald, 1885), 3. BM/BL.

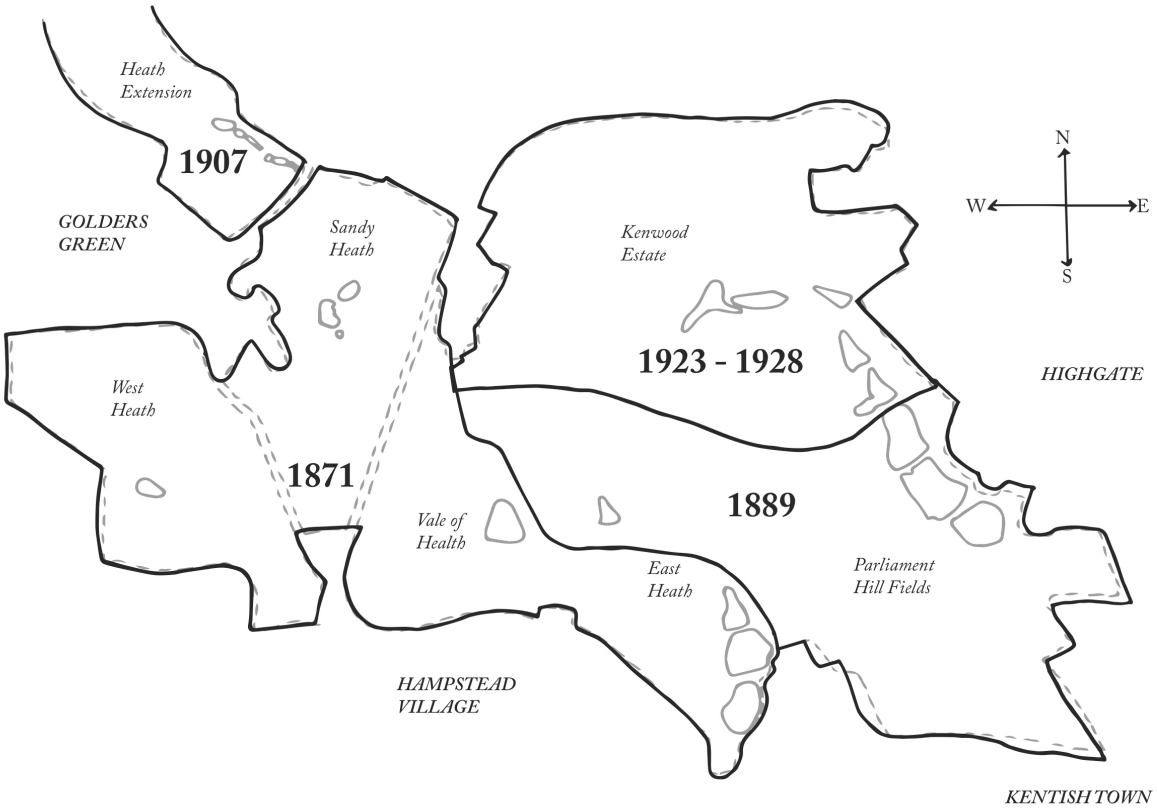


Figure 20 Hampstead Heath major acquisitions by year

The addition of these lands to Hampstead Heath meant transitioning traditionally agricultural landscapes into public open spaces. Parliament Hill Fields had been grassed and hedgerowed for cattle and sheep; the lands that made up the Heath Extension had, for centuries, been used as farmland; and by the nineteenth century, as the Mansfield family spent most of their time at Scone Palace in Scotland, much of Kenwood had been let to Express Dairy.[328] So the transition of these lands into open spaces presented something of a challenge: a coherent land management plan would have to be devised in order to maintain the Heath's character. Much

[328] Wylde's Farm, in particular, had been heavily used as a farm: at one time split into several small farms, unlike the rest of Hampstead Heath, the fields here were once under plough. They were likewise used for crops and orchard fruits. Likewise, Wylde's is perhaps best known for its cultural legacy as a gathering place for nineteenth century intellectuals including Dickens. Mrs. Arthur Wilson, *Wyldes and its Story*, Reprinted from the *Hampstead Annual* by Sydney C. Mayle (Clerkenwell: The Priory Press, 1904). BM/BL.

effort had been spent in decrying the "parkification" of the Heath, so the challenge was how to maintain a rugged, pastoral landscape without it being actively used and maintained by traditional means, that is, by livestock.

While the landscape of the Heath continued to grow with new acquisitions, the Hampstead Heath fair likewise continued to thrive, and in the 1910s attracted visitors in the hundreds of thousands, meaning footfall continued to impact heavily the growth of heathland flora. The neighbouring grassy fields also changed dramatically, and a number of factors contributed to this. One factor, as mentioned, was the transition from grazing. Only small numbers of sheep remained on the Heath until the Second World War. These sheep still grazed West Meadow at Kenwood as late as the 1950s, keeping the grass short. Rabbits, too, grazed much of the Heath's grass until their populations suffered in the mid-twentieth century, in part due to the introduction of the virus myxomatosis and, it is said, due to the encroachment of scrub on grassland with the neglect of the Heath's traditional hedgerow boundaries.[329] Likewise, the War itself had a large, if temporary, impact on the site: large portions of the Heath were turned over to the military, meaning the fields at the Heath Extension and Kenwood were used for drill, and large portions of the Heath were used for allotments.[330] In a way, this interlude meant that strategies for maintaining Hampstead Heath were further delayed, such that it was not until the 1960s that the need for a management strategy became evident. The years between the late-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth saw Hampstead Heath transformed from a well-used local common into a public open space and the amount of grazing on the land drastically reduced, accounting for what

[329] Don Scott, *The Nature of Hampstead Heath* (Hampstead: High Hill Press, 1979*),* 43, NHM; Kit [CW] Ikin, "Scrub", *H&OHS Newsletter* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1978), 15. CLSA.

[330] Kenwood housed Army servicemen throughout the War, while Athlone House housed the Royal Air Force, despite some seventy bombs being dropped on the Heath throughout the Blitz. Sand digging was temporarily resumed for sandbags—as discussed in the Introduction— and allotments temporarily grew up on the Heath Extension, such that after the end of the War, the Heath was in as dire a state as after Wilson's exploitation of it.

some ecologists have referred to as the single greatest change to Hampstead Heath's local flora.[331]

Specifically, once grazing ended, the fields of Parliament Hill and West Meadow, especially, grew out long. By the 1960s, and once the Greater London Council (GLC) took over management of the Heath from the London County Council (LCC) in 1965, the landscape of the Heath had transformed into a much more rustic version of itself. The lack of grazing meant not only that grass grew long, but saplings were no longer kept in check, so scrub and woodland began to encroach upon neighbouring grassland. The hedgerows that once marked field boundaries began to outgrow their very borders. This encroachment of scrub and woodland dealt a final blow to the Heath's "heathland" character: heather and other low-growing, shade-intolerant species, most of which had already disappeared under footfall, further struggled amidst the spread of fast-growing birch, sycamore, and turkey oak. But in the process, the unruly characteristic of the landscape quickly captured the hearts of locals: an unkempt landscape provided a distinct contrast to the groomed parks dotted around London, and many quickly grew accustomed to the "wild" look of the Heath in this period. This affection for a "wild" or rustic Heath is today expressed in a number of ways: in interviews, individuals used the phrases "fairly natural countryside"; "rural analogue"; "a real feeling of being in the country in wild heathland"; "the nearest we have to countryside"; "wild grass"; "wild or uncultivated or rural space".[332] The Heath, in its unruliness, presents a vision of rural English landscape aesthetics rarely seen in the city, and far less accessible in the countryside due to agricultural use. It is, as Williams might put

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See: The Bomb Sight Project, "Bomb Sight: Mapping the WW2 Bomb Census", (accessed 26 October, 2015), http://www.bombsight.org/?#14/51.5647/-0.1697

[331] Joyce Bellamy, Paul Canneaux, Stuart Carruthers, Ian Greenwood, Tony Hilton, Sally Prothero, Jane Smart, Robert Smith, Gareth Stanfield, Les Willis, and Lucy Yuill, *Hampstead Heath Flora: Habitat Handbook No. 1* (London: Greater London Council, 1986), 13. NHM.

[332] Interviews: Nicky, 29 January, 2015; Rachel, 29 January, 2015; Les, 7 February, 2015; Viv, 13 February, 2015; Jonathan, 15 February, 2015.

it, "a rural landscape emptied of rural labour".[333] Wolton and McDowall, in their first book on the Heath, describe the Heath as Londoners' "substitute countryside".[334]

Amidst these descriptions, however, is a constant awareness that, today, this rustic state is now the result of very specific management decisions. In the 1960s and 70s, a management plan for any parts of the Heath did not yet exist. Until that time, the Heath and Old Hampstead Society (HOHS; now known as the Heath and Hampstead Society) had, through the practice of walking the entire Heath twice a year, advised the LCC and the GLC on how best to manage the Heath's landscape.[335] By the late 1970s, however, the need for a coherent strategy on the GLC's part became pressing. The 1977 walk, which encouraged the clearance of scrub to prevent the rapid growth of woodland, resulted in GLC maintenance crews using heavy machinery to vigorously clear sections of West Meadow at Kenwood and East Heath in 1978 (see Figs. 20, 21). Amidst vociferous opposition from members of the local community, who had not expected the clearance, there emerged a conflict that is now mostly remembered for the grim assertion, widely published in *The Times,* that better scrub clearance in East Heath and West Meadow was needed to cope with the number of dead bodies dumped on the Heath annually.

ii. The Heath Keepers

On 25 April, 1978, *The Times* ran an article by journalist Ruth Hall, entitled "Haggling over rights on Hampstead Heath". The article described the efforts of the newly-formed Heath Action Group (HAG) to campaign against the Greater London Council's overzealous removal of trees, undergrowth, and grass. The campaign emerged some weeks after the GLC had begun to carry

[333] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 125.
[334] Wolton and McDowall, *Hampstead Heath*, 9.

out systematic mowing of grass and clearance of scrub—using heavy machinery—in West Meadow, just west of Kenwood, as per the suggestions of the Heath and Hampstead Society (HOHS) in the previous year's recommendations. The debate, Hall pointed out, was then not solely between HAG and the GLC, but also involved in-fighting between the HOHS and HAG. Hall depicts HAG as the histrionic and disaffected locals, and the HOHS as monied but venerable conservationists. The article reads like a satire of "not in my backyard" campaigning, widely known as NIMBYism, taken to its extreme, yet Hall cuts to some of the most crucial themes at play in the Heath's history: the meaning of "wildness" on the Heath, the difference between the Heath and other parks, and the complex web of actors that have gone about creating and preserving this landscape.

The "wild" aesthetic of the Heath, I will discuss below, draws on a number of changeable factors: prior to the 1978 outcry, concerns about how to manage the Heath's landscape had flared up from time to time. In the late nineteenth century, as I indicated in Chapter Three, this resulted in concerns about what plants belonged on the Heath and how to manage the site differently from other municipal parks. The 1978 conflict cannot be understood entirely apart from these previous concerns: the importance of an informal, "rough" appearance on the Heath remained important then and remains important to locals today. Likewise, as I will discuss below, the locals embroiled in the debate were hard-pressed to determine what, exactly, constituted the Heath's ideal landscape: was it the barren, post-industrial wasteland of East Heath in the late-nineteenth century, the rolling pastoral fields dotted with sheep of the early-twentieth century, or was it the municipally-managed recreation ground that had come to characterize the southern edge of Parliament Hill Fields, often used for cricket and football? The GLC, from a maintenance

[335] The practice of walking the Heath to provide guidance on the Heath's management continues today. These suggestions are, ideally, meant to be incorporated with and read alongside the City of London's wider Hampstead

standpoint, would have found it far simpler to maintain it like other municipal parks: mowing, clearing, and smoothing over the Heath's rough edges. But even these rough edges came to be contested within the local community, with some advocating for restoration to the barren, sandy heathland (a seeming impossibility, given the heavy use of the site; see Chapter Three, pp. 146-148) and others advocating far less intervention in the progression of scrub into woodland. The 1978 conflict was ultimately a conflict about which vision of Hampstead Heath ought to be preserved.

Hall's article—having run in a major national newspaper—is the most enduring remnant of the conflict, and it is important to read it in the fullest context possible. Few still remember this debate—none of the individuals I asked at the Heath and Hampstead Society remember it, and none of the current committee members of the Society were involved—but by tracing the conflict not only through the archives of the HOHS but also through local newspapers and GLC records, it is evident that the 1978 conflict was merely the fruition of long-standing concerns over land management on the Heath. Concerns about the scrub clearance and fast-growing species like sycamore and birch had been under discussion as early as the 1950s, when grass management on the Heath first became a major concern after the removal of sheep. London County Council records from 1957 and 1959 highlight efforts, alongside the HOHS, to clear scrub and develop a balanced strategy for planting suitable indigenous tree species while "suppressing alien undergrowth".[336]

Under the GLC, similar concerns continued: in 1971, HOHS member and Hampstead Heath history-buff C.W. "Kit" Ikin noted that the new GLC Parks Manager would take time to

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Heath Management Plan.

[336] See Minutes from a meeting between the LCC Parks Department and the Heath and Old Hampstead Society, 6 November, 1957. LMA GLC/RA/D2G/3/43; Heath and Old Hampstead Society, *Heath and Old Hampstead Society Annual Report* (1959): 4. LMA CL/PK/2/48.

"adjust himself from Municipal Park to wild Heath".[337] Within the pages of the HOHS's quarterly newsletter, concerns about scrub clearance began to appear in 1972. Specifically, internal divisions within the Society became clear at this early stage, as some within the Society sought to restore the Heath to its more barren heathland landscape, a move viewed by many to be at odds with efforts to maintain scenic, tree-framed views on and from the Heath:

> Misconceptions about the Heath, as Constable and Dickens knew it, exist and tend to confuse this Society into bursts of action subsequently regretted. As a result the G.L.C. and the public have split further apart, neither able to understand why this should be so. Hampstead Heath is not an agrarian industrial monument but something living, natural and developing according to present day needs for leisure. To be blunt, a windswept place of sandy dunes with views towards newly erected hospitals has not gained the public applause expected. Perpetuating the Heath in an artificial state, retaining the scars of brickfields, sand quarries and exploitation, without allowing it to take the form a century of public use as an open space has brought it to, has been a costly mistake in goodwill and the appearance of the Heath.[338]

These early inklings of a conflict indicate not solely divisions within the local community, but difficulties for the HOHS and GLC in managing public opinion. Likewise, they indicate the lack of a vision for the Heath's long-term management: ought it to be restored to heathland, the characteristic plants of which had long been trampled out, or should the Heath be managed in the

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[337] C. W. Ikin, "The Society's Role Today", *Heath and Old Hampstead Society Newsletter* 2, no. 4 (Autumn 1971): 3. CLSA.
[338] Ralph Wade, "The Heath Today", *Heath and Old Hampstead Society Newsletter* 3, no. 3 (Summer 1972): 3. CLSA.

manner of rural pasture? Ought it to be managed like other London parks? Within the local community and with the Parks Management team at the GLC, the answers were unclear.

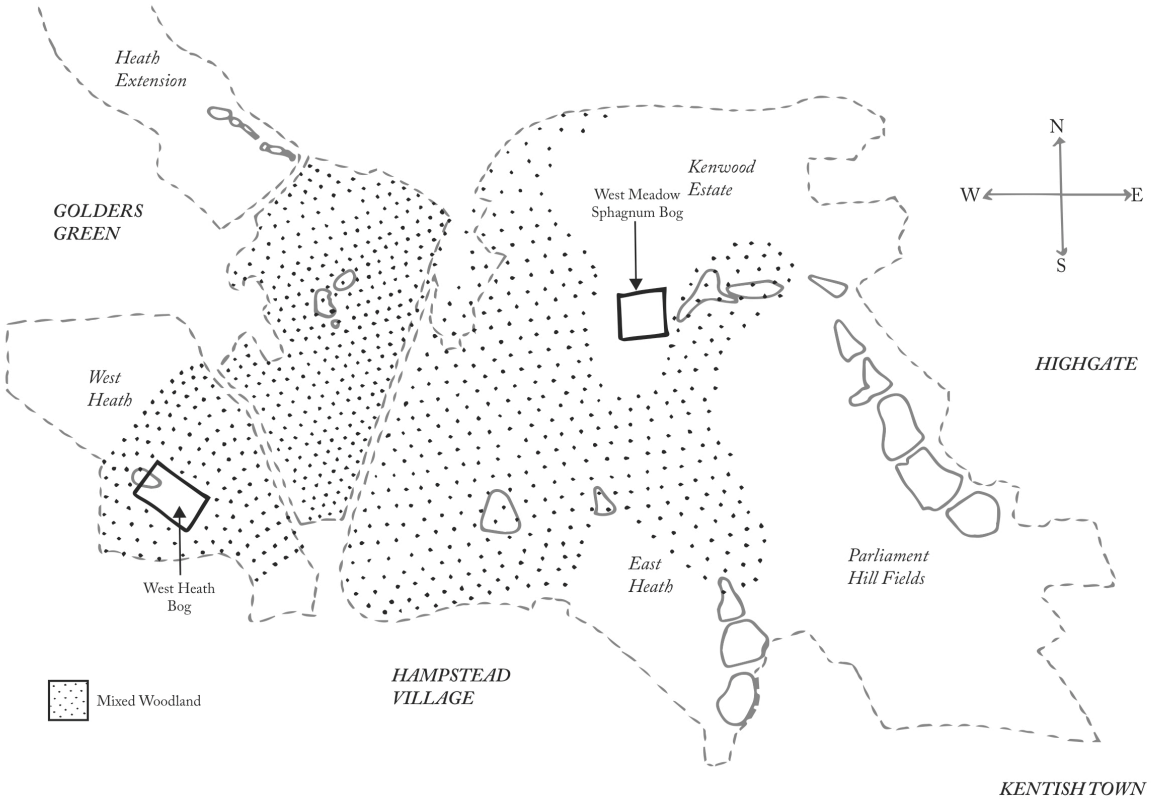


Figure 21 Woodland on Hampstead Heath

To understand fully the debates, it is important to consider the changes to the landscape with the removal of sheep, the loss of rabbits, and the transition from grazing. Much of the land acquired for the Heath in the late- and early-twentieth centuries is mixed semi-improved grassland, marshy grassland, and small sections of semi-improved acid grassland. These grasslands are punctuated by dense scrub, which mark the transition into woodland on the

northern stretch of the Heath.[339] At West Meadow, since the soil on this part of the Heath is claygate beds (a mixture of sand and clay), moisture is sufficient to support a sphagnum bog, which is registered as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), an important designation of conservation status in the United Kingdom. With sheep and other grazing animals on the site, grass, scrub, and tree seedlings were kept in check through grazing. After the mid-1950s, when the last sheep were removed from the Heath, however, this changed. Grass began to grow longer, which, though it would require mowing in summer, did not present an enormous problem because it would die back annually. The tree seedlings protected by thick scrub, on the other hand, began to encroach on the grassland, with fast growing species like birch and sycamore marking the beginning of the spread of woodland into grassland. On West Meadow, this presented a significant challenge, as fast growing birch was quick to grow up around the sphagnum bog, dramatically altering the habitat. The precedent of the bog at nearby West Heath, which had been allow to grow thick with birch, resulting in a dried up bog, presented an incentive amongst locals to advocate a more stringent and sensitive management of tree growth.[340] So the management of scrub was and continues to be the key focus for maintaining the borders of grassland and woodland habitats on the Heath.[341]

In the spring of 1977, the GLC met with the HOHS to discuss the implementation of a management plan, focusing specifically on scrub clearance on the Heath.[342] With the preceding decades of neglect, scrub had begun to encroach on grassland in a number of areas: East Heath

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[339] Annie Chipchase and Rosie Whicheloe, *Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Habitat and Invasive Species Survey: Report for the City of London Corporation* (London: The Ecology Consultancy, 2013). For guidance on UK habitat definitions, see Chapter One, p. 11.
[340] See, for example, "GLC Wrecking Heath Sites, Say Experts", *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 24 February, 1978, 48. Concerns about the bog would continue to be discussed in the *Ham & High* for two further editions of the paper.
[341] See the Heath and Hampstead Society's current report, *Heath Vision: Hampstead Heath in the 21st Century* (London: Heath and Hampstead Society, 2004). http://www.heathandhampstead.org.uk/heath
[342] "Questions calling for the GLC…" *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 7 April, 1977.

and West Meadow. The bog on West Heath served as a lesson in this regard: scrub and birch growth there had been left unchecked in the preceding years, and the bog had all but dried up (see Fig. 21). So the HOHS and GLC discussed methods for preventing similar problems on East Heath and West Meadow. The GLC, in their council minutes, indicated the intention to develop a management plan alongside the HOHS, while also noting the importance of qualified staff on the Heath, perhaps through the implementation of a school-leavers work scheme, to mentor young people not in education.[343] But the GLC repeatedly fell back on budget restrictions to account for a lack of strategy for caring for the Heath, especially amidst calls for dedicated "Heath Keepers" trained specifically to manage sites like the Heath, as opposed to normal municipal parks.[344] The following autumn and in the early months of 1978, the GLC left it to its Parks Department to implement the suggestions for maintenance of the Heath: mowing a good portion of West Meadow, among other sections of grassland and scrub on the Heath. GLC staff targeted birch and scrub near the sphagnum bog on West Meadow, leading to the initial press outcry in the *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, and divisions emerging between local residents. Local naturalist and campaigner John Hillaby, quoted in the newspaper's article, "GLC Wrecking Heath Sites, Say Experts", stated that "what is happening in the meadow may well be a disaster if they start taking out the birch from the bog area without having any clear idea of what they're doing".[345]

This *Ham & High* article*,* from 24 February, 1978*,* highlighted two main concerns: the lack of adequate staff training or knowledge in how to manage sensitive sites like the bog; and the HOHS's "policy of opening up vistas" to restore the Heath to its earlier, sparser appearance prior

[343] Greater London Council, Minutes of Proceedings, 29 March, 1977, 198-199. LMA Open Shelves 597/79/19.6.
[344] Heath and Old Hampstead Society, *Heath and Old Hampstead Society Annual Report* (London: Heath and Old Hampstead Society, 1978), 8. CLSA.
[345] "GLC Wrecking Heath Sites, Say Experts", *Hampstead and Highgate Express*.

to the unchecked growth of woodland in the twentieth century. The article, referencing Hillaby, a naturalist, John Clymo, a botanist, and Robert Dougall, former president of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, positions conservation knowledge against the aesthetic interest in opening up vistas. The HOHS would of course counter that restoring the Heath's 'heathlike' state was a matter of adequate conservation—effectively protecting the sphagnum bog—but in the course of the article and subsequent replies in the local paper, the matters of land management and the Heath's wild aesthetic would be brought into conflict.[346] The sides in the debate, likewise, were not simple: the HOHS criticized the inertia of both the GLC and the London County Council (LCC) in maintaining the Heath, criticising the "umbrella of trees (birches and then oaks) which have been allowed to grow up in the last 50 or more years, cutting off the light".[347] But they likewise criticized Hillaby for demoralising the GLC's staff who were attempting to do the recommended work of clearing the scrub.[348]

The perception of wildness on the Heath was and remains a crucial factor in its maintenance. In the *Times* article mentioned at the opening of this section, Hall wrote that "the wildness, critics say, is being deliberately eroded, and the whole place about to turn into yet another urban park".[349] While I refer to "wildness" to reflect the terms used by Heath users to describe the landscape, one might also think about its connection to wilderness, in part to delineate the British context from the North American. As much of the North American debate has demonstrated, notions of wilderness are constantly negotiated. As William Cronon highlighted in his essay, "The Trouble With Wilderness", "wilderness hides its unnaturalness

[346] D. Sullivan and C.W. Ikin, "Hillaby Hasn't Done His Heath Homework", *Hampstead and Highgate Express,* 3 March, 1978, 39.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ruth Hall, "Haggling for Rights on Hampstead Heath", *The Times*, 25 April, 1978.

behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural".[350] Raymond Williams, similarly, has noted of the British context that the pastoral, rural ideal is contingent on its look of naturalness, which he links to an idealization of such landscapes *as landscapes*, as opposed to sites of labour. As he famously stated, "A working country is hardly ever a landscape".[351] On the Heath, this is embodied in the difficulty in assigning exactly what state of the Heath's development is "natural" and in the erasure of centuries of labour—whether agricultural, industrial, or otherwise—in the pastoral appearance of its fields. As I will indicate throughout this chapter, the Heath is the product of just such negotiation and complexity.

Wildness, and indeed wilderness, in the English context, carry somewhat different baggage than the North American, yet on the Heath it is complicated all the same. As previous chapters have indicated, the Heath is a dramatically-altered, semi-domesticated landscape. There are at least two ways in which wildness can be read on the Heath: the first with regard to the actually rugged appearance of its flora and terrain; the second with regard to the Heath's aura or atmosphere of unruliness, in both landscaping and the ways in which the landscape leads users to a kind of unruliness in their comportment. The first, which is contained in so many Heath users' discussions of the space as "wild", "uncultivated", or "rural" tells of a very specific understanding of wildness in the British context. Historians of the British landscape—from Williams to Rackham—have highlighted the degree to which the British landscape is the result a co-productive, harmonious union of human and natural forces.[352] As W.G. Hoskins famously wrote in *The Making of the English Landscape*, "not much of England, even in its more withdrawn, inhuman places, has escaped being altered by man in some subtle way or another,

[350] William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature", *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995), 69.
[351] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 120.
[352] See also: Marion Shoard, *The Theft of the Countryside* (London: Temple Smith, 1980), 11.

however untouched we may fancy it on first sight".[353] Wildness on the Heath, then, enters the conversation not as a statement about the historical origins of the landscape, but as an aesthetic descriptor on a sort of continuum, with uncultivated heath and moorland at one end of the spectrum, hedgerowed English countryside somewhere in the middle, and well-maintained, monocultured farmers' fields or the manicured gardens of other London parks at the other.

As much as the Heath, locals are quick to remind us, is not a park, the yardstick by which its land management is measured is deeply tied to other parks.[354] The meandering layout of the Heath tends to follow the lines of its hedgerows, and desire lines tend to determine the placement of paths, meaning the Heath is not broken up by orderly, paved paths so much as it is by winding ways through the fields and woodlands.[355] Its hedgerows overgrow and spill over into grassland, creating the appearance of something a little "wilder" than English countryside, which is groomed through agricultural use. But it is crucial to underscore that much of this is due to specific decisions with regard to landscape management: to reduce the construction of new paths (thus leaving well-trodden footpaths as important routes through the Heath); the reduction of concreted paths; minimal scheduled mowing; and the careful maintenance of the landscape's

[353] Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, 17.

[354] In one interview carried out with swimmers on the Heath, a respondent summed up the Heath's land management: "The hills, that makes it more exciting that just flat areas like Hyde Park, where you've got extended football pitches, that's what it's like. I like the tundra-aspect of the Heath, which is really where the name derives from. Because it was originally heathland. And I think heathland is, that kind of wild grass, is some of my favourite kind of landscape really. I really love it. Up nearer the car park, you see quite a lot of that. The grass is sometimes red and gold, and it's rough and it's short, and I like that a lot. I think that's one of the most beautiful parts; the wildness of it. You don't get that wildness in many other parks in London. So I think a lot of us are quite keen to see its wildness maintained. Every now and then there's a little encroachment on that, and it's sad, and people, swimmers, will always talk about it, that there's a new encroachment, there's a new plan to build some paths which are more geared towards being safe and pedestrianized, or there's more gates, and fences and things being put up, which aren't natural. But I guess that's going to happen more and more. But we don't want to see the place becoming too municipalized. We want it to be as wild and free as it possibly can." Viv, *Interview,* 13 February, 2015.

[355] Desire lines, in landscape gardening, are routes commonly used by the public to navigate an open space; i.e. often the shortest route from a to b.

borders through hand-built constructions like dead-hedges.[356] But in 1978, such clear plans were not in place, and decades of neglect had resulted in a rather more rugged and unruly Heath than conservationists may have desired.

The 1871 Hampstead Heath act states that Heath management shall "preserve as far as may be the natural aspect and state of the Heath".[357] The preservation of the Heath's "natural aspect", to locals and Heath managers alike, means a variety of things: the rustic style of the landscape characterized by long grass, scrubby hedges, winding paths, and trodden-down footpaths; a landscape without buildings, concrete, and other markers of the city; and, perhaps most vexingly, the preservation or conservation of the Heath in a particular state of its development. As Norman Henderson describes it, this more widely represents the British view of landscape conservation: "The British concept of the conservation ideal is a steady state of human intervention designed to maintain a given habitat at a particular successional stage in perpetuity".[358] The problem in the 1978 case is the divergent views on exactly which state ought to be preserved. The HOHS at the time were engaged in an effort to restore the Heath to some analogue of heathland, despite the clear loss of heathland flora and habitats in the previous century of heavy use. In this respect their efforts can be likened to a kind of "museumification" of nature, which sought to render the Heath as a static representation of itself at a certain moment in time.[359] Tsing, in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, similarly describes a Finnish forest management strategy as land managers dreaming of "stopping history".[360] Likewise, it is important to remember that the

[356] On 25 March, 2015, I carried out fieldwork interviewing and volunteering alongside the Heath Hands volunteers, constructing dead hedges along the route of the ancient Saxon ditch boundary. Much of the landscaping work on the Heath is carried out by hand, with minimal machinery, by volunteers supervised by CoLC staff.
[357] Hampstead Heath Act, Note 16.
[358] Norman Henderson, "Wilderness and the Nature Conservation Ideal: Britain, Canada, and the United States Contrasted", *Ambio* 21, no. 6 (1992): 397.
[359] See Paul Gobster, "Urban Park Restoration and the 'Museumification' of Nature", *Nature and Culture* 2, no. 2 (2007): 97-114.
[360] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 167.

Heath, when originally acquired for the public in 1871, had undergone heavy exploitation for sand, gravel, and clay, and was as such much more barren in the nineteenth century than in it was by the middle of the twentieth. Its nineteenth-century landscape was itself dramatically different than the Heath in the eighteenth century, prior to the extensive sand extraction carried out by Wilson in his efforts to despoil the landscape. So there was not a clear standard to which the landscape's managers ought to aspire. I would argue that, in a parallel move to Williams's description of all countrymen "of all conditions and periods" being merged into a single countryside figure, this conflict can be read as an attempt to merge or reconcile various stages of the Heath's succession into a single ideal of "authentic Heath".[361] The attempt to develop a management plan for the Heath—one of the key outcomes of the conflict—would be predicated upon some agreement of what this ideal ought to be.

Hillaby's criticisms of the HOHS's and GLC's policies highlighted the lack of skill in conservation on the Heath, indicating that while all groups agreed that certain species ought to be removed (sycamore, birch) a more sensitive approach, with less machinery and more skilled workers, was required. Criticising both the lack of a management policy on sycamore and the extensive clearances of West Meadow in 1978, Hillaby called the Heath under the GLC's management "an arboreal slum, with overcrowding of the trees we don't want, such as sycamores, and indiscriminate clearance of the wilderness".[362] This wilderness Hillaby pointed to, the Heath's "wildness", was the natural progression of scrub into woodland, a process itself dominated by undesirable fast-growing "weed" species like sycamore, which had begun to crowd out other native trees.[363] Left unchecked, the fast rate of sycamore growth, the strong

[361] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 257.
[362] Hall, "Haggling for Rights on Hampstead Heath".
[363] See Chapter Three for a discussion of "weeds" on the Heath. The current HOHS plan for the Heath, *Heath Vision*, echoes the same concerns: "Unfortunately many glades, open grassland and heath have vanished – within

viability of its seeds, and its tendency to colonize scrub with many seedlings and dense root systems made sycamore, unlike other species, a particular target of the campaigners' concerns.

Hall's *Times* article characterized the debate as one between a group that had a plan for keeping the Heath in its present state, and another that wanted to allow it to grow out unabated, but this misread the situation and overlooked the measured response of Hillaby and HAG more broadly. The HOHS and HAG fundamentally agreed on one key point: a management plan and skilled Heath keepers were sorely needed. They both agreed that certain species—sycamore, in particular—ought not be allowed to overrun the Heath. But HAG criticized the wholesale and indiscriminate clearance without skilled labour, which Hillaby described as "mowing down wild meadows, just to make things more manageable".[364] In the end, infighting within the local community became an irresistible temptation. Exchanges between Hillaby and C.W. Ikin, one of the leaders of the HOHS, played out in the letters to the editor section of the *Ham & High*, became personal, with Ikin and David Sullivan, writing for the HOHS, stating that Hillaby has "created the effect of sensation and drama—in place of the constructive, necessarily patient and often frustrating work" carried out by the HOHS.[365]

Hall's article, too, was, a work of dramatic and comedic proportions: she went out of her way to create a caricature of local residents that all too easily slipped into hyperbole in describing the conflict. Likewise, the portrait she painted of the Heath is one of extremes and risqué behaviour:

> The trouble with the Heath is that too many individuals are convinced of their unique territorial rights. Joggers risk heart attacks along paths they consider inalienably their

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living memory – under scrub and secondary woodland, an encroachment that needs to be halted and, in some areas, reversed." … "Sycamore and turkey oak saplings should be regarded as forest weeds and eradicated as far as possible." … "Saplings must not be allowed to grow within the long grasses, and bramble must be contained to the woodland edge and not allowed to colonise the grasslands" *Heath Vision*, 5.

> own. Disconsolate flashers loom from the undergrowth to frighten old ladies walking their dogs. People occasionally crucify themselves on trees (there are still one or two around). They play football, fly kites, collect sorrel for ecological soup, swim in the murky ponds—the undergrowth has been reduced to discourage voyeurs—and indulge in sweet nothings, if not worse, in the once luxuriant hay meadows.[366]

At one point, Hall quoted (from the *Ham & High*) Robert Dougall, a former president of the RSPB, stating that he "saw one of the grebes [a common water bird] there last month, and the look on its face was unbelievable".[367] Beyond mocking the activists, Hall poked fun at the GLC, too, noting that—according to GLC Parks Manager J. Hancock—the only reason that the Heath would not become an urban park like any other is that it could not afford the staffing costs. Throughout the article, Hall pitted the activists with HAG against the stalwart locals in the HOHS. Sullivan's and Ikin's letter in the *Ham & High* positioned the conflict similarly, with HAG "sensationalizing" the conflict in the face of the more conservative stewards of the Heath at the HOHS.

Ultimately, the existing order on the Heath prevailed and the existence of HAG was short-lived: the HOHS wrote in their autumn 1978 newsletter that new members had been elected to the Heath committee (presumably from HAG) and "wounds mended".[368] The legacy of the conflict, of course, was the development of a more coherent plan for the Heath's management. The following year, in 1979, the HOHS presented a proposed management plan for the Heath, the first of its kind, providing guidance for each section of the Heath. The story of HAG, however, didn't quite disappear: in 1980, the HOHS ran a short account of the conflict in an

[364] Hall, "Haggling for Rights on Hampstead Heath".
[365] Sullivan and Ikin, "Hillaby Hasn't Done His Heath Homework".
[366] Hall, "Haggling for Rights on Hampstead Heath".
[367] Ibid.

article entitled "The Heath Divided, or 'Marx Moves to Hampstead'", noting that "as in all good revolutions, many HAG members joined the HOHS".[369] And though the upstarts in HAG were absorbed into the HOHS, all was not quiet on the Heath: by the early 1980s, Thatcher's changes to local government began to take hold, and in 1986, the future of the Heath was once again in question with the dismantling of the GLC. The Heath and Hampstead Society, as the HOHS came to be known, would be instrumental in working with temporary management of the London Residuary Body in the mid-1980s, and ultimately in efforts to set-up a suitable caretaker for the Heath in the long-term. Efforts were made to secure a cross-council management plan for the Heath with local councils, but ultimately, amidst some public disquiet, the City of London Corporation (CoLC) was entrusted with the Heath's management in 1989, leaving the Heath and Hampstead Society to develop a working relationship with a new keeper of the Heath.

The frictions between locals and land managers did have their results: following the HOHS's efforts to develop a management plan, the Greater London Council introduced a devoted Heath team following the conflict. Today, under the management of the City of London Corporation, the Heath is managed according to a multi-year plan known as the Hampstead Heath Management Plan. The plan is broadly negotiated through the work of rangers, ecologists, and other staff of the Heath, and through the continual input of the HOHS in their annual Heath walks. The ever-changeable character of the plan points not only to the broader culture negotiation by which ideas of land management take shape, but likewise points to the need for an intimate understanding of the human and nonhuman factors at play on the Heath. As Tsing explains in *Friction*, land management is shaped not solely by "social conventions and political

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[368] Heath and Old Hampstead Society. *Heath and Old Hampstead Society Newsletter* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1978): 6. CLSA.
[369] John Standish, "The Heath Divided, or 'Marx Moves to Hampstead'", *Heath and Old Hampstead Society Newsletter* 11, no. 3 (Autumn 1980). CLSA.

coercions", "state regulation and systems of property", but also by the range of interactions between humans and nonhumans.[370] It is only by addressing the particularities of such narratives that a fuller picture of the landscape becomes possible.

iii. Bodies in the Grass

The conflict played out by Hall forced not simply the three organizations—HAG, HOHS, and the GLC—into opposing positions but unwittingly enrolled a much wider number of actors (human and nonhuman) into the fray, echoing Tsing's observation that friction makes "new objects and agents possible".[371] While the details of the 1978 fray have been widely forgotten, one potent image from the time has remained. Wolton and McDowell's 2007 history of the Heath refers to the fray and the *Times* article, noting in passing that the reason cited in the article for mowing the grass on the Heath was, quite simply, dead bodies.[372] Tracing it to its source, Hall's article quoted J. Hancock, the GLC Parks Manager, who stated that complaints about mowing the long grass are "all very well, but what about the dead bodies? Do you realize there are 20 corpses hidden around the Heath every year? This is a regional park and we can't just expect them to rot away".[373] Of the long list of actors responsible for shaping the Heath's management plan, according to Hall—landscapers, local activists, runners, flashers, dog walkers, athletes, foragers, swimmers, lovers, and those intent on committing suicide—few had the drama or flair of the twenty corpses.

