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AUTUMN 2026



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AND

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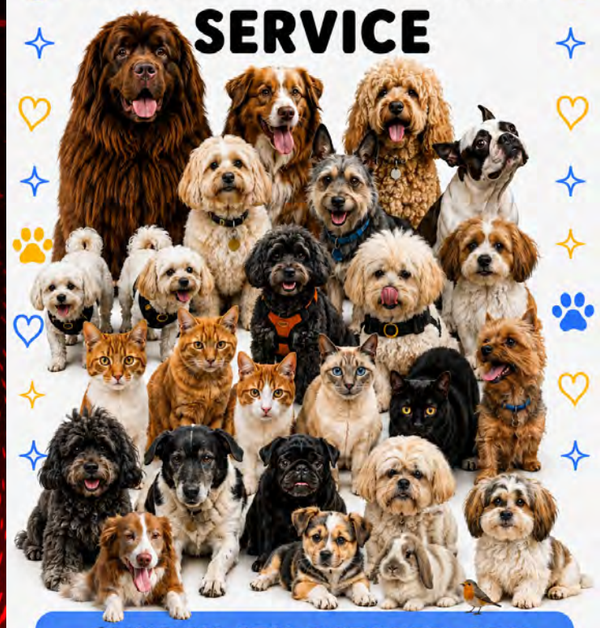
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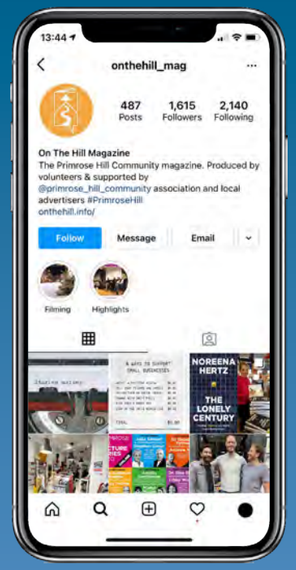
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AUTUMN 2026

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The Team

Editor
Maggie Chambers
editor@onthehill.info

Editorial Group
Dick Bird, Doro Marden, Pam White, David Lennon, Mole on the Hill, Michael Johnstone, Andrew Black

Social Media and Website Editor
Jason Pittock

Subeditors
Brenda Stones

Cartoon
Bridget Grosvenor

Photographer
Sarah Louise Ramsay
www.slrphotography.co.uk

Design
John Dillon
hello@jwdillon.co.uk

Advertising Sales
Richard Ramsay
ads@onthehill.info

Special thanks to all our contributors.

PRIMROSE HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

This publication is created by the community and for the benefit of Primrose Hill on behalf of your local charity, the Primrose Hill Community Association (PHCA). All proceeds from this publication go directly to fund the charity. We hope you enjoy.

www.phca.cc

Disclaimer: the views in the magazine are not necessarily the views of the PHCA.

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Editor's Letter



Welcome to Autumn

Having spent a lot of time near Bridlington and the Yorkshire Wolds, it's no surprise I'm a big David Hockney fan. I once had the good (or bad) fortune to be driving behind his van, mounted with 18 cameras and crawling at a snail's pace as it recorded hedgerows for his exhibition, *David Hockney: A Bigger Picture* held at the Royal Academy of Arts in 2012. After he died in June, Xandra Bingley contacted me to tell the delightful story of how she had once invited him round to tea in Primrose Hill to discuss figurative drawing for *The New Review* literary magazine. He's a huge loss, both to the art world and to us all. His paintings of the Wolds taught me to appreciate hawthorn blossoms in a way I never had before. As Hockney himself said, 'These simple little things are unbelievably rich.'

Another Northern creative is our very own Mole on the Hill who has been writing for this magazine since it began, 12 years ago. Hoping to keep his identity a secret, he wrote as a mole, watching over us from the top of the hill. Now aged 90, the Mole has decided to lay down his pen and we have let the cat out of the bag (or the mole out of the hill) and revealed his identity. Thank you, Jim, for all the wonderful articles you've written for us over the years.

As the long hot summer becomes a distant memory, there's still lots to do in Primrose Hill this autumn. The Primrose Hill Community Association will be holding its AGM on Thursday 15 October, a W.B. Yeats evening on Sunday 15 November and the Village Disco on 21 November. Don't think of hibernating just yet!

Maggie Chambers



“It’s a marvellous machine . . . do you think it would do a Rembrandt?”