Following up the claim, Hall pointed out that Scotland Yard was very tight-lipped on the number, stating cryptically that too much undergrowth would, in theory, be advantageous to a

[370] Tsing, *Friction*, 173.
[371] Ibid., 247.
[372] Wolton and McDowell, *Hampstead Heath*, 11.
[373] Hall, "Haggling for Rights on Hampstead Heath".

person seeking to hide, but neither confirming nor denying the number or sources of the bodies. While an exact number of bodies found during the 1970s cannot be confirmed, local newspapers from the decade confirm that some bodies had, indeed, been found on the Heath.[374] London County Council Records from the 1950s detail a few bodies found in the bushes, ponds, or hanging from trees.[375] In 1977, three bodies found on the Heath were mentioned in the *Ham & High,* amidst a much wider concern about the number of rapes (four that year) perpetrated on the Heath.[376] At the very least, 1977 was characterized by a deep sense of concern about crime on the Heath. The threat of crime on the Heath is due, in some part, to the physical landscape: it is incredibly large, unlit at night, and features rough terrain. Policing the entire Heath is not only a challenge, but something of an impossibility: even today, the Hampstead Heath Constabulary has only a handful of staff members, and on patrols they are only able to cover small sections of the 800-acre Heath at any given time. But many of the crimes, as current Constabulary officers indicated, are minor bylaw infractions, like barbecuing or dog fouling.[377] Though violent crime does occasionally take place—and clearly was a major concern in the late 1970s—the image of the dead bodies in the scrub functions more as a potent idea than as a practical problem.

The idea of dead bodies as a motivation for mowing and scrub clearance certainly makes for good storytelling, but beyond the remark from Hancock, it never came up again. Current members of the Hampstead Heath Constabulary laughed off the idea that so many bodies could

[374] The London Metropolitan Archives hold St Pancras Coroner's Courts archives up until 1964, while more recent cases are held between both the LMA and St Pancras Coroner's Court. They are subject to a thirty year closure. Despite the 1970s cases falling outside of this closure period, neither the LMA nor St Pancras Coroner's Court were able to provide clear guidance on how to access these records or their current location(s). In any case, coroner's records are filed under case names and not earmarked for location, resulting in an enormous difficulty in mapping the locations of bodies found within the district. The local newspaper, *Ham & High*, reported extensively on all criminal activity on the Heath and as such is the best source from which to compile a picture of crime and death on the Heath.

[375] See London County Council records in LMA CL/PK/2/48.

[376] See *Ham & High* 29 April, 1977; 7 June, 1977; 5 August, 1977; 12 August, 1977; 9 September, 1977; 14 October, 1977; 21 October, 1977; 28 October, 1977; 11 November, 1977; 2 December, 1977; 16 December, 1977. Some of these accounts of crime on the Heath are graphic.

be hidden on the Heath given the level of use faced by the landscape.[378] But whether or not the dead bodies materially existed, it is undoubted that the work of policing an urban open space as large as the Heath would be aided by the removal of undergrowth. Entangled with the dead bodies, then, is some notion, reflected in Hancock's quote, of the function of the Heath and how it ought to be managed: he refers to it as a regional park. Policing a site as large as the Heath—which up until 1992 was policed by Metropolitan Police (Scotland Yard), and is now policed by the Hampstead Heath Constabulary—presents an enormous challenge, as much of the Heath is isolated. It is also crucial to consider that the grasses and scrub—originally feeding and managed by livestock—have an agency not simply in hiding dead bodies, tripping up joggers, or shielding sexual activity, but in signifying the kind of wildness or naturalness locals value on the Heath. They are the means by which not only crime management, conservation goals, and social norms are achieved or maintained, but also the means through which the aesthetic ideal of the Heath is conveyed—and not without intense intervention.

In his essay on conservation ideals and wilderness in the British imagination, Norman Henderson describes the British wilderness aesthetic as "a great diversity of plant life… packed into an unnaturally small area".[379] On the Heath—and indeed in any managed landscape—this sense of wildness or naturalness is contingent upon carefully measured maintenance. The density of scrub and woodland was and continues to be, of course, subject to a wide array of concerns: the needs of athletics, birds, anglers, desirable plant species, dog walkers, and of course, efforts to police the Heath. But the deep interconnection of concerns around "opening up vistas" and massive scrub clearance with efforts to regulate how visitors use the Heath is undeniable. A

[377] Interview, Dave and Steve, 12 March, 2015.
[378] Steve, *Interview*, 12 March, 2015.
[379] Henderson, "Wilderness and the Nature Conservation Ideal: Britain, Canada, and the United States Contrasted", 398.

landscape completely overrun by scrub, we have seen, was undesirable not simply from the HOHS's and HAG's conservation standpoint, but from the standpoint of policing and managing the site. But likewise a sterile, parkified Heath ideal was undesirable. What was sought was not wilderness in any real sense, but rather some unruliness—some sense that the countryside has grown just out of control; that the possibility of losing oneself still existed.

iv. In the Bushes

On the morning of 17 January, 1971, a long distance runner training on the Heath made a grim discovery. Near the wall of Inverforth House on West Heath, he found the body of Brian Lawrence, a murdered bank clerk from Hampstead Village. "He looked very pale and there were bits of leaves on his face and coat. His hands were clenching the ground," said the runner, describing the scene.[380] In the weeks after Lawrence's death, police would make appeals within the local community and on the television program *Police 5*, worrying that Lawrence's death was the result of an attack by "queer bashers".[381] At the time, no one was held accountable.

Lawrence lived in nearby Belsize Park. He worked in a bank, and, as the press circulated the notion that his murder was a homophobic crime, acquaintances wrote to the paper to indicate that they would rather remember him as the "shy, upright man in City clothes who was our organist and choirmaster, and who sometimes sang baritone solos".[382] Lawrence was 34 at the time of his murder.

Six years later, in September, 1977, James Quigley would be charged and put on trial for the murder after boasting to a prison cell mate that he'd once killed a man in London, but that the

[380] "Hunt for Heath Killer - Police Appeal", *Hampstead & Highgate Express*, 22 January, 1971, 1 & 32.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Diana Maynard, "Respect for a Victim of a Sad Fate", *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 30 September, 1977, 35.

police would never be able to prove it. In police interviews, he stated that he'd made a habit of "assaulting 'queers' in various parts of the country", allegedly stating, "I hate them and always will".[383] Quigley reported that he'd turned to robbing homosexuals across the country as he travelled in search of work.

As I began to prepare this chapter on scrub clearance, I spent many hours trawling through newspapers for grim accounts of dead bodies and other crimes on Hampstead Heath. I also began interviewing users of the Hampstead Heath Public Sex Environment, a well-known cruising ground on West Heath. Between these archival searches and interviews, I found Brian Lawrence's story. Lawrence's story—far more detailed and heartbreaking than many of the other crimes detailed in the pages of the *Ham & High,* eliciting letters from community members, memorial services, and an extensive search for a perpetrator—led me to pause in my research. For months, I had attempted to substantiate claims that dead bodies were a problem on Hampstead Heath—their unpleasant materiality leading to very practical changes in grass and scrub management. At no point, until I began to trawl the newspapers for reports, did the "twenty bodies hidden on Hampstead Heath" become names, faces, very real crimes and tragedies. Lawrence's murder, motivated by homophobia, stood out because, as so often happened in the process of this research, the Heath began to connect threads I didn't yet realize needed to be deeply interwoven.

West Heath, where Lawrence's body was found, is a long-established cruising ground, known amongst policing and outreach groups as a "Public Sex Environment" (PSE).[384] As a site, it has been used as such for over a century, though the early twentieth century saw a number of

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[383] "Labourer Denies 'Queer-Bash' Knifing in 1971", *Hampstead & Highgate Express*, 16 September, 1977, 1.
[384] Public Sex Environments are defined as "
PSEs are public locations where people visit and engage in consensual sexual contact. The persons can be same sex or opposite sex". Metropolitan Police Service, "Areas that are designated as 'public sex environments' by the MPS",

prosecutions on the site for heterosexual couples engaging in public sex.[385] It is one among many cruising grounds in London—and perhaps the most legendary.[386] The City of London Corporation's reports note that West Heath is known locally, nationally, and internationally for cruising.[387] It has been described as the "daddy of all cruising grounds".[388] Much of the landscape is well-suited to sexual activity: the steep slope behind Jack Straw's Castle leads into an often dark, fairly sheltered woodland, cut through with multiple dirt tracks. Long grass and thick bushes abound, and the area known as the PSE is circumscribed by the paths marking the roadways and the edge of Golders Hill Park.

According to a Metropolitan Police response to a Freedom of Information request, there were 38 homophobic crimes in the area between 2009 and 2015.[389] In their guidance for policing PSEs, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) note that crime—often violent crime and theft—on PSEs is often motivated by homophobia.[390] Lawrence's death, albeit decades ago, is one such case, and points to a more prevalent concern that emerges in my consideration of the relationship between landscaping, stakeholders, and management of the Heath: the ways in which social and environmental enforcement—"soft enforcement"—are used to manage the busy and much-frequented cruising grounds on Hampstead Heath and to establish social norms for how the site

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Freedom of Information Request Response listed on the MPS Publication Scheme Disclosure Log, 23 June, 2013, Sec. 1. http://www.met.police.uk/foi/pdfs/disclosure_2013/june_2013/2013040001639.pdf

[385] Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 52-55.

[386] See, for example, Mark Turner's account of London parks in *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), 68-70.

[387] "West Heath has a history of being a popular Public Sex Environment (PSE). It is known locally, nationally and internationally as an area where sexual activity takes place, a fact publicised through various media including the internet. This activity predominantly involves men having sex with other men". Richard Gentry, "Update Report on Hampstead Heath - Public Sex Environment Outreach Work", City of London Corporation. http://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/documents/s48213/HHCC%20Terrence%20Higgins%20Trust%202015%20v5%20FINAL.pdf

[388] Mark Turner, "Welcome to the Cruising Capital of the World", *The Guardian*, 21 June, 2006, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/jul/30/georgemichael.popandrock

[389] Metropolitan Police Service, Email to the Author in Response to Freedom of Information Request Reference No: 2015110000154, 20 January, 2016.

"ought" to be used.[391] Public sexual activity, in Britain, is not illegal, so long as reasonable discretion is taken, and PSEs hold no legal status. Rather, the sites form a grey area, in which users can continue to engage in sexual activity on the site so long as they do not offend public decency—it is an offence to have sex where one might reasonably be seen, for example—and police and land managers engage in measures of dissuasion and outreach. The approach to the Hampstead Heath PSE is one of "management", attempting to improve safety for all users and mitigate the impact of the PSE. Of particular significance are the uses of community outreach workers and landscaping or vegetation management to minimize disturbance to the non-PSE users, while allowing Heath managers and the police services in the region to maintain good relations with the LGBTQ community using the site. In a sense, however, the use of outreach and landscaping function as measures of "soft enforcement", effectively discouraging use of the PSE by legitimizing it and regulating it.

In an effort to understand the ways in which this "soft enforcement" is carried out, between March and May 2015, I conducted interviews and carried out fieldwork with a number of organizations and individuals linked to the Hampstead Heath PSE and the PSE's official Sexual Activity Working Group (SAWG): constables from the Hampstead Heath Constabulary (HHC); gay men who cruised on Hampstead Heath, whom I was put into contact with by locals familiar with the cruising ground; and outreach workers, staff, and volunteers with the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), a well-established UK charity campaigning on issues related to HIV/AIDS. THT, since 2011, have been the key partner with the HHC in delivering outreach on the PSE. Requests to interview members of the City of London Corporation's landscaping staff were denied. The

[390] Metropolitan Police Service, "Areas that are designated as 'public sex environments' by the MPS", Sec. 7.3.2.
[391] Soft enforcement is often characterized by the dissemination of information and use of community engagement as a form of policing, often in park environments. Michael R. Pendleton, "Policing the Park: Understanding Soft Enforcement", *Journal of Leisure Research* 30, no. 4 (1998): 552-571.

key issues identified by SAWG on the Heath include sexual detritus, homophobic crime, sexual offences, offences against public decency and propriety, and littering.[392] Here, then, I will consider the ways in which practices related to the 1978 conflict—scrub clearance and grass mowing—are currently enrolled in the enforcement and shaping of sexual behaviour on the Heath, and the ways in which the materiality of grass, shrubs, and trees concomitant with sexual activity in the PSE contribute to a sense of the Heath as wild and unruly. By attending to the current management of the PSE, I hope to highlight the sense in which both sexuality and the landscape are managed on the Heath, reflecting Gordon Brent Ingram's observation that "most of the earth's ecosystems have been transformed by human cultures that have coupled heterosexuality with reproduction, socialization, and survival" and that "notions and spaces of sex for pleasure outside of heterosexual reproductive units often remained decidedly marginalized".[393] Indeed, I indicate the ways in which the legitimacy of the PSE is excluded from some "local" debates about the Heath's management and the broader production of the Heath's historical identity, often cultivated by advocacy groups like the Heath and Hampstead Society. I attend to the wide variety of actors at play on the Heath in an attempt to recoup a wider sense of the Heath's history, often excluded from conventional, often hetero-normative, narratives, and to gain a sense of the ways in which the intersection of private and public on the Heath is remapped through the act of and policing of cruising.[394] Ultimately, considering the PSE within the context of the Heath's wider history allows me, drawing on Ingram's work in queer landscape ecology, "to better describe and understand the shifting relationships between those

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[392] Richard Gentry, "Update Report on Hampstead Heath - Public Sex Environment Outreach Work", Background. http://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/documents/s48213/HHCC%20Terrence%20Higgins%20Trust%202015%20v5%20FINAL.pdf

[393] Gordon Brent Ingram, "Fragments, Edges, and Matrices: Retheorizing the Formation of a So-called Gay Ghetto through Queering Landscape Ecology", *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire,* eds. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 255.

[394] See Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 65, on sexual intimacy and the boundaries of public and private.

physical spaces, increasingly influenced by urban design, ecosystem management, and aspects of sites marked in some ways by the rich combination of homoerotic social networks, forms of private and perhaps public erotic expression, and resistances to homophobia".[395] Initially, however, understanding the physical space of the PSE and the complexity of its use and management requires an experience of the site itself: through an evening visit with the Terrence Higgins Trust.

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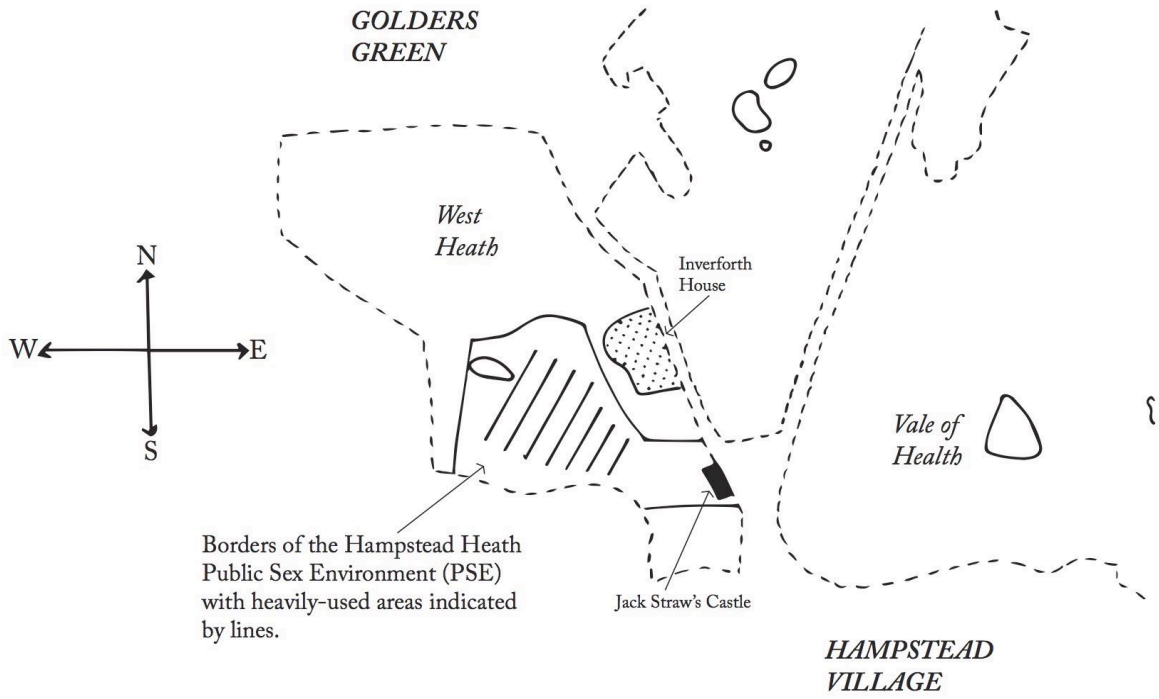


Figure 22 Map of the Hampstead Heath PSE

[395] Ibid., 256.

In late May, at six in the evening, I meet Paul outside Hampstead Tube. A liaison worker at the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), Paul works on the front-line of the charity's outreach work on PSEs and is taking me along for an outreach session on West Heath's PSE. He greets me, wielding an enormous tote bag full of condoms, and we wait a few minutes for Derek, a first-time THT volunteer, to arrive. Walking up the hill to Jack Straw's Castle on West Heath, we chat amicably about the Heath, about Paul's experiences doing outreach, and about what to expect on-site. At the top of the hill, we stop in the carpark to unpack, Paul handing out personal emergency alarms, pamphlets, and brightly coloured THT t-shirts proclaiming "It starts with me" across the front. He hands me the large bag of condoms and Derek a large bag of individual lube packs, explaining that THT uses a single brand for condoms and lubes so that they can better monitor the litter, at least anecdotally, to see if they are being used. We wait a while for the Hampstead Heath Constabulary to arrive with walky-talkies for us to carry during outreach while Paul talks us through procedure.

We begin the evening by walking the perimeter of the PSE, which begins down the steep hill from Jack Straw's Castle, follows the wall of Inverforth House, extends as far as the edge of Golders Hill Park, and towards the edge of the West Heath bog and Leg of Mutton Pond. During the walk, we check rubbish bins, noting disposed condoms, wet wipes, and lube. Paul points out litter on the ground, under trees, and in bushes, and describes them as the "tell-tale" signs of sexual activity. He also points out discarded drug bags, noting that "poppers", chemical drugs taken prior to sexual activity, and drugs like methadrone and GHB are increasingly used in PSEs across London.

The longer we walk, the more relaxed Paul becomes: he stops to chat with a regular, who asks for some condoms and lube while telling Paul that it's been a quiet day, with very few men

around. It's overcast and looks like it might rain; Paul doesn't seem surprised. The same man engages Derek in conversation about the best cruising sites across the country, before turning to me and remarking that women don't really get to cruise. His remark underscores my presence as a woman, as a researcher, somewhat out of place in a PSE used primarily by gay men.

Laughing, we walk on, and Paul tells Derek and me how to navigate the PSE: regulars know that one area is generally reserved for harder sex, while other parts of the woods are more social. Once we've walked the perimeter, we begin to walk the internal paths of the open woodland, ducking between branches and shrubs to get a sense of how much litter has been left behind. Paul tells us about his work in PSEs across the city, about the different roles he navigates as a gay man and in his work, laughing. "It's like being the child catcher on Chitty Chitty Bang Bang except we're finding the gays", he jokes.[396]

It's a quiet night, and though we see a few single men taking their slow walks through the woods, Paul declares it a slow night. We keep a distance from one pair in the bushes—Paul mentions that outreach workers never approach individuals while they're engaged in sexual activity—and after wandering up each darkening, winding path through the trees, we call it a night and pack up.

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Walking the Heath with Paul underscored the complexity of the Hampstead Heath PSE. Much as in the 1978 scrub clearance case, the existence of the PSE on Hampstead Heath allows a number of actors—perhaps not conventionally viewed as having all that much agency in shaping the Heath—to emerge. As we walked the perimeter of the PSE, one of the first things Paul pointed out was a patch of shrubbery near the carpark. He had asked CoLC to cut these bushes back, he

said, as having a patch of camouflaging shrubbery so near to the PSE's edge was leading PSE users to stray from the centres of the site. Cutting the bushes back would be a key means for discouraging users from straying out of the core region of the PSE, one of the key methods of demarcating and cordoning off sexual activity on the site.



Figure 23 Shrubs and trees cut back to discourage sexual activity along the path, May 2015

Scrub clearance and grass mowing, in fact, are two key means for managing PSEs. The Metropolitan Police Service, in their policy guidance on PSEs, advocate a "stepped approach" in policing PSEs. As use of a PSE and being present on a PSE are not illegal, police attempt to manage use of the sites by discouraging sexual behaviour, effectively enforcing hetero-normative social norms in place of law enforcement. Approaches to such management have changed

[396] Author Field notes, PSE Outreach, 20 May, 2015.

drastically over time: one PSE user told me about police raids a decade ago, describing the use of horses to clear the woods.[397] In an effort to improve relations with the LGBTQ community and to work with other community organizations, however, the Hampstead Heath Sexual Activity Working Group (SAWG) and the Metropolitan Police have changed their approach. As a first step, the current approach involves engaging in community information and dissuasion, through outreach workers, leaflets, and local media. The second step targets the environment itself:

> The aim of this step is opportunity reduction and the following options could be amongst those considered;
>
> - Target removal - for example: closure of a facility
>
> - Access control - for example: revised opening times.
>
> - Capable guardians - for example: park attendants or patrols, wardens to deter unacceptable behaviour (intervention protocols and training should be considered) .
>
> - Signage.
>
> - Landscaping and cutting back of shrubbery
>
> - Lighting.
>
> - Overt surveillance for example : non police CCTV schemes.
>
> - Staff vigilance and guidance.
>
> - Environmental design (long term)[398]

The policy of "managing" the PSE, in reality, is carried out by the cooperative team making up the Hampstead Heath Sexual Activity Working Group, (SAWG), a multi-stakeholder group of which THT, Heath and Hampstead Society (HHS), and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) are members. At the beginning of the season, THT and CoLC work together to identify

[397] Interview, Rui, 23 April, 2015.
[398] Metropolitan Police Service, "Areas that are designated as 'public sex environments' by the MPS", Sec 7.2.1.

scrubland that needs to be cut back and areas that ought to be allowed to grow out, in order to provide some shelter. So while there is some effort to reduce use of the PSE through pruning and clearance, vegetation management is more often used as a means for controlling the PSE's borders. This is consistent with the MPS's and HHC's approach that the Heath's PSE ought to be made as safe as possible for all users, which one HHC constable summed up as a core aspect of their approach to the site, stating that "the idea is that the area is managed for the safety of everybody. So if a member of the LGBT community wants to visit the area they should do so safely".[399]

On the Heath, then, the existence of the PSE—which is viewed as long-established and a part of the community—is accepted but managed. As the same HHC constable put it, "It's been a PSE for over a hundred years, so it's not going to change with management. The City of London is here to manage it, so manage the safety, it's the individual person's safety, it's health safety, it's making sure that people who are visiting the area for all the other reasons as well can do so without a problem. It's not a simple issue, it can be quite complex".[400] The Hampstead Heath Management Plan likewise sums up the approach: "No activity of a sexual nature will be tolerated on the Heath where it could cause public offence. […] Overriding Objective: Recognise that the Heath's main users are those who come for informal activity and manage informal recreational activities to ensure that as far as is reasonably practical they do not adversely affect others' enjoyment of or the natural aspect of the Heath."[401] Sexual activity isn't actually the problem; guidance from the MPS, which is adhered to in the Management Plan, encourages sensitivity in applying the law only for offences against public decency. For example, police

[399] Interview, Dave (in "Dave and Steve"), 12 March, 2015.
[400] Ibid.
[401] City of London Corporation and Land Use Consultants, *Hampstead Heath Management Plan Part I: Towards a Plan for the Heath, 2007-2017* (London: City of London, 2007), 60-61. https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-

would only make an arrest if the activity was carried out in a way likely to cause offence: i.e., in the open, in full visibility of other Heath users.[402] As such, it is a matter of policing to determine what Matt Houlbrook terms "an imagined geography of sexual transgression", defining the terms of acceptable conduct on the Heath.[403] There is a sense in which management serves to dissuade users from visiting the site and enforces a vision of how the Heath and the PSE should be used.

Scrub clearance is a key factor in this; bushes have the power to channel activity into certain parts of the site, while a lack of shrubby cover can discourage activity in other parts.[404] One PSE user described the way in which long grass allows men to sunbathe naked on the hill next to the PSE, while the darkness and isolation of the site at night provides a level of discretion.[405] In terms of both PSE management and PSE use, the management of plant-life at the site is a means not solely for discouraging sexual activity but also as a means for channeling it, complicating the usual wisdom that "authorities who want to stamp out this sort of behaviour always start by cutting down the bushes".[406]

Ultimately, however, this approach points to a complicated reality of the Heath: its rustic, overgrown character, which we have seen is so deeply desired by locals like the Heath and Hampstead Society, likewise provides an ideal site for a sexual activity. The abundance of plant-life, differentiated terrain, and the isolation of the site at night make it difficult to police, with the

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do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/wildlife-and-nature/Documents/Hampstead-heath-management-plan-2007-2017.pdf

[402] Interview, Del, 5 May, 2015.

[403] Houlbrook, *Queer London,* 21.

[404] This is consistent with policies in other PSEs to "afford privacy to outdoor fornicators". BBC News, "The Tricky Business of Policing Sex in Public", *BBC News Magazine*, 16 September, 2014. http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-29205198

[405] Interview, Rui, 23 April, 2015.

[406] John O'Brian, "Personal Column: 'I go with gay strangers. We have our own code'", *The Independent*, 22 September, 2011. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/personal-column-i-go-with-gay-strangers-we-have-our-own-code-409834.html

MPS and HHC opting *not* to police the site at night for health and safety reasons.[407] As the MPS put it, "its very rural character […] make it a unique and challenging site to manage in terms of community safety".[408] The Heath's "wildness", again, can be difficult to contain. Further, many of the same local campaigners who advocate in favour of the Heath's rustic character—which is comprised of overground shrubs and thick woodlands and grasslands—are the very same who would like the see use of the PSE extinguished, as explicitly stated in the HHS's *Heath Vision*.[409] The web of stakeholders—most of whom are represented on the SAWG, except notably but unsurprisingly the PSE users themselves, who for a variety of reasons cited by THT (privacy, family life, etc.) may be reluctant to engage with land managers—is as complicated as the on-the-ground realities of managing the site.

The work of the SAWG and THT in their outreach has focussed on opening a dialogue between users of the site, specifically with a view to placating competing groups' concerns. Litter, especially sexual detritus, is cited by SAWG as key concern at the PSE and across the Heath, and was the main motivation for the THT and Hampstead Heath Constabulary partnership. It occupies a complicated status, however, as sexual litter and drug paraphernalia are often conflated as belonging to the users of the PSE. The CoLC currently employs two litter pickers who collect litter on site, and they in turn keep track of drug paraphernalia found on site and report their findings to the HHC, who, along with THT, have correlated PSE use with drug use.[410] Litter, however, is somewhat more complicated than that: it likewise provides a key metric for the outreach workers. During our visit to the PSE, Paul frequently checked litter and rubbish bins for condom and lube packets, as a means for determining how effective the outreach

[407] Metropolitan Police Service, "Areas that are designated as 'public sex environments' by the MPS", Hampstead Heath Case Study
[408] Ibid.
[409] See Heath and Hampstead Society, *Heath Vision*, 17.

work (which involves handing out condoms) had been. So while land managers are keen to minimize or reduce litter on site by installing more bins, sexual detritus like condoms are, as Paul explained to me, something of a good sign because they indicate users are engaging in safe sex.

On the outreach walk, we noticed a number of wet wipes and condom wrappers discarded on the woodland floor, especially in areas far from paths with rubbish bins. The disposal of litter, of course, is an issue that points to how the Heath is managed as a landscape: bins on the Heath are intended to be discreet, are painted a dark green, and users occasionally report that they are difficult to find.[411] Paul likewise pointed out that users may be reluctant to carry around used condoms and wet wipes while searching for the bins. Moreover, litter is an issue far more widespread across the Heath than just on the West Heath PSE; as general litter has become a concern across the Heath, the spread of sexual detritus to other parts of the Heath has been linked by SAWG to a poor community understanding of the "borders" of the PSE.[412] This in turn has led to concerns that the gay community is held disproportionately accountable for litter across the entire Heath, as there is little evidence to suggest that all sexual detritus found on the Heath is the result of gay and not heterosexual sex.[413]

The MPS's policies with regards to PSEs, of course, assume that management is a key aspect of policing PSEs. Management of the PSE and management of the landscape go hand in hand on the Heath: scrub clearance and outreach work form key aspects in an overall management effort (summed up in the Hampstead Heath Management Plan) to control, to

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[410] Gentry, "Update Report on Hampstead Heath", Sec. 10 - 11.
[411] See Gentry, "Update Report on Hampstead Heath"; Interview, Del, 5 May, 2015.
[412] Interview, Dave (in "Dave and Steve"), 12 March, 2015.
[413] Interview, Del, 5 May, 2015. Likewise, concerns around sexual behaviour on the Heath have not been limited to either the present time or space, and neither have they been limited to gay cruising. A number of reports of 'flashers' on the Heath in the 1960s and 1970s are to be found in the pages of the *Ham & High*, as well as in London County Council archives. See "Letters to the Editor", *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 14 August, 1961; and files from the London County Council in LMA CL/PK/2/48.

borrow a phrase, "the reproduction of preferred non-humans".[414] This management work in turn serves to control how the Heath is used by its wide array of users. It is obvious that the management carried out by the SAWG is always a work of compromise: it is fairly commonly acknowledged that the presence of outreach and management of the site—and even the cessation of predatory, aggressive policing as had been carried out in the past—has reduced the elicit thrill of using the PSE for some, though not all, users.[415] The toleration of cruising by the police, as one user put it, "spoils the cruise".[416] Outreach by members of the gay community, combined with the extensive documentation of litter and use of the site make up both informal and formal surveillance.[417] Likewise, the very continuation of sexual activity on the Heath is deplored by some residents, and is made explicit in the Heath and Hampstead Society's *Heath Vision*:

> We are completely against any single interest group whose activities effectively restrict the quiet enjoyment of the general public to all parts of the Heath. Homosexuals currently use the West Heath during the night and day for their activities – at night there are several thousand. This use is starting to spread to several other areas, including the Vale of Health, Cohen's Fields, Millfield Lane and the Men's Pond. The general public avoid these areas and they are therefore really excluded from much of the Heath. We want to see action taken by the Corporation Constables and by the Police to curtail this type of sexual activity and its resultant offensive dangerous detritus.[418]

The kind of language used in HHS's text points to the phobia of some members of the wider community: the notion that users of the PSE form a "single interest group" (any more than HHS

[414] Darren Patrick, "Queering the Urban Forest", *Urban Forests, Trees, and Greenspace: A Political Ecology Perspective,* eds. L. Anders Sandberg, Adrina Bardekjian, and Sadia Butt (London: Routledge, 2015), 195.
[415] Interview, Del, 5 May, 2015.
[416] Interview, Rui, 23 April, 2015.

themselves!); the threat of "several thousand" homosexuals using the site at night; and the fear that sexual activity is starting to "spread" to other areas.[419] HHS's conflation of sexual activity with concerns around litter plays on the matters hygiene and safety, with the report spending far more word-space and adjectives on sexual activities than on the other most common cause of litter on the Heath, dog fouling.[420] Similar concerns have, in the past, been raised by Heath management (since changed), as the *Independent* reported that the former Heath manager, Bob Hall, did "not like what he sees" on the Heath, which the article dubbed a "gay ghetto".[421] Ultimately, this framing of the PSE depicts sexual activity as at odds with the natural environment, and landscape managers deploy the very material of that environment (shrubs, trees, etc.) to enforce this association. The way in which HHS frames cruising as at odds with the landscape, in a sense, works to reinforce a vision of the landscape as a "hetero-normative Arcadia", ultimately a way to "police same-sex desire".[422] It functions as an erasure of a homoerotic association with the landscape, reducing sexual activity to a potentially-unsafe, polluting, and niche activity.

In his essay on the gay pastoral, David Shuttleton has noted that a woodland setting can likewise signify "the 'naturalness' of same-sex desire; a liberated pastoral space", which also serves to contrast with a "visible, metropolitan gay subcultural socialization" and the long-held

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[417] Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 44.
[418] Heath and Hampstead Society, *Heath Vision*, 17.
[419] Concern about cruising from the HHS is not new: in 1923, the Hampstead Heath Protection Society noted that "the things that go on [on] the Heath… are such that… most careful parents would not allow their youngsters to sit on the Heath alone, I certainly never allow mine to go off the… paths". J.G. Pearce to committee (30 June 1933), LMA LCC MIN 8945, quoted in Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 235.
[420] Ibid., 17. HHS states only that "further measures should be adopted to deal with the problem fouling by dogs"
[421] "But Mr Hall does not like what he sees. The heath - dubbed the "green lungs of London"- is also the gay cruising capital of the world. According to Mr Hall, the men who go in search of casual sex among the trees are turning parts of the heath into "no-go areas" for other visitors". Martin Hodgson, "Gay 'Ghetto' Plan for Hampstead Heath", *The Independent,* 22 September, 2011. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/gay-ghetto-plan-for-hampstead-heath-422097.html
[422] David Shuttleton, "The Queer Politics of Gay Pastoral", in *De-Centring Sexualities: Politics and Representations Beyond the Metropolis*, eds. Richard Phillips, Diane Watt, and David Shuttleton (London: Routledge, 2000), 127.

association between homosexuality and urban environments, between gay aesthetics and camp.[423] The cruising ground—understood by the language of policy-makers as something to be policed, managed, or contained—disrupts both efforts to signify the natural landscape as a hetero-normative space as well as readings of homosexuality as belonging in the city and not the countryside, which here is taken to include the Heath. The Heath, as we have seen is a landscape positioned in opposition to the city. Ultimately, the language of policing or management, and indeed of the HHS in their response to the PSE, indicates that the Heath is understood as pastoral space in which sexual activity does not belong: that sex disrupts the "quiet enjoyment" of nature, to borrow a phrase from the HHS. This reading of the Heath reflects Williams's critique of overly-idealized pastoral landscapes as places of "peace, innocence, and simple virtue".[424] Indeed, cruising is framed by the HHS as a kind of invasion of urban (and gay) corruption on a once-quiet natural landscape ("at night there are several thousand"), indicating that within the strictures of policing or managing the PSE, there is little space for an understanding of sexuality as belonging in or belonging to the natural landscape.[425] My conversations with THT staff and volunteers indicated that the politics of the site can be a rocky terrain for them to traverse: as outreach workers, gay men, and stakeholders in the PSE's management.

Ultimately, the management of both the PSE and landscape on the Heath can be read as a management of what Darren Patrick refers to as "the terms on which beings, human and otherwise, are themselves recognized as having a 'right' to inhabit, use, and proliferate in particular spaces".[426] While community engagement with THT has generally been viewed as

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[423] Ibid., 126, 129.
[424] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 1.
[425] See Richard Phillips, "Imagined Geographies and Sexuality Politics: The City, the Country, and the Age of Consent", in *De-Centring Sexualities: Politics and Representations Beyond the Metropolis*, eds. Richard Phillips, Diane Watt, and David Shuttleton (London: Routledge, 2000), 102-124.
[426] Darren Patrick, "Queering the Urban Forest", 194-195.

having positive results—anecdotally, Paul cites an end-of-season picnic held the previous year with regular users of the PSE, and annual reports on the work of the SAWG have been positive—it is an intervention that sits at the centre of an uneasy compromise between some community stakeholders, like the HHS, who would rather see the Heath free of sex and its litter, and PSE users who are put off by engagement with outreach and police. Attending to this uneasy balance and the key forms in which such management take place—scrub clearance especially—allows for an understanding of how environmental factors have strong impacts on sexual cultures, deeply informing who and what can "take place"—in both the senses of occupying the place and as activities occurring—amidst the unruly, "wild" landscape of the Heath.[427]

v. Conclusion

Efforts by land managers to police the PSE underscore the ways in which single narratives or management strategies fail to encompass the entirety of the Heath's identities and narratives. As I have indicated, a perception of the Heath as quiet, pastoral, and rural, is positioned at odds with sexual activity, a framing which fails to capture or fully understand non-hetero-normative uses of the site. Likewise, in such management efforts the very material of the landscape is deployed: in the pruning of bushes, a very material means of shaping how the Heath is used and for whom the Heath exists.

The 1978 conflict, likewise, indicates that amidst the in-fighting and political-wrangling of local stakeholders, new and equally relevant actors appear in shaping the site: trees, scrub, grass, and dead bodies, to mention just a few. The wide array of shifting, often conflicting, actors indicates that management of the site is always a process of broad negotiation, amongst not solely the human communities that shape the Heath but also its nonhumans. As Tsing indicates,

[427] Ingram, "Fragments, Edges, and Matrices", 257.

conflicts like scrub clearance—between groups, individuals, knowledges, plants, and other bodies—allow for new actors to emerge. Further, these examples point to the ways in which the rural aesthetic of the Heath—as excessive, as unkempt, as non-parkified—not only requires extensive maintenance but is itself up for constant negotiation. Conserving the Heath at any stage in its development means privileging one vision of the landscape—as heathland, as post-industrial wasteland, as pastoral farmland—as authentic.

In the next and final chapter, I turn to a similar debate over foraging, highlighting the ways in which not solely community conflict shapes land management on the Heath, but also the ways in which aesthetics, expertise, and the status of nonhumans on the Heath are continually up for negotiation.

Chapter 5: Fungi and Flower

In the preceding chapters, we have visited each section of the Heath in turn: from Kenwood to Sandy Heath, to Parliament Hill Fields, West Heath and the Extension. Walking—or indeed swimming—the Heath has provided some shape to what would otherwise be a rather overwhelming history, as each section of the Heath has unraveled a storyline not bounded by chronology: swimmers carry forward a three-hundred-year-old practice of finding health and restoration in the Heath's various waters; protest still rages to defend the Heath as a public space; the Heath's history of landscape management and as a cruising ground demonstrate that the site exceeds both the physical and cultural borders of a "park". Here, in this final chapter, I wish to turn not to one part of the Heath in particular, but rather to practices that have ranged over the Heath's landscape for many centuries. Botany and foraging have taken place on the Heath since at least the sixteenth century, when the first botanical works in England were produced, and as we have seen in Chapter Three, the Heath has served a practical purpose for its copyholders for some time.

In this chapter, I will consider briefly the Heath's centrality in the history of British botany, noting the ways in which the Heath's history of use deeply relates to its long history of domestication and entanglement with the growing city. This history, I will indicate, underscores the complex relationship between expertise and amateur knowledge that has shaped use of the site and continues to shape land management policies on the Heath. I will then turn to two contemporary case studies to illustrate the contemporary context for botanical knowledge, foraging, and land management on the Heath. The first examines a 2012 conflict between foragers and the City of London Corporation, which began to enforce no-pick by-laws on all

plants except blackberries. The second case study documents a walk with well-known local mycologist, Andy Overall, who in addition to using the Heath as a key site for fungi foraging, occupies a complicated space between Heath user and advisor, as he is frequently commissioned to carry out survey work for the City of London Corporation. Each of these case studies points to the wider themes that have arisen throughout the preceding chapters: whether the Heath serves as countryside or a park; how to manage the site; and the ways in which conflicts on the site can point to a wide array of actors who shape the site. Conflicts around foraging point to the complicated way in which the Heath's status as a public space is negotiated between users, land managers, nonhumans, and other factors. Further, the practices of botany and foraging themselves belong to a kind of attention akin to aesthetic engagement. As Berleant notes, aesthetic engagement attunes to the landscape not solely with vision, but with "the body in our movements and actions".[428] Botany and foraging, then, are a means of integrating humans with environments through this attuned, full-bodied engagement. Indeed, it is in her discussions of mushroom foraging that Tsing's work most clearly connects the body, sensation, and attention with the "frictions" out of which contested landscapes emerge. As such, it is in this final chapter that the connection between a deeply engaged aesthetic experience of landscape connects explicitly with efforts to maintain the Heath as a public space, underscoring the theoretical connections that have vibrated throughout the preceding chapters. By situating the contemporary case studies within the context of the Heath's broader history as a site of botany and foraging, I underscore the ways in which the Heath's history has a way of punctuating and shaping our present understanding of the site, pointing to a landscape that can never be understood solely through a single layer of narrative retelling. On Hampstead Heath, an understanding of the

[428] Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, 19.

landscape's complexity, like foraging for mushrooms, takes time, attention, and above all, a deep engagement with the landscape itself.

i. A Local Flora

> At the appointed hour in the morning seven of our ten fellows assembled. Buggs, Weale, and Wallis were missing, but their places were taken by John Sotherton, John Marriot, and Thomas Crosse, who joined our fellowship. Undeterred by the lowering sky, we thought it shame that we who had faced greater hazards should shrink from such a trifle. So we left the city and made our way to Kentish Town. From there we had travelled fast but not far when a heavy shower drove us to seek refuge in Highgate. Scarcely had the rain stopped when impatient of delay, we made for the wood.[429]

So begins Thomas Johnson's *Descriptio Itineris Plantarum* (1632)*,* one of the earliest works in British botanical history, and the earliest carried out on Hampstead Heath. It was not the first time Johnson had been to the Heath: Thomas Johnson visited the Heath in 1629, just as he was gaining a name for himself as a botanist. In his *Iter Plantarum* (1629), *Descriptio Itineris Plantarum* (1632), and his enlarged version of John Gerard's *Herball* (1633), one of the most widely circulated botany books of the seventeenth century, Johnson recorded some 120 species for the first time in Great Britain.[430] By 1634, in his *Mercurius Botanicus*, he recorded nearly 900 species, "of which about 50 were recorded for the first time".[431] This is remarkable and

[429] Thomas Johnson, *Botanical Journeys in Kent and Hampstead: A facsimile reprint with Introduction and Translation of his Iter Plantarum 1629, Descriptio Itineris Plantarum 1632*, ed. J.S.L. Gilmour (Pittsburgh: The Hunt Botanical Library, 1972), 65.
[430] Gilmour, J.S.L., "Introduction", in Thomas Johnson, *Botanical Journeys in Kent and Hampstead,* 1-3.
[431] Ibid.

marks a key point in the Heath's story because it places the site at the centre of Britain's botanical beginnings: Johnson did much of his work on the Hampstead Heath.[432]

The Heath's significance to the history of botany in Britain is largely due to geographical factors: being situated within five miles of the city and featuring a variety of flora due to its complex topography, the Heath was both convenient and worthwhile. Johnson's work on the Heath, both in his own works and in his expansion of Gerard's *Herball*, documented the Heath's flora extensively. In his *Iter Plantarum* and *Descriptio*, by providing a list of plants found on the Heath, Johnson created "the first British Local Flora, the herald of a host of such publications, now covering nearly the whole of the British Isles".[433] So the Heath has been just as important to botanical study as it has been to land conservation in Britain: acting as a crucial foundation in both projects. Johnson's work occupies the border space between plant study situated in the landscape, carried out by herbalists, foragers, and field botanists, and the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century transition to a more theoretical botany, preoccupied with taxonomy and nomenclature. In this regard, the Heath's role in the history of plant study is as a site not solely for field surveys and botanizing, but for observing the subtle negotiations that take place between different forms of plant knowledge, between experts and amateurs alike.

When Johnson was working on the Heath, theoretical botanical study in Britain was just beginning: up until then, the work of herbalists in studying the medicinal properties of plants, emphasizing practical uses for plants, had been the key avenue for plant study, but Johnson's work emerged just as the era of the herbal was drawing to a close.[434] Johnson himself worked as an apothecary, and much of his plant study was linked to medical use and study. In carrying out

[432] He also carried out excursions in Kent and later in his work, much of the rest of the southeast of England.
[433] Gilmour, J.S.L., "Introduction", in Thomas Johnson, *Botanical Journeys in Kent and Hampstead,* 3.
[434] Agnes Arber, "Nehemiah Grew 1641-1712" in *The Makers of British Botany*, ed. F.W. Oliver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 47.

his botanical excursions at particular sites and using his texts to create a botanical "portrait" of each landscape, however, Johnson's "field botanical" approach to plant study places him at the juncture between the herbalists and the botanists, as the study of botany increasingly became linked to theoretical concerns of taxonomic classification and nomenclature.[435] He noted the presence of cultivated plants (apple trees, etc.) and excluded them from his accounts.[436] He then listed plants by waypoints in the landscape, attempting very basic classification or description in his texts, but mostly worked to document an inventory of plants found. In this regard, his contributions to botany's beginnings was in the advent of local floras, often used by amateur plant enthusiasts and field botanists in exploring a specific landscape, and less as a means of scientific classification. Local floras remain a key means by which naturalists, foragers, and amateur botanists traverse and decode the landscape of Britain.

Johnson's work, among the earliest developments of botany in England, likewise took place at the beginning of a period in which Britain's plantlife was due to change rapidly: while just thirty-six hardy and cultivated tree species were recorded in England in the mid-sixteenth century, this grew to '"by 1600, 103 species; by 1700, 239 species; by 1800, 733 species; and by 1900, 1911 species'".[437] This is in part due to increased and more systematized botanical study as botany became more established, but also due to a wealth of new plants brought to Europe as plant trade thrived with both exploration and colonization. The expansion of empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the increase in plant trade shaped not solely colonized

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[435] Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 6; Sydney Howard Vines, "Robert Morison 1620-1683 and John Ray 1627-1705" in *The Makers of British Botany*, 11.
[436] Thomas Johnson, *Botanical Journeys.*
[437] P.J. Jarvis, 'Plant Introductions to England and their Role in Horticultural and Silvicultural Innovation, 1500—1900' in H.S.A. Fox and R.A. Butlin (eds.), *Change in the Countryside: Essays on Rural England 1500-1900*, special publication, 10 (London: Institute of British Geographers, 1979): 145-64, quoted in Paul A. Elliott, Charles Watkins and Stephen Daniels (eds.), *The British Arboretum: Trees, Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011), 17.

landscapes abroad, but also the "home" landscapes of the colonizers. The plants available to European gardeners changed dramatically during this period, underscoring the ways in which gardening style, botanical conquest, and plant study were entangled with the political and economic conditions of imperial expansion. As Janet Browne notes in her study of gardens and empire, "National pride was also reflected in the breadth and variety of the collections, each plant representing Britain's greatest topographical explorations, its political allegiances, and its commercial intentions".[438] In this regard, we can link the expansion of the British Empire directly with discussions around "landscape improvements" we have seen in earlier chapter: many of the plants brought in as improvers on the Heath and around Britain (*Rhododendron ponticum, Ailanthus altissima,* etc.) were brought back as botanical acquisitions from colonial exploration.

As plant diversity in Britain increased, the popularity of botany throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was such that, by the end of the eighteenth century, not only were botanic gardens established throughout the country (Edinburgh and Chelsea as early as 1670 and 1673, respectively; Kew in 1759) but botanical card games, puzzles, and books had become widespread.[439] In the nineteenth century, museums like the Natural History Museum—originally a single museum with the British Museum—became centres not solely of natural historical study, but of public engagement with natural history. As botany became more popular than ever and more plants became available in Britain, the Heath changed dramatically. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, increased land use and industrial sand extraction meant the loss of heathland and plant diversity in the period between the late-seventeenth century (when the ponds were first

[438] Janet Browne, "Botany in the Boudoir and in the Garden: The Banksian Context" in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature*, eds. David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 165-166.

built) and the late-nineteenth (when it was preserved for public use). As bryologist Paul W. Richards notes in his own study of Johnson and the Heath, "The changes of the flora of Hampstead Heath over its 400 years of recorded botanical history depended on the vast increase in the human population in its immediate neighbourhood, and on the changes in land-use consequent on the transformation of Hampstead from a rural parish to a unit in the London conurbation".[440]

The Heath provided a key site for a number of floras throughout the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, especially for amateur and field botanists, marking the site as crucial to the history of more local, less-theoretical botanical study. Much of the theoretical, academic botany—specifically taxonomic and nomenclatural study—was carried out in botanic gardens. The Heath, by contrast, served various purposes for locals and field botanists in the centuries prior to its 1871 acquisition for the public: as a site for amateur study; as the source of study for British local floras; and as a ripe practice ground near to London. It served as a site in which to hone field skills and also to observe a variety of characteristic British plantlife. Edward Baylis's *Botanic Physic* (1791) was partly researched on the Heath.[441] Dawson Turner and Lewis Weston Dillwyn's *Botanist's Guide Through England and Wales* (1805) drew largely from the Heath, and John Stephenson's and James Morss Churchill's *Medical Botany* (1831) detailed many of its plants according to their locations on the Heath.[442] Hewett Cottral Watson's *New Botanist's*

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[439] Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 11.

[440] Bryology is the branch of botany studying moss, lichens, and liverworts. P.W. Richards, "The Flora of Hampstead Heath, 1597-1971", in Thomas Johnson, Botanical Journeys in Kent and Hampstead, 16. Paul W. Richards was himself familiar with the Heath: an eminent botanist and specialist in bryophytes, Richards's obituary in the *Journal of Bryology* noted that "as a young man, living nearby, he had frequently botanized on Hampstead Heath". P.E. Stanley, et al., "Botanical Biography of P.W. Richards", *Journal of Bryology* 20, no 2, 1998, pp. 323-370: 329.

[441] Ida M. Roper, "Edward Baylis's "Botanic Physic", *The Journal of Botany, British and Foreign* 56 (1918): 52-54.

[442] Dawson Turner and Lewis Weston Dillwyn, *The Botanist's Guide Through England and Wales* Volume 2 (London: Phillips and Fardon, 1805); John Stephenson and James Morss Churchill, *Medical Botany: or,*

Guide to the Rarer Plants of Britain (1835), building on Turner's and Dillwyn's work, indicated the Heath as the location of many of the specimens it describes.[443] The pages of the *Magazine of Natural History and Journal of Zoology, Botany, Mineralogy, Geology and Meteorology,* a major nineteenth century natural history magazine published between 1829 and 1837, are peppered with references to the Heath.

The rise of non-theoretical, amateur botanical study in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries likewise coincided with the increase in concern around access to open, recreational space in Britain's growing metropolitan areas. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Heath was at the centre of concerns around land access for the working poor, and as such occupied an awkward position in relation to both recreation and botanical study. By the nineteenth century, amateur botanical study had become a part of wider efforts to provide suitable, moral recreation for the working classes, as Anne Secord notes in her study of working class botany in rural Lancashire.[444] But with the turn to pubic use and the rapid change to the landscape from the nineteenth century—as we have seen, through extensive mineral extraction, increased footfall, and landscape improvements—the Heath changed dramatically. By the twentieth century, botanizing on the Heath fell relatively to the wayside as it grew as a site for recreation.[445] Nevertheless, some study did continue: the Hampstead Scientific Society was founded in 1899, and it went on to publish one of the most complete natural history texts on the Heath. That the site is still a key survey site for the London Naturalists Society today is a

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Illustrations and Descriptions of the Medical Plants of the London, Edinburgh, and Dublin Pharmocopoeias (London: John Churchill, 1831).

[443] Hewett Cottral Watson, *New Botanist's Guide to the Rarer Plants of Britain* Volume 1 (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman: 1835).

[444] Anne Secord, "Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in Early-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", *History of Science* 32, no. 3, 1994: 273.

[445] Ian Douglas and David Goode, "Urban Natural Histories to Urban Ecologies", *The Routledge Handbook of Urban Ecology*, eds. Ian Douglas, David Goode, Mike Hock, and Rusong Wang (Oxford: Routledge, 2011), 74-83.

testament to its botanical diversity and interest, despite dramatic changes to the landscape in the past two centuries.

Moreover, despite a loss in diversity and special interest for botanical study, the site has continued to serve a practical use as a source of foraged plants within London's borders. Just as herbalists prior to Johnson sourced plants on the Heath, copyholders foraged for edibles on the landscape, and locals have continued to use it for sourcing elderflower, hawthorne, blackberries, and other useful plants throughout the its transition into recreational space and well into the present day. In this sense, the Heath marked the border between the professional scientific and domestic practices of botany and foraging, underscoring the ways in which the site itself was and continues to be an "in-between" space, not just in its botanical use but in its own hybrid identity between wild and domesticated, as indicated in Chapter Four.

Historian Harriet Ritvo asks, "At what point did a species cease to be wild? Was the simple incorporation within a cultivated setting enough to establish that a line had been crossed?"[446] On the Heath, this "in-between" status of plants—shaped by centuries of use and, more recently, decades of landscape improvement—is mirrored by the uneasy status of the site as a site of labour, its "wild" aesthetic, and its reality as a domesticated, managed site. Just as the Heath is neither simply wild nor domesticated, urban nor rural, it is not simply a space for professional science or amateur botany. In particular, the Heath served as a site not solely for honing botanical expertise, but also as a site for sourcing plant material for practical use. It continues to occupy this uneasy space between expert and amateur use, which is likewise a tension embodied by Britain's long tradition of foraging, a practice once widespread and only recently re-emerging. Foraging for medicinal and edible plants depends not solely on botanical knowledge

[446] Harriet Ritvo, "At the Edge of the Garden: Nature and Domestication in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (1992): 367.

and study, but also on practical knowledge of the landscape, as is given by local floras and landscape guides like Wolton and McDowall's *Walker's Guide* to the Heath, or, more broadly, by books like Mabey's *Food for Free*.[447] As we shall see in the following sections, foraging provides a lens through which to consider how such knowledges, skills, and experiences encompass concerns around both land access and land management on the Heath.

ii. London's Larder

In 2006, Richard Mabey wrote an article for *The Guardian* outlining the origins of Britain's foraging renaissance. Television series on foraging and wild food were in preparation, he noted, and the 2004 Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, an annual conference on food held at the University of Oxford, took "Wild Food" as its theme. British food was being revived, with chefs from Britain gaining international acclaim. Local authorities began to offer foraging courses or guided walks in search of wild British food. But, as Mabey noted, none of this was detached from a wider history of foraging within British food culture, in which foraging for blackberries, elderflower, and other common hedgerow plants had been well-established.[448] The tradition of landscape writing in Britain —from the Romantics to authors like Mabey himself— had emphasized an intimacy with the particularities of place: from Wordsworth's writings on the Lake District to Mabey's own tales of the countryside industrial landscapes on the edge of London, which explicitly linked landscape writing with foraging practices.[449] British nature writing, for the most part, has been intimately concerned with the particularities of place: from the Lake District of the Romantics to the broads, marshes, and old tracks of writers in the "new

[447] See Wolton and McDowall. *Hampstead Heath: A Walker's Guide.* Richmond: David McDowall, 2006; and Richard Mabey, *Food for Free* (London: Collins, 2012 [1972]).

[448] Richard Mabey, "Where the Wildings Are", *The Guardian*, 2 September, 2006.

wave" of nature writing.[450] Foraging, similarly, requires not solely an understanding of plants, but an understanding of places: an intimate knowledge of the landscape, so foragers might know where to look and what is safe.

During the Second World War, efforts to ration food led to a revival of hedgerow foraging, capitalizing on the wealth of fruits available in country hedges that lined the countryside, and again in the 1970s, with the publication of Mabey's *Food for Free*—re-issued in 2012 as the "bible" of British foraging—the practice grew in popularity. Foraging, then, has often been linked to periods of economic austerity, and so it was that the economic recession of the early 2000s saw a revival of foraging in Britain and a widespread concern for how best to regulate foraging on landscapes increasingly under the management of local authorities. Both mushroom and blackberry foraging have been central to such concerns, as I will discuss below.

Its revival in the 2000s resulted in a series of conflicts that are still playing out across Britain. While local authorities had initially stepped into the boom by offering foraging courses, within a number of years many of them radically shifted their position on foraging, citing ecological concerns as a reason for banning the practice in public parks, commons, and open spaces. As a result, bans and byelaw enforcements continue to come into effect across Britain: in 2016, Bristol announced a city-wide ban on foraging, one of many bans that have made headlines in the past decade. This highlights the degree to which foraging and byelaws against it call into question how landscapes like the Heath can be managed and how they remain crucial to debates around access to public spaces.[451] On the Heath, the wax and wane of the 2000s foraging trend underscores such concerns, and indicates that the themes that have emerged throughout the

[449] See, for example, Mabey (1973), *The Unofficial Countryside* (Stanbridge: Little Toller, 2010).
[450] Authors identified as part of the new nature writing include Robert MacFarlane, Helen Macdonald, James Rebanks, and Amy Liptrot. Mabey, in many cases, is referred to as a "father-figure" of the movement.
[451] Louis Emanuel, "New Rules 'Ban Blackberry Picking' in Bristol", *Bristol 24/7*, 2 February, 2016.

course of this dissertation—the rights of locals to make use of the landscape, public access to the Heath, and how the Heath pushes back against efforts to manage it—continue to remain relevant. Here, I turn to a 2012 conflict over foraging, outlining its origins in the 2000s foraging boom, and the degree to which the enforcement of anti-foraging byelaws on the Heath has impacted land use. A wide array of organizations and individuals were enrolled in the fray: the City of London Corporation (CoLC), who manages the Heath; Transition Belsize, a local environmental organization; the Heath and Hampstead Society (HHS); everyday foragers; and celebrity chefs. Ultimately, the conflict illustrates the complex ways in which land management and access are understood and negotiated on the Heath, and the ways in which use of sites like the Heath is deeply linked with ideas of how and for whom the British landscape is maintained.

In the autumn of 2010, I stopped by my local pub across from the Heath for Sunday lunch, only to find the door locked. A sign posted in the window read: "Closed for Private Function". A few days later, the reason for the pub's weekend closure made national headlines: "Noma Head Chef Accused of Illegal Mushroom Picking" read *The Daily Telegraph.* Rene Redzepi, head chef of Danish restaurant Noma, *Restaurant* magazine's "Best Restaurant" in the world at the time, a hotly-contested accolade, had visited Hampstead Heath with other chefs and a foraging guide, seeking the ingredients for a lunch they would cook at the local pub. They ventured onto the Heath to pick mushrooms and other hedgerow plants, including sorrel, nettle, and blackberry. They were, of course, followed by journalists, and the trip became part of a press tour for Redzepi. Among the group were leading UK chefs—Brett Graham, chef at leading London restaurant The Ledbury; TV presenter Valentine Warner; and others—and their guide, *The Forager's Handbook* author, Miles Irving. After Redzepi's trip to Hampstead Heath was covered on BBC Radio 4's *Today Programme* and a series of photographs documenting the foraging trip,

the City of London Corporation (CoLC) and local conservationists including the Heath and Hampstead Society (HHS) raised alarms around foraging on the Heath.

Such a high profile foraging trip, they warned, would bring many more to the Heath in search of fungi and wild plants. The "stunt", they claimed, encouraged hundreds of people to descend upon the Heath to forage, threatening the Heath's 340-plus variety of fungi.[452] Moreover, the CoLC and HHS highlighted that Redzepi's foraging trip broke the law: a number of articles cited the 1968 Theft Act, which states that it is illegal to pick mushrooms or any other plants for commercial gain. More likely, Redzepi's foraging trip—which resulted in a lunch amongst friends—violated *Hampstead Heath Byelaws*, specifically the one stating "No person shall remove, uproot, destroy or injure any tree, shrub or plant, or pluck any flower, bough or leaf, or dig, cut or take any turf, sod, gravel, sand, clay or other substance in any open space".[453] CoLC confirmed that whether for personal or commercial gain, foraging was not permitted.[454]

The furore came as a surprise to many, including me. Just that spring, I'd taken a foraging course with Andy Overall, an amateur local mycologist on the Heath, picking mushrooms, wild garlic, and other edible plants. Each summer, I'd taken to collecting a few elderflower blossoms from the hedgerows of Parliament Hill Fields in order to make homemade cordial and champagne. And I wasn't alone: foraging saw a boom in the UK in the 2000s, first with the revival of British food and then a broad return to grassroots activism and environmentalism during the recession and subsequent government cuts to education, efforts to tackle climate

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[452] "Noma Head Chef Accused of Illegal Mushroom Picking", *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 November, 2010.
[453] The Theft Act 1968 states: "(3)A person who picks mushrooms growing wild on any land, or who picks flowers, fruit or foliage from a plant growing wild on any land, does not (although not in possession of the land) steal what he picks, unless he does it for reward or for sale or other commercial purpose. For purposes of this subsection "mushroom" includes any fungus, and "plant" includes any shrub or tree."
See also: Hampstead Heath Byelaws, 3. https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/Documents/hampstead-heath-byelaws.pdf
[454] "Noma Head Chef Accused of Illegal Mushroom Picking", *The Telegraph*.

change, and many social services.[455] Skills like foraging were viewed by some environmental organizations as part of a grassroots response to the recession and wider anti-capitalist movements, an association which is mirrored by Tsing's observation that foraging functions both outside of and inside of capitalism. In particular, she highlights the ways in which foraging produces a product which can then be entered into the capitalist economy as a commodity, but that this is not always the case, and that the ability to forage is predicated on knowledges transferred in often domestic, interpersonal ways.[456] Both an interest in British food culture, which had until the 1990s been viewed quite poorly among European gastronomes, and an effort to promote more local and self-sufficient food cultures in response to the perceived failure of global capitalism (whether genuinely or as a fashion) contributed to the growth in foraging. Celebrity chefs, the poor economic climate, and a wider revival of traditional skills and crafts—from chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's television series to the Campaigns for Real Ale and Real Bread, and efforts to preserve traditional farm skills like drystone walling—were all credited for initiating the boom in foraging. By 2011, a "year of the forager" had been declared and British broadsheets were raising the profile not solely of foraging but of the risks presented to local environments by irresponsible foragers.[457] Courses in mushroom picking and edible plants sprang up all over the country. Likewise, local parks and councils began to assess whether open spaces like the Heath or London's Epping Forest could sustain the increasing number of

[455] The resurgence in UK grassroots activism coincided with the recession in 2008 and further cuts to public spending in 2010. Such activism included both environmental campaigners, many of whom began protesting climate change policies prior to the recession, and anti-cuts campaigners, especially during the 2010 round of Conservative budget cuts and tuition-fee increases. Between 2006-2011, campaigns like the Camp for Climate Action, which dominated grassroots environmental activism before disbanding in 2011, encouraged the sourcing of local foods. In the same period, Slow Food's youth network travelled the country offering "skill share" workshops in practices like foraging. So it is crucial to read the revival of traditional British food alongside environmental, economic, and other social factors.

[456] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 66, 133-134.

[457] See for example: BBC News, "Is Foraging Fruit Legal?", *BBC News Magazine*, 21 October, 2010; Damian Carrington, "Illegal Foragers Are Stripping UK Forests of Fungi", *The Guardian*, 24 October, 2014; Siobhan

foragers. So Redzepi's trip to the Heath brought into stark relief the conflict between contemporary efforts to manage access to open spaces and what one forager has termed the ancient "freedom to forage".[458]

By the spring of 2012, the conflict took a new shape: foraging had grown to such a degree that authorities had begun to enforce their no-pick byelaws, most famously in Epping Forest, also managed by the CoLC. As the "Great British Food" revival led to high prices for fungi and other foraged produce, and foraging became lucrative for commercial pickers, sites like Epping Forest and the Heath came under pressure. At Epping Forest, officials reported busloads of pickers arriving and foraging indiscriminately picking mushrooms before sorting the fungi for commercial sale. On the Heath, around the time of Redzepi's visit it was reported that commerical pickers were combing the site: one conservationist stated, "I saw one person stuffing a massive hessian sack full of them. If it goes on unchecked, it could do real damage because it's much more harmful than picking the odd blackberry".[459] The CoLC, in efforts to enforce the byelaws, began seeking arrests and prosecutions. At Epping Forest, they began searching day-trippers, resulting in twenty successful prosecutions in 2013.[460] On the Heath, the CoLC began to issue warnings to foragers, and the *Ham & High* reported that the Heath's superintendent had warned that foragers "could be taken to court and fined if they are caught uprooting fungi and other precious plants".[461]

The Hampstead Heath Constabulary, in my interviews with them, described the shift to stricter policing following the Redzepi visit as part of a longer history of trying to control groups

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Norton, "Foraging: How the British Rediscovered Their Taste for Chasing After Wild Food", *The Independent*, 25 July, 2015; Nick Weston, "Foraging Without Damaging", *The Guardian* 11 March, 2011.

[458] Alan Gibson quoted in The Daily Mail, "How can they ban us from picking BLACKBERRIES? Officials claim it will harm the environment on Common", *The Daily Mail*, 7 October, 2011.

[459] Jeremy Wright quoted in "Noma Head Chef Accused of Illegal Mushroom Picking", *The Telegraph*.

[460] Siobhan Norton, "Foraging: How the British Rediscovered Their Taste for Chasing After Wild Food".

indiscriminately stripping the Heath of fashionable plantlife: "We've had groups of people stripping bamboo. We've had people stripping the elderflower. Apparently there's a particular time of the year when you can take the elderflower tree to make stuff out of it. People with bin bags full of them".[462] Indeed, while until then it had been a spot for locals to forage in small quantities, the ubiquity of the Heath as "countryside in the city" meant it was disproportionately targeted by new foragers from across the city. Plant theft, likewise, became an issue. They told me they'd come across individuals uprooting entire beds of ornamental flowers like daffodils. Regarding foraging, the Constabulary reported that they would ultimately "take a proportionate view to it" and "take a discretional view as to what a person's doing".[463] But up until the new foraging boom, a coherent strategy had not been required. The decision to enforce the byelaws resulted in a number of shifts in the community, most notably the shift by the local group Transition Belsize to adopt a "no-pick" policy on Hampstead Heath. Prior to the conflict, the group had been leading foraging walks for both edible and medicinal plants and fungi on the Heath, under the guidance of the same foraging guide as Redzepi, Miles Irving.

One of Transition Belsize's organizers, Alexis Rowell, took me for a walk on the Heath to discuss the 2012 conflict and the shift in policies. The group, he told me, had begun with foraging walks on the Heath around 2009, just prior to the boom in foraging, when the conflict on the Heath emerged:

> There was a whole sort of foraging craze that suddenly popped up. And restaurants were keen to get sorrel and stuff like that. […] And I think it was mostly mushrooms to be honest, but it was also sorrel and a few other bits of wild garlic. So whereas we,

[461] Josh Pettitt, "Concern for Beauty Spot as Foragers Target Hampstead Heath", *Hampstead & Highgate Express*, 12 March 2012.
[462] Interview, Dave, 12 March, 2015.
[463] Ibid.

> because we'd been trained by Miles, we knew exactly what was okay to take, what we had to be really careful about, and we couldn't… like if there's a wild garlic patch, you don't just pull them all out. You take a couple of percentage points of what's there. But people who didn't know that or people that were there for commercial advantage will just strip the whole place.[464]

Transition Belsize, he explained, needed to shift their approach to foraging in light of the policy changes on the Heath and in response to the impact on the landscape as a result of commercial foragers. Differentiating between individual foragers and commercial foragers, as in Epping Forest, was too difficult a task on a site as large as the Heath. Throughout our walk, Alexis stopped to pluck and eat a few nettles, lime leaves, hawthorne blossoms (the "bread and butter of the hedgerow", he told me), and sorrel leaves, teaching me a few new plants as we talked. This reflected what Alexis described as an educational shift in Transition Belsize's approach to foraging: their foraging courses were renamed "educational walks", resulting in a noticeable drop-off in attendance.[465] As Alexis described it, "This is an incredibly stressed natural environment. There are far too many people on it. But we had to then be pretty cautious about what we were saying and what we were doing." The adoption of the "no-pick" policy came about as a result of this increased pressure on the Heath.

Like the Constabulary, Transition Belsize has treated the "no-pick" policy with discretion. Interestingly, however, the CoLC's and Transition Belsize's policies have never been enforced in the case of blackberry picking.[466] **"**The Heath authorities are perfectly okay for people to go blackberrying," Alexis explained. "So blackberrying is foraging, that's why foraging is really in

[464] Interview, Alexis, 15 May, 2015.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Interview, Dave, 12 March, 2015.

everybody's DNA, because *everybody* goes blackberrying."[467] The decision to enforce the no-pick byelaws in general was made explicit by the CoLC and the Constabulary themselves, but Heath Superintendent Simon Lees confirmed that "casual blackberry picking would be allowed to continue unregulated."[468]

I highlight the matter of the blackberries here because it crystallizes a number of key points in regard to the relationship between foraging and the Heath. Looking at a range of literature on urban foraging and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) that has recently burgeoned, it becomes evident that the conflict around foraging on the Heath is related to a number of themes that have already emerged in previous chapters: debates around conservation and landscape management on the site; access to public space; notions of the aesthetic landscape of the Heath as a working landscape; and the ways in which engagement with nonhumans on the Heath encourages or fosters communities. Scholars examining foraging highlight:

> the ways in which humans actively resist the dominant green space management paradigm that views humans as separate from nature and highlight the socio-ecological importance of interstitial green spaces. Further, the examination of urban foraging practices has the potential to aid researchers in deriving scalar insights into the workings of urban socio-ecological processes and power dynamics that shape the interaction of individual people, plants, and mushrooms, including ideologies and institutions ranging from the local to the global.[469]

In particular, the case of blackberries points to a strong relationship between the Heath, blackberry picking, and British cultural identity. This in turn links to the rural aesthetic of the

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[467] Ibid.
[468] Pettitt, "Concern for beauty spot as foragers target Hampstead Heath".
[469] McLain et al., "Gathering 'Wild' Food in the City: Rethinking the Role of Foraging in Urban Ecosystem Planning and Management*" Local Environment* 19, no. 2 (2014): 225.

Heath, with pastures shaped by hedgerows of bramble bushes. The case of fungi foraging, discussed further in the following section, thus is part of a larger history in which policy-making, commercial factors, and public space have been negotiated between and across a range of actors occupying often ambiguous or precarious positions in relation to the Heath itself.

Blackberries, the drupelets of the bramble plant, *Rubus fruticosus*, are plentiful on the Heath, and many venture into the hedgerows in late summer to gather them. The right to go blackberrying is perceived as an integral part of British identity, such that public right of access is defended on the basis of the long-standing practice of foraging blackberries as well as the matter of cultural identity.[470] As Alexis's observation that banning blackberrying would be unenforceable indicates, following a number of foraging bans across the country, the right to pick blackberries was discussed by media, foragers, and even the Hampstead Heath Constabulary in my interviews as fundamental, as a part of being British. Bans on blackberrying around the UK raised similar ire to the Heath's ban, with the right-wing papers *The Daily Mail* and *Telegraph* reporting on 2011 bans around the country as threats to a traditionally British pastime.[471] The *Telegraph* article references blackberrying as so key to the British cultural imagination that it was the subject of both an Enid Blyton story and a Seamus Heaney poem.[472] As in the case of a North American study of huckleberry foraging, blackberries in the UK are a "material expression of a rural, place-based way of life".[473] Alexis explained that the blackberrying is a necessary exception to the no-pick byelaw: "It's nonsense but I understand

[470] See Annika Dahlberg, "Box 5.1 Public Access Rights in Sweden: A Demonstration of Cultural Importance of Forests and Their Products" in *Non-Timber Forest Products in the Global Context* , ed. Sheona Shackleton (Berlin: Springer, 2011), 109-110.
[471] *The Daily Mail* headlined their coverage of the Southampton Common ban "How Can They Ban Us From Picking BLACKBERRIES?", indicating the strong feelings associated with blackberry-picking in Britain; likewise, the *Telegraph* referred to the practice as "traditional blackberry picking". Andy Bloxham. "Traditional Blackberry Picking Under Threat From Council Officials", *The Telegraph*, 7 October, 2011.
[472] Ibid. It is worth noting that Seamus Heaney was born in Northern Ireland.

that they have to have some sort of policy. And if they stop people from picking blackberries, they'd probably have a, well, they wouldn't be able to. Nobody would stop picking blackberries!".[474]

Likewise, the decision to exclude blackberrying from the enforcement of the byelaw can be understood in the often ambiguous context of which plants are deemed desirable on the Heath. Much as the bramble hedges in Parliament Hill Fields contribute to the Heath's rural charm and aesthetic, they are amongst the plants targeted as part of the efforts to manage scrub discussed in Chapter Four. The Heath and Hampstead Society's (HHS) *Heath Vision* report describes bramble as "invasive", despite recognition that the low-growing shrubs provide necessary understory and habitat for birds, in particular. HHS's recommendations are made in line with their effort to make the Heath accessible, in particular, to walkers. In contrast, the City of London Corporation's (CoLC) management plan for the Heath discusses the importance of the provision of "a substantial, undisturbed area of scrub and bramble on the Heath", an effort echoed in importance by the more recent Habitat Survey carried out by ecologists on the site ahead of the dam construction work for the Ponds Project.[475] So while it is possible to view the non-enforcement of the byelaws in relation to blackberrying as a matter of devaluing blackberries or brambles more widely, they in fact occupy a contentious space within the context of the Heath. It is possible to understand the policy in recognizing that blackberrying is a cultural practice inherent to British identity. Blackberrying is depicted, in discussion with both the Constabulary and with foragers, as more of a personal pursuit, lacking the environmental risks, commercial possibilities, and cultural barriers of foraging for other plants or fungi.

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[473] Carroll et al, "Somewhere Between: Social Embeddedness and the Spectrum of Wild Huckleberry Harvest and Use", *Rural Sociology* 68, no. 3 (2003): 329.
[474] Interview, Alexis, 15 May, 2015.

Broadly-speaking, beyond the matter of blackberries and British identity, the enforcement of no-pick byelaws has most often been depicted as a means for deterring commercial profit from plant matter and fungi harvested on public land. The cases of Epping Forest—which saw intense foraging from commercial pickers—and the Heath—at the time of Redzepi's visit—were each discussed with reference to the onslaught of commercial pickers unsustainably "stripping" the forest of specific plants, like fungi. The amateur mycologist Andy Overall explained that on both sites enforcing the byelaws against foragers harvesting for personal use was deemed crucial as a means for stopping commercial harvesting, which is more broadly illegal under the Theft Act 1968. "It's the commercial aspect of it", he explained. "That's what they're concerned with. They think that if we let you go up there, and sort of pick mushrooms, then we've got no case if we want to stop the commercial collectors. They might cite you and say, 'Well, you let him go up there, why can't we go up there?'".[476]

On the Heath, with Transition Belsize's walks and fungi courses offered by Andy, it is evident that the no-pick byelaws greatly oversimplify the identities of foragers by attempting to classify them as simply commercial or recreational.[477] Operating to a certain extent outside of this capitalist dichotomy, foraging can be viewed as existing in what Tsing terms the "third nature" which exists after or outside of capitalism.[478] As she explains, third nature persists despite capitalism. Some private foragers, then, could be viewed as functioning in response to capitalism and in contexts outside of commercial supply chains for foraged goods. This is crucial because the Heath played host not solely to commercial foragers but also to private individuals

[475] City of London Corporation and Land Use Consultants, *Hampstead Heath Management Plan,* 42. See also: Chipchase and Whicheloe, *Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Habitat and Invasive Species Survey,* 28.
[476] Interview, Andy, 14 March, 2015.
[477] This is consistent with a number of studies on NTFP harvesting. As one study noted, "the dichotomy often used in trying to classify gathering activities as either 'commercial' or 'recreational' greatly oversimplifies the significance of these activities to those who participate". Carroll, et al, "Somewhere Between", 337.
[478] Tsing, *The Mushroom At The End of The World,* viii.

and organizations who occupied spaces of unofficial expertise, whether as amateur naturalists, self-taught foragers, or simply wild food enthusiasts. These individuals can be understood to connect with the long-standing history of plant study on the Heath. The foragers could not simply be divided into commercial or recreational camps, and on paper the byelaws blurred distinctions between commercial and recreational foragers by banning the practice outright. The enforcement of the byelaws and the associated press coverage—which highlighted the damage to the environments by unscrupulous commercial foragers—effaced the realities of economic and environmental precarity that tends to go hand in hand with mushroom harvesting.[479] Efforts to generate policy on the basis of the risk presented by commercial harvesters overlooked not solely the knowledge and skill involved in responsibly foraging on the site, but also the broader, non-tangible benefits of foraging like increased opportunities for education and community-building. Likewise, it reduced or limited the ability of local organizations to "skill up" private individuals who might want to forage responsibly, with Alexis pointing out that interest in Transition Belsize's foraging courses dropped off dramatically when they became no-pick educational walks.[480] In particular, community-building, knowledge transfer, and increased concern for and stewardship of local landscapes could not be accounted for or accommodated by the blanket policy. The wealth of knowledge held by foragers within the urban environment was ignored and became difficult to transmit. It was a logic which segregated humans from the nonhuman world, "obscuring collaborative survival":[481]

> Urban gatherers often possess sophisticated local ecological knowledge, including: species identification; species assemblages, composition and distribution; soil conditions; subtle seasonal shifts; and year-to-year changes in plant composition and

[479] Ibid., 4, 20.
[480] Interview, Alexis, 15 May, 2015.