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ON THE STREET

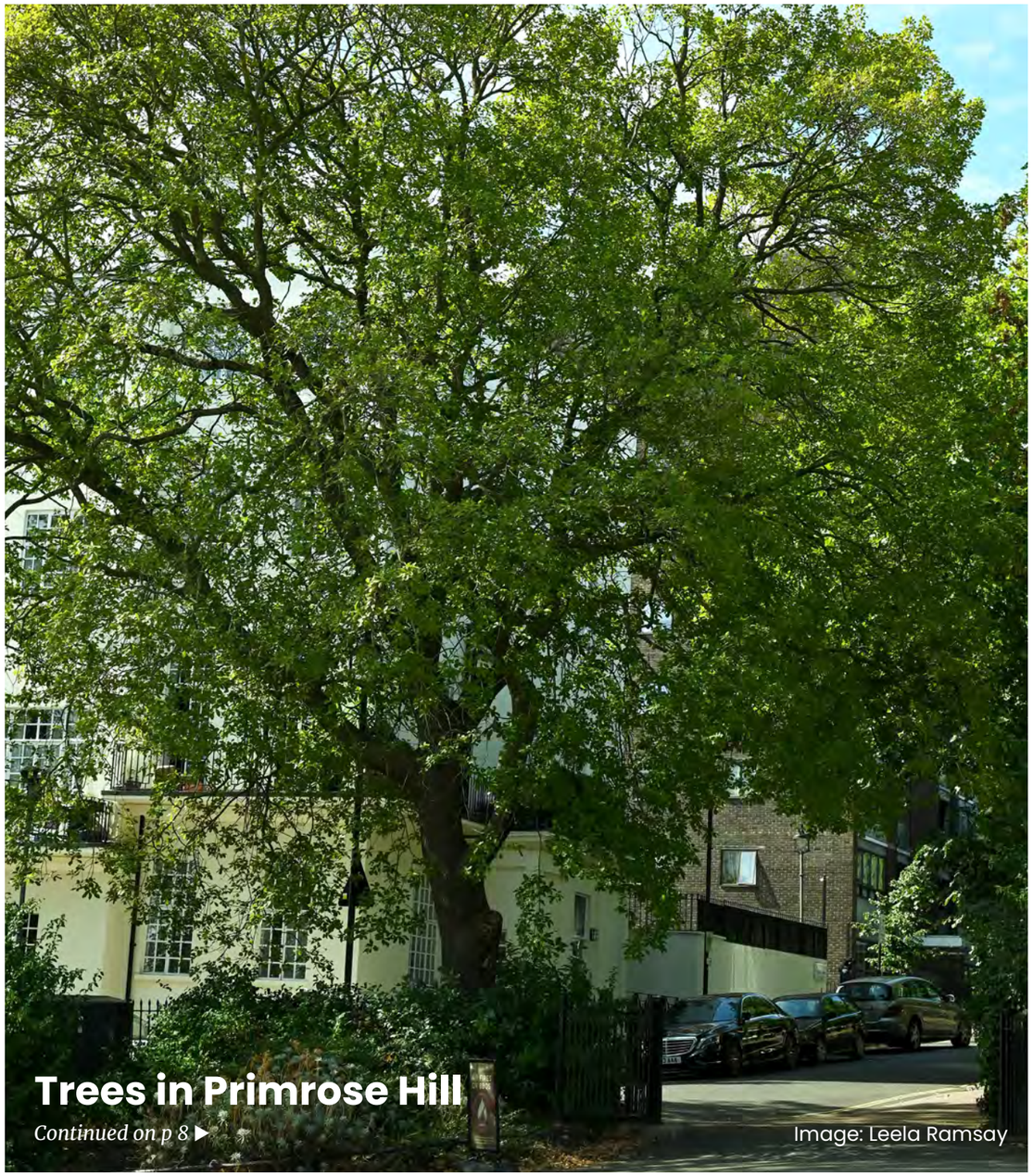
Trees in Primrose Hill (p8)

Compliments to the Chef (p9)

Streets of Primrose Hill (p12)

Pet Blessing (p13)

AND MORE



Trees in Primrose Hill

Continued on p 8 ▶

Image: Leela Ramsay

Trees in Primrose Hill

By Doro Marden
Photography by Leela Ramsay



We are lucky to be living in a neighbourhood with so many mature trees; even though the summer heatwaves have been bad for trees generally, they still support insects and birds and absorb CO_2 and other pollutants. Also, from a human angle, just seeing trees reduces our stress and blood pressure: research has shown that a view of trees from hospital results in patients needing less pain relief and leaving after shorter stays.

Trees help our over-heating environment by reducing urban temperatures by 2 to 8 degrees, and up to 5 degrees at night; this is because their shade reduces the heat absorbed by hard surfaces. Sadly, new street trees seem to be upright 'lollipop' trees, which won't provide the canopy that larger trees do. Insurance companies often demand that mature trees are thinned or felled (this is what happened in St George's Terrace Gardens), so branches are brutally cut back which reduces their shade.

To cut down or prune a tree on private land in a conservation area (most of Primrose Hill) you need permission from the planning office, with an application six weeks before any work begins; you could be fined up to £20,000 if you don't apply. And you can't just replace a 100-year-old tree with a new sapling; see the campaign group Canopy Coalition on canopy.org.uk for lots more on this.

The worst culprit is HS2: they have felled as many as 500 trees on our railway embankment, as well as lots of mature trees around Euston and Hampstead Road. According to the Woodland Trust, 55 ancient woodland sites have been affected by the route to Birmingham. Ancient woodlands are irreplaceable stores of complex biodiversity, and once gone they are gone for ever.



What are your favourite trees locally? Maybe the magnificent London planes in the park alongside Regent's Park Road; or the cherry trees in Chalcot Square. One of those is a Tai Haku with especially large blossoms; this tree was extinct in Japan, where all these ornamental cherries originate, until one was found in a Sussex garden in 1923 and reintroduced worldwide.

If you want to identify a street tree, LB Camden has a 'Camden Tree Map' which tabulates all the trees in our streets and some of the estates. However, the magnificent ash in Auden Place doesn't seem to be shown, and despite ash trees being decimated by Chalara ash dieback, this one still looks healthy. Another interesting tree is the Hop Hornbeam at the top of Gloucester Avenue: it has beautiful catkins in spring, which turn into papery