> productivity. People learn and pass on information about gathering in many ways, including: through family and friends; formal botany, ethnobotany, herbalism, and mycology instruction; and field guides and books.[482]

It is vital to note that when Transition Belsize implemented their parallel "no-pick" policy, they turned their attention towards education and reframed their foraging walks as educational.[483] What is striking is that management approaches to sites like the Heath take little account of such knowledges: Transition Belsize had no overlap with policy-making on the Heath, beyond advocating for a few fruit trees which were ultimately planted within a fenced-off area.[484] This was consistent with wider trends worldwide in which foragers' practices and knowledges are "scarcely being incorporated into management practices or policy on public or private forestlands".[485] Foraging, rather, was typically viewed by park managers and conservationists as an "inappropriate and incompatible use" of the site.[486]

Foraging, then, presented a contestation to efforts to simplify understandings of how humans interact with nonhuman landscapes in the local context. Personal motivations, knowledges, and political orientations all shaped the ways in which foraging took place on the Heath. Likewise, foragers occupied differing positions based on their relationship to the Heath, whether as locals, experts on the site, commercial pickers, celebrity chefs, or the many iterations in between. Neither the categories of commercial nor recreational captures the entirety of knowledge, skill, and cultural practice bound up with foraging as a practice on the Heath. This is

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[481] Ibid., 19.
[482] Poe, 414.
[483] Interview, Alexis, 15 May, 2014.
[484] Ibid. This is a stark contrast to the Heath and Hampstead Society who, due to their long history of guiding management on the Heath, still carry out their annual walk with Heath managers, though recent conflicts of the Dam works have indicated a stark reduction in the Society's ability to shape policy on the Heath.
[485] Thomas Love and Eric T. Jones, "Why is Non-Timber Forest Product Harvesting An 'Issue'?", *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 13, no. 3/4 (2001): 116
[486] McLain et al., "Gathering 'Wild' Food in the City", 235.

not to say that foraging on the Heath was always advisable. Alexis described Transition Belsize's policies as concerned largely with the overstretched and overused character of the Heath itself, recognising that as a landscape it simply could not sustain the number of visitors it was receiving annually. But rather, the simple attempt to eradicate foraging effaced the skill, knowledge, and other non-tangible values presented by the practice:

> Connections to plants also often extend to urban foragers' environment and place connections, and active gathering is one way local environmental knowledge is shared and maintained. Foragers described their connections with urban nature in intimate and corporeal terms. These intimate connections motivate stewardship activities for some and otherwise break down urban–nature dualisms.[487]

The case of blackberries—which proved a crucial exemption to no-pick policies—illustrated the deep entwinement of the right to forage with identity. In Britain, both are deeply bound up with the "Right to Roam" and a perceived right to the commons, established customs of rural rights of way to footpaths entrenched in British law. Likewise, skilled foraging on the Heath—as both Alexis and Andy explained—involved an intimate understanding of the landscape, ultimately pointing to a strengthened ability to care for and further the wide plant and fungal diversity of the site.

With this in mind, I will turn to a more focussed discussion of fungi foraging, drawing on interview material and a foraging walk in the spring of 2015 carried out with Andy, who is the sole licensed forager and an amateur mycologist who leads fungi walks on the Heath, but who has also occasionally carried out fungi survey work contracted by the City of London Corporation.

iii. Uneven Ground

In the spring of 2009, when I first met Andy, it was for a fungi identification and foraging course at the Hampstead Heath Education Centre. Ten of us gathered in the schoolroom-style building at Parliament Hill Fields, comparing drawings of fungal anatomy and learning new terminology. After lunch, we set out onto the Heath, baskets in hand, and began to collect: mostly St. George's mushrooms (*Calocybe gambosa*), but also some wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*). We wandered up and down the sloping hills of the Heath, amidst weekend strollers and dog walkers. No one thought much of it at the time.

Six years later, much has changed. Andy's role as a mycologist on the Heath has become somewhat more complicated as the foraging bans have come into force. His expertise is simultaneously in demand—he was contracted to carry out surveys on the Heath ahead of the Ponds Project—and limited—as he operates his foraging courses relatively in the shadows. Still, he carries on in his efforts to demystify the complex science of mycology for an everyday audience, drawing on his own mycological studies and the foraging skills he has gleaned over the years.

In late April, 2015, I'm meeting Andy for a "fungi foray" on the Heath. But this time, it seems far less official—we meet at the carpark of Jack Straw's Castle near West Heath, and as I stand waiting for Andy and the other foragers to arrive, I begin to wonder if the foraging craze of the 2000s hasn't died back rather a bit. Including Andy and me, just four of us gather for the walk, a noticeable drop from the ten students on the 2009 course. Foraging on the Heath has since been banned—unless you have a license, and due to the City of London's reluctance to

[487] Poe, 419.

encourage picking, Andy has the only one. It's raining and cold in the carpark, but a warm mist rises from the lush Heath.

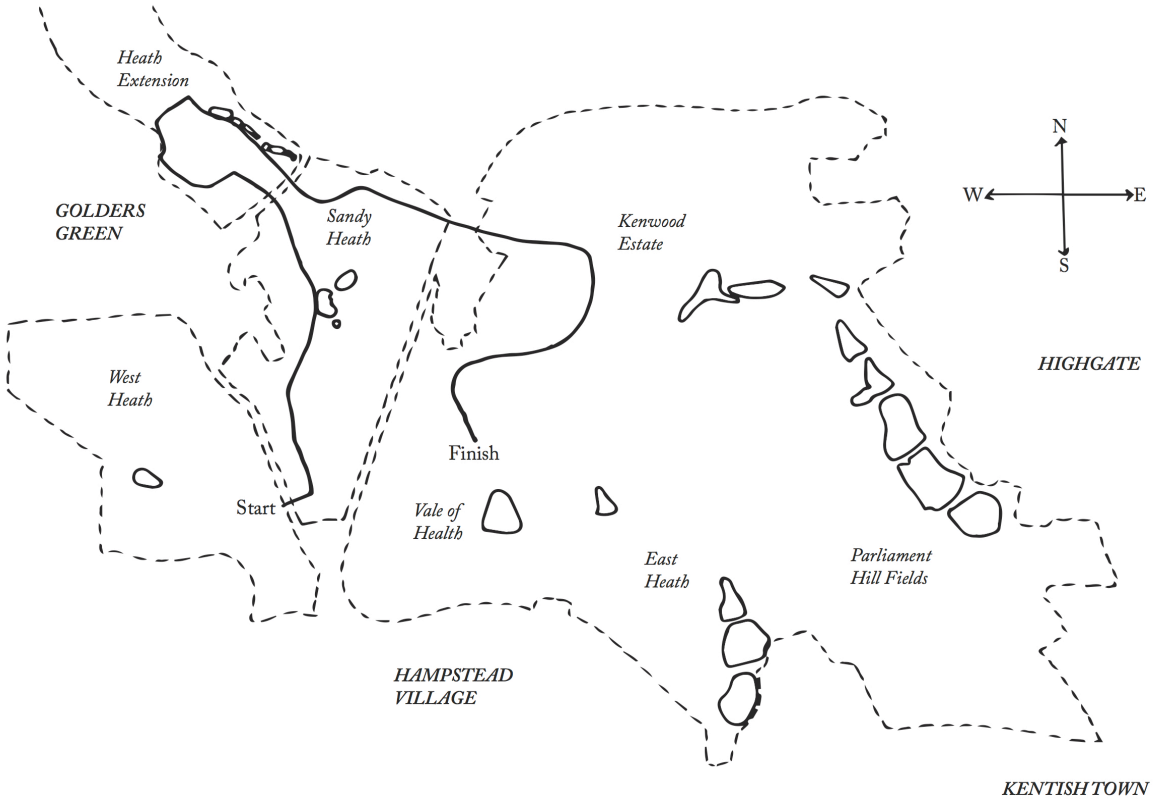


Figure 24 Rough route of foraging walk

Andy arrives, emerging from the well-worn path near Inverforth House, wearing green waterproof trousers and a raincoat, a backpack and boots. We chat for a while, and he remarks that numbers have died down a lot since previous years. Whether this is due to foraging bans or the waning of the trend for foraging, he isn't sure. He's hoping the weather today will clear, and wonders how the previous two weeks of dry weather will impact our foraging. Once the others arrive—a young couple who've done a few of Andy's courses before—he leads the way down through Sandy Heath, pointing out the intricate, clam-shell curve of maze gill fungus, *Daedalea*

quercina, growing on an oak road bollard on the edge of the pavement. Underneath, its flesh is maze-like and looks like brain coral.

We walk across Sandy Heath chatting, then over to the Heath Extension to a cluster of St George's mushrooms growing amidst a patch of other edibles: nettles (*Urtica sp.*), brambles (*Rubus fruticosus*), and alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*). The group wades in, searching for the tell-tale flash of creamy white amidst the green and brown, but I hang on the sidelines. The nettles are keeping me out: I'm allergic to them, so the plant which many deem a delicious nuisance is, to me, unreasonably frightening. But on the edge of the Extension, in a patch of alexanders, I find a few mushrooms. Eyes trained to the ground, I search amongst the scrub for more, growing dizzy with focus.



Figure 25 St. George's mushrooms

When I look up again, I've covered a good patch of ground—I'm about 20 yards from where I began, yet I feel as if my body has guided me across the Extension on its own. Brambles and twigs carpet the grass edge, but I haven't tripped once. I've been entirely in my eyes and my feet; the thrum of birdsong after the rain has fallen into the background, and all I can smell is wet grass and muck. In her work on matsutake mushrooms, Tsing describes this as "open yet focussed attention", and that seems apt.[488] As Berleant explains, aesthetic engagement joins the

[488] Tsing, "Arts of Inclusion".

"perceiver with the world in complex patterns of reciprocity", involving a kinaesthetic engagement that is responsive to the landscape.[489]

Looking around, I see that the group has made its way through the nettles towards a small copse of elm and holly trees. I hop out of the scrub to catch up with them, finding speed in my feet again. Wading past the patch of nettles, I find myself in a shaded grove of green. A four-foot patch of wild garlic, its white blossoms still closed tightly, grows at one end of the darkness. Between them and me stands a spongey ridge of carpet moss, *Mnium hornum*. The group are crouched down here, looking at an old elm log. On its side, Andy points out bay polypore, *Polyporus durus*. It gleams with wetness from the rain, shiny brown in the dark. We all take a look, then venture on through the bushes back into the field.

Walking along the path on the Extension's edge, we find occasional St. George's in the bushes. To my right, I spy what look like oyster mushrooms on a log. Andy tells me they are *Crepidotus vulgaris,* and I think of Andy's remark that we tend to notice the things we think we can eat.[490] "It's not edible," he tells me, before pointing out a nearby elm log, lined with dryad's saddle, *Polyporus squamosus*, and some jelly-like woodears, *Auricularia auricula-judae*, on another log. Andy sees the things none of the rest of us notice: as Tsing would say, he has developed the "art of noticing".[491] I feel like I'm getting better, but the quick way Andy pulls out a Latin name, the way he identifies not just the fungi but the fallen logs and surrounding plants, all of this tells me that he knows this patch of ground far better than I ever will.

We walk on and find some tripe fungus, *Auricularia mesenterica*, and smoky bracket fungus, *Bjerkandera adusta*. Inside a fallen poplar log, we find tiny cup fungus, which Andy guesses is *Peziza varia*, but he isn't sure. It's refreshing to see him flounder, even a bit, but he

[489] Berleant, *Art and Engagement*, 15.
[490] Interview, Andy, 14 March, 2015.

explains that he has looked at some samples of this fungus under the microscope and it mostly matches the species type, but there is a variation in the spores and so he can't be sure. He says there is something about the spores usually being arranged one way, and goes into a detailed description of the spore arrangement. He moves between the roles of mycologist, forager, and guide almost seamlessly.

Nearing the end of our foray, we wander back over Sandy Heath towards Kenwood. Here, we spy a leaf fungus, *Stereum rugosum,* on some fallen hawthorn on Sandy Heath. Andy points out pathogenic annosum root rot, *Heterobasidion annosum,* on pine and takes it away, remarking that it's a major scourge on pine. There are so few pines here so we don't see it too often, he explains.

At Kenwood, we find nothing much of interest: some old, dry and mouldy *Crepidotus* on a log and some white, knobbly *Rigidoporus ulmarius* on a horse chestnut. Andy remarks that they usually grow on elm, but with Dutch Elm Disease and the loss of so many trees, they've changed hosts. The Heath is constantly changing.

Nearing the end of my walk, my eyes are sharper. I spy some kind of bracket fungus from a distance and point it out: *Trametes gibbosa*, lumpy bracket, Andy tells me. Winding up, we find one more patch of St. George's near the Upper Fairground. The group wades into the patch, taking some but leaving a few, as Andy advised us, before I am stung by a nettle and excuse myself, a bunch of wild garlic and 12 St. George's in hand.

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Andy's role as a forager, guide, and mycologist is a complicated one. When Andy first began learning about fungus 20 years ago, he did so as a backyard amateur. A childhood spent

[491] Tsing, "Arts of Inclusion"

birdwatching and nest collecting had honed his senses, and with enthusiasm he began to train himself to work with fungus:[492]

> I got a big book, Roger Phillips's book, *Mushrooms*, and sort of collected a few things from the Heath. Got them back and then tried to ID them in this book. And I found a few of them and I thought, "I like this, you know" because when I was a youngster I was living down in Essex in the countryside and I was very, very interested in birds so I would kind of paint them, when I was in my teens… But what that did was, that whole experience, was it honed my senses to know what to look for.[493]

What Andy describes fits the way Tsing describes the "arts of noticing" involved in mushroom hunting. As in most botanical branches of study, the senses, finely tuned yet open, become honed to spot the mushrooms. Tsing describes it as a "dance", a means of knowing the forest, but a difficult skill to explain. "Some pickers mention that they pay attention to the dirt, favouring areas where the soil looks right," she explains. "But when I press for specifications, they always demur."[494]

Andy described the "art" Tsing highlights:

> Because you become finely tuned to shapes, colours, positions, they just stick out amongst the grass, or amongst the green, a brown or a different shade, yeah, that sense has become really finely tuned. It's crucial. When I was saying to you just now about the "feel" of the bank of that pond, that's another thing. What your brain does is absorbs everything about that situation, so you see the mushroom but it's also

[492] Collecting eggs and birds' nests, once a common hobby, was not outlawed in Britain until the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act.
[493] Interview, Andy, 14 March, 2015.
[494] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World,* 242.

> taking in the type of moss, or type of wood, the general feel of the place, that goes in. And the more and more you do that, you carry that with you. That sense with you. So you're looking around all the time and your brain will go, [snaps] yes, this kind of place. And then you look for the shapes and colours and so forth. It takes time, like anything.[495]

To describe such skill as Tsing and Andy do, as an art, brings to mind the other lens through which it is possible to consider fungi foraging: the aesthetic. The entire body is engaged in the process, oriented towards the fungus, and entirely alive in the search. It is a process identical to the kind of aesthetic engagement advocated by Berleant's engagement model of aesthetics, in which one is fully immersed in the landscape. As Berleant writes, "we not only *see* our living world: we move with it, we act upon and in response to it. We grasp places not just through color, texture, and shape, but with the breath, by smell, with our skin, through our muscular action and skeletal position".[496] These experiences are likewise shaped by knowledge and cultural factors. Andy's description of "carrying" the "sense" with you indicates this full-bodied engagement with the landscape, likewise immersive in a way not dissimilar to swimming. So the process of foraging, beyond the fruits themselves, provides other riches.

As Tsing describes it, the attunement to place involves the entire body, as well as memory:

> When one arrives in the spot [where they've found mushrooms], the memory washes over one, making every detail of that thing come suddenly clear—the angle of a leaning tree, the smell of a resinous bush, the play of light, the texture of the soil. I have often experienced just that wash of memory. I am walking along what appears to be an unfamiliar stretch of forest, and suddenly the memory of finding a

[495] Interview, Andy, 14 March, 2015.
[496] Berleant, *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts,* 53.

> mushroom—just there—bathes my surroundings. Then I know exactly where to look, although finding is still as difficult as you can imagine. This kind of memory requires motion and intimate historical knowledge of the forest.[497]

Tsing, like Andy, gives the sense that this "art of noticing" can't be taught. But many of the skills for foraging can.

Like Transition Belsize, Andy's aim is partly educational. His work grew out of his initial interest in foraging in the mid-1990s. He launched his company Fungi To Be With, he said, to "re-introduce people to their natural environment, their green spaces, via fungi".[498] At the time, he explained, mycology in Britain was a niche, scientific interest with very few amateurs operating within cities like London. His approach was meant to be open and educational, spanning both edible and non-edible fungi. In this regard, Andy occupies a liminal space between expert and amateur, indicating that a complex reading of his work is required. Just as Anne Secord describes the ways in which nineteenth century working class botany was rather more ambitious than many historians of science have indicated, it is crucial to consider the similar tensions between expertise and amateur knowledge embodied by Andy's self-taught mycology.[499]

With shifts in policy on the Heath and on sites like Epping Forest, where Andy has foraged in the past, blanket policies towards foraging have sat uneasily with workshops. Andy is the only person who has held one of the licenses granted by the City of London Corporation (CoLC) to allow mushroom picking on Hampstead Heath, a situation which neither Andy nor the CoLC is willing to explain. This license has meant that Andy has continued his array of fungi forays on the Heath, four times annually, since he began in 2008. When we met for our walk in April, he

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[497] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 245.
[498] Interview, Andy, 14 March, 2015.

described dwindling numbers, in part because he suspected the foraging trend was dying off, but also partly because access to foraging sites is increasingly becoming limited. But just as Alexis of Transition Belsize had described the drop-off in interest when their walks shifted from "foraging" to "educational", Andy explained that the educational component, while interesting to him and other serious foragers, is less of a draw for students on weekend courses:

> Yeah, it's a sensitive area actually. It's always a fine line, because people are interested in, always, the way that people get interested in fungi and mushrooms is via the fact that you can eat them. And then like I did, some people shoot off and get really interested in them as a whole group, or in certain families of the mushrooms, so that's what you're kind of hoping is going to happen. But obviously, 95 per cent of them just want to see what the edible ones are.[500]

Summing up the discrepancy between foraging bans and the reality of his own skill as a forager, Andy said, "They [the City of London Corporation] know you're knowledgeable, but they don't like you taking people up there and collecting, they think, bucketloads of mushrooms. But it's not, it's small amounts of mushrooms".[501]

What is remarkable about Andy's situation is that while he has been running foraging courses on the Heath, throughout the time of the foraging bans and amidst increasing tension towards foragers like him, the CoLC has continued to employ him for mycological surveys of the Heath. In particular, he was contracted to survey fungi on the Heath in the most recent round of extensive habitat surveys on the site. These surveys, he noted, were commissioned as part of the CoLC's Ponds Project, so the existing tension around foraging—in which Andy operates as a forager in the shadows, but is routinely called upon for his knowledge of the site—loops back

[499] Secord, "Science in the Pub", 277.
[500] Ibid.

into the issues of land access, management, and local conflicts that have emerged since the dams were first proposed. In the process of carrying out this 2014 survey, focussing on the banks of the Heath's ponds, Andy discovered a new species to Britain on the banks of the Mixed Bathing Pond:

> Last year I did a survey for the Heath, which was to ascertain larger fungi in certain areas of the Heath that are going to be affected by the dam works, so I was going round all the ponds and surrounding areas to see what was around. And during that in April, around the Mixed Pond, I found this *Cortinarius*, which is a webcap. They're unusual in spring. There are a few species that occur in spring, *vernus* is one of them, *Cortinarius vernus*, but this looked unusual so I got it back and looked at it under the microscope. And I couldn't find it. It didn't fit anything that I had literature on. So I was liaising with people in France, and in the end it went to Kew [The Royal Botanic Garden]. I got it over to Kew, and they DNA'd it and matched it with a species that had just been renamed as *Cortinarius nolaneiformis*, and that's a species new to Britain. That's being published in this quarter's *Field Mycology*.[502]

The fact that Andy's knowledge of the site is derived from his time foraging means negotiating two often opposing roles: "I was doing rangering up at Kenwood then [between 2007-2013], because I was kind of on side, but I was also doing mushrooms as well. So I can kind of see it from that side, and I can see it from my side, I can see both sides. What you've gotta do is you've gotta find a middle road".[503]

Andy's roles as a forager, mycologist, and educator require a negotiation of each of the roles' networks: other foragers, scientists and their institutions, students, and the CoLC

[501] Ibid.
[502] Ibid.

themselves. But the constant, for Andy, is the Heath. The body of knowledge he has developed simply through years of foraging the site and treating it as a laboratory for his own growing mycological skill, while touching on concerns around the site being over-foraged or over-used, are likely of key importance to the CoLC. "I think the most important thing about it," Andy explained, "about what I've been doing on the Heath, is the amount of time. Because somebody who's spent that much time doing anything on the Heath, and producing information, I think is invaluable for them".[504] And while foraging for edibles is a pleasure Andy enjoys, he says that carrying out his own mycological research and educating others are the foundation of his role on the Heath. His long-developed intimacy with the site means that foraging, for him, is largely *about* the Heath: "I introduce people to the Heath and I record the larger fungi on the Heath. I think those are the two most important things about it. I mean, new species to Britain are great, it's great, there's been a couple. But I think overall I think those are the two more important things".[505] So any understanding of the conflict around foraging on the Heath requires an understanding of more than just the division between commercial pickers and hobbyists. Rather, an attempt to capture and make sense of the skill, intimacy, and knowledge-base developed in concert with work on the Heath escapes the logic of the byelaws.

iv. Conclusion

Andy's roles as a mycologist and forager involve negotiating not simply the landscape of the Heath, but also the complex politics involved in how the site is managed and how knowledge on the site is produced. Likewise, the conflict over foraging underscores the ways in which management and regulation fail to capture the complexity and diversity of the site and its users: a

[503] Ibid.
[504] Ibid.

simple ban on foraging greatly over-simplifies the array of knowledges and the practices that take place on the Heath. These practices draw not simply on transmitted knowledge of plants and fungi derived from botanical plant study, which I've shown is deeply linked to the site, but also upon the kind of engaged aesthetic experience I have attended to throughout the course of this dissertation.

As in efforts to manage vegetation in Chapter Four, what at first seems like a conflict over whether or not to pick mushrooms, in fact exceeds the boundaries established by efforts to regulate the Heath. Ultimately, foraging presents a more complex question of who the Heath is for, who owns it, and who – in the broadest sense – might be considered an active agent in shaping the site.

[505] Ibid.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters I have wandered the Heath, considering chalybeate waters, ponds, and swimmers. Sand, social reformers, weeds, and squatters. Sheep, scrub, corpses, and cruisers. Botanists, foragers, and mushrooms. There has been much more in between. Many stories have been included, but as with any text, much has gone unsaid.

Tsing, in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, writes that "a rush of stories cannot be neatly summed up. Its scales do not nest neatly; they draw attention to interrupting geographies and tempos. These interruptions elicit more stories".[506] In telling these stories from the Heath, it has not been my intention to provide a complete or coherent history of the site. Rather, the ranging, somewhat scrabbled-together array of narratives points to the impossibility of compiling a single history of Hampstead Heath. Methodologically, it has drawn together approaches from across the humanities: from history, aesthetics, from multispecies ethnography, among others. The Heath provides an instructive exercise in how one might put into practice a notion of interdisciplinary environmental humanities, allowing the site to shape the tools of enquiry. Including voices from the human to the nonhuman, the historical and the present, this exploration has, ultimately, pointed to a particular kind of truth about the Heath: that it is a lively, multitudinous place, alive with stories, layered and hooked upon one another as intimately as moss works its way across the landscape.

What conclusions do I draw from these stories? Most crucially, that the Heath is a vibrant, complicated landscape. In the process of researching and writing this dissertation, the Heath made its own interjections: in the form of botanical anomalies (the newly discovered mushroom, *Cortinarius nolaneiformis*), archival discoveries (from brutal crimes to bizarre anecdotes, like a

long-forgotten 1970s proposal to build a heliport on the Heath), and new conflicts, especially around the Ponds Project. Writing alongside an incomplete, unfolding conflict like the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project has continually reshaped the trajectory of this dissertation: the significance of the Heath in battles for public spaces was not always so evident, but that is nonetheless one of the key threads that weaves through this dissertation.

In his multi-volume history of Hampstead (1912), historian Thomas Barratt writes of the Heath:

> It is only four miles from London, and if we look more penetratingly into the scene we shall observe certain signs, not at first observable, of multitudinous presences in the dents and hollows of the receding landscape. These are the signs of encroaching London; but Hampstead and the conservators of its Heath can afford to laugh at them, for let the future days show what they may in the mid-distances and remoter background, whatever dark features may mar the outlook as it expands to the horizon, Hampstead Heath, with its delightful scene of free and open country—its varied prospect of upland, hill, and dale, its gleaming stretches of gorse and wood and fir-crowned headland, its leafy avenues, its ponds, its winding paths, and health-giving breezes—all these beneficent things are for the free and uninterrupted service and enjoyment of the people in perpetuity.[507]

Barratt speaks of the dents and hollows in the landscape: when he was writing, the scars of brickfields and sandpits were all too present. In the past century, they have receded, but their record is still in the landscape. Sandy Heath remains cratered, pitted, its young woodland scattered over the remains of the nineteenth-century sandpit. The terraced houses now

[506] Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 37.
[507] Barratt, *The Annals of Hampstead* vol. 3, 279.

surrounding the Heath on all sides were just being built in Barratt's time, and they edged ever closer to the Heath. He lived through the battle to acquire the Heath for the public, too, so the 1871 Hampstead Heath Act gives his text a kind of untrammelled optimism that the Heath will be preserved.

As I've indicated throughout, the future of the Heath is not so simple. How to maintain a landscape of such complexity has puzzled its caretakers and locals since its acquisition, and questions of how to maintain the Heath still resonate in the conflicts over the Ponds Project. As the dam work has been carried out, sections of the Heath have been closed, fencing erected, and heavy machinery brought in. Work on the dams is required by law, but the failure of the City of London Corporation and the local community to find a mutual approach to the project underscores the notion that the Heath continues to be a site of contestation, conflict, and campaigning. As open spaces and traditional rights of way across the country confront the threats of cuts and closures, the Heath provides an instructive, multi-storied example of what stands to be gained from the preservation of public spaces, and of course, what stands to be lost if neglected.

Likewise, I have indicated the ways in which landscapes like the Heath offer prime and vibrant sites for interconnecting fields of environmental study. In particular, I've explored how both multispecies ethnography, under Tsing, and environmental aesthetics, through Berleant, can be brought to bear on an environmental historical study. Both have allowed me to attend to the particularities of the site in ways that not only bring to life communities and practices on the Heath, but also attend to the historical traditions that have shaped the site, especially its relation to landscape aesthetics. Ultimately, I have indicated that an understanding of a landscape as complicated and contested as the Heath requires a broad range of theoretical tools.

On New Year's Day of 2016, I walked across the Heath to the Ladies' Pond. I wanted to celebrate the passing of time with a swim. As I arrived, though, I realized I had walked into something of a party: the swimmers were celebrating the New Year with an enormous gathering. Swimmers bobbed along the pond's icy surface wearing dancing Santa hats. A glorious spread of food was laid out on a table. Onlookers gathered on the dock, awaiting a speech. I crept down the ladder and into the water as the speeches began. The women spoke of the pond, what it meant to them, and of the changes about to take place: in February, the pond would be closed and the dock and changing room razed and rebuilt. The trees had already been cleared. Soon, the swimmers would have to leave too. The future of the site and the community gathered there seemed uncertain. Still, joy spread over the landscape.

I swam out into the pond, the buzz of the speeches fading into the background as the cold of the water crept over my body. Around me danced the hum of swimmers, the sharp cold of the water, the fish, the birds, the trees, and the sky. The question of whether I would ever swim here again and whether it would ever be the same receded. I was in the middle of the landscape, swimming through Hampstead Heath, unruly, vibrant, and alive.

Appendix A: List of Interviews by Category

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PONDS	Caitlin	273
	Dagmara	276
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POLICING AND PSE	Dave and Steve	279
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Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

The following interviews were conducted between January and May, 2015 and transcribed during that time. Questions asked by the author are indicated in italics and responses are given in plain text. Interview subjects completed an Informed Consent Form prior to participating in the study, and all of the participants agreed to waive their anonymity. As such, the interviews are arranged alphabetically by first name.

Alexis, on behalf of Transition Belsize, 15 May, 2015, on the Heath

I wonder if you could tell me a bit about Transition Belsize's perspective on foraging, and the conflict that happened a few years ago?

So one of the things that we first did was set up Transition Belsize to try to give people a better understanding of what edible plants are out there. So we set up a four-day foraging course run by Miles Irving, run by us, but he was the tutor. And we went out four times in the year in totally different seasons, so one day per season, and we looked to see what there was out there that was edible. So we signed people up and got people to pay for it and we did basically four full days of training, which culminated with a lunch. So we gather some bits and pieces around, and we all learned huge amounts, and we created a group of people that were pretty comfortable with what's out there. However what happened in probably around 2010, 2009, a lot of people started going to the Heath and just grabbing stuff. [He stops to get some nettles.] Antihistamines.

I can't touch them, I'm very allergic to them, very wary of them.

That's problematic. I treat my hay fever with nettles.

Does it work?

Yeah, it works really well for the base level. It doesn't work on really bad days. I use Chinese herbs for that. But on most days, a good dose of two or three nettles teas a day, and a bit of this [a leaf]… It's one of the fun bits about teaching people about edible plants is to show them that nettles are not such scary things. Although obviously they are if you're allergic to them. But most people think, a) you touch a nettle you get stung, b) you eat a nettle and you get a stung throat. But actually, it's not true.

I wish I could eat them.

So I always wander around here for what's here. So during that one year course, we did gather the stuff and we did go back to somebody's place and cook.

And you did all the gathering on the Heath?

Yes. And then at some point people started going to the Heath and looking for stuff that had, in some sense, commercial value. There was a whole sort of foraging craze that suddenly popped up. And restaurants were keen to get sorrel and stuff like that. [stops to eat some hawthorne] I'll just have a few bits of bread and butter, hawthorne, the bread and butter of the hedgerow. And I think it was mostly mushrooms to be honest, but it was also sorrel and a few other bits of wild garlic. So whereas we, because we'd been trained by Miles, we knew exactly what was okay to take, what we had to be really careful about, and we couldn't… like if there's a wild garlic patch, you don't just pull them all out. You take a couple of percentage points of what's there. But people who didn't know that or people that were there for commercial advantage will just strip the whole place. So then we had to have a formal no-pick policy, which is still and has always been within reason. The Heath authorities are perfectly okay for people to go blackberrying, so blackberrying is foraging,

that's why foraging is really in everybody's DNA, because everybody goes blackberrying. Gathering a few nettles, no one is going to get worried about.

They'll probably be pleased with you!

Gathering nettles, a few hawthorne flowers, so it's really about understanding how this is an incredibly stressed natural environment. There are far too many people on it. But we had to then be pretty cautious about what we were saying and what we were doing. So from then on we had a policy, which anyone could see, which was about teaching people about edible plants and medicinal plants. We also did some courses on medicinal plants too. My dog likes this stuff [picks up a plant], cleavers, which is technically for us a cleansing tonic. I don't know what he likes them for.

Does he just eat it?

Yes, he's a very interesting forager.

[He picks a lime leaf]. It's a bit dead. But, lime leaves and when the flower comes out, capturing and turning it to tea.

Yes, I use it when I'm sick. I use it all the time. I read somewhere that it was good for fevers.

[He pauses to take a phone call]

Sorry, I just want to stop here because it's one of my favourite alexanders patches. I just want to see, it's probably all gone by now. So where was I. So it had to start being much more about education. Plus also we had a couple of scares. We started making a wild food pesto which we would give to people when we did open days. [He pauses at the alexanders.] Oh here we go, it's all gone to seed. This is a very good patch. Again, there's so much of it there that a little bit taken isn't going to do any harm but you can't be running courses or advertising to do it like that. So what we say now is it's a no-pick

policy, but what we're trying to teach people to do is to be really sensitive about the natural environment here and understand that it's completely under pressure. But if you take your nettle leaf and the odd cleavers, not plant but the tips of it, or a lime leaf, you're probably not going to damage it. But we say that in groups, we wouldn't say that publicly. Education.

In terms of that distinction that's made between plants - no picking except for blackberries - what do you make of that?

It's a nonsense but I understand that they have to have some sort of policy. And if they stop people from picking blackberries, they'd probably have a, well, they wouldn't be able to. Nobody would stop picking blackberries! So, they're in between a rock and a hard place really. They're trying to protect the place. I mean, the people who don't understand or don't know how to look after, respect nature, the people who are making the financial stuff, they're the real problem. It's not a Transition Group that are doing an edible plant walk or a medicinal plant walk. So what they're doing is not really directed at us, although we got caught up in it particularly in the local newspapers because we were advertising foraging courses and foraging walks. So then we changed it to educational walk about edible plants. And it was amazing how, what a turn, what a drop-off in interest there was! But I think it's a really valuable lesson or education that we can give to people about how to respect the natural environment and how to eat from it. So I think the Heath have got a very difficult, uh, they're in a difficult position. So I understand what causes them to say you can go blackberrying but you can't do anything else.

In terms of other groups, do you have any crossover or interaction with them?

We have occasionally interacted with other groups. We haven't run a foraging course on the Heath for a long time now but we still sometimes do edible plant walks. I think actually I led one last September for Belsize Green Fair. I took a group of people on an edible plant walk. And that's fine. But again, a few years before that we would get, like, 40 people would turn up. And be really excited about it. But this time we had about 3 or 4 of them.

Do you think that's down to the no-pick policy or do you think the boom has moved on?

I think it's both. I think edible plant identification doesn't sound quite as interesting as foraging and I think that foraging, although it's something that humans have done forever, it just sort of hit a chord at that point and suddenly took off. It's now been replaced by… goodness knows what else!

Do you think that a site like the Heath given its long history as a common, in which people did forage, do you think that there's any special case to be made for the Heath?

No. No I think not because unfortunately hundreds of years ago, or even a hundred-fifty years ago, the pressure on the Heath was far less than it is now. There are just too many people wanting to do things on the Heath and it's just not possible to have a situation where everyone's encouraged to come and get their winter greens. It's just not a viable environment. It's such a stressed natural environment, I don't know how to describe it. So no, I don't think there's a special case. I think there's a case for making and creating much more common land and indeed removing the concept of private property, but I think that's a slightly different discussion. Everyday I'm grateful that Henrietta Barnet or whoever it was managed to save the Heath for the people, but the fact remains that there are far too many people using it. So we have to be extremely, extremely sensitive with it. [He approaches a patch of sorrel.] This used to be a really good, um…

What is it?

I don't know in English what it is. I can tell you the French… It's um… Sorrel. Common sorrel. Very abundant. Now the thing about common sorrel is that it's frankly such a fiddle to pick that anybody who tried to pick it in quantity would be here for weeks. So that in a sense saves it from being… but if you have a look, you see it at the edges. But if you start to look you see it pretty much everywhere. It's good, huh?

Yes, I've never had it.

When you see things like that, it's either dock or it's sorrel. I have no problem with someone taking a handful of those and putting them in their back garden.

Do you think that, with the blackberries, do you think they're just so abundant that the stress is entirely different on the landscape?

Well, the blackberries… they're designed to be, the blackberries are designed to come off the bush at some point. The stress comes when people damage the plants or make their family unviable.

So it is about education?

Yes, exactly, and I think that's what we're very proud of doing. I do it all the time, I'm just always, whenever I'm out I'm always telling them about plants. Beyond the story that played out in the news, and the headlines when Rene Redzepi went in and did a big pick. Yes, I think some of us were actually involved with that. I think Miles and [Rene Redzepi]…

Yes, it made big headlines. And it centred the discussion on the Heath.

Yeah. That's difficult, obviously. Because there's one thing educating people when people are taking a few leaves but it's another thing going on a TV program, saying to people I'm

going to pick all this stuff. If it's done sensitively, then… it's okay. What they should have done probably is come here and show that there are edible plants and then go somewhere else like, Miles lives in a very beautiful area of Kent. There's lots of common land.

Do you think that it's part of the narrative, though, to have these things in the city?

Um, I think for them it was just easier because they wanted to make a TV program and Hampstead Heath is a bit iconic. Um, if what you're trying to say is 'Wouldn't it be good if there were Hampstead Heaths all over the place where people could go and forage' well I would agree with that, I would definitely say, it would be lovely if, but with the way of the world, we're not going to create foraging paradises that can actually feed people. It can only ever be a tiny supplement. Even when I've been totally hardcore foraging for plants I never get much more than a handful. So I think we probably are where we are because we've only got one wild park in London, really. So I think [the TV show] was a bit stupid really, and they'd have done better to come here because it's iconic and show that there are lots of edible plants here and then actually go somewhere else.

How long have you been around the Heath?

I came to university when I was 18. And I've been more or less here ever since, with stints in Tbsili and Paris, over the years, either as a journalist or with business.

I am just curious about your relationship with the Heath?

I've been in Camden on and off since I was 18. I guess I've lived pretty much everywhere in Camden. I've lived in Kilburn, I've lived in West Hampstead. I've lived in Belsize, I've lived in Kentish Town, I've lived in Highgate, I've lived in Cantelowes/Camden Road area. I stayed in a student hall in Camden Road in my first year here.

Has the Heath always been important to you throughout that time?

Not as important as it became after I got into Transition. I had my personal enlightenment around 2004, 2005, where I realized my life, the way I was living it, was totally unsustainable, and that I was really part of the problem, not anything to do with the solution. So I went into a complete tailspin and changed my life dramatically. Gave up flying. Gave up supermarkets. Got a bike. Got rid of the car after a two-year argument with my girlfriend. Started looking around at what was out there, that was thinking about these problems. I came across, well, first of all I got myself elected as a councillor at Camden Council, primarily because of my concern about climate change, and then after I was a councillor I came across Transition and thought, wow, this is really good because it brings in the idea that fossil fuels are a real problem and we're in depletion stage. Um, plus climate change, plus eventually they added this sort of financial speculation pillar. And it just seemed very cool. So, and then as part of that I got really much more interested in nature and in being a part of it, and started going off on… [stops] Ground elder! I've never really done much with it, but they say it makes a good thing to put in stew or a sort of spinach-type thing. The thing about ground elder is that when it appears it really appears, all over! All over the shop. So you might as well turn it into spinach.

When you started to learn about the environment, was that when you started picking up your foraging knowledge?

Yeah, totally. I knew almost nothing about plants. I had no idea really, mostly just wandering around, no idea at all. And a little knowledge can be a little dangerous, as Miles used to say about me, when we first started the foraging course. Because when we first started learning, and actually I think before we did our Transition Belsize course, the GAIA foundation in Hampstead were running foraging courses before us and they would

have Miles down for a day. And I went on one of those, and I got so excited about things as well as very sick because we found this chicken of the woods mushroom, and cooked it up, and I promptly threw it all up. But I was still so excited! That I was just running around the Heath going "Whoa! Everything, you can eat everything! Yay! Yay!" I was the archetypal face of a little bit of knowledge is quite dangerous.

Did you do courses or are you self-taught?

Yeah, some of it. I did a few courses with Miles. The thing about foraging is it's very easy to forget everything. So the thing I always recommend to people is, look, go out and enjoy being shown all these things but try and hang on to two or three plants, every time you go out. Try to really get to grips with a couple of them. And get to know it. Because that's the thing is being able to find it again. As well as being able to identify the things you don't want to eat. Like hemlock. So I've had some wild chervil on my balcony. Ever since about 2006 I've been growing huge amounts of stuff on my balcony in Belsize Park and one day this plant self-seeded itself. And I thought, great! It's wild chervil. And when it got quite big and have it for lunch. And it was only at that point that Sarah, my co-organizer, are you sure it's wild chervil? Are you sure it isn't hemlock? And when I looked close it had purple dotted spots, and it had all these hallmarks of hemlock. So I don't know how it got there. We had never come across hemlock on the Heath in all of our time. But it certainly was there. Oh, here's another. [Points to a patch of herbaceous ground plants.] You probably know this, but bluebell leaves and wild garlic are very easy to confuse until they flower. But with wild garlic the leaves are delicious and with bluebells the leaves are toxic. One time when we were making a wild garlic pesto, we mixed up bluebells and wild garlic and we only found out when, late at night, we'd been preparing this pesto for serving on

Haverstock Hill the next day, and we suddenly noticed there were some bluebell leaves in amongst the wild garlic. So…

As far as Transition working with the City of London, do you have an ongoing relationship?

Not really. They tolerate us doing plant identification walks and that's about it really. I suppose in an ideal world they would sort of want knowledgeable members of the community to be leading plant identification. But I don't know, sometimes I think they get a bit bogged down with their own stuff, and that's sort of fair enough. One of my, another member of Transition Belsize, was trying for a long time to get them to bring back sheep. And it's sort of, it's technically in their long-term plan, but I think that's really a very long-term plan. And you can't have sheep roaming around freely, so there would be enclosed. They'd be like a mini-zoo, so I'm not sure there's a load of value in it. By and large, sheep eat everything. One of the problems in deforested areas, why the trees don't come back. If you go on the Downs in East Sussex, we cut all the trees down to use the wood and then sheep have kept the whole thing completely deforested. And now they talk about it being a wonderful example of chalk downs and all the butterflies but actually, it was forest, for most of its existence. They're a bit precious about that here, too, actually. I would love them to let more trees grow, whereas they see it as a heathland that they're protecting. Sections of it are, but I think it's too much, and more of it should be kept as what it was, which was woodland.

That picks up on one of the things I'm working on in one of my chapters, because I'm writing about that transition out of agriculture in about 1956. Do you think there's some tension with heathland versus woodland, is there room for negotiation?

We did get somewhere, as Transition Belsize, we did get somewhere with the idea that they might get a few fruit trees in but they didn't want to put them in on the Heath because they felt it was a sort of out of keeping, so I think there is now a fruit tree or two in the Extension. But mostly they do their own thing, and I don't feel they're massively good at engaging with local people. Especially not groups like Transition Belsize. It's more toleration than anything else. I think that toleration is very interesting, as one of the people I'm speaking to is Andy Overall, and he used to run courses on the Heath and still runs foraging walks and is occasionally commissioned to do surveys. So that is an example, then, of a sort of corrupted approach. To be fair we haven't really, it's been a long time now, since we did this, and this is what we like to do and support or promote. Look at that tree! It's fantastic. I never really got into toasting acorns. Miles knows about it. You toast them and then grate them like nutmeg, you can use them for a form of coffee, or you can even turn them into acorn flour. Bake them and then grate them.

Sounds like a lot of work.

Exactly. For not much gain really.

Do you have a favourite plant on the Heath?

Um, probably my favourite plant is the sorrel because I find it so surprising. That intense zingy, zesty flavour. And I have a, for me it's a little bit of a symbol of how we can stop getting things from the other side of the world. We could stop getting lemons just from halfway across the planet and use sorrel. It's got the same properties and the same taste. The one that we used as our symbol for Transition Belsize is cow parsley. Funnily enough we asked a design company to do a logo for us and they came back with something with tomatoes and carrots and we though, actually, we're much more interested in wild plants.

Why don't you use this branch here? And I happened to have a piece of cow parsley in my hand. [Stops.] Do you know this one? It's willowherb.

Yes! It hasn't flowered yet. This patch and further up came after the Blitz.

I bet it brought quite a few pioneer plants with it like that.

So what is the benefit of the hawthorne?

It tastes strong and delightful. It's traditionally known as the bread and butter of the hedgerow. When people were very poor and hungry during enclosure and the industrial revolution, people would come and eat hawthorne leaves and hawthorne flowers. You might rather have sausage and chips! But people would come and this would be their meal. It grows on you.

So what has Transition Belsize been up to nowadays?

Um, there's always a tension in Transition groups between deepening and broadening. I actually went to Lewes a couple of years and then got involved in Transition Town Lewes down there and I haven't done very much with Belsize since I came back last autumn, except leading an edible plant walk at the Belsize Green fair last year. So one of the members is heavily involved in the restart project. One is part of the Slow Food Movement. So in all honesty I think that Transition Belsize is a bit quiet, and a number of key members have moved to other bits of town. Some energy has been devoted to the Kentish Town Veg Box. There are still growing sites around Belsize Park. Though I think the one behind the Premier Inn is more or less falling into disuse. I think the thing is, in other places a whole bunch of us were putting in twenty hours a week, whereas in London it was much harder to persuade people to spend significant parts of the week. Because everybody finds lots to do.

Is there anything about the Heath you find particularly special?

The Men's Pond. I swim from about May through until November. When it gets down to about eleven degrees I… I took my French godson and the son of my ex-girlfriend on a wild camping holiday in the Black Forest, and we set off with half the food we needed with the intention of finding the rest.The pressure on the Heath is so much bigger. So the Men's Pond. And my perspective is slightly different now because before I didn't have a dog. So before I used to come here for my own pleasure, now I come for his pleasure. I like the bits that people don't go to. Those are my favourite bits. I used to be in the Men's Pond, in the Mixed Pond, because there was very heavy gay pressure in the Men's Pond. I felt slightly intimidated at the time, and now they've got their own naked changing room, area, in the Men's Pond. But actually I appreciate the Men's Pond far more than the Mixed.

What does the Heath mean for you? What do you come here for?

My favourite time is when it snows, in the middle of the night. I love it, like Narnia. Like a magical positive frozen Narnia. I came here one time, the last time it seriously snowed, I came up with a sledge and started sledging and were sledging until about three o'clock in the morning and unfortunately it was a mudpit by then, so we went off to look for some more hardcore, fresh ground. And unfortunately Sarah broke her leg and got it cut under the sledge, and I had to pull her to the Royal Free on the sledge. Thank goodness we had the sledge in a way. I think, I plan to do most things in life on the Heath. Eat, have sex, walk, sing, dance, sleep, I'm pushed to think of many things that I haven't managed to do the Heath. I left London a few years ago looking for something, somewhere where I could be closer to nature, partly because it's a very progressive town, or I thought it was, with a strong Transition group, and partly because it's technically in the middle of the

countryside. But what I discovered when I got there is the countryside down there is privatized, fenced off, deforested by sheep, industrially farmed, and not great for dog walking. So, the odd thing is, I came back to London and came to stand in the middle of the Heath, and I could hear less traffic noise on Hampstead Heath, slightly more planes, but less traffic noise than in anywhere around Lewes.

Andy, 14 March, 2015, at his home in Golders Green

Can you tell me how long you've been working with fungi?

Close to 20 years now.

What grabbed your interest?

Um, they were growing in the garden of a flat in West Hampstead that I was living in. Um, just white mushrooms, like normal field mushrooms, growing on the lawn and they kept cropping up every year, and I thought, first of all thought, "Oh, I wonder if you could eat those." So I actually collected a couple and tried them and it was fine. But then I though, well, I wonder, that was when the Heath came into the picture, and I thought, I wonder what I could find up on the Heath. So I got a big book, Roger Phillips's book, Mushrooms, and sort of collected a few things from the Heath. Got them back and then tried to ID them in this book. And I found a few of them and I thought, "I like this, you know" because when I was a youngster I was living down in Essex in the countryside and I was very, very interested in birds so I would kind of paint them. When I was in my teens. And there was a tradition back then that my dad, and his friends, they used to go out bird nesting, they used to collect birds' eggs, so I kind of carried it on. And there would be a bunch of us and we'd

go out and collect birds eggs, and we'd have boxes of them, and we used to swap them between friends. But what that did was, that whole experience, was it honed my senses to know what to look for. So that was the kind of beginning, that was the roots of the whole thing that came after, the mushroom thing. Because after leaving Essex I came to London, and I was in music for quite a long time, so on my way through music I found this mushroom door opened. And it was through the ones in the garden and after about a year or so of popping down to the New Forest with a few friends, I couldn't ignore all the other things. Most people were after edible mushrooms, but I was going, "Look at this! Look at this thing here, it's great!", so I decided that I thought there was room to start a little club or something like that because everything else that kind of existed around that time were kind of groups that were very scientific based, and I didn't think that was an easy way for people to get involved. So because they were quite stuffy, you know, so I started Fungi To Be With and the whole reason behind Fungi To Be With was to re-introduce people to their natural environment, their green spaces, via fungi. And it kind of worked. Obviously it's taken on a whole different thing now, but back then it was very popular and people were very into it and felt reinvigorated by a lot of the experiences, coming onto the Heath or wherever I was doing the walks. It was great. So that's how I got into it.

Is there anything about the Heath in particular that is ideal or makes it special for you?

Well, I know it very well, so it's kind of close to my heart. The good thing about the Heath is its age, it's old. It's got a wide diversity of different types of trees, and also it's got three different soil types. So you start from the clay at the bottom and come all the way up to the sand at the top, and that affects all the fungi. The different types of fungi growing on the Heath. So that I find interesting.

Is there anything about past land use on the Heath or land management that contributes to the presence of fungi on the Heath?

No doubt, yeah. Well, the digging up of sand and the replanting of trees, I think all that would've affected. All types of management and interaction from man affects the fungi, but when you get, one species might go and another species will crop up unless you completely pollute somewhere. So yes, it would have done. but it would've changed.

Do you get a remarkably different array of fungi on the London clay versus the sand?

You get less down in the clay I'd say, because it becomes dry and cracked and also it becomes waterlogged. So you tend not to, but you do get stuff there. But a lot of fungi like porous soils, where the water runs through and doesn't hang around.

Higher up on the Heath?

Yeah, it tends to be. It crosses over as well, where you get the clay and the sand together.

How often do you go onto the Heath?

I wait until the right conditions. Recently it's been quite dry and cold. Waiting for a little bit of rain and the warmth is great. As soon as that starts to kick off, I'll be up on the Heath walking around, seeing what's around. We're in April, May, so now I'd be looking for things like St. Georges mushrooms, things like conecaps, conicybes, and early laetiporous, chicken of the woods type things, and then as the year progresses things like boletes and russulas, going into summer, into the autumn. Those are private visits. But then I do my walks, which I'm doing one on Sunday, the first one of the year, and then in May, then I'll leave it until September. August, September, let the summer do its thing. Last year I did a survey for the Heath, which was to ascertain larger fungi in certain areas of the Heath that are going to be affected by the dam works, so I was going round all the ponds and

surrounding areas to see what was around. And during that in April, around the mixed pond, I found this cortinarius, which is a webcap. They're unusual in spring. There are a few species that occur in spring, vernus is one of them, cortinarius vernus, but this looked unusual so I got it back and looked at it under the microscope. And I couldn't find it. It didn't fit anything that I had literature on. So I was liaising with people in France, and in the end it went to Kew. I got it over to Kew, and they DNAd it and matched it with a species that had just been renamed as cortinarius nolaneiformis, and that's a species new to Britain. That's being published in this quarter's Field Mycology.

Where is it normally found?

You can find it in mainland Europe. They reckon it's not that uncommon, but I don't know, I mean, the guys that wrote the paper that had the DNA coding in it to which this one was matched, was from Finland, and I think he was looking at specimens from all over Europe. So I think it's fairly common in other parts of Europe.

How would you say something like that got onto the Heath?

And how long it's actually been there. Because it's in an area that no one would go. So it might be that, it might be on the feet of birds, I doubt on the boots of humans because no one goes in that area, very rarely, I mean, people do go over the fence there from the ponds and from the Heath, so they do, so it's possible. That would be the way it got there, I'd imagine. God knows how long it's actually been there. And also the time of year. It was April, so apart from people like me you wouldn't be thinking of looking for any fungi at that time of year, or mushrooms at that time of year. So the fact that I actually walked along that bank at that moment was just fortuitous. I was lucky. I put the wrong name in the paper! The guy in France, the mycologist in France was saying it was this species

called cortinarius irregularis, and the Heath wanted the press to know about it, so I told the press about it so it came out as irregularis. So in the new checklist it is as nolaneiformus, but there is a note saying that it was sent to press as irregularis but it's not that. That's what they call a nomen dubin, which is a dubious name. [I show him some of Anna Tsing's works.] I sort of touched on that for a while, and I brushed against it when I was in Mexico, just travelling. I met up with Gaston Guzman, who was friends with the guy, names are disappearing, but he met the guy that wrote the article, the famous article on magic mushrooms, anyway, he's a very important Mexican mycologist. He's written and discovered lots of things in Mexico. But yeah, they've got a church out there called the Church of the Sacred Mushroom and there's a mushroom inside a cross, and I went and saw it and had a look at the sacred mushroom of the cross as it's called. Yeah, so I kind of brushed against it. And also Gaston produced a book which was all to do with indigenous uses of fungi in Mexico.

Returning to the Heath, in recent years there's been a lot of fuss about foraging on the Heath. Can you tell me a bit about where you stand?

Yeah, it's a sensitive area actually. It's always a fine line, because people are interested in, always, the way that people get interested in fungi and mushrooms is via the fact that you can eat them. And then like I did, some people shoot off and get really interested in them as a whole group, or in certain families of the mushrooms, so that's what you're kind of hoping is going to happen. But obviously, 95% of them just want to see what the edible ones are. So on the Heath, when I first started it wasn't a problem but over these 15-20 years, the foraging thing, the fast food movement, and just general foraging has become more of an issue. And I have to tread carefully everywhere now. Between you and me, I

always let people take a few edible mushrooms home. Because it doesn't do any harm. My problem with their stance, because I have to work with these people, is the information. Because I think they can make whatever decisions they want because they actually run the place, but they're kind of misinforming people because fungi as you well know, are underground. Most of it is underground or in the wood, and the thing you see above the ground is the fruit body that produces the spores that produces the mycelium which runs through the ground and through the wood. Well, by picking a mushroom or even a whole load of mushrooms you're not destroying the fungus. That isn't actually getting out to people I don't think. And I think there's more at play here then, you know. I've always felt there was a bit of an underlying ulterior to it.

In what sense?

In that a) they don't like people making money from the lands that they manage. 2 they don't like to be associated with loads of people going around collecting stuff from their land. And thirdly they wrong think that it's actually affecting the habitat on the Heath. If anything is affecting their habitat on the Heath, and the mushrooms on the Heath, it's the management. And the pollution. London pollution.

Is there something they can be doing differently?

One big problem that I think the Heath has got is compression. But the footfall is generally in areas where there's paths, so you don't get a lot of compression when you start going off the paths. There are some areas where it's pretty hard and solid, but mostly it's not. But it's the use of heavy vehicles. If they're using very heavy vehicles that is going to really start destroying certain fungi. Because it'll just squeeze the life out of the mycelleum. But these things have been around a lot longer than we have. And they're very durable. So they

might die for a certain period, but you bet your life they'll come back. They'll be back. So this whole thing about foraging and - there was a thing this morning on the telly - because I've got into trouble before by just saying, "Look, you're just being sourpusses and you're not understanding the whole picture here," and if I make too much of a noise and that they'll just say we don't want you coming up here anymore.

Despite the fact that you're actually doing surveys for them?

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. There's a story, because I do breakfast forays up at the Magdala and the Holly Bush. The way I put it on the website, and also I did an article for this magazine, and I was chatting with this woman telling her, "Yeah, I'm a ranger," because I was doing rangering up at Kenwood then, because I was kind of on the side, but I was also doing mushrooms as well. So I can kind of see it from that side, and I can see it from my side, I can see both sides. What you've gotta do is you've gotta find a middle road. So that we both - and I thought that was what I was doing. Because I was taking people out and I was taking some mushrooms and I was building a list and collecting the rare stuff and taking it to Kew, getting it all, building this whole database of mushroom species, but it always seems to come down to this plundering of the Heath or Epping or wherever it is. And I was pulled into a meeting with the superintendent on the Heath, because it was carried in the Ham & High, and also this magazine, and someone got hold of it. So I was pulled into this meeting and I got a bit of a [slaps] slap on the wrist and the ecologists were there and they were going at me as well. Because it was weird because I was on my own and I was totally outnumbered, so I just sort of walked away. And they said, we still want you to, you know, you just gotta be like we've gotta kind of cuff you a bit, you know. And the following year I get an email from Meg Game: "Andy, we're doing the dam. As you're

the expert for mushrooms on the Heath, will you come and survey." And that was the very same people. So this is what you're dealing with. They know you're knowledgeable, but they don't like you taking people up there and collecting, they think, bucketloads of mushrooms. But it's not, it's small amounts of mushrooms. I've had similar experiences being a researcher. Do you think that part of the difficulty with enforcing a no-pick policy is that they're not differentiating between say mushrooms and elderflower? It's just a blanket policy. In Epping though they've just stopped everything. It's draconian. It's bizarre. They were on the TV this morning. It's another strange relationship. I think because I've been around doing this for so long in those areas, and providing them with information, they allow me, but they're still tightening the grip. I never used to have license, Epping was the only place that I used to have a license for, from the start, and then over the years, just the last couple of years actually, every single place - Epping, Hampstead Heath, Wimbledon Common, Putnam Common - these places I've always gone. They're all now got these things you have to sign up to and I have to pay for all of them. In order to run the courses. And within those licenses there are restraints but I know they're there but I, doing the walks and taking people around and educating them, and they are going to take some edible mushrooms. It's like… it's ridiculous.

What would it take to manage it responsibly?

It's the commercial aspect of it - that's what they're concerned with. They think that if we let you go up there, and sort of pick mushrooms, then we've got no case if we want to stop the commercial collectors. They might cite you and say, "Well, you let him go up there, why can't we go up there?" So that's probably where they're coming from. I think probably these things go up and down, and depends who's in charge, who's running the

place. The funny thing is, the guy that I saw, the superintendent I saw on the Heath, who slapped me on the wrist, he's now working at Wimbledon Common. And I wrote as I normally do to the guy that I normally deal with and he said, Oh, he's bringing in a license system. So I said, okay, we know each other. So I turn up there with my group, got the license, and then I notice a sign, a board, with a signup - and it says "Mushroom picking for local people", come to the office, pay us 6 quid, and you can go and pick up to 1.2 kilos of mushrooms. And I thought what's going on here then! But it was totally contradicting everything.

How much contact do you have with other naturalists in the area?

Well, I did have, I was working with a guy called Mike Taylor. Who's very good at butterflies and birds and I think plants, actually, he was working with me when we were at Kenwood. We were both rangers at Kenwood. But he's now working with the RSPB up there, he's doing butterfly courses. Also I've got a good relationship with the ARB guys, and we've got a bit stronger over the last year or so, because they're coming to me for identifications of certain bracket fungi. One split, like ganaderm, there's two different species and they're quite difficult to tell apart. One of them's much less common - aplanatum - but you need the microscope, so I've been doing a bit of that for them. So we're in contact often.

When were you a ranger at Kenwood?

From 2007 to 2013.

Wow. You know Paul? English Heritage has been very supportive, more so than the City.

The City of London are a funny lot. I think they're Masons. I think they are. When you think about it, the actual name itself, City of London, it's like, what does that mean? The [Heath and Hampstead] lost that court battle, didn't they.

When I went down, the site of the project was secured with security fencing.

So do they get protestors down there? Because they're really going to transform that pond, aren't they, the boating pond.

Do you think the project will have a huge impact on the ponds?

I did go round there. There's not a lot around that particular pond [the boating pond] apart from the willow trees, which are cool. I don't know whether they'll be removed or not, don't know how far back it goes.

They removed primarily oaks from the south west side of the pond, most of the willows are still intact. And also at the Stock Pond and the Ladies Pond as well.

Are they taking out any of the willows there?

I don't think so.

Because they've got really good populations of philinus igniarus on them, the brackets, which you don't, it's not a rare thing but it's a good population.

Do you think most things would be lost through the removal of trees or through the disturbance of the ground?

Both. I was interested that you say the Stock Pond because the Stock Pond is where I found quite a nice area, actually, especially the, was it the west side, I can never get my bearings. The less overgrown side, which is going back onto the Heath. That had a nice feel to it, and there weren't a lot there, but I had a good feel to it so you know that there will be stuff

there. The other side was busy, but I did send in my recommendations. About clearing stuff.

Anything final?

I think the most important thing about it, about what I've been doing on the Heath, is the amount of time. Because somebody who's spent that much time doing anything on the Heath, and producing information, I think is invaluable for them. Especially on an ecological side, I think. Whether they've actually used it or acknowledged it is another thing. Because they're weird. As you say, one minute they're slamming you and the next minute they're asking you to come and, you know, do this and do that. But I introduce people to the Heath. I introduce people to the Heath and I record the larger fungi on the Heath. I think those are the two most important things about it. I mean, new species to Britain are great, it's great, there's been a couple. But I think overall I think those are the two more important things.

You mention this long-term relationship. That you know the Heath better than anyone. When you started talking you said it was the kind of looking you were used to doing when you were looking for birds. With mushrooms and moss, people say it's a different kind of looking, it's a sort of attunement to the landscape, do you think that that's important?

Yes, absolutely. Because you become finely tuned to shapes, colours, positions, they just stick out amongst the grass, or amongst the green, a brown or a different shade, yeah, that sense has become really finely tuned. It's crucial. When I was saying to you just now about the 'feel' of the bank of that pond, that's another thing. What your brain does is absorbs everything about that situation, so you see the mushroom but it's also taking in the type of moss, or type of wood, the general feel of the place, that goes in. And the more and more

you do that, you carry that with you. That sense with you. So you're looking around all the time and your brain will go, [snap] yes, this kind of place. And then you look for the shapes and colours and so forth. It takes time, like anything.

Caitlin, 4 February, 2015, Phone Interview

Why did you write about swimming on the Heath?

When you're used to somewhere, when it's your own backyard, you don't necessarily stop and think about it. I think partly it was because I'd lived abroad for 15 years, in the States and in Botswana, and then had come back and settled here and come back to my old stomping ground. With the ponds, I'd just assumed that they were natural ponds and they'd always been there. I hadn't realized that they'd been purpose-built, purpose-dug, and the women who did the photographs for the book, Ruth Corney, she'd had the idea that she wanted to do something about the Lido, and she's from Manchester and she moved to London and fell in love with the Women's Pond, so we had that in common. She'd been taking photos for a long time, so we'd had this idea, what about doing a history of the Lido *and* the ponds. Because they're four unique bathing spots and they share the same lifeguards, and a lot of people swim in all four places, or a few of them. And then I started doing a bit of research and had that exciting moment where I realized nobody's written about them. There was a very short book written about the women's pond. And someone had written an article about the men's pond, so you start digging around and you realize, no, they're not natural ponds. They were actually dug to give London water. And then the whole thing about when did people start swimming here. And then I started finding

archived newspaper reports from the early 1800s of people swimming, and that's when I though what a brilliant book it would be. I had to educate myself because I didn't know anything about the history of the Heath even though I was brought up on the edge of it and have always been walking on it, swimming on it, and playing on it.

Did that realization about the ponds change things?

Well, it made me go back to the ponds. The lido, I'd been swimming in since I was a toddler (I'm 51) and I must've swum at the mixed pond when I was about 8 or whenever you're allowed to, but writing the book made me go back and swim at the mixed pond, which I haven't done, I can't remember doing that as an adult. Definitely the mixed pond is the one that I like to swim in. I suppose because I swam at the women's pond as a teenager so I'm quite familiar with it, and then, when I'd moved back to England, I remember my mum taking me to swim at the pond, and that was sort of a long history, but the mixed pond had been a big gap. I like the atmosphere of the mixed pond. I think it's got, it has a less exclusive feel to it. It's not the prettiest and the water, it's not, of the three ponds, the water quality is not as good as the others. It's more open, people are walking along the causeway and seeing you, but I just like it. It has a really nice atmosphere. Actually, a novel I'm writing now is set at the mixed pond.

Do you think that the Heath and literature is a valuable relationship?

I suppose I am sort of aware of it in the back of my mind. There has been a lot of fiction. Is it the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe? He came up with that while strolling on the Heath. And you've got Wilkie Collins, The Woman in Black, on the Heath. So I did start looking at some of those. But it's the swimming link I'm interested in.

Swimming is of great importance?

As my parents have always been big walkers, I was dragged all the way through my childhood for a daily if not twice daily walk on the Heath, with me moaning and lagging behind, "I want to go home, I'm cold", this that and the other. But swimming, I just enjoy it. It's a pure pleasure. It's a mental thing as much as a physical thing. I think it keeps me sane, actually. So writing that book and now the Thames book, now I've started swimming in the Thames, one thing just links to another and as I say, it's also about finding out about something, maybe you have this with where you come from, where you're used to exploring somewhere and it's where you grew up, but it doesn't mean you know the history. The pond is deep and dark, and some people really find the idea of being in the pond, or in the Thames, horrifying. The lifeguards at the ponds are so lovely, at the ponds and the Lido, and they really love their job and they really care about the ponds. Because the [Ponds Project] really seemed to happen as I was writing the book, it is part of a cycle of conflict between who's in charge of overseeing the Heath and who's using the Heath. So it seemed to be another chapter in that. What I couldn't understand was, I kept up with it, but what I didn't really understand was how City of London are legally required to do this. That's still something that escapes me. They're argument is that they have to. And I don't really follow that but it looks like they've already started. I think when the season starts this year at the Mixed Pond, this'll be the last chance to swim in it as it is. I would love to see what they dredge up, meanwhile, I'd love to see what the find. I don't think it's been done for decades.

Anything about the Heath that is important to you?

Just that it's there and it's not a Royal Park. It's not manicured. I was thinking about this this morning, I was walking my dog on the Heath in a bit of a blizzard, in the snow, sleet

storm, and having lived abroad for so long, when I came back, I just found the Heath… it did seem manicured to me. It seemed very tame and very small. I'd been living in the African Bush for twelve years. And the Heath seemed so tame and so small and so ordered. And it's taken me a few years to appreciate that it's not. And considering that I have been walking, playing, and swimming in it for nearly fifty years, I can still get lost. I've got a really bad sense of direction, but I can turn a path and come across maybe a bench with an inscription on it that I don't remember ever seeing before. That's really nice.

Do you think the Heath is special in its relationship to London?

I think it probably is, yes. And if you walk up the top of Parli Hill, you've got that view of London. Where do you get views like that? That is incredible, to stand there. And whenever you do stand there, there's always people *just* standing there, just looking out over the city.

Anything else?

I think with writing the book, now I realize I'm part of a tradition. I think the tradition of bathing on the Heath, I didn't know anything about it. I think in terms of segregated swimming, it's great. I mean, how many places do women have to ourselves? We don't. When I was doing the book, a lot of men would say, "Why do women have to have a pond to themselves?" And never once did a woman say, "Why do men have to have a pond to themselves?"

Dagmara, 1 February, 2015, at Melrose and Morgan in Hampstead.

How long have you been swimming here and how did you start?

When you speak to other ladies, they don't say how many years, they say how many winters. So it's my first winter, so I'm a baby. It's my first time. I moved here in May, and I didn't even know about the ponds until someone told me in July, and I started swimming throughout the summer and autumn, and then winter. So it was gradually. The first time I went in I loved it, and I haven't stopped since. I had been living in Richmond. I've been living in London for 8 or 9 years and had never heard of the ponds, had never lived in North London, so when I moved here and found out about the ponds, I've never stopped since. I genuinely love swimming, but I have an allergic reaction to chlorine, so I can't use swimming pools. And the seaside is not so close. So when I found out that I could swim outdoors, obviously. The fact that it's outdoors. I never thought I would do it, I only thought I would swim in the summer, but weekend after weekend I realized that I could just carry on. I never felt like it was too cold. I was thinking of getting a wetsuit, and I got myself some gloves and boots, but you do realize that you don't feel the water the same way, as you feel it on your body, so I decided not to get the swimsuit. I've been told by the lifeguards that I stay in the water longer than average, but I was brought up in a very, very cold country, so I think that makes a difference. I'm used to the cold. In Poland. I was born in one of the heaviest winters ever, and we were always exposed to the cold, so for me it's not winter here.

How was your swim today?

Today I stayed for thirteen minutes. I thought, you know when you go in the water, I thought I stayed twenty minutes, but it's just thirteen minutes and it feels like forever. It was only three and a half degrees. So it is pushing a bit. I stayed once much longer, the water was seven degrees, and I think it was a bit silly, but I stayed too long on purpose to

see what would happen. And I think you kind of realize how far you can push, and I don't push as far as I did that once time. Because it was unpleasant, you just shiver and you can't stop. I remember as a child, you always had numb fingers, it was so cold, -20, -25, so this is something that is familiar to me. But obviously, I think I know when to come out, when enough is enough. I think that the worst part is you are having a shower and getting dressed, when you realize that it's not normal to be exposed to such cold temperatures. But if you don't go too far you can deal with it. And I always have a hot drink with me.

Is there a difference between winter and summer swimming?

In winter it's more relaxing, there aren't as many people, it's more quiet, it's more like meditation. But in the summer it is crazy, it is hot, you just feel the buzzing. I think that's also the difference between the men's and the women's ponds, because the women never stop talking! It is just lovely, a completely different environment and atmosphere because it is more social. But in winter it is more of the tough women, and there aren't that many of them. There's always someone swimming but it is more calm and I think I prefer winter for that reason. When you want to go and relax, it's definitely quieter.

Do you feel like the setting within the Heath is important to you?

That's the beauty. That's what this can offer. The ducks and the coots, and in the winter, we had a group of geese taking off just in front of you. It's beautiful. That's what makes it so magical and so special.

Do you participate in Ladies' Pond events?

I do things on my own rather than being in a community. I don't feel like part of the community because I'm used to doing things on my own.

What does the Ladies' Pond mean to you?

I love the idea, of it being just women. I had a few incidents swimming, with men who are also competitive, and I'm not doing this for exercise, more for relaxing, and more women are like that. Nobody splashing and trying to zoom past. I like that idea. It's so relaxed. And you see the women getting changed and nude, and it feels natural and quite relaxing, you don't have to worry. I like the idea that nobody cares, we're there, and people get changed, just drop their clothes. I really like that. I never thought I would but it's a lovely place to be. The fact that in summer it is a lot more secluded and you don't feel like people can peek through. I like that. You can sunbathe topless and you don't have to worry, I like that more than the men's, which is more exposed. You don't feel like you're in London. I've also lived in the countryside and I have wanted to move out of London, but when I'm here it doesn't feel like you're in a big city. It's very important. I'm more of a countryside person. It's lovely when you go to the Heath and you see those ladies in their 70s, 80s, and I would love to be like that when I'm their age. But it's a shame that you don't see younger people in their twenties. In the summer you do, in the summer everybody is there, but in winter, it feels like the community is getting old. Which is a shame, because how do you promote cold water swimming? You can't convince someone by talking, they need to try. I wonder what it's going to be like in twenty years if there aren't enough young people coming.

Dave and Steve, on behalf of Hampstead Heath Constabulary, 12 March, 2015, at the CoL offices on the Heath

In terms of work with the dogs, what do you do with dogs on the Heath?

Steve: What we've got are what are termed as 'General Purpose' dogs, so they can find property that's lost, a simple thing like if someone's lost a phone or keys, we can find them. Provided that you've got, generally, not if you say, 'Oh I lost them on the Heath', but if you've got a rough idea of where you might've lost it, then they'll be able to find it. They'll work out if something's got a fresh scent. So that's how they work on that. We can use them on property, on things like tracking, people that might be wanted. That would be more of a police enquiry, something like that. We wouldn't be tracking someone on our own, but we can do that, so maybe if there was a burglary in a house backing onto the Heath or if someone's stolen a car and made their way across the Heath we can assist in that kind of way. Vulnerable missing people we can find as well, if it's in a contained area. Crowd control issues. We have big, big attendances at the Lido in the summer, three and a half, four thousand is the limit they get to, so you walk around there with the dog for five minutes, and if things are getting a bit tasty.

People respond to the dogs?

Steve: Yes, in sort of that, 'We'd better not do what we were going to do' way. Probably the presence of them than actually using them to do something. It's the actual physical presence of them being there that can really help. Even just getting them to bark. We'll get them to bark in the van if we're going past a group that look a little bit dodgy. We'll get them to bark and that tends to get them to be a bit, yeah, 'Better not be naughty today'.

Any byelaws in particular you have to deal with often?

Dave: There are. There's what's common and what generally concerns the public most, and those two often overlap. Cycling is the most prominent byelaw breach, as I say, that's the design of the place. We always say, you've got cyclists who don't know and cyclists

who don't care. Those that don't know will just look at a path going onto a bit of green land and think, 'Wow, that's a lot safer than the road.' And sometimes not see the sign. All the paths are signed. Sometimes they'll see the sign and jump off, other times we'll stop them and we'll talk to them and they won't do it again. There's also the cyclist who knows full well they shouldn't be cycling through the Heath, but takes the risk and we'll deal with them. The most belligerent cyclists, everything is dealt with the lowest level, we work on the basis that a sensible conversation, someone will learn their lesson and they won't do it again. That's the relationship we try to have. But you will meet people who just repeat and repeat. And people have been to court and are fined quite a lot of money for it. It's entirely preventable. By the time you get to court, you've had several warnings. At least you know the rights. There's a massive issue at the moment around dog control. All incapsulated by the laws around dog control, which state that if you bring a dog to the Heath, which everybody does, you have to have it under your control in such a way that it doesn't harm people, wildlife, or cause a nuisance. Now, again there are a variety of dog walkers who enter the Heath, some very responsible, some less responsible, causes a lot of arguments with people. We use the term user groups, so you've got swimmers, you've got fishermen, you've got cyclists, you've got dog owners. The idea is they all get on together, but that doesn't always happen.

Steve: Professional dog walkers are like the number one thing. People are under the misapprehension that there is a limit to the number and there isn't. There might be in the future, but there isn't and people get very heated by the fact that somebody is walking X-amount of dogs, so that is a big one. And like Dave just said, it's becoming more so that

people will actually approach us or phone us about, say, someone there will twelve dogs. It's a common complaint.

Do you work with the land management on how so many dogs might impact the ecology of the site?

Dave: Yeah, we do. All the teams here work hand in hand with each other. But the issue about dog fouling is a big issue in certain areas. You've got key entrances where some people just exercise their dog to go to the toilet and take it home. And we deal with them. Again, it's the same approach. We try to have a conversation. We do other work: Steve works closely with the Dog's Trust Charity, and at his request they come on and run events most months. They give out endless free services. We do completely free cycle security marking, and give out stuff about bikes. We are giving stuff to you - we can get your dog microchipped, we can get you a voucher for the vets, we can get you a collar, but the payback is that you look after it.

No-Pick byelaws made the news a few years ago. Can you tell me about that?

Dave: We take a proportionate view to it. You do commit a byelaw offence if you pick fruit or foliage or plants or the like from the Heath. But you've got to take a discretional view as to what a person's doing. If someone's stripping a tree of all of its goodness, then that's one thing, but if someone's taking a few raspberries from a raspberry bush then…

Steve: I definitely draw the line where daffodils are. If someone's picking bunches of daffodils, they're there for everybody to enjoy. Not for somebody to pick and take home. If it's blackberries, I think there's obviously a difference in that.

Dave: And the difference is as well, at Golder's Hill Park, it's a park, it's manicured. But the Heath is left to grow. So any kind of plant or anything at Golder's Hill Park would be viewed more seriously than some of the stuff from here. It's about what it is, where it's from. Blackberry picking we'd probably turn a blind eye to. We've had groups of people stripping bamboo. We've had people stripping the elderflower. Apparently there's a particular time of the year when you can take the elderflower tree to make stuff out of it. People with bin bags full of them. But that's different. Some of our by-laws are quite modern, but some of them were written for the day they were written. So we have to apply common sense.

How many dogs do you go out with?

Steve: We've only got one. We've got two dog handlers, and we've each got one dog.

Do you have a good relationship with your dog?

Steve: Yeah, we're together 24-7, so yeah. He's my fourth dog. One was before I came here, while I was previously doing the same job in a different place.

Do they develop a relationship with the place?

Steve: my dog, I don't know, I don't think my dog reacts any differently to when we come here than when I take him to my local park. You do get dogs that definitely know when they're at work and they know as soon as they're away from work. Mine's sort of, pretty, the same all the time. It's more what I do, commands I'll use, that will turn him from one thing to another but you do get, I've had dogs before that are as soon as you drive in through the gate (snaps), at work. The one I've got now is not like that. It's just different. They're all different.

Do you know anything about dead bodies and mowing the grass in the 1970s? Would you see this as a real concern?

Dave: No. I've never. Who knows what the history of this place is, a huge open space in North London, you can fill the gaps in there if you wanted to but there's nothing, there's never been. I've never heard that.

Steve: You know where I'd say it's probably more likely to be true is Epping Forest, because that's 10,000 acres to the east of London, and it's very remote, and you would not be disturbed, if you were there at 2 o'clock in the morning, no one would see you.Whereas if you were here, my guess is this is too big a park with too many people about, even in the wee small hours used to get away with that. So I think that's a bit fanciful.

[I read them the Times article by Ruth Hall].

Dave: Sounds like a bit of romantic link really, with a huge open space, back in the day people used to believe that you would disappear and be buried in open spaces.

Steve: I mean, we get fairly infrequent suicides. Maybe one a year, probably. But not people being…

Yes, the article picks up on the kind of landscape it is - the grass, the undergrowth - and relates it to crime.

Steve: I wouldn't be surprised if there aren't some, but… one or two I think and they've probably been here, a long time, probably before… Obviously we don't know for sure, but I'd be surprised. The amount of dogs and things on here you'd think that they would get, very soon, that there'd be dogs digging at a particular area or something.

When you do find things Met Police gets called in?

Dave: Yes, anything of that severity we just hit the pause button, and call the Met Police in and assist them. There's a kind of relationship that's evolved over the years that we're here so they don't really trouble the Heath unless they have to. They then trust us to get on with it, really, so generally speaking they'd come on and we would help them do their work. We don't cross with Met police officers in our patrols, because the understanding is that there's a constabulary on the Heath and we'll leave it to them.

Can I ask a little bit about coordination with local organizations, especially about work on the Heath as a PSE?

Dave: Okay, there is a misunderstanding amongst the public that the entirety of Hampstead Heath is a public sex environment, which it isn't. There is small, clear geographical areas that are. The most prominent, the most famous one, is on West Heath, which is absolutely a public sex environment. Now, getting back to what I said earlier, support in the LGBT community and making the area safe is the responsibility of the Met Police first and foremost, it's the responsibility of us, because it's part of our area, and we do a lot of work there as well. And what we do is we do lots of engagement work with Terrence Higgins Trust, local Camden LGBT organizations and the like, and it's a range of events during the year. We take the lead, really, as opposed to the Met taking the lead, and we do patrols there, we do reassurance. The idea is that the area is managed for the safety of everybody. So if a member of the LGBT community wants to visit the area they should do so safely, but they should do so aware of the health risks and being supported around those, and the Terrence Higgins Trust will come in with us and do some work and engage with people. They should do so and not leave litter, that then, makes it unpleasant for the person

walking their dog. It's all about the different users working together. So the litter is a real problem there. The City of London employs litter pickers there every morning and we have leaflets and do a lot of work under the outreach heading, just saying if you want to visit the area do so, just don't leave litter, look after your own personal health, and these organizations have been helping, so we do a lot of outreach work with various organizations.

What does it look like when you go out on PSE patrols?

Steve: We tend not to go out there after dark, because the actual environment is not really a safe one to be in after dark, tree roots and there's no lighting at all. So it's really, we wouldn't go there. We sort of do a bit of a cross-over with the, usually on a Friday in the better months, with the Terrence Higgins People, up to kind of dusk-ish, with us there, then they're quite happy to stay on there afterwards, but that would be with… [materials].

Dave: We've also got our own email address on the website, which is direct in for anybody who wants to raise any issue around the PSE.

Would that be complaints?

Dave: Anything. Concerns. Sightings of unusual people they haven't seen before in the area, word of mouth, it's just that bridge, isn't it, between people who are visiting the area having the faith to come forward to the authorities. So as an alternative to the police, they've got us as well.

Steve: You've also got people witnessing crime there who don't want to report the fact that they've been victims because they don't want anybody to know that they've been there, so obviously you've got that issue as well.

So do you operate on the premise of "it's going to be happening so let's keep it as safe as possible?"

Dave: Spot on. Yeah. It's been a PSE for over a hundred years, so it's not going to change with management. The City of London is here to manage it, so manage the safety, it's the individual person's safety, it's health safety, it's making sure that people who are visiting the area for all the other reasons as well can do so without a problem. It's not a simple issue, it can be quite complex, so if you can.. The popularity of the area is affected by the weather, obviously, and we have to manage stuff that happens on the periphery, sometimes where visitors may park their car to go visit that area on a Friday night, that area of car parking becomes quite busy with people. And that's more in the public view, because there's a busy road that goes past, and we have to deal with that. It's all sensitive enforcement work as well.

Any final thoughts on this as your workplace?

Steve: It's unique. I worked in Haringey before, which is very urban and, although you've got pockets here where there's a bit of an urban influence as well, but it's, well, to be this close to the centre of London and have something like this to work in is really a privilege really. Sometimes you take it for granted. I think often if I'm going on a course or something, if I'm going into town, in the rush hour, and you see that, I think, Oh my goodness, you don't know how lucky I am! You don't realize how fortunate you are really to be working here. For the most part it's a nice environment, but you have days particular,

in the summer, because it's so weather orientated there can be days in the summer when you just can't, you know, you just want to go home. A very human problem.

Dave: I think it's also the individual as well. There are two more mature officers on the team age-wise and state of life. What you get here is the surroundings, and the backdrop of the city of London, which is kind of a nice thing, but you've got to, it's what satisfies your need in a workplace really. Sometimes you can walk around here for four hours and that's all you want. I mean, we do lose staff. In my experience here, the staff we fail to retain have been people who this isn't quite enough for. Perhaps younger individuals who just want a bit more excitement, um, and we've lost three people, some have gone back to the Met, over the last year, so I think if you're a bit younger and you want more out of your enforcement job, this might not satisfy you. That seems to be the case, but if you're just looking for something that ticks the box…

Steve: You can make it, really, there's flexibility enough, I think you can make the job what you want it to be, to be honest. You can find enough to keep you amused.

Dave: It's not a bad place to come to work, really.

Del, on behalf of Terence Higgins Trust, 5 May, 2015, at the THT offices,

Do you want to tell me about the context and history of the project?

Yeah. The context of the project, actually, I've been managing this work for 5 years. We have as a charity been going to Hampstead Heath for a longer period. This is the boring bit, but obviously a lot of the work we do here, we only really do it if somebody has funded us to do it. That's just the way of the world. But there used to be a team called the Lads Team that regularly did work up on Hampstead Heath, and other public sex environments, and engage with the guys and talk to them about sexual health and safety, and if they've had any issues around crime, if they were using condoms, sometimes touching on drug issues, how to report crime. We have this campaign, I'll give you one of the cards, that says "Bin It". So that was one piece of work that I didn't manage. But because the City of London Corporation have this quarterly group called the Sexual Activity Working Group (SAWG) and I went to one of these meetings because obviously Hampstead Heath is in Camden and this building's in Camden, so we needed to focus on the needs in Camden. And then I basically explained that we haven't been back to the Heath in a little while because we hadn't any funding to do that, so now I explained to the City of London Corporation who own the Heath as you know, they fund the Terrence Higgins Trust to do any outreach service. That's been going on for about five years. Pretty much the service consists of going onto the Heath in the public sex environment areas, especially West Heath, in pairs, typically a sessional worker and a volunteer worker, and engaging with the guys that are using the Heath. We used to be a bit more static and have a table and teas and coffees, but we actually find it's better to walk around, and to talk to the people that are there, find out what their concerns are, but also give them one of the deliverable messages on that card Bin It, which is that if you're going to use the Heath as a public sex environment, then respect the environment as well. And especially by not leaving your little behind. Because

that's the thing that the local committee complained about. Not so much about sexual activity, especially if it's late at night, but with the litter that's left behind. So that's why we campaign just Bin It. So if you're going to use a condom, either bin it or take it home with you. And to a certain extent it's been quite successful, because as you probably realize with the Hampstead Constabulary, there are certain areas that are really heavily used by the guys, so you don't patrol the whole Heath. And what normally happens is we agree the shift, typically on a Friday night, Wednesdays are quite popular, my team go down there, when they get to the car park at Jack Straw's Castle car park, they call the Hampstead Constabulary and often the Hampstead Constabulary will know they're there, so they'll be nearby, because they're quite visible and you can usually hear them coming with their walky-talkies, it's usually better if they stand a bit further away. But they're there to protect my guys if there's an incident. If they're not around, and they're busy, then usually my guys will have a walky-talky, but they'll also have a little alarm thing that looks like this [shows me]. But pretty much the messages to the guys are the same sort of thing, really: Are you okay? Do you recognize or have any issues here? Have you been a victim of homophobic attack? Would you know how to report it? How's your sexual health? Are you connected to any clinics? Do you use condoms? I mean, we don't say this to everyone obviously. Where are you from? We try to keep a few demographics. Maybe even some of them don't identify as gay, MSM, men who have sex with men, and find out any other issues, and also more recently we talk about drug issues as well. Because there's been an increase in drug paraphernalia there, and we're thinking that people, focussing particularly on this year, will be taking G and Crystal and things like that. So that's a top concern. And there has been some concern that there are guys that are using, that because they're taking

drugs, they're less inhibited, and therefore creating more issues for the local environment and the local residents. So that's an issue, and that didn't used to be an issue say, ten years ago. So the drug issue is one that's increased.

Do you think there's a reason for that shift?

I think it's just a general rise, unfortunately in the UK, of gay men using drugs when they have sex. So because they're taking this sort of trio of crystal, mephodrone, and GBL, those drugs are specifically about having lots of sex and feeling aroused for long periods of time. And in an open environment like Hampstead Heath is possibly quite a good place to do it. Because these days, in theory, with the rise of apps and people finding sex online, why would you need to go to the Heath? On the other hand, my team do outreach in saunas, and to go to a sauna in London these days, I think it's about £18, so that's quite an expensive way of doing it. On the other hand you could argue it's a safer environment.

So Hampstead Heath really is the one [PSE] that's probably the most long-established. Probably Clapham Common is the second. And with Hampstead, obviously when we go there, I do the occasional shift, and you can approach somebody and sometimes we might say, "Oh how do you know about this area, or where do you live?" and sometimes people will say, "Oh no, actually, I don't actually live in London, I'm a tourist, I'm on holiday and I already knew about it, it was in my guide before I came here, sights to see."

But overall working with the Constabulary and working for the City of London proved quite fruitful. It's been a good relationship for both of us: we've had a beneficial impact on people having more respect for the local environment, and at the same time maybe deliver better messages more effectively to get people to look after themselves.

How do you find PSE users respond when they're approached?

I would say you get roughly three categories: you get the 60% are absolutely fine. Some of them actually want to talk to you because they're a bit bored. You get another 20% who are like, "Oh, leave me alone." Until you build up trust, or once they know you're a charity, you're not after getting them in trouble. You get some that are hostile. You get the occasional "Leave me alone." And then sometimes you have to be a bit persistent. You don't start breaking into a run but you might be quite, what's the word, assertive outreach. All outreach workers have to be a bit, you always have to deal with rejection. Some people will tell you where to go. You get an occasional few that are really hostile, "You pissed me off, I don't want you near us, you do-gooders, here telling me what to do." And you get the occasional few that, although they're not aggressive, they don't want to be seen to be there, because they're worried about their lifestyles and maybe they've got a bit more of a double life, or they're worried they might be outed in some way. You get a mixture, but the majority are people who… especially the older guys that have been there for ages, who are just sort of cruising around, and they're normally fine, and sometimes you get groups of people who might know each other. And some of the older guys, more established users, actually complain about the new group of drug users, saying that they're spoiling the environment.

Has there been a big shift in the crowd?

Yeah, that would be a good thing to talk to Paul on my team about, because I don't do many of the shifts myself, but the general feedback I'm getting is that yes the crowd has changed. And it's really hard because we want to go there when it's quite busy. We don't go there too late at night, because there's too many health and safety implications, moving around in the complete darkness. But we try to vary the shifts, so currently at the morning

Wednesdays are quite popular, for some reason. Maybe because it's the middle of the week, and people have got over the weekend or whatever. So we're going to focus on Wednesday evenings for a while. As I said, they're all done in pairs. Sometimes it plateaus a bit and there don't seem to be so many people going, and for a while I think people think, perhaps PSEs will no longer be used because of the rise in dating apps, but that doesn't seem to be a case. People sometimes use them to meet there.

How has the local community responded to the work?

I think it's always subtle cruisers. Say mid-evening for example, you get joggers and dog walkers and people like that and they all get along with each other quite well. And when we do the outreach we always tell my volunteers not to make assumptions about why people are there. a) because they might not be officially cruising, they might just be wandering through to see if it might happen. and b) because they genuinely might not be at all, they might by walking through an area, and their dog's run off. So don't make assumptions. But occasionally when we've spoken to people about why we're here, the feedback from local residents has been quite good, and on top of the actual outreach shifts we do a couple of litter-pick, community events twice a year. Usually on a Saturday afternoon. And then we have a little van in the car park with the Hampstead Constabulary local police, and a few other local projects. And sometimes we're quite discrete in our language when we say we're litter picking, but we'll pick up anything. I remember the last time I did it, I remember one of these Hampstead Constabulary and this very well-to-do lady congratulated the guy from the Hampstead Constabulary saying, "Oh, it's really good that you're doing this for people who are on day release." She thought I was released from prison for a day! One of those, you know, community orders. But overall, when we go to

our meetings, the people that pick up the litter from the Heath have various different stories to tell, where sometimes some areas are seen as a no-go area. And I know there are times when they don't pick up the litter because there's too much activity there, so they might do it the following morning or something. Overall I'd say that people there are fairly respectful of each other, but you do get some people, some of the PSE users saying, "This is my area." And we have to point out to them that it's not their area because they haven't bought the Heath. It might be a traditional thing that certain areas you use as PSE, but it isn't your area, you don't own it. And if anyone else wanted to use it they are fully entitled to. So that is an issue sometimes. I think in general with local residents, they don't really seem to get that many complaints on the Heath in a way.

Is there anything particular about the Heath as a site that makes it conducive to use as a PSE?

Yeah I think probably, because it's a very large site overall, and it's got those wooded areas and large open spaces, that in some sense, it's quite an affluent area. Traditionally loads of gay men lived in Hampstead, that's changed a bit now because of austerity, but lots of times it was the area gay men used to live. I think it's almost the size of the place and the variation in the areas means there's enough room for everyone almost. I think if you look at most open spaces in London, maybe not so much the central ones, but it does seem to be the case that there is often a PSE there, but Hampstead Heath because of the area it's in, gets less instances of crime and homophobia. Today, for instance, Paul is actually in Camberwell, in Southwark, because there's a public sex environment there. And one of the biggest concerns there, in Burgess Park, is the amount of robberies and attacks that have been on the park. So PSE users have been quite vulnerable. So I think Hampstead is less so. People probably feel safer to cruise there. Plus it's also about this tradition.

People often say, “Oh, I went for a stroll on Hampstead Heath” and people are like, “Oh were you? You know” So it’s safer because people have heard of it.

So it’s made safer by demographics and by long-time association?

Yes. And maybe it’s the Constabulary themselves that make it a bit more safe, the fact that it’s got its own police force.

Is there an element of soft enforcement with this?

Yes, I think that is true, that it’s not unusual to see outreach workers, the Constabulary, even the police there, or the litter pickers, the keepers. So therefore it doesn’t become a free-for-all where you can just do what you like. I think maybe that’s a good thing. And I think you’re right. Although it’s tolerated, sexual activity is tolerated, there are lists every year, the Constabulary produce a list every year of warnings they’ve given out to PSE users, where their behaviour has gotten out of hand, or it’s in broad daylight, and maybe at risk of causing a public offence. For example when people run around naked in the middle of the afternoon or something. Usually it’s because they’re on drugs or something, that’s the problem. You get the sort of naturalist bathers, of any sexuality or gender, that occasionally cause offence near the baths area, but normally it’s people who are a bit high, a bit out of it, not necessarily just people who are cruising either that have caused issues recently.

Is there an issue of overlap in policing a drug environment alongside the use of the space by gay men?

It’s slightly problematic because the drug issue, I think, is seen as probably more distasteful than the sexual activity late at night. And also it’s more confusing for the Constabulary. They can say to a couple of guys who are getting out of hand, “Calm down

guys, put your clothes on," and it's fairly straightforward. But if there's seen to be sniffing or injecting, that's a really different set of skills. And even for an outreach worker, that's for example why we have Paul on board, because his background is working with people with drug issues. So he really understands what drugs they're taking, the effects they have. Some of these drugs are quite dangerous, as you probably know, if you take the wrong amount. So it's a different set of skills sometimes, you might need. And also because some of the people there put themselves into very vulnerable situations, are quite isolated, so they're likely to be less aware of the local environment, I guess.

Anything else you want to tell me?

We [the committee] meet once a year at nine o'clock in the morning, and we wander round the Heath with local residents and we talk about the areas and we talk about what we do, and why we do it, and the chairman comes. And it's a bit odd, really. We bump into dog walkers and we're just standing there around a bin with used condoms in, which is obviously really good because the bin's being used.

It's interesting because sometimes you talk to the older PSE users and they say, the Metropolitan Police used to drive through the Heath on horse, drive through on horses, and men would go screaming from the bushes. But one guy recently made a comment about PSE users, saying "Oh, I kind of missed those days. It was part of the thrill. That I'd get caught."

Yes, I heard a similar story from a man who said he doesn't go anymore, and that he feels like it's too safe now.

Sterilized, yeah. Some of the other guys, going back to the drug thing, feel that if it's just a bunch of guys going there to cruise, maybe have a bit of sex, whatever, have a cigarette,

that's fun. And everyone's communicating. But if people are on drugs, those drugs exclude the people who aren't on drugs. And that's the problem, so that's why there's a divide.

A conflict between users?

I think so, I think these users, with these sort of new drugs, that's fine, but it's also very much, to be part of the club you have to have a certain look sometimes, and it's almost like a fascist regime really. If you want the drugs, you have to look like this, have this sort of body, be a certain age, and if you don't look like that, you're not part of the party and we don't really want you here. And I find that is sort of, while it used to be quite inclusive, you can feel rejected. You go through an open space like the Heath and think, "Oh, I'm just gonna wander around here and have fun," and then you feel rejected at the end of it instead of included. And I think in terms of, you do get some people, and this is perhaps more traditional, who say the reason I like cruising in open spaces is because it's all being part of nature, a natural thing to do, we should have sex in public, we should be free to take off our clothes. To be that type of person, which I have some type of sympathy for. But it's complicated because when you do a litter pick and all the activity is gone and all you see is the tissues… I hate it. And I hate people dropping rubbish. But what we try to say to people is, "Look, if you are walking down the street drinking a can of Coke, would you throw it over your shoulder into the bush?" Most people wouldn't, but some would. Hopefully most wouldn't. And I'd say, "Why do you think it's more acceptable just to dispose of [sexual detritus]?" And it is a matter of sometimes people compare it to doggy bags, it's a bit messy, you want to get rid of it as quickly as possible, people don't want to necessarily take used condoms home with them, they might be living a double lifestyle. That's why we have so many discussions about the bins. The bins need to be discrete on

Hampstead Heath, no one wants a big sign saying, “Bin”. And sometimes people say, “Oh well I couldn’t find the bin”. We have that discussion every year. Because sometimes the bins have been burned out. Sometimes the gay men get blamed for everything on the Heath. And there’s no evidence. I think sometimes they get burned out by kids during the day. So there are lots of issues but what we’re trying to do is create a culture where people who use it are more respected, they’re less at risk, but also they do have more respect by other people, so we’re not going to get somebody’s child or somebody’s dog picking up used condoms, because that’s not nice for everyone. So that’s where we want to get to. Every year the Corporation have this very posh dinner, so posh that you have to stand up for the King and the Queen or whatever, but one year I went there. What’s interesting about it was, it was people on the Constabulary and people they either fund or support on the Heath. So I was sitting next to somebody from the RSPB, and also on the other side of the table I became quite friendly with someone who runs the affordable art fair, so it was great, because such different… environmental project, charity project, and an art project, but we all got on so well. We really understood why we were there. And then a few years later, from that contact, because that was three years ago, Romy from the Affordable Art Fair and I linked up, and every year that they have a charity that they support. So last year it was Terrence Higgins Trust, and it all started from [that]. And we had to be quite open about it, we had a big poster that said Bin It, and we talked about the history of men using Hampstead Heath as a public sex environment, and as it was the Affordable Art Fair, it was all mums and kids and stuff. Because the other project I manage, funnily enough, is this project with sex workers. And that’s not such an issue on Hampstead Heath, but you do get opportunistic men going there saying “How about it? Could you pay me so and so?”

Overall though, I would say it's harder to sell sex on a public sex environment because everyone else is having it for free! So why would you? But people get away with it. You'd be surprised. These younger guys go there thinking, "Oh, these rich old queens, they've got money, if they want me, they can part with some cash."

When you do work like this with the Affordable Art Fair, do you find it difficult to explain the work to the public?

Sometimes, yeah, and we constantly have that problem. Because obviously if I'm working with sex workers, people with drug issues, people who use PSEs, people who go to saunas, even at THT when we have wealthy donors going around the building, often they want to come and see the gritty stuff that I manage, but sometimes I don't use too explicit language to everyone. You know, even at the meeting for the SAWG, the Chairman there is called the Chairman, I don't start saying, "Oh, two guys are fucking behind a bush." I would never use that kind of language! You might do it here. I would say, "Oh, we've noticed some activity or signs of drug use." Sometimes you have to be quite careful the way you word things.

That's interesting, the connection between soft enforcement and the language - the way it comes through in official reports.

And with some of the other PSEs, like Clapham, it runs slightly differently because basically when we go there, it's funded by the local council, but we work with the police, but they have LGBT liaison officers that are quite well-known in the community, and with the Constabulary, I think they will need to get a new one, but they had a particular LGBT liaison up until last year. Someone who understands those issues. They don't have to be

LGBT themselves, but this guy Ian was a gay guy, so he had an understanding, in theory, of what the community's issues were.

Hannah, 15 February, 2015, at the Ladies' Pond

How long have you swum here?

I was swimming here in the summers over twenty years ago. I'm not sure I started winter swimming here until my daughter reached an age when after she was born, well, when she was first newborn, she would sit in a car seat wherever I went, usually in a playpen, in a swimming pool because in those days I would do lanes to train. And then she got too big to be in a playpen, when she was toddling, and she toddled at 9 months, she's now 17 and a half, so I've been winter swimming for at least 16 winters. I started winter swimming because it was the only place that I could go swim without having to pay for childcare when she was at school or nursery, because I was a single parent and couldn't leave her unattended at home. I had very narrow hours when I could swim. So that's how I started. And like everyone, once you start winter swimming, it rapidly develops an addiction. It gives you a quality that is completely unshakeable, unless your doctor forbids you, which I don't want to know about!

What do you like about it?

I call it mind-ironing. That's my nickname for it. Because when you tell colleagues about it, they look at you like you're slightly crazy or with real envy, sometimes both. I call it mind-ironing! In the summer, I tend to avoid it when it's crowded - I come at the beginning or the end of the day. It's the meditative quality, whatever the brain chemistry is,

whatever's happening, the impact of the cold on the hypothalamus or the amicdala, whatever it's doing, I'm not a brain chemist, but whatever's going on, it's fantastically meditative. It's a sort of mind over matter business. It's the element of submission and triumph - a bit like labour. If you trust your body, you have to submit. Not many western women are trained to do it or to understand it that way, but I think it's very similar in a way that it requires a huge level of trust in the body, and the capacity to listen to what the body is telling you, and a trust in the veracity of what your systems will tell you. Like if you start to feel the burn on your feet you know you're too cold and you need to get out. Having the confidence that your body's actually going to signal when it's too much is part of the process of learning to swim in the winter. Because if you slather yourself in vast amounts of neoprene, and in a sense you're still trying to keep control. Your mind is still not letting you submit your body to the test of the cold water on a regular basis.

Do you use that as a guide?

These days I have a counting system indexated to temperature. I sort of know how long I can last. So I basically keep count of my breaths and my strokes, and I measure temperature changes, like this time of the year when it starts to open out, the days get longer and it creeps up in temperature. I like to test out how much longer I can go than my allotted span. I sort of nudge it forwards. At the moment, this winter I've probably done more than last winter. I have not done less than 120 strokes any day this winter, regardless of the temperature. Which is a sort of, not quite crawling down the edge of the half lap, but it's a fairly broad half lap, unless I've been under the weather or I've been feeling particularly shocking, I might just go to the rope and back, which is about forty or fifty, but now I'm aiming to do about 120 at the moment. And it'll creep up by about 25 strokes per

degree, until you get to about 8. And above 8 I can sort of, between 8 and 12 I can do as much as I feel like. I stop counting at 8. And above 12 I can stay in as long as I like, it has no impact at all.

Do you swim elsewhere?

I have a book and a map. And I have people I visit outside of London. So over the years I've developed a knowledge of where to swim, particularly when I'm driving long distances, I like to stop and take a swim somewhere along the way that's really pretty. There's a couple of really nice places to swim, for instance, halfway down through Wiltshire, not very far from the A303, not very far from the Somerset borders, and you can whack off and swim in the River Brew, or in the River Tee. I've got a sister in Cornwall, so that's two pit stops. And I have lots of friends in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, I know lots of swimming places on the Wye. And that's a much more dangerous river to swim in, you have to be much more careful when you get in because of the currents. And how much water there is in it, very strongly affected by the weather.

Is there something special about here?

Well I live not very far from here. And I can swim here, in the winter I can swim on the way to work, and in the summer it might be before or on the way home from work, and on the weekends I can swim whenever I want. And this sort of ritual of always coming anchors a lot of my routine. It's a key part of the structure of my life. I cycle long distances and I go to yoga classes regularly, so it's not the anchor of my exercise regime. It's more about my mind. My state of mind. And that's just the process of getting in the water. I wouldn't want to live without I now. I'd find it odd. I don't like salt water swimming very much, so I'd prefer to be somewhere with decent fresh water. It's a great privilege to be

able to swim somewhere where you don't have to worry about where the water's going. If you go in the Sussex Ouse or, there are plenty of rivers you can swim in, but you do need to know where you are and the state of the tide or how much rain is coming down the catchment. It can be really quite hazardous if you aren't quite savvy about how it's run in a given stretch. It's very easy, it's lifeguarded which is really pleasant. I'm not a great fan of it being lifeguarded but they do their job very well. And over time you become part of the community. And there is this huge community of incredibly unusual, idiosyncratic, able, intelligent women. Self-directed women. It's such an amazing group of people. And it's really odd, because you see many of them day in and day out in the changing room. So they provide a kind of fabric and continuity in your life, in terms of your relationships, but you don't necessarily talk about very much with them. But when the shit hits the fan, conversations in the changing room, within limits, you can talk about almost anything. And there's a huge sort of solidarity here, in a way that, we don't live on streets where you know your female neighbours and have tea with them in the way that our grandmothers did. But it's a similar dynamic in that you can pretty much predict which people will turn up at which time of day, because people have quite regular habits. Not always, there are habits that vary depending on people's work routines, but there's a certain cohort of people that come at the same time every day, so you can avoid them, depending on what you want. And in the winter in particular it's quite a tightly knit environment, from that point of view, unless you choose to change in the cold. If you change indoors you somewhat buy into that dynamic. There are some people who like the lights on and some who don't, you learn these things, but on the whole, I have some good acquaintances here, the whole spectrum. There are people you coincide with a lot who you probably would never sit

down and have coffee with, and then there are others who, there are other spin-offs like the walking group. You can go for a walk with swimmers, and you go for long walks with people like that regularly over the period of a year and a half one weekend a month, you get to know them. One of the lifeguards is a particularly gifted community animator, and she and a few people have initiated very loose but ritual activities on eighth days and quarter days. Samhain, Imbolc, Midsummer, and the Solstices and the Quarter Days. That's a fairly cohesive group. And people seem to like it.

Do you find the environment important?

Crucial. Yes, and I'm terrified of what all this engineering is going to do to the Heath, with the dams. It was always inevitable. It's about the City protecting their very deep pockets. I swear that the water modelling that has been applied to the dam down in the Catchment, in the east, by the environment agency are probably bent. Or misleading. I'm fairly sure the bottom end of it is about certain contractors—Masonic relationships, for all I know—with, you know there are some very close-knit relationships within the business community and it suits everybody. You spend a certain amount of public money generating profit for people who will make a lot of money from it. It will do nothing for the Heath, virtually, it's debatable whether these were every reservoirs at all, and whether they should ever have had the dams attached to them. They've got dams, but whether the dams are sort of needed to shore them up on the risk analysis currently. It's one engineer who has had the entire legal clout to decide to spend this huge amount of money on a simple 400,000 year risk! And it will trash, by the time the machinery has been in and out of here, the damage they're going to do to what's left of the environment here. Grim.

What you think will change? Can they put it back?

I don't think they'll be able to because of all the concrete they're going to put down. You won't get it back by any stretch. And all the trees take decades to grow. There is so much more that could've been done to manage flood risk. The level of footfall on the Heath is huge and a lot of the ground further up on the Heath, above the ponds, is heavily compacted, but they don't plough and seed and run flower meadows. They don't break that ground regularly using any form of machinery in a systematic way to manage the catchment as a SUDS, a sustainable urban drainage system. There's so much more that could've been done with the Heath, as a SUDS, to manage it in a way that would've been beneficial. It still would've been a managed landscape, but it's a myth to say it's entirely natural, it's always a managed landscape. But having created a quasi-natural landscape as we have it now, there's no reason to trash it.

Do you spend a lot of time on the Heath?

A fair amount. I do. It depends a lot on my state of mind. I live close enough to the Heath that if I want to go for a long walk easily, the Heath is the natural place to do it. If I've got more time I might walk up the Lee Valley, if I don't want to get on a train or in a car. But it is a fantastic resource.

Do you have a favourite spot?

Not particularly. I know the Heath really, really well, virtually every inch of it and the extension. I guess it just depends what kind of space I want to be in. If I want to be in woodland of a certain kind, I'll go up beyond the Spaniards Inn. I think there are certain routines. I live on a bus route that takes my just past Kenwood House. So I'll often access it from that bus route. Or if I'm cycling I'll come down Millfield Lane, because I live east of the Heath. I probably use the east, and north, and southern ends more than the other, but

I do walk over to the western side most weekends, if I'm in London and not going out of town and not doing a vast amount of gardening. I will probably do a longer walk. In the growing season I probably use the Heath less, because I run a huge garden and I'm often outside anyway. It's more in what I call the hungry gap between January and the end of April, I'm probably on the Heath more than in any other time of year.

Is it special in the middle of the city?

If I could hack commuting, I wouldn't live in London, but I can't. It's the compromise that I make. If I lived near Richmond Park, I could live in another part of London, but I couldn't live anywhere far from a big open space. And there are very few of them. I say few, I mean, London has more green space than most cities put together but of the size of the Heath or Richmond Park or Sydenham Wood, there aren't. Public transport is fantastic and I use a lot of other green space in London, but the Heath is my local playpen.

Is it different than other parks?

Well only because it's closest to me. And I'd add to that in the sense that it's not a park in the same way, it has a different quality, it's managed in a different way. It's not - I'm also a trained garden designer and I know a lot about garden history - the Heath has a very fundamentally different pedagogic history as a piece of ground. It's never been subject to the same trends and movements that have developed other municipal spaces. And it isn't flat. The landscape is on a hill and the landscape has been allowed to determine a lot of the… And a lot of the paths on the Heath mark out natural desire lines, where desire lines went historically, and that's where the paths are. Whereas a huge number of parks, paths are put in to make people go places that don't respect desire lines. They sort of bring people into a place that has a terminating vista, looking at whatever it is. If you go to Kew,

it's the classic place to see that writ large, but Kew wouldn't satisfy me in the same way. So no. It's the natural quality of it. And if I go to Kew, I would feel so confined. I'm searching for this seemingly unmanicured landscape. Even though I know it's completely managed.

Anything else?

I think it was very unfortunate that the Corporation were the people that got it, when the GLA was dismantled by Thatcher. I think it would've been far better if it had been incorporated as a standalone institution with its own management and that that management was locally, democratically accountable to all the boroughs that surrounded it, rather than it just being the wealthy mob down the road. Because I think there is this constant tension on the Heath where the Corporation is forever looking for ways to turn it into a cash cow. And they do that with all their parks. They do that with the leases of all the restaurants and cafes in their parks. They are constantly trying to milk public spaces as a money making venture. And with the Heath, because it's covenant, if you look at the covenant on the ponds in particular, the idea that they think they can charge is a flagrant breach of the basic covenant of the ponds and what they were given to the people of London for by the people who gifted them. And if it was in the control of the GLA or if it was managed within the democratic bubble, rather than by, frankly, what is a semi-Masonic institution, it would be very different. And frankly I think the priorities that have been placed on the resources here. It's had a great superintended, the one who's just left, but that was luck more than design. It's constantly at risk of being mismanaged for the wrong priorities, because it doesn't have the framing that it had when it was being run by the GLA. That's a very personal opinion. But many, many people will effectively talk

about things that boil down to that, without really knowing why what they're complaining about is what they're complaining about. They won't happen to know the history of the source of the aggravation they're describing, but if you track it out, it boils down to the fact that a bunch of accountants and a bunch of their masonic employers can set priorities that are based on financial risk, and very narrow economic thinking rather than a holistic, sustainability focused paradigm that is primarily about well-being. The one thing you say about the Heath is that we'll never lose it because of the number of people who use it. [As we are talking, a chainsaw begins cutting a tree nearby]. It has a huge hinterland. It's a bit like, the Transport committee did an enquiry into the Coast Guard a couple of years ago and they suddenly announced they wanted to cut the Coast Guard in half. And there was absolute public outrage, and nobody could understand why, until somebody pointed out that 75% of people who live in the United Kingdom live within 25 miles of a coast. And suddenly it made sense. And then when they tried to sell off the forest. Similar issue. I don't know percentage live within a mile of a woodland but it's a lot. These public goods have no quantifier on them.

Jane, March 19, 2015, at the Ladies' Pond.

How long have you been here?

Working here since 2012.

Have you been coming to the pond for longer?

Yes, I think about 2005. I was brought here by my current partner, a new partner, basically, and she used to come here. She introduced me to it. I knew about it, before I came here,

when I lived out in Herefordshire. I'd read about it in magazines and thought, I must go there when I go to London. But mostly I would come to South London, and it was Hampstead Heath - too far away and too difficult to get to on public transport, so I never made it. Now I'm here all the time. Throughout winter, and almost every day if I'm in London. And it was a sanctuary for about, well, it still is, but it not a working environment for me from 2005 til 2012.

What is it that grabbed your attention and kept you coming?

Well, obviously you can swim. So it's nice when you need to be in water. And it's outdoors and completely and utterly beautiful. And there's this completely wonderful community of people as well as place, so there's something very held here. Which is an energy, or aura, or a feeling or something, that is very addictive. It's quite silent and it's quite powerful. It can be not good. But it's mainly good. 99% good.

Is there something special about this place as opposed to others?

Yes, I don't know what that is, if I'm honest. I don't know why I can go and swim in beautiful seas and rivers elsewhere or lakes or ponds or whatever elsewhere, this holds so much. I think it's the realization that this just holds, it's sort of about the way you approach the ponds, and stare at it, and it is very deep, and the beauty of the trees around it. The enclosed space. Without buildings, without reference to other people, you can sort of look into it like any view that falls away from you. And it seems to hold… someone once said to me that water holds feeling. Or is feeling. It helps emotions and feelings. It seems to hold stuff, and take it away from you, and allow you just to… be.

Is there something about swimming?

Swimming here particularly, because I'd never swum out of my depth before I'd swum here. And I remember the lifeguard, Nicola, said to me, "Can you swim?" and I said, "Yeah" and so she said, "Just swim." And it was that empowering feeling of knowing once I'd done it and wasn't particularly scared, that for the first time in my life I was swimming in what was a dangerous, felt like a dangerous area. I mean, very much swimming in rivers and seas where it was technically dangerous to go out of your depth, because of the power of the sea or the power of the current in a river or whatever, and to realize that you could. And the total immersion in cold water, which a) gives you a massive [muffled] endorphin rush, and the total immersion in a medium that actually holds you. I learned float here. That… the fact that I can float and I can be in deep water and I can be completely immersed in it. It gives you this feeling of joy or release or, almost, to be controversial, it's almost like electric shock treatment, I think. People talk about it just deleting stuff… you know, it just… whoa! It's a shock. I've never phrased it that way before but it just suddenly occurred to me that it's this, particularly in winter, it's as dramatic as that. You wouldn't want to do it when you get in when it's 2 degrees as it has been. Ahh, why am I doing this to myself? Well, because that makes you feel fabulous. It's the deal.

You're a big community organizer here. Is the community element or all-women element really important here?

I don't know where it came from, really, that was just weird. But when I became a lifeguard, again it was another weird thing. If you hang around here long enough, and then your dad dies, and you find out that your father saved someone, rescued someone from drowning, and never mentioned it, that he got an award, he got a bravery medal, he never mentioned it. And it was just sort of this light bulb moment that now Dad's died, I came

back here, someone said, “Oh we’re recruiting for lifeguards,” and someone said to apply and I went, “Oh, okay.” Out of getting that job it was suddenly apparent, I didn’t know who I was somehow. The community element thing just came about, I don’t know, I mean, I’m sorry to question it but it’s just that I don’t know. In a way I met another swimmer Lizzie who had organized a Halloween event and she and I was just relaying back to her how fantastic it was that 34 women came with witches hats and swam. Literally from one poster stuck on the wall. And she and I got talking. And she said, “Why don’t we do some more things? Why don’t we do something for Solstice?” And I was going, “Oh, I’ve never celebrated any of these things particularly,” and started to do it and I think… that was really as a swimmer, not just as a lifeguard at all, so and then people started to enjoy it and I also think the job of being a lifeguard… I was suddenly in a place where all my rural knowledge and my outdoor knowledge of birds, my passion for wildlife and the seasons and being outside in nature, I just wrote it down on pieces of paper and stuck it up on the board. So, “By the way, if anybody’s seen a kingfisher today?” or “Did anybody notice there’s an owl?” and then people started to pick up on it. Oh god, why am I doing it? I don’t know why I’m doing it? I’m a great believer that a place will empower you or dispower you, drain you or give you energy. So it wasn’t something I wanted to do, it wasn’t something I thought had to be done, it just evolved out of the place.

Can you tell me about what you’ve been doing with the trees here?

So, um, well I work… one of my other personas is that I am an artist. I decided this year to call myself a tree artist, just because I work with bits of tree. And they felled as part of a huge dam project quite a few trees, right in the staff area of the pond, but visible to swimmers. Including a very huge oak tree, which, when I looked at a slice of it that they’d

left, I suddenly realized as I was counting the rings, was 82 years old. [We're interrupted at this point by another swimmer who comes in to the changing room to chat]

[We move outside to the staff area]

Oh my gosh, Yeah, they've really cleared!

This is for the spillway.

It's just so bare.

Yeah, but also full of sun. Which yesterday was just fantastic, this was just all shaded and everything. Um, basically, they left the main trunk of this oak tree, and there was this slice that I looked at and it was, I was just looking at the rings on it, and thinking, I wonder how old the tree is. And worked out it was about 82 years old and got very excited because I just suddenly thought, we have 82 year old swimmers, I'm sure. I went in the changing room that day and said, "Does anybody know of an 82 year old swimmer?" And strangely I had thought that one, Liz Waterhouse, might be about that age, and she just said, "That's my birthdate. 1933". Which we reckon is when the acorn first sprouted. So we took photographs with her and talked to her about that, and that was, I've just been looking at the timelines on it, the different years, and seeing when there were good years, and seeing when the war was, seeing when the olympics happened, which happens to be just when the heartwood becomes sapwood, which is quite a nice change for the millennium. And talking to people about when they first came to the pond and on the tree, how big the tree was at that stage, and whether they're in the heartwood or the sapwood, and people say, "When I came to the pond in 2000-and-whatever I came in 1965 or whatever," and realising that this tree had grown up watching over all the swimmers effectively. Obviously Liz didn't come here when she was nought years old, but her life started in the southeast actually,

which was, quite a rarity for a lot of swimmers here. And presumably it was just an acorn, not a planted tree, I'm presuming. An acorn pushed in by a squirrel or something like that. It might well have been a planted tree a few years later by the women here, but we don't know of anything particular happening at the Ladies Pond at that time so I'm presuming it was just a natural seedling. And while it is horrific to see that the trees have come down, as I work in wood and with trees and everything, I started to feel that maybe we could do something with the wood. I don't have the confidence to say we're definitely going to make this that and the other with it or anything, but I tend to work one decision at a time. And the fact they left a big trunk, well I thought we might try to just split it in half by hand in the old way that I do it. Um, and we started yesterday, the 18th of March. I just decided that yesterday was a good day to try, and it split. We started the split. It started to creak and crack as we put in the wedges and it's obviously releasing all its tension when it does that. And it might just be possible to have something at the end when it does that.

So it splits according to its own course?

To its own grain, yes, in the bodging world - I'm a bodger, a chair bodger by training - a bit like firewood, if you split through the pith, the first growth, on a line which literally gives you an equal amount of wood on each side across the diameter of the log, you will find that it will split along the grain. So the fibres will just peel apart and do it for you. And you just keep putting wedges in where the split arrives to open it up along the length of the log. So that's how all peoples have started to do it before we attacked things with machines and chainsaws and whatever.

So what do you think the importance is of having this tree here at the pond to stay?

Um, the importance is that it grew up here and it's been here while we've been here. The fact that that landscape is going to change tremendously when they rebuild the building and put a new deck in and clear this area and put some concrete on here to make a spillway. More like a reservoir. This is something, completely natural, as is swimming in the pond, as is the pond. Well, it's a man-made natural pond but it is a natural pond in terms of mud and silt and water. It's part of our history I suppose. And it was a way of dealing with the sort of anger and sadness and slight depression of huge change from a very secluded place to a very much more open visually-changed place. It's also because the first swimmers, I realized, who came here, the first women who came here in the twenties or even earlier, to swim, when given this pond… They arrived at a place that was very open, almost in the middle of a field, and we've been incredibly lucky to have the seclusion and the maturity of these trees as they've grown up. I also did a drawing back in 2012, the first year I worked here as a lifeguard, of all the trees. I went around the pond and did a drawing and noted all the trees and plants around the pond. I don't know why I did. I just thought it'd be something to do and so I presume this tree actually - I haven't checked - I presume it must be marked on that drawing. So the fact that it's down and is now wood, still a tree but in a different form and can't grow on, then it's a way of, I think even you said it, you mentioned the word honour. But lots of swimmers have said it to me separately, it's a way of honouring the tree. Which I hadn't put into words. I suppose that's what it's about.

Do you feel like it's gathered the women around this sort of care for the trees here and the space?

Yes, I think people seemed to be really touched by looking at the slice of tree. And the timeline and things. And realising that they're part of it. It's the big thing, really, sort of like life and death. It's the life and death of what you're used to. It's the death of what we're used to and it's the life that has grown there and doing something with it and having it in memory, but also perhaps having something tangible or different that will feel right. And it's a way of actually just physically, when you've made some large mallets to knock the wedges in the wood. And it's a way, when you swing these heavy things into the wood, and put energy into it, it gets rid of the frustration.

The rest of the trees that they're felling, presumably there isn't something doing similarly elsewhere. Did you ask specifically that they left them for you?

Well actually Nicola asked specifically that they left these. I had said, I don't know how it came about, but I think had said, "I think they're taking down an oak tree and I thought it was the one on the corner, strangely," and I said "Do you think there's any way we can have the wood?" And we didn't really know but she made some initial discussions with people and I think the feeling was from the conservation and the arbor team that the Heath - this is third hand - that they thought it would be great if there was some sort of community project. But that the wood, most of the wood that is being felled is going to be used for construction things, for paths and things, and turned back into useful stuff on the Heath. So thanks to Nicola and the conservation team and various others, the contractors who came in here, who aren't part of the Heath obviously, they left this and I'm hoping that we can get some of the other wood. The older wood and the holly wood and some silver birch and stuff like that, just to make other things, or at least to work it so that, just the process of what I do, using a bench called a shave horse and just sitting on it, just

working the wood, is actually very calming. And I'm hoping that people will be able to have a go at that. Even if nothing comes out of it. Everybody wants to have tables and benches and da da da da, which is great, but I'm not confident, whereas I used to make all that stuff, nowadays I'm not confident that I can do that. I tend to just let the tree, the wood, and myself or whoever's doing it, design whatever's going to happen, by just working it and seeing what comes out.

Did you have a lot of women come out last weekend?

No, this is a staff area, so literally, lifeguards helped me yesterday and one friend, Jill, came round, just to start knocking it in. So very few people have seen this actual log at the moment, so I need to negotiate whether I can bring people around to have a go at actually knocking it out and splitting this, and I'm hoping that's possible. If not, those that can will work it and we'll take bits around for other swimmers to have a go. It felt like it was the right time to do something like this. For me, never mind anybody else. So we'll see. But it may not get any further than this - I may find I can't do anymore, and that's alright.

Is there anything else you want to tell me about?

The reason I came here originally was that my partner that brought me here was terminally ill with cancer, and she came here as her sanctuary. And said that the water was like brown silk. And that it was a wonderful place for her just to feel totally at home. And - I don't want to say normal - but just away from being who she was. And in her last few months she was very concerned about what was going to happen to her after she died, and she said, "What actually happens to me?" and this was a question, no one can answer it. And then somebody came up with this, I think she read somewhere that basically when you're alive you're like a pebble being thrown into a river that forms an eddy, a swirl of water, and

when you die the swirl disappears and you fall to the bottom of the river or whatever, and you become at one with the flow, and you become a part of the river and the water and everything else. I swim here - in fact, we were just talking to somebody - the majority of swimmers, we're all living and dying while we're here. We're all at some stage within that process. People come with huge mental anxiety, physical anxiety and whatever, and both as a lifeguard and as a swimmer, I've just got to know so many people that are at various stages since, as no doubt I am and everybody else is, and the water and the pond and the Heath beyond is the one place that holds something which is essentially human. And I don't know why that is. I don't care actually. And I hope, whereas the majority of people, when you mention this to them, that this is precious and important, it is like a lung for people, this place, the whole Heath is, a place to breathe, a place to be, I don't know why I can go to the most beautiful parts of the countryside there is to live and *not* find it there, but I can still find it here. Maybe that's because of my experience and links with people. But I will bring people through the depths of the countryside and say, "If you come to London, you have to come to this place just to experience it once." Whether it's the pond or the Heath I don't mind, just come and experience it and understand its rarity, whatever that is. [I then took a look at the log, marking out the heartwood and the sapwood. I mark out when I arrived, when I was born, when Jane was born, etc.]

You see, this was handed over to the women sometime in the 20s, and there was allegedly something to do with the King coming down or whatever, so I'd thought they'd have planted a tree then, because that would make sense, if the King comes down you plant a tree or he plants a tree or whatever, but I don't know. We've tried to find an oak sapling from this tree, because this must be a seed tree at that age, but we can't find one at the

moment. But hopefully we'll find an oak sapling and plant it, if it's in this area. We've got a yew sapling. So we'll have to shift it before they remove that.

It'll be quite a change.

And it will be good. I mean, the kingfisher flies over here and the geese can fly onto the pond easily, and the sunlight is beautiful. And the light.

Will this remain a staff area?

No, we technically don't have a staff area for the new build.

So when will this all be finished?

We're supposed to get this back next May. Supposed to lose it in February and get it back in May. I don't know if that'll happen. They've got to lose all this deck, take all the deck down, rebuild it, put up a new build in. February, March, April, May. We'll see. I think the project will actually change everybody's lives, and no doubt for the better, but it's the way that it was conceived and, just…. [inaudible]. [We look at the tree map of the pond that is posted on the community notice board. Jane points to the oak.]

So it's that oak. I don't know, I think just this job, and being in the space for eight hours a day, and it was quite difficult. I just used to run away and I had my head down a lot. All this, what's going on here? What's going on there? I can't stand this. And I'd find some [inaudible]. Suddenly it was all about the place. It's a way of hiding here, I think, when you need to hide from people.

Jonathan, 15 February, 2015, at Kenwood House

How long have you been coming?

I grew up in Muswell Hill, 2 or 3 miles to the east, and I think I probably came to Kenwood for as long as I can remember. I think my parents probably brought me here as a baby, so I think my parents here since they moved here in the early 1970s. So I've been coming all my life. I think probably my earliest memories are a little bit older. Coming to the Kenwood concerts. We would never buy tickets to come into the deck-chaired areas. We would sit up on the hill in this direction and have a picnic blanket and we would normally come with another family or a couple of other families. The kids would run around and the adults would sit and listen a bit more to the music as it came from afar. Those are some of my earliest memories, and I guess we did that from about 8, for a few years around that time. The early to mid 90s.

You still come now.

I do. I came here a lot with my family as a child, and then I guess I started coming here by myself when I came back from undergraduate studies, so that would've been 2005. I came back from Cambridge and I worked for six months at an orchestra as a project management intern, and it was Monday to Friday in the centre of town. I found it quite stressful and demanding, and I started coming to the Heath every weekend for a walk which I found very important and enjoyable. That would've been around the age of 21. So yeah, I would've come here with my family a lot through childhood, then there was a bit of a gap, then in my early twenties started coming here quite a lot by myself for walks at the weekend in the context of quite a demanding Monday to Friday job.

It was about six months after that that I got involved with Heath Hands. I had this six month job at the orchestra, and I was thinking about what I wanted to do next, so I'd taken this job because I loved classical music and I was interested in what jobs there were within

classical music, but I wasn't really sure and I had mixed feelings about the job. At the end of the six months I wanted to try a few different things. I got a position with an arts and disability charity, and I also saw the Heath Hands opportunity. And given how much I loved coming to the Heath, and I felt quite stifled by the office environment and I like being outside and wanted to do something more physical, so I thought it might be an enjoyable thing to do one morning a week. So I did that in 2006, for about 6 months, on Thursday mornings. So that was my Heath Hands experience, which I then did up until I began a masters in the October of 2006 at UCL. At which point it wasn't possible to come on a Thursday morning anymore. Since then I haven't done the Heath Hands but I've come regularly to the Heath, with varying degrees of frequency. I always come to the Heath on my birthday - I walk across the Heath on my birthday normally on my own, that's my preference, and then I will always walk across the Heath in the week before Christmas as well. Those are two things that always happen. My birthday is July 12. I guess there are various things I can say about why I do those particular walks. I guess there are ways in which this place has been overlaid by personal memories. The fact that I did come here with my parents means that I have very long associations, and happy associations, so I quite enjoy being put in touch with those pasts. And it is a place which very much is more, it's not exactly a park. It has much more features of a wild or uncultivated or rural space, yet it is very close to the more urban locations that I have spent my life and am very attached to. So I like putting myself in this location in which I feel close to the scenes of my urban life, but in a very distinct kind of space outside of them. And I guess I treat it as an opportunity for quite enjoyable reflection. So these walks that I take at those times of year, I look forward to as opportunities to be outside of my everyday life, in certain

respects, but not so wildly removed from it that I'm not still closely attached to it. So they're walks through which I am able to think in different ways that might not be possible in the everyday life, but is also within certain sites of my own biography. And I guess there are lots of things which I enjoy about this space. I like the diversity of the environment, the fact that you do have these mature woods, these beautiful meadows, you have the ponds. The fact that there seem to be these very characterful and distinct parts of the heath, but still part of a single space. So you know, which part am I going to go to this time, which route am I going to take this time? I enjoy that feature of the space. I guess it's also located in a part of London which is very comfortable. It's got the beautiful architecture of Hampstead village, and there's a part of me which enjoys this kind of comfort and I guess there are certain reassurance at a psychic level that comes from being in this part of London. Which I guess is not only through its associations with my own childhood, but also because of the material prosperity of the space.

Does the history matter to you?

I don't know a huge amount about the history of the Heath. I probably have more of a relationship to the arts and intellectual life of Hampstead and Highgate and how they might overlay the history of the Heath, rather than about the Heath in particular.

What did you do with Heath Hands?

A large proportion of the time was spent pulling up balsam. I don't know if that is still as much of a problem as it was ten years ago. There's the sphagnum bog, and we did some work there. The most Sisyphysian moment was when we were getting pebbles out of the lawn here and they were just getting kicked back! That was just morning which felt a bit ridiculous. But the activity I remember us doing most was pulling up balsam.

Did this change your relationship with the Heath?

It was interesting to meet the other people involved in Heath Hands. That gave me a sense of one particular range of, collection of people who were coming and engaging with the Heath. Just to come and find out a bit about them. I guess there are one or two features of the Heath that I didn't know about that I came to know. I didn't know that Sphagnum Bog was this particularly ecologically-rich site, and I didn't have a sense of it being there particularly, so I guess I got some slightly more developed knowledge of the different parts of the Heath and the ways that they're important, like particularly this moss and the fact that it was there. And I guess it gave me a fuller sense of some of the ways in which the Heath is managed. And I was interested to meet some of the staff and have a think about their jobs and what they do and who they are. It probably did give me more insight into the ways in which this environment is reproduced, for all the ways in which it combines both manicured garden-like areas and more wild rural aspects, the whole thing is clearly reproduced in important ways and clearly managed, and I guess it's important to put myself back in the position of knowing that previously, but I guess it gave me a sense of the reproduction of the Heath.

Is your experience of Kenwood continuous with your experience of the Heath?

No, I think during my childhood I probably almost always came just to Kenwood. It was really Kenwood that I knew most, maybe one or two times to the ponds, but it was only in my early 20s that I began to explore the rest of the Heath. So I guess Kenwood feels like the much more, if we want to use the dichotomy of culture and nature, then Kenwood is the cultivated, more garden-like, reproduced section of the Heath, and beyond Kenwood is the more natural or rural. And I guess I have a sense of there being gates which can be more or

less shut on Kenwood. Whereas the rest of the Heath you can get in at night and it isn't enclosed. I guess I'm interested in the relationship between the Heath and the rest of London. There are days when I'm having a walk on the Heath when I really don't want to turn and have a sight of the Shard, and the city, so I'll deliberately avoid that and I guess there are interesting ways in which different parts of the Heath connect to other parts of London, so I guess down by the Royal Free, the Heath kind of just opens onto the street there. Whereas here there is a more definite boundary between Kenwood and the rest of the world. So I guess have have more of a sense of Kenwood being discreet and having more boundaries, with the rest of the Heath being more wild, it kind of just spills onto London a bit more.

So you find the view of London troubling sometimes?

I guess it depends what I want. I guess I maybe make some distinction between the walks I do on my birthday and at Christmas, which I typically would try to do on a weekday. There would be fewer people here, and I would typically enter the Heath at this meadow here [by Athlone house], and you've got this wooded entrance here, and this meadow, and you can't really see beyond it, which I like very much. I like the experience of not being in connection with the urbanscape at that point. But as I walk up the meadow, I know that if I turn my head to the left I will see the city of London, so in certain moods I won't turn my head that way. And other times, maybe there's not much distinction between the parts of the Heath as I've divided it than between what I'm in the mood for, but I can be up on Parliament Hill, and that's kind of why you go there, isn't it? To see the view. And that can be wonderful, it just depends what kind of occasion it is and what kind of relationship with this space and with London that I'm after.

Any favourite spots?

Yep. I mentioned this meadow over in this direction, I don't know the name of it. I think one of the reasons is that it would often be a place from which I enter the Heath. And it's one of those places where, you haven't really seen the Heath and then it's there in front of you, and also because it encompasses your field of vision and encompasses you, and I like this sensation of being kind of enclosed by it. And there have been occasions when it has been covered in snow, and I've been there in the height of summer and the grass has been very high. I think it's partly about being in a space that's quite different to, heterogeneous to my urban experience. And there's all kinds of fantasy which can take place. I love that meadow very much.

Les, 7 February, 2015, outside the Men's Pond

[Les begins by reading a poem he wrote, entitled "Pond Life"]

How long have you been swimming here?

About twenty years. I live in Islington so it's not too far, I walked today.

Do you normally swim at the Men's Pond?

Yes, I've only swam once at the Mixed Pond. The main thing is the nature, you're in nature, you're swimming very close to the fish and the birds, you can get right close to them especially the birds. The greater crested grebe, for example. And I have seen kingfishers here. In the summer you have damsel flies. And it's free - it's something where you can just turn up and bring your own food. I know you're supposed to pay but it's discretionary like in a museum, it's something that's rapidly disappearing in London. Free

things. It's quite spartan, the conditions here, which I don't mind. And I know people here, so there is a social aspect of it, but I quite like swimming when it's quiet. I found last summer got quite busy at times so I started coming in the morning, when it was a bit quieter and I could be a bit more anonymous. Because it is a bit like a knitting circle in there, you feel everybody knows your business to an extent. But for some people it is a really social, it's very important socially to them.

Do you feel a part of that community?

Yes, yes, I've been told I'm part of the furniture.

You swim until October?

Usually, yes, and start in the spring if there's a sunny warm day. But that's in and out really.

What's your cutoff temperature?

About ten degrees. Yes. Last year when it was very hot it was 23 degrees sometimes in the water and that was like a bath, a bit sluggish.

Could you describe what it is in the sensation of swimming that holds your attention?

It's quite meditative. It's not organized, you can swim however you like, unlike in an official pool where you have to go anti-clockwise or there's lanes or whatever. So there's a degree of freedom here. You're very aware of the elements and you see the change, the changes in the seasons. There's nowhere else like it in London I think. I'm very concerned that it's going to be compromised by the work that's proposed to be done on the ponds. I think it's going to be disruptive in the least.

What do you think is going to change?

I don't know for sure but I understand there's going to be digging, so that's going to be a noise problem. I just feel it's going to be disruptive. I mean, why spoil it? It's perfect as it is really. I mean, we've had some very wet winters and there's been no floods, so I think it's just another corporate scam. Just change for the sake of it.

Have you been involved in the community backlash?

A little bit. I went to a meeting in June and I've signed petitions. And I've said to a friend that if it comes to it, that we have to lie in front of diggers, we might as well. I'm involved in other things politically, so I think it's all part of this corporate takeover that doesn't take any notice of democracy.

Is the Heath important to you?

Yes, because I come here in all seasons. In a way I kind of prefer it in what I call the off-season, because there's fewer people, there's real hardcore people come here. It can be too busy in the summer but even then you can usually find a little bit, if you know Cohen's Fields. I'll probably go up there after, because that's a quiet bit, and there's a fox that me and some friends sometimes feed. I haven't seen her since New Year's Day, but she trusts us. In the autumn, we found out about her because these guys said that this fox comes up at a certain time of day because she knows we've got food for her. She doesn't like fruit, but anything else - bread, cakes, anything really apart from fruit I've been told. She likes dried fruit and nuts she's eaten, but she's a bit fussy. I call her Vivian Vixen, but that's just a silly thing really. I don't know why Londoners don't like them. She's in very good condition. Sometimes you see mangey ones but it's not their fault. I think it's exciting to have something wild in London. I mean, the heath itself, I know it's managed, but it's the nearest we have to countryside apart from the Lee Valley. I go there a lot as well. It's quite

different to here, but it's also a place where you can get away from large numbers of people, and advertising, and hyper-consumerism as yet. You can view the city from here, as you know, and it looks very distant and ethereal, insubstantial; it's all a facade. The tumulus I like as well. I'm not spiritual, but it has a sort of feel to it and seems to attract a certain sort of people. There's all these rumours about what it's about, and it's got some unusual trees there - coniferous trees, there's not to many of them on the Heath. I think there is a theory that it is ancient after all, an ancient burial ground. It's just a nice place to go in the winter to see the sun go down.

Anything that bothers you?

I think there's a problem with rubbish in the summer, and I have written to the City of London saying perhaps there should be some more recycling containers around but I think they thought it was going to compromise the integrity of the Heath. I don't know, but around Gospel Oak it can get terrible in the summer. But not really, I can't think of anything. Most people that come here do respect it. But some people who come here, you think why do you come here if you just drink and leave your rubbish about, why not just go to McDonalds or something?

Anything else?

It can be a meditative sort of place, and I think people do come here when they feel a bit stressed. Sometimes I've gone to Cohen's Fields and sat on the grass - it never seems to get too wet there, and you can just listen to the wind in the trees. I don't come so much to the pond anymore for the social aspect, sometimes I feel it's a bit intrusive, and in the sunbathing area we're all a bit cramped. So I come here for the swimming, the exercise. But you're never a stranger here. It seems to attract eccentric people. About seven or eight

years ago I had quite a few kingfisher sightings. It's different at different times of year. The cormorants come in the winter but it's the grebes especially. Because it's their environment, you're right close to them. Sometimes you hear this noise and you think, "what the hell was that?" and it's a big carp just turning. I think there's no where else like it. I don't like the fact that they might start charging for it. I think if it becomes more tarted up, that's what they'll do, they'll use it as an excuse to make it more official. It's fine as it is, I think. I can't really think of any improvement. There's a bit of tension between some of the guards and people, but not too much, I think we all accept each other. There's a big gay community there and there's been a bit of friction in the past but it's not too bad these days.

Liz, 15 February, 2015, at Kalendar

Do you swim often?

With the exception of last week, which has been sort of miserable and grey, I swim there probably twice or three times a week. But this is my first winter. In fact, I've only lived in the area for two years, and I swam in the summer the first time, and the second summer I swam and then I just sort of carried on. I kept thinking, "Oh, when it gets below 16 degrees I'll stop" and then thought, "Oh, this is alright, I'll go down to about 10", and so I found myself swimming on Christmas Day and swimming when there was ice on the pond, which was an extraordinary experience. And so I'm now going to carry on, but I swim when the sun shines, so I don't mind how cold it is or whether there's snow or ice, but I find it really hard to motivate myself if it's grey. So I've had a week off because it's been a grey week,

and the only day that it wasn't I was working but I'm going today. Today the sun is shining, and I'll be off! I feel that little call to go and swim.

How is it going?

I'm completely surprised at myself. I am *so not* the kind of person who goes and swims in cold water. It's sort of got a nutty fruitcake element to it - I mean, why would anyone go and swim when the water is 2 degrees and where there are little ice bergs floating around you? Why would you do it? Well, why would I? There's something of an addiction, there must be something about what it does to the body. There's a feeling of overcoming the psychological difficulties of going into the water and all that so you feel quite proud of yourself in a weird way. But mostly you feel so wonderful when you come out and it lasts for the whole day. So if you wake up feeling kind of 'glumphy' and you go for a swim, you're a new, positive person as a result. It's like a drug.

Did you swim before moving here?

I've always swum, but only when I fell out of boats. I'm not a sit on the beach swimmer at all - my poor children have never had beach holidays. They've been sort of dragged up mountains or on boats. So I don't go to swimming pools and swim lengths - I don't really *like* swimming actually as a sport, because there's something passive about it. But this is a completely different experience. It's to do with the environment, really, the trees and the birds and the solitude. This sort of mystic place. And just being women, because it's relatively little in life that one does without there being men. I think it works differently the other way around. There are lots of, or a few effectively men only places, but there aren't many for women, and it's a different atmosphere with just women. It's very open and supportive, I think, unlike the men's. My husband swims at the men's and we discuss the

different ambiences, so you get women wandering around with no clothes on, all shapes and sizes, and there's no body beautiful thing at all. Nobody cares what anyone looks like. And people, I think, are very open - one has wonderful conversations in the changing room. Lots of women of different ages and different backgrounds, but united by doing this really peculiar thing that I can hardly explain. It's a very warm experience. There are little frictions, about whether you turn the light on or not or whatever, so real life does intrude, but I find mostly you can sort of bask in a feeling of being women together. And in the summer, when the sun shines, and you get the women all sunbathing on the meadow, that's lovely too. I don't know why, it's just happy.

Is community important?

I think it would be less fun if it was just me, or if people didn't speak. It's a kind of casual community for me. It's not that I have made friends there that I go out and have coffee with - that's not why I go anyway. It's a sort of casual interaction that is present. And surprisingly there are a lot of people who do swim through the winter, so there are a lot of people you see every day, and you see loads of people just once, and have a conversation, and off they go. I've talked about what it's like going from swimming in the ponds to what it's like going to Burma, where it's apparently 40 degrees, to do refugee work for 4 weeks with somebody. There was a wonderful conversation between an English woman and an Eastern European woman about cows and the milk marketing board. They found out that they had a shared interest and in their earlier lives had both worked for the equivalent of the milk marketing board in their respective countries. So you know, these things go on. Philosophy, people talk about. There've been a lot of conversations about counselling - I think a lot of counsellors go swim. Why would that be? I think self-employed, have a lot of

time. Geographical. You get talking to people. And the lifeguards are there, a nice continuous, reassuring presence. And in their way, they're part of the fabric. Some of them have been there for years, simply know it all, have seen it all, identify with the birds. They're good on pointing out kingfishers and so on. It's wholly pleasurable I think.

Is the setting important?

It is. Again, a bit of a surprise, because we moved here from Fulham, where we had a bigger house, so we were downsizing because we're now retired and our children have left home. And we actually chose this house really, because it's near friends and family we have in Muswell Hill. I didn't really notice that it was so close to the Heath until we moved in. I sort of knew it was but, I didn't realize we were between Highgate Cemetery, Waterlow Park, and the Heath. We had all of that, and it's been massively important to us really. We go out in all weather. It was particularly lovely last winter when it snowed and we went crunching through the snow. It's a safety valve, you can sort of still go out and get lost, after two years. It's very important. I don't go on my own really. I usually would go with my husband, or if we have friends to supper or whatever, but I have been for walks on my own when I have felt like I wanted to be on a hillside or whatever, to look over London, but mostly the Heath is more of an experience with people, to be shared with people. The ponds, though, I do have a friend in the summer and I sometimes meet her there for a picnic, but mostly I go on my own to the pond and that's part of it.

Do you have a favourite spot?

I never know what anything is called on the Heath. Just back from Parliament Hill, at the top of the hill, down a bit, towards Kenwood, there is a wood of trees that are widely spaced out and have low branches that are parallel to the ground, that you want to climb on

and which I would've done as a child. And underneath, grass doesn't grow underneath, there's sort of soft brown leaf mould stuff that is rather nice. But there's enough light that comes through, so it's not a dark wooded experience. I think that's really beautiful. Sort of on top of one of those smaller, curvy hills, you go up to it. Makes you want to hug a tree.

Anything about swimming in the pond specifically that interests you?

There is. I really don't understand it - as I say, there are lots of nice swimming baths here and I would never go swimming there, but I do like swimming. So let me think - it's quite mysterious, because you can't actually see what's going on there. It's not clinical, like a swimming bath would be. There's something slightly wild about it. I saw an enormous terrapin, must've been there about 50 years, basking on a lifebuoy, and I know there are crayfish in there. There's something about it being a real environment. A bit of murkiness and mystery. There must be something about exercise, although the exercise for me is that I usually cycle up the hill to it, so that's probably more exercise than the swimming that I do. It's a good hill. I think the swimming experience, it is somehow different from swimming in a pool. One has the same quality as swimming in surf, or if you jump in a fast-flowing river, if you jump in a river, as I used to do when young, so it's not simply swimming. It's swimming plus something. And there I think it's that you're moving, you're swimming towards a bird, say. There's often a cormorant watching you, or a seagull or some baby ducks swimming in front of you. I find it really quite hard to say why I enjoy swimming there and nowhere else, but it must be the ambience I think. And the getting cold, I suppose. There is definitely something about getting really cold briefly and then getting warm again, hopefully!

How long do you stay in?

Five minutes at this time of year. The lifeguards say you should stay in for the number of minutes that it is centigrade, but I like to swim to the barrier, and that tends to take me five minutes. But whether it's hot or cold in a way, the jumping in is always a shock to the system, obviously, and I've got my technique for doing it, which involves not hesitating at all, counting up to four, looking at the sky, and then going down four steps and pushing off, and I do that like a metronome. But whether it's 16 degrees or 2 degrees, you have a shock of cold and you gasp when you first get in, and you swim to the first life buoy, and by the time you get there you have acclimatized. At 2 degrees it's probably the hypothermia starting to set in, but anyway, by the time I've got past that, I feel I could stay in for ten minutes or fifteen minutes, but I'm sort of, the lifeguards say don't. That's death.

Anything else?

Like everybody I am nervous about the ponds project. The most important thing to me - I don't know the rights around it, I did go to the planning meaning and I was *sort of* convinced that they can't get around doing it, but that it's probably unnecessary but the law - but the really important thing is that they do put it back like it is. I wouldn't mind an extra hot shower, but I think some of the ladies would mind the changing room being made slightly more comfortable, but personally I do like the hot shower, but the essentials of it really need to remain the same. I just hope that they'll respect that, really.

Can they achieve that?

It's not natural, of course, it's a reservoir. You see building projects, and in my working life I've been involved in lots and really they can do it, they can do almost anything. I know they can put it back to how it is with perhaps one or two modest improvements. I'd like the bike path to be less muddy, that sort of thing, I don't think that would spoil the

ambience. But the meadow, and the deck, and the surrounding trees and so on, I'd like them to be kept really as they are. Maybe a few more! The privacy has reduced while I've been going, they've pruned the bushes and things, which are really a shame for women who don't want to be looked at. So they could improve that. But I'd be pleased, really, if they do it as quickly as they can. [Pauses.] It must be a combination, must it, of the coldness, and the overcoming difficulty, and the beauty.

Nicky, 29 January, 2015, at the Ladies' Pond

Can you tell me a bit about how long you've been coming to the pond and why?

I live about four and a half, five miles away. I've been coming to the Heath about, consistently, most days, when I'm in London, about 12 years. Since I first got my own dog. Dog walking is the reason I started coming to the Heath every day, with my last dog, and then about eight years ago I wondered whether it would be possible to combine swimming here, I thought I'd try it, because I'd always looked at it with interest and slight suspicion, and I came and the first day that I arrived here, the first day that I swam here, a kingfisher dipped down into the water, in front of my nose, and I was completely hooked. Kingfishers are incredibly rare to see, and it was just magical. I didn't realize what it was at first, because you see it from below, and then you think, oh my god, that was a kingfisher, how extraordinary! Swimming in winter is very intense. Swimming here is meditative, in the summer it is a more lingering meditation, in the winter it is a more focussed meditation, because you have to contend with the cold, which is quite painful. But you do get the most amazing endorphin rush afterwards. You do this first thing in the morning and you feel,

well, what can the day throw at me that is going to be tougher? It is a good way to start the day. This pond is very, it's a very unusual, unique place. All the ponds here are. This one is in my opinion more beautiful than the others. And it's an extremely uplifting place to come. There are mornings when you come here in winter and you think, "Oh, do I really want to do this," and I don't think I've ever done it and then come out and thought, "No, I wish I hadn't bothered." It's very, very uplifting. It's beautiful, physically stimulating. I think I and others believe that it is physically enhancing. You feel certainly mentally fitter, but also physically fitter as a result of doing it. So it has lots of benefits.

Is there anything that you really love about the Heath?

I love the fact that we're five miles from Oxford Circus, the centre of one of the world's largest and most vibrant cities. And you have what appears to be fairly natural countryside and a lot of wildlife, which is living quite naturally. Like most of the British countryside, this is managed. But most of the management in the wilder bits is fairly unobtrusive. You can see it going on, but it's not manicured. And that's important.

Do you think it is an important contrast with other London parks?

I am slightly allergic to anyone describing it as a park. Clearly it is, because it's managed, but I don't perceive it as being a park. I see it as being an oasis of, a sort of rural analogue in the middle of the city. It attracts extraordinary people. This place in particular. All the ponds attract interesting individuals of either gender, but you do meet some amazing women here and people who swim here in winter are fairly opinionated, strong-minded, interesting women. It's a great community, but the most important thing for me is that it's beautiful. Five miles from Oxford Circus, I did one swim and I saw a kingfisher, a

cormorant, and a heron, all fishing as I was swimming, all at the same time, and that's extraordinary.

Paul, Head Gardener at Kenwood, 31 January, 2015, at his office in Mansion Cottage

Can you tell me a bit about your work at Kenwood?

I'm in my eleventh year at Kenwood. I didn't really think I was going to be here so long. It goes very quickly, very busy site, and it's quite interesting because I work at Kenwood and I live on site, but when I travel home, I live in southwest Scotland, so I live some distance away. So when I come to the city, I come to a green oasis. So it's a reverse of what people expect. But it is an interesting site, incredibly busy, and that's both a good and bad thing in a way. Because of the pressure on the landscape, and so very many people can sometimes detract from the charm of the place. A Romantic, 18th century landscape that has a million people is not so Romantic! I'm on site most of the time. My pattern is that I work every other weekend, I don't work Mondays, and that gives me a long weekend away every other weekend.

What's it like living here?

Well I live in the old stable block, which is in one way quite charming. I'm very much a person that has history running through the blood, as they say, as most people at EH tend to have, so all the time I'm deeply interested in what's gone before. My previous job was head gardener at Threave, which is a National Trust for Scotland garden, it's their training garden. And so, a similar thing again. So it's nice to be part of a living landscape and indeed the garden and estate, that is a fragment of what was there before. Kenwood has

been an estate of one sort or another for about 800 years, so it's a significant period of time. And whilst the ebb and flow of the success of the estate has changed, and obviously the size, at its peak of over 1500 acres to the remnant of 112 acres now, nonetheless there is that continuity of the estate, and of course there's always been a head gardener or an estate manager of some form or another, so I'm just another person in that long line of succession. So it's nice. It's enjoyable. Of course it's a team effort and I work very closely with my fellow gardeners. Horticulture is a very rewarding, not financially rewarding, thing. But sometimes things are worth more than money. And we all tend to have the same sort of take on life, if you like, and that makes it a nice environment in which to work. So that in itself is very rewarding. There are six full time gardeners on site, we are a team of four within EH, then we have two contractors, who are with us the entire time as well. They take care of things like emptying the bins, cutting the hedges, sweeping the roads, mowing the grass and those activities that allow themselves to be very nicely parcelled up for contractual operations. So it's a good combination that works well in London.

Do you feel like you have much of a relationship with the Heath outside of Kenwood?

Strangely no. No, it really is strange. Kenwood tends to be for me something of a gilded cage. A very nice cage, but sometimes I can come from home, come to Kenwood, and I might stay on the estate, sometimes I might not even leave the estate and go back home again. Apart from going to Euston and jumping on the train to go home. Ordinarily we do travel, the head gardeners, quite a bit to meetings. So there is quite a bit of movement that does take place. Which is quite nice, because whenever we have meetings or training it tends to be in these sorts of places that are within the EH portfolio.

How much does historical intention factor into your work?

It's absolutely critical. Kenwood is a restoration program, as you've put your finger on. It should've been finished by now, it isn't finished, it's perhaps 70 per cent finished maybe. But when English Heritage was created about 27 years ago or so, EH then took over Kenwood, which had been managed by the Heath, by the Corportation of London, and I guess the Corporation of London had been managing Kenwood as just another part of the Heath, really. And there was very little in the way of historic integrity in what was taking place on the site. It was just another open space, albeit a nice open space with a house, but the landscape tended to merge from one to the other. So in the time that EH have taken on the curation of Kenwood, and in a way it illuminates a new government department, and tremendous resources being thrown into that department when it was created. And of course now, in April, English Heritage becomes a charity, and we've been flatlined by the government for about ten years, so resources have been squeezed and it's been much more difficult to find pots of cash. Having said that, the organization that is an organization that is very good with buildings, only lately I would say have they woken up to the fact that landscapes tend to be the thing that draw people in for return visits. People will go to a building to see it and tick it off their list and think, "Well I've done that". Unless there is something that is changing, perhaps, like the paintings in the house. But I think landscapes have the power to draw people back, the plant material, the fact that they are changing, so the organization has seen that and is now investing quite heavily in landscapes. Which is a very positive thing. So even in a contracted fiscal period, the organization is really investing in landscapes and that's good for us.

What is about this particular landscape that brings people back?

Regionally, I think that there is a passion for Kenwood. I think it's a multi-faceted thing. I think there's a passion about what was here, there's certainly passion about an internationally-renowned gallery that people have free access to, there's a sense of ownership in the community as well. The fact that it's on their patch and people like to take friends when they're visiting. I think curiously, the Brewhouse, people like to come for Sunday lunch. So that's sort of patronage of the refreshment facilities. It's just a nice location that people like. It's always safe. The socio-economic mix is comfortable for people, and the area tends to be fairly affluent, which throws up one of the challenges for the organization because as the body that we are, we're looking to bring in ethnic and minority groups, and that has certainly been reiterated following our Heritage Lottery Grant, where one of the conditions of receiving the money for the restoration was that we develop packages to broaden our profile.

How much do you know about the history of the ponds?

I know a bit. What I can tell you is that there were medieval fish ponds down there, in Wood Pond, and then that was amalgamated the Wood Pond that we see today. When was that done? I'd guess it'd be about 1750. One of the things that might be worth investigating is that many of the farm ponds had been developed where marl had been taken out to spread on the land. This one then (After Pritchard, 1793), [pointing to map] the Thousand Pound Pond indicates the cost. Also note other ponds here [pointing to west side of property, by the house]. You may know we did some tree felling, which was quite contentions. But now those trees are gone, it does actually provide the opportunity to bring those ponds back. I'm working with a hydrologist at the moment, who is actually doing the brief down at the Heath Ponds, Nick Haycock, he is working on this for me. This is quite

an interesting one [shows sketch] this is a pre-Repton sketch. We've got the kitchen garden on this side, on the west side, as opposed to over here on the east, and of course, we have the ponds here. And these are the pre-Repton farm buildings.

What kind of work goes into maintaining the ponds?

They were dredged I think in 92. That was a lot of work, they were badly silted up. First of all, when they were taking out the sludge, they did some soil tests, and they found that some of the material taken out needed to be treated as toxic waste. Because of the fireworks, and the fallout from the fireworks. So that in itself was quite interesting. Fireworks on there had been from 1951, I think, and we no longer have fireworks. Maybe five years ago they stopped. Now we don't do any concerts at all, which in some ways is sad because it tended to be a local community interest. When that was done, a lot of heavy equipment created pockets of compaction where these vehicles had been, and only about four years ago I did some compaction relief across the estate. And it was in March, and I spent £20,000 relieving this compaction over the site, essentially because of trees so that we could get better growth from the trees and gaseous exchange taking place with the roots and so on. But when we, about five years ago, had a hydrologist looking at the dams, it was noted that during heavy rain, there was water topping over from one dam down to another. Because the water was running over a mud bank, essentially, and one pond is 12 or 15 feet higher than the other, there was concern about a catastrophic collapse of the dam. So we spent £300,000 and brought in some steel shuttering, Land and Water, a company came in and put in some steel shuttering, and we clad it in timber. Nice job. And that is the precursor of course that the Heath are now looking at and doing themselves. So in that particular instance, we were ahead of the curve on that one. But when that was

being done they did find some old timbers, which we were not sure what they were. There was speculation from that of an old mill to a boathouse. And then, latterly, we thought maybe it was an old boat house that was down there. It was in Wood Pond, towards the south part of the dam. Not a great deal to see but when they were putting in the steel shuttering, there were some timbers down there, way in the mud, so it was an interesting find and we did wonder. They were elm logs, and I think we did put a chainsaw through and got it dated with the timbers, with the growth rings. Now I can't remember the date, but it seemed to fit the 1800s. There is no record of there being a boat house there, anecdotally it was kicked around, but there is no firm evidence. The timbers were indeed quite well preserved.

Do you have a favourite part?

It would be the Dairy. Probably when it's raining. When there's no one here. And when the light conditions, and there's mist and fog to block out, and there's a degree of wind to block out any background noise of the city. Days like that, you really could be anywhere. You capture the magic. And now that we've reopened that view, standing at the Dairy, looking across to Sham Bridge and the house. We have just cleared one more view from the Dairy to Beech Mound, one of our oldest views. And because of the way that we work, with community stakeholders, anything to do with the loss of trees raises emotions. And sometimes it takes a long time to win people over. And we tend to be an organization that hates any sort of conflict, and we want people to embrace what we do and to feel that we are good custodians of the landscape. It can take quite a long time for people to be accepting of what we want to do, so it tends to be a long burn on the things that we do. I guess in a way the organization has been bitten by the past, because when Kenwood

started, there were plans to implement the huge changes on the estate immediately, and there was a lot of tree felling that took place. EH wasn't really very good with consultation at that time, and there was tremendous public opposition, and because of that everything was stalled. And because it was stalled, the money was lost from the site, otherwise the project would've been finished. So because of that very severe reaction, it tended to stop progress in its tracks. And it's taken a very long time to reach a degree of momentum, whereby we can start making significant change over a shorter period of time. We've only just achieved momentum.

Do you feel like, with reopening the views, you are achieving the landscape ideal?

Absolutely, without a question. Now I can take groups around and say, this is what we did in the last year, we opened that view, and people can see it. And even at the time that we went to public consultation, January February last year, and I did a day at the Dairy, a drop in and talk to the head gardener day about the plans, it was incredibly busy, very interesting. For me it was quite fascinating because I started to see people in different ways. And this local community has a whole range of very interesting and talented people, many of whom come to Kenwood. If we got artists or musicians, they tended to be very passionate about the landscape, but also very passionate about the living trees. So the very pragmatic approach of "Oh, we fell these trees, we can drive that view down to the historic intention" and albeit that we've got 6000 trees on the state and over the last six year planted about 1700 trees, so we have actually got quite a number, nonetheless they were distraught at the loss of these trees. And it was a very personal thing to them. It was very genuine and I could see they were in genuine anguish at the possibility of the loss of these trees. And then other people were much more pragmatic, and the historians and engineers

on the other end of the scale, who would have a much more clinical and sort of cotton-clipped view of what we were doing as long as there was a tree stock that was still being managed for wildlife, and would be for the good of having trees on the state. They didn't have an issue or the personal dilemma of the loss of a living organism if you like.

Do you think these approaches are mutually exclusive?

Well, I suppose it takes us back to what we're about. And we are keeping history alive for people to come and visit. And people by their very nature are diverse in their own passions, interests, and personalities, and we have to take that broad spectrum of emotion and it is about being human really. We're not machines, and it is good that people are impassioned to care, sometimes it is just difficult to harness and work with. And sometimes, because they are so embroiled with passion, they don't look beyond the immediate casualty of perhaps one tree. Ironically the three beeches, the three copper beeches, they're the ones that really did galvanize opposition. People just love these copper beeches. And yet they are just *so* inappropriate. They really are! In our landscape, they couldn't be more inappropriate. What we have there is a meadowland, and okay it's a gentleman's estate, but nonetheless there is that naturalistic pasture ground on that west side, but those copper beeches! They certainly did it for folk. There was an interesting article produced by Dominic Cole, who is quite a talented and well known landscape architect. I think published in the London Gardens Trust. He made an analogy of the landscape to one of the old masters in the house. I can't remember the exact phrase, but it was something along the lines of "The public has chosen to ask English Heritage to leave the three copper beeches, but in doing so they have not allowed EH to fully reveal the masterpiece of Repton's landscape. It is akin to scribbling over an old master." It was such an interesting take on it.

Sometimes people see an estate like this and think, “Oh my goodness, isn’t it lovely, what a wonderful job”, and of course people management is a very big issue. The damage that is done, unintentionally, but when you get 1.2 million pairs of feet over the landscape, the place wears out. And that’s a very big problem. Within the organization, we’re a tourist attraction, and when you have a tourist attraction you almost think the more people you have the better, because the more money you bring in, and because there is no charge to come into the estate, there’s no governor on the numbers of people coming in. So I tend to be the lone voice around the table saying, “Actually, guys, we’ve already got too many people now, we should not be attracting more people to the site, because of the damage that that does to the site”.

So the opposite view to inside the house?

Exactly. Apart from the curator, who would agree with me. For my general manager, one of his main focusses will be driving income, of course, because Kenwood runs at a deficit of about a million pounds a year, and the organization need to generate money. The organization needs to be self-sustaining in about eight years’ time, so there is a great challenge to raise sufficient money. Therefore that also means that there is a greater increase and pressure on the landscape. So we have to find ways to generate more money, but to manage the pressure. Can we be smarter in the way we do that? That challenge is still hanging over us.

But it’s nice work. And interesting work.

Rachel, 29 January, 2015, in her home

How long did you swim today?

I don't know, I don't time it, but, a couple minutes. It's not much. It was colder last week, there was no ice on the pond today. There was one day last week that the Ladies' Pond was closed because of ice. In the past we'd get the boat out and push it through, but that doesn't happen now.

How long have you been swimming here?

About twenty years. Since the early 90s, 91 or 92 I think was when I started swimming totally regularly. I was at work then and I would go before work, and I've kept the habit of going first thing in the morning because it's a great way to start the day, and this time of year you see dawn. You see the sun getting up, you hear the birds beginning to get excited. It's just wonderful living in a major capital city, to be able to be so in touch with nature.

Did you go to the Heath often before you started swimming?

A bit, yes, I lived near the Heath. We moved to a house on the Holly Lodge estate in 1980, and then brought up a family, and you know, with young children, you don't go out first thing in the morning to have a swim on the Heath. It was only later when they'd grown up and left home that this started.

Do you swim every day?

Every day that I can, yes, unless I have an early start and I can't be bothered to get up at six o'clock or something. So yes, I do.

What keeps you going?

Being in touch with nature, there's no doubt about that. The swimming is quite nice, and I enjoy it but I don't go to swim, I go to see what's happening in the natural world. And it's

just fantastic, watching the seasons come and go, and being aware of the seasons. Being aware of leaves forming, the difference kinds of flowers you get, and that's to me very exciting. And a huge privilege, living in a great big city. Having that on my doorstep.

Do you think swimming gives you more of an awareness of the seasons?

I think it does, because you're right in touch with nature, you're right in the middle. You go swimming around and there are ducks and you see the kingfisher occasionally, and you feel a part of it, you don't feel separated from it. So I think the swimming does make a difference. You really get down to nature, and you're awfully cold in the winter sometimes!

Do you swim in the summer?

Yes, I do, and again in the summer it is nice swimming early because it's before the crowds. I swim sometimes in the Ladies', more often in the Mixed Pond, which I like very much. And that can get really crowded on good summer weekends particular, it's absolutely bursting with people. But if you go at 8 o'clock in the morning, it's fine. It's got a charm of its own, too. I love the Ladies', but the Mixed Pond is very special too, and this time of year very few people use it, just the Winter Swimmers club, and so you usually have the place to yourself, and that feels very special.

Do you feel like you are part of a swimming community?

Yes, very much, and I like that. Although I don't go to meet people, which some people do. I think some people use the Ladies' particularly as a social centre, but it's nice and it's a very friendly group of people. I've made one or two very good friends from it, actually.

Is there anything about the Heath more widely that you really care about or love?

I love its naturalness. Of course I know it's not natural and that every blade of grass is being looked after, but it feels like a natural open space. It's not a park, it's not all prettified, it's allowed to be natural and to have a real feeling of being in the country in wild heath land. I love the fact that it's so varied. I know it very well having lived near it for so long - for thirty, thirty five years now - but I can still walk and look up and think, "Where am I?". It's incredible how varied it is, it's just wonderful. You can live in the country and not get anything like such good walks. It's ploughed fields and cars dashing along main roads, no pavements, but on the Heath you can always find somewhere quiet and peaceful to walk.

Is there anything you dislike?

I could start on the dams project, which is a big thing at the moment and has raised my eyebrows a great deal, and many other peoples'. I've been very much involved in the campaign to try and mitigate what they're proposing to do on the Heath and I'm very depressed that both the judicial review and then the planning department campaigns failed. I really admire Mark Hutchinson who is going to appeal to the Environment Secretary. I think that's a great mistake. What raises my eyebrows is seeing big dumper trucks driving over the Heath. I hate seeing any vehicles on the Heath at all, I think the City aren't too bad but they do use motorized vehicles more, perhaps, than they need to. There's nothing wrong with a bicycle for people needing to get around quickly on the Heath, and it's just not a place for cars. And there's going to be two years of great disruption with the dams, the ponds project. Sometimes if a major race is going through the Heath it is a bit of a pain, but that's fair enough, it gives a lot of people pleasure too, and the Heath is incredible adaptable. You can see a big race taking place on a muddy day and the whole place is

churned up, and you think, “This is awful”, and a couple weeks later it is fine again. So that doesn’t worry me too much.

What do you think will change about the Heath with the dams project?

There are going to be some quite considerable physical changes. The first one will be to the Model Boating Pond, which is going to be expanded, and as you know, an island and a bit round it. That will change its look a lot. I suppose one will get used to it in time, but I think that’s a pity. I feel perhaps even more strongly about the catch pit area on the Hampstead chain of ponds, where a very secluded, damp valley that people hardly go into, and is full of wildlife, flora and fauna, is going to have a massive great bund put through it, eighteen feet high and I forget how wide, huge! Absolutely huge. And they say, “Oh it’ll all be put back, it’ll all be lovely, it’ll all be as it was,” but of course it isn’t. How can it be? And it’s going to be an enormous amount of disruption, getting that there, getting the soil in, building that thing, and that’s going to last forever. There is going to be two years of hell while it goes on, but it’s always going to be there thereafter. And I think that’s a huge pity. Of course you can say, “The ponds are completely unnatural anyway,” but they’ve been there long enough for me not to want them to change. And they’re going to change in a very radical way. It’ll make a huge difference. And I’m still convinced it’s an overreaction on the part of the City of London. They seem to be taking safety precautions to a ludicrous degree. If we did have a 1 in 10,000 year event, let alone a 1 in 400,000 year event, think what the rest of London will be like! So what if there’s a load of water rushing off the Heath. The whole place is going to be in trouble!

Does the history of the heath and it’s context in London factor into your experience?

Yes, it is such an important space for Londoners. And hugely well used. I think every major city needs that kind of an outlet, where you can be in touch with nature and breathe fresh air and feel away from pollution, from cars, and so on. And sit outside and enjoy the sunshine, when there is any. It's incredibly important for Londoners.

Is it important or different than other London parks?

Yes, because of its natural thing, because it's real nature, and if you're keen of collecting, or looking at wildflowers and seeing how things grow, creepy crawlies of all kinds, ornithologists go mad around the place! And that's really great. It's great for children. And it's very much used for educational purposes. With the City, what's impressive is how much they care about the Heath. It's really impressive how much they have the place at heart. So yes I'm moaning about the dams project, but apart from that I think they're fantastic, and by and large I think the City's done a really good job, looked after the Heath extraordinary well. I suppose it's life, but it always has been a problem that one is a bit worried about letting young children out alone on the Heath. Bicycles were often snitched from kids and that's a very upsetting thing. That's one of the downsides, but that's life. I think the Heath Constabulary are pretty good.

Rui, 23 April, 2015, Interviewed at a cafe

Can you tell me a bit about your time using the Heath for cruising?

I've been thinking a lot about why people would use the Heath, and specifically why people do go and cruise on the Heath and what do they want to get out of it and how does it

fit and sit in with the rest of the users of the Heath. And how does that encroach on their freedom to use it, for both of the parties? For the dog walkers, to the people who go and cruise.

What do you think?

From the point of the view of the people that use it to meet other people for sexual encounters, sexualities are as different and as vast as personalities. They change and evolve with time. The turns you on when you are fifteen is not what turns you on at 25. At 45, it's definitely different. It changes and evolves. As your tastes in wine change over the years, or your taste in food. It changes. A lot of people use the Heath in a sexual sense because of loneliness. It's sad but it's true. It's loneliness. The main groups that you find is married people, who obviously due to the pressures of society, that they perceive, because it's all a perception, their perception of the pressures of society does not let them have an open fulfilment of their sexual wishes and needs, so they feel that by having a meeting where we don't exchange any numbers, names, address, anything else - it's just that.

You've encountered that?

Yes, married, a lot of the married men are really a big proportion of the men who cruise the Heath. Either they got marred because of the pressures of the family, depending on their ethnic group or religious group, as we know, some of the religious groups it's not acceptable to be gay. Really, in no religion it is, but that's okay. The Christians tend to be a bit more flexible on that. It's a cultural thing. I'm Portuguese. In Portugal, the same as in all of the Med countries, there's not a need to pigeon-hole people. So if you go to bed with a woman, providing that you are taking the passive part, the passive role, you're not doing anything *to* her, doesn't mean you are a lesbian. It just means that you fancied a bit of it.

Now, if you performed the active part, then you are. The same with men. If men in latin countries - keeping in mind that London is a big melting pot - providing that a man doesn't take the active part, he's still straight. Hampstead Heath, specifically, you get a lot of people that it is the escapism that they need from their lives, from their day to day life. For me specifically, at that point in time, it was paying for attention with sex. I will be the centre of somebody's attention, even if it's only for those ten minutes. You channel things into that. And then you realize that that is empty, because when it's all over, when that ten minutes [is over], it's empty, and you need your fix.

When did you start going?

I started going to the Heath in 2004.

And you stopped about four years ago?

Yes.

Anywhere else you went?

There's lots of cruising in London today in parks, you've got Bellswoods up in Essex, the forest close to Gatwick, and it's as simple as, let me show you [he shows me an app on his iPad]. Here we are. This app relies on geographical location. So, closer to me, cruising areas… and then I can divide it by parts, and it tells me what time it happens, there you are. For example, close to here, it tells me when someone last posted a comment onto it. These are parks very close to here. It says here, info, and these are people who say, now I'm going to be there at four, I'm going to be there at three, I'm going to be there are six. And it tells you what's happening there. It's very well-organized.

Do you find that people tend to rely more on apps now?

Yes, and there are loads and loads. You've got Grindr, you've got Gaydar, you've got Manhunt.

Are they used in conjunction with PSEs?

The divide in the population is that the population that is older than 40, roughly, uses the Heath. Because they don't want to be faffing with apps. They are not very familiar with it, they did not grow up with it. The youngsters - very much on the apps. The Heath and the cruising spaces have, not as much as they used to, clearly their impact is not the same in fulfilment of the needs of the gay population. It's not the same. It does not occupy the same space as it used to, because of the amount of apps that you have right now. There are a lot more apps, but a lot less sex.

Do you think the Heath is specifically suitable?

The beauty of the Heath is because the police control it, but not in an intrusive way. The police will never bother you, unless they get complaints. So you can do whatever you do, providing that you are fairly discrete about it, you'll have no problems. So the Heath still holds that place. That it's outdoors. It's very much the 'you see it before you get it'. I can put in an app whatever pictures I want to, you know, and publicize it out there, and you go and meet me and I'm not that person in the pictures. On the Heath, you're looking at the guy. You can either make the pass or not. If it suits you, and that's what you want, then you will look at him and make eye contact. I'm full of euphemisms - no, you don't make eye contact, you just get it out and waggle it. [He laughs]. Just like a 'show me yours, I'll show you mine' type of thing. And it's very much in your face.

What would discretion look like?

Discretion means you choose your times. And you know what areas of the Heath are the busiest ones. You know the paths that the walkers that walk their dogs, you go more into the trees. And you knows those areas because, normally, the patches by the trees are bald from being used. You can also, unfortunately, know where those spaces are with the amounts of condoms and wraps disposed on the ground. So you always have to keep in mind that if you're not discrete you'll lose it [the space], because the police will just lock it down. They'll be there. Respect for other users is, again, on the spectrum of sexuality, of course there are people who get off on shocking you, they don't want to have sex with you, they just want to flash you. Shock you. And they get off on that. So the Heath is an ideal place to do it. If you want to shock the shit out of somebody, you go on the Heath with your coat and just nothing underneath. But let's face it, you've seen one, you've seen them all. It serves a function. And they all do the same function. But it would shock you. If you think that you're walking with your kid, and the kid would look at you and say what's that, you could just tell the kid what it is, but you wouldn't feel comfortable with it - then you would complain. And that would spoil it for everybody else. I know people that, the only form of contact that they had was the Heath. That was where they socialized, that's where they met people, that's where they'd go on a sunny afternoon. And go on the buff on the grass, just by the carpark, that path, the first five hundred metres, the grass is quite tall. And then you see the line of the trees. That bit there is as cruisy as can be. And what the guy's do is, because the grass is so tall, they undress once they lay down on their towel. And then somebody will walk onto the woods and they will follow.

So the long grass provides discretion?

Yes because the main thing is to be discrete. The world will take anything you throw at it providing you are discrete. Just like you don't go down the street shouting "I'm a vegetarian, I'm a vegetarian", you don't have to go down the street shouting "I want cock! I want cock!" It's simple. There is a time and a place. Now, at nighttime the Heath takes a totally different, it's a totally different beast. At daytime you get the more mainstream gay people. And nighttime you get the niche type of market. People in leather, in harnesses, the brides - you get men dressed as brides who go on the Heath. There was once a bride on the Heath, scared the shit out of me! This white thing, coming out of the trees. But it does happen. It's the escapism. Because it's in the dark, it gives in the opportunity for people to live their fantasies a bit more. Some guy who, in the day, if he decided to go out in a dress wouldn't be convincing at all, would just shout from a mile that he's a bloke in drag, looking really bad. But at nighttime in the Heath, the light, the lighting, you'd say, "Yeah, that chap in drag is quite convincing." Some do it so you don't recognize them in their real life. But that happens at nighttime, all day, for example, the gang bangs and all of that happens at night. Because at night the children have gone home. The dog walkers have gone home. So only if you're up to no good will you be at nighttime on the Heath. Up to no good. As long as it doesn't hurt anybody, it's fine. So at nighttime the Heath has that aspect. Plus, at nighttime people will huddle together, for security. Because if you are by yourself on the Heath and nighttime, you feel at risk. It doesn't mean that you want to do anything with me, but that you want to know that I am not that far from you. So if something happens and you scream, we'll go. You don't necessarily want to see what I'm doing, but people huddle about not far from the car park. People don't venture far into the

woods, because of the danger that it is. Cruising in the last ten years has changed drastically.

Would people move away from the group for an encounter?

Sometimes the group won't move away from you. When you are on the Heath the normal rules of society don't apply. All of this, "Oh don't do this," - I wanna look because I wanna see it. How does he take that? And join in or not, or whatever. But the moral social compass is switched off. Totally. There are things that I would do at the Heath that I wouldn't do in normal life.

What about the Heath makes that possible?

No more than swimming naked in the sea. If you leave these [clothes] behind, you look at me like that and it gives you a sense of an image, leave it behind and you as a person don't know what to make of it. The signs that I have outside won't tell you what I do or what I'm like as a person. So there's no external sides to this. I remember going on the Heath in a pair of Doc Martens, a pair of shorts, and nothing else. I remember going on the beach many years ago, to the nudist beach, and I could walk two miles of beach with nothing on, and there were people there who were fully dressed and people who were not. It's about being comfortable with yourself. One thing leads to another, quite clearly. And the difference between gay people and straight people is that gay people are very good at expressing themselves sexually. There is no, "Oh no I don't want it, but I'm gagging to." If I want it, I'll tell you. Likewise, if I don't want it, I'll say so. I'll say "Cheers mate, thank you very much, but fuck off." Just because you are up in the Heath with your legs spread open or your ass up in the air doesn't mean that you're going to give it to the first person who comes in. You still have the power of choice, that is never taken from you. More so up

there, because all those social constraints are taken aside, you are more of an animal. And it is, I want it or I don't want it. And this is why everybody resents the trolls, the guys who are up there and cannot take no for an answer and you go and move to the back of a tree and they follow.

Have you had any bad experiences?

A few times. At the car park, you've got a big old oak tree, I spent four hours up that oak tree, in the buff. The police decided to raid the area, and because of complaints. Somebody behaved stupidly. They need to do it to clamp it down - it dies off, then it goes up again, they do another raid, then they leave it in peace for three months than they do it again. This was in March 2008. I had a meeting the next day, and I was like, I'm going to go onto the Heath just before I go home. I stopped at the Heath. So I go onto the Heath and do what you do on the Heath, and there was a raid. And my clothes were in the car, I had my infamous leather shorts on, and I've never climbed up an oak tree as quick as that day. So they had the dogs with them. I was up the oak tree, and they could not see me because it was dark. But the dogs knew I was there, so they barked. And they took three or four people in and registrations were taken and all that. But I was adamant that they were not going to catch me, adamant that I would not go running into the woods, because I would end up in the middle of the night in the woods and you lose yourself. So I said, oak tree - good place to be. So I waited there and then at about quarter to four in the morning, I came down from the tree because they'd gone, and I got back into my car and I found loads of missed calls. It was my partner, saying "Where are you?" And I said they'd raided the Heath so I was up an oak tree. So that was it. But I've had a few close shaves like that, because the police now and then do, and so they should.

Have you been recently, during the THT's work?

They do it now, but that spoils the cruise. Because it's permitted, then it's not fun anymore. You always want to eat the cake that your mother said was for dinner. You always wanted that one. So if they're making it that easy, and the work that they do is very good and valid and everything else. Some people who go up there are straight guys, CEOs of companies and so on, they don't want to run the risk of being recognized. They have all the money in the world for all the condoms they want. So they would, THT does a lot of good and it's good for the younger group, but the Heath: wrong place for them. The bucks that go up there are in the 40s, we know the risks. So if I choose to take them, they are chosen risks. Kids might not, because the view of STIs and everything else, now, with my generation in our forties, the view is avoid it like the plague, because I think it was the campaigns of the 80s. I don't know if you remember the campaigns of the coffin, or the gravestone or whatever, but that hits you hard. And in the 80s we were totally in the dark. The kids of today look at it like, it's the same of diabetes, like instead of an injection you just take the pills. With all the drugs, they do bring the count below detection. But they organize POS parties! It's a strange behaviour but it's the behaviour of a group of youths that want to belong to something, and if that is what links them onto something, they'll do it. They don't use the Heath. Or very, very seldom. You don't see very young guys, in 18-20s, it's guys in their 30s plus. The kids use the apps.

Do you think the Heath will be less used?

No, because the 25 year olds today in ten years will be 35! And when they stop pulling on apps, they go on the pull. It'll move. The kids of today, keeping in mind that in the gay world, once you're 25 you're old, you're yesterday's hat, so… definitely once you hit 50

you've had it. It's necrophilia. Unless you have one of two [three] things: money, status, or a good body. Then you can still pull them. And I can show you on ten of the websites that I have spent millions of pounds on membership - no over 30s! It's a constant. So I have guys of 18 trying to hit on me. Where are they from? Countries that don't have EU passports. Unfortunately there are a lot of guys in the UK in their 50s and 60s who are so lonely, and want to be loved, that they will give them that passport. So do you think that if you are 65 and an 18 year old kid is hitting on you… he wants a passport. Love and sex are so different. I can have sex with anybody, but I can love only one guy. I've been in a relationship for 14 years.

Do you go to other places than the Heath?

Darling, I'm 46, it cools down with age. In my 20s I could not sleep unless I had sex. I can't remember the number of sexual contacts that I've had, but they run into the thousands. I've done it any combination possible - two, three guys, four, two women, one guy. For me, sex is an art form. It's not all about cannibalism. It's an art form. It's a lot more about giving than receiving. It's not just about getting your balls empty. It's about the expression of ecstasy in the face of your sexual partner. In the Heath, it's all about the animal feeling. It's about raw sex. Animal. When I say raw sex, I don't mean without a condom, because with no condom, don't even bring it close to me. But it's about the primordial thing, the animal thing. Just having the release. If you're doing that release with sex, then fine, but if you are doing it for love, for companionship, for anything else, it lasts only as long as the act will ask, and then you're lonely again, and you go back again. Until either you work it out in your brain, or perhaps you have a group of friends who say, "Don't you think you're overdoing it a little bit?" It's okay to have fun as you go to the pub

once or twice a week. It's a very… experiences on the Heath are different for everybody. The Heath is fundamental and important to people, to a particular group of people, of an age. Because when you are gay and you have hit 40, you will either pull because you've paid, or you pull because you are quite good looking and handsome, otherwise you won't. You go to work and come home, you have disposable income, but then you are lonely. So you went out, you had your beer, and you went home, and you're lonely, you are by yourself. So what do you do? You call an escort, or you go to the Heath. And you do it. So it plays the role of the day centre, as when you are in your 70s and 80s, to feel that you are with people. It serves a purpose and it will always serves a purpose, and it's purpose is not seedy. On the face of it, it is, but when you look at it deeper, it has a deeper meaning than just, "Go and get your rocks off." And it's important and it's a shame that we're losing cruising areas for that purpose, even if, picture yourself at 50, your family has kicked you out and ostracized you because you're gay, so you really have no ties. And people are a bit skeptical about you, so you just sort of keep things a bit closed. You've done well at work, etc., you're lonely. You have all the channels on TV but you don't have a person - the closest thing is the Heath. So actually you can go there, get no complications, you don't have to bring them home, and it works, for a period of time.

Val, 15 February 2015, at the Ladies' Pond

Did you swim today?

I've swum today, yes, and the temperature was 3.5 degrees. Sometimes it does change though. It was a good swim. It was lovely, because it's very till today on the pond anyway. We're sheltered down here from the wind.

How long have you been swimming here?

Since the earlier 80s. So I've seen lots.

Have you always swum all year?

Not all that time. I can't remember when I started winter swimming except it was probably when I retired at 60. 14 years ago.

Do you have a favourite time of year?

I think spring is my favourite because you don't have so many women here, and I'm so lucky that I can walk to the pond so I can see the seasons. Once the real cold of winter is gone from the pond, it's really nice, just to have that sort of edge of coldness. [As we are speaking, another swimmer makes a gorilla-like sound before getting in the water. We laugh and Val remarks, "Anything for a bit of attention!"]

How long do you stay in?

I never talk about how long I stay in. I stay in as long as my body will let me. My body will tell me how I feel. I have this little place on my thumb, for some reason, that gets a tingling, so I know it's time to turn back. It just starts there, I don't know why. I don't think about it, I don't have to think about it, I do it. The thing is, if I stay in too long, I'm cold for too much of the day and that's not worth it. It puts me off.

What keeps you coming?

It's the feeling I get afterwards. I can be coming across the fields and the wind is blowing and it's snowing or whatever, and I'm thinking to myself, "What are you doing? What are

you trying to prove?" It seems a crazy thing. But once I've had my swim I'm walking back like a new woman.

What is the feeling?

You feel alive. Ready for anything really.

Do you swim every day?

I swim most days. Sometimes you just can't. And also this place is not on the way anywhere for me, so it has to be specially thought out, see how my day's going. It's a priority.

It seems like you're part of the community.

Yes, well I've been here for thirty years, haven't I? It's lovely. You never know who's going to be in the changing room. But you always know you're going to have some silly conversation, or some intellectual conversation even. It's really nice, and I would really, really miss it. I've seen women who've got too old to come, and it's such a big part of their lives when they are, so it's really hard not to have it. [As we are speaking, a bird starts to squawk overhead.]

What about the Heath?

Yes, I've enjoyed this Heath. I started living here in 1978 in Gospel Oak. I'd been up to the Heath before then, but I belong to the Marylebone Bird Watching Society, and we have local visits and coach outings, but Tuesday we meet to walk on the Heath. So that's good. That's another strand.

Do you ever swim at the Mixed Pond?

Yes, I've got a season ticket for the whole thing.

Do you have a favourite spot?

A favourite spot? The women's pond!

What is it about it?

It's apart from everyday life, isn't it. I worked as a secretary and a social worker, and it's so nice to be free of children and dogs and men. They're all things that seem to take up more attention than I want to give them. Now I'm older, I can do things like that. I can say, "No, I've got a limited time." None of us know when we're going to die, but I've got a limited time left and I want to do what I want to do. And that's swimming here.

Is there anything you love about the area?

Well you see, I think living in London would be very stressful. It is stressful. Without this, I wouldn't be sane.

So it is therapeutic?

Totally. And that's another thing, when you're swimming and you've got a cormorant coming up to you with a fish in its mouth, and a kingfisher displaying for you, it's really lovely.

Anything you dislike?

The City of London look after it very well, but sometimes I think they err on the side of trying to make it a municipal park, and it's not *that*, and we don't want it to be *that*, we want it to have that wildness. It's totally different from the Royal Parks for instance, but I think London is so lovely, it's got so many green space, all the parks, but this is the, what should we call it… My sister lives in the country but when she comes up here she says it's wonderful because you can walk where you want to walk, you're not confined to rights of way and things like that, and she says, "You wouldn't even know you were in London in

parts of it!". And I've done a lot of walking on the Heath, all over the place, I don't know. London would be very difficult to live in without it.

Anything else?

[Airplane passes overhead]

Of course, I would like to mention the lifeguards. Without them, they keep it nice and keep them, what was I trying to say. People say, you must be mad, getting in to that cold water, but I think we're the sanest people here. Because we have the swimming.

Viv, 13 February, 2015, at the Cafe on the Heath

Can you tell me a bit about what the pond means to you?

I think the pond, the Heath in general but the pond in particular, and swimming at the pond year round combines the appreciation and the involvement with nature. Which is really paramount and really important, but it combines that with a sense of community as well. So I think there's a kind of sense in which the one follows the other. You have this draw to nature and what could be more profoundly a part of nature than swimming a pond? Particularly all year round. But then as you do that, you get to know other people who do it as well. And a bond forms with the people who you swim with. Particularly because you swim all year round, you get to know the people very well. And I think there's some kind of common bond which is formed between a lot of people who are from quite disparate backgrounds, because of the fact that they swim in this cold water, which is usually cold, the whole year round. There's something quite specific about that, because the people who actually swim are from very, very different backgrounds. You'll have justices of the peace

and people who sweep the road and drive taxis, which are traditionally considered to be very different backgrounds, very different walks of life. And that doesn't matter at all, that's something quite liberating and quite exciting and enriching about that.

Do you think that's an exceptional thing in a space like the Heath, with its middle-class associations?

Yes, I think it is quite special. I think the people who swim here are both aware of it, like it, and kind of promote it as well. They're very comfortable with it, but they are very aware of it as well, because traditionally, you would not be mixing with those kinds of people. People don't mix with people from very different classes most of the time, so where are you likely to find people mixing with people with very different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, class backgrounds? It would be the pond. That, for me, was quite a liberating thing. And interesting as well.

Is there something about swimming that allows that?

I'm not sure if it's anything about swimming, but certainly the fact that all these people who come together at the ponds have one thing in common. That's that they swim throughout the year. Because there are people who swim in the summer, maybe when it's warmer, and I don't think there's the same sense of camaraderie or the same sense of shared experience or the same closeness that we have. I think about the people who sometimes get together away from the ponds, or share some kind of event which is happening, maybe someone's birthday or maybe someone's an actor and they're in a play, it's not generally the people who just go there in summer who will turn up for those events or get invited. It's the people who go the whole year around. So there's something about the fact that we all swim in that water the whole year around which really does draw us

together. And it draws us together in a way that supersedes any kind of background to do with demographics. Demographics don't seem to enter into it.

How long have you been swimming here?

All year round, this is my eighth year. But I've swam in the ponds, on and off, for about fifteen years. Which is about how long I've lived here, around '88, '89 I came to Kentish Town. That's 25 years. I would probably have started swimming at the pond from about 1990, but not all year round. I just knew about it and would come and swim in the summer, because it was different to swimming pools.

What got you to start swimming year round?

Around four or five years before I started swimming all year round, I would extend my seasons if you like, further and further, and I started to go into October, and I knew people who continued, because the further I went, the fewer people who would still be there. So the people who were still there, a larger and larger proportion of them were people who swam all year round, so if I was swimming in late October, then 60-70% of the people who were still there were people swimming year round, and I'd talk to them. And I'd get to know them, and I'd talk to them about swimming all year round and my desire to do it but my fear that it would be too cold for me. And more and more of them would say, "No, you should do it, you should do it! It's November in a week or two, it's already down to 8 degrees now," so it just sort of planted the idea in my mind that it would be a thing worth doing. And then I'd come up here in the winter, and I'd look at the pond, and think "This is my park as much as anyone else's, this is my environment, this is nature, which is my brother, my sister, my friend," and I'd look at the water and think, "I should be a part of it! I should be in there. There's nothing to stop me except my own inhibitions or my own

fears." And then one year I just sort of went for it. And it was a year when it was extremely cold, and there was a lot of snow. So if it hadn't been a baptism of ice and snow, it would've been a baptism of fire. People said, "You picked a great year to start with, didn't you?" because there were several inches of snow in the changing area. I think there's one aspect of life on the Heath and life at the ponds that you wouldn't really know about and wouldn't really get involved in unless you swam all year around, and that's the relationship that's developed between the men swimmers and the women swimmers. That in itself is quite interesting, because these days the people from the Ladies' Pond invite the men once or twice a year for a swim at the Women's Pond. And we do the same, inviting the women to the Men's Pond for a swim. I think that was born through difficulties, actually, because one of the men swimmers was played a prank on, and was told that we were invited to the Ladies' Pond and he went up there and he got shouted at by one of the ladies up there, and it was a mistake. He wrote a letter complaining about it, and it got published, and up until then I think we'd always been quite generous to the ladies, in terms of if their pond wasn't functioning we'd invite them down to the Men's Pond. So in order to say sorry, they invited all of the men up to the Women's Pond for a swim and breakfast. And then it just continued really. Because every now and again, one of the ponds is closed for some reason or another, and it kind of makes sense for one of us to say, "You can come and use our pond." That's something that has been born out of swimming, a desire or love for cold water swimming. We don't see each other all the time, but from there things have developed as well, in terms of the fact that there is going to be a dam here now. I guess that's one of the offshoots of swimming and the Heath. People there love their pond, they don't want to see any change, and they become quite passionate about maintaining the

Heath and maintaining the tradition of the Heath, so in a way, just swimming up there now links in directly to what was happening 100 years ago. The fact that it's always been free; people feel quite passionate that it should continue to be free, and the CoL might want to change aspects of that. And if they do, then people who swim on the Heath feel, well, for a hundred and fifty years we've been able to come up and swim for free, and that's a principle which we feel is really important. So it's not about the money so much as about our right to come up here and swim for nothing. So they'll generate quite a powerful lobby to defend those rights. And that all is a result of a mix between people coming up there, being together, and deciding on how we should continue to enjoy the Heath and enjoy our pond, and loving nature, and loving swimming.

What is it about swimming that is special?

I think at the end of the day there's something of a mystery about that. There's an element of mystery about that, because it's not that straightforward a thing. The more you examine it and the more you try to pin it down, the more slippery it becomes. I don't think there's anybody who swims at the Heath who would say that the greatest moment is that moment before you're just about to get in the water. I think most of the people who swim, that moment just before they get in the water, this time of year, anyway, you usually have the thought, "Why the hell am I doing this? Why do I do this? What is it that makes me do this?" And a lot of the people who swim on the Heath will concede that the vast majority of the population think we're completely barmy, and we'll concede that they've got a point, because it is quite a challenge. And it is a challenge which you impose on yourself, possibly for no good reason. And I think also that it's not that easy to prove conclusively that it's really, really good for your health. I think at best there are these notions and ideas

that it's good for your immune system, because it boosts your immune system and you don't get colds so much, it strengthens you generally-speaking, because if you can put up with getting in the cold water then you're probably going to be pretty hardy as an individual generally, but in terms of clear clinical proof, I suspect that there isn't that much. I've read articles where medical professionals have said you should be very careful about getting into cold water if you've got certain conditions, and that might be to do with blood pressure, so who knows. So I think the truth is that there's definitely a buzz and a high when you've got out and you're drying yourself. You do feel very alive and feel very in touch with nature, and you feel all those clichés, like you feel very invigorated and all that, and that's a good feeling. Beyond that I think there's something of an addiction to it. Maybe it's an addiction to feeling that. But there's nothing wrong with that, in the sense that you've gone up there and you've had a swim, you've not been taking illegal highs to feel like that. And you do feel very awake. When I started swimming all year round, I work in film, and I left my mental health job because I was setting up a film, and I was therefore doing a lot of work from home, and I needed to have somewhere to go first thing in the morning, rather than just walking form my bedroom into my study. The perfect thing to do was to come up here and have a swim and go back. You feel hugely different if you get up just that little bit earlier and go and have a swim in cold water, and then go back to your desk, to actually getting out of bed and just wandering into your study. A lot of people say, "Why don't you just have a cold shower?" but it really isn't that simple. That's where communing with nature, being a part of the trees, the ducks, the leaves, the sky, all of that, and also seeing people who you've developed some kind of a bond with, makes a big difference. And having a talk with them.

Do you have a favourite part of the heath?

There's not many parts of the Heath that I don't really like. But there are quite magical areas around Kenwood. Not Kenwood itself, but nearer to Kenwood. I run from time to time, but when I run I run up to Kenwood and there are lots of areas up there which aren't that populated, and which are wooded, and they're very magical. Particularly at certain times of the year, because it is quite high up there it's quite misty in the morning. Usually I run before a swim, so I'll be running at 7 o'clock or 7.15 and it's often very misty up there and there's something magical about running through those woods, when there are very few people if any around. The only thing around you is the animal life, really, and the trees. And the mist. And that's it. Up there I've experienced some of my favourite moments on the Heath. And the most magical moments. It's so still. It's something that you're doing maybe 15 minutes after getting out of bed, you know. If you were to place somewhere there, they wouldn't believe that they were in the middle of London. Most of the parks are quite flat and kinder, and you can usually see quite a lot of the city wherever you are. If you're in Regent's Park or Hyde Park, you can see the city pretty much. But if you plonk yourself up there, in those woods, you don't know where you are. You could be in the middle of anywhere. That's quite special. And the fact that it's very undulating. The hills, that makes it more exciting that just flat areas like Hyde Park, where you've got extended football pitches, that's what it's like. I like the tundra-aspect of the Heath, which is really where the name derives from. Because it was originally heath land. And I think heath land is, that kind of wild grass, is some of my favourite kind of landscape really. I really love it. Up nearer the car park, you see quite a lot of that. The grass is sometimes red and gold, and it's rough and it's short, and I like that a lot. I think that's one of the most

beautiful parts; the wildness of it. You don't get that wildness in many other parks in London. So I think a lot of us are quite keen to see its wildness maintained. Every now and then there's a little encroachment on that, and it's sad and people, swimmers will always talk about it, that there's a new encroachment, there's a new plan to build some paths which are more geared towards being safe and pedestrianized, or there's more gates, and fences and things being put up, which aren't natural. But I guess that's going to happen more and more. But we don't want to see the place becoming too municipalized. We want it to be as wild and free as it possibly can. And that's something that we all share. And I think that's been born partly out of our experience of being as in the wild as we possibly can, which is stripped off and in the water, with all the pikes, and the germs, and the ducks. A lot of conversations revolve around the bird life up there, and we become quite protective of the bird life, so every year there'll be coots or moorhens which'll have chicks. And they'll be a sadness when we hear that one other chick has been lost, which happens. I think there was a duck that had about eight to begin with, or ten, and as the weeks went by it went down to eight, then seven, then six, but it's part and parcel of nature. And being in nature. I don't think I'd be as aware of that and of the passing of the seasons, and all of the impact and implications of that, had I not been swimming at the ponds. I would have been a bit more dead to it. So I've becoming alive to those nuances and those details of the passing of the seasons, both in terms of the animal life, mostly the birds, but also the trees and stuff like that as well. Which is very enriching I think.

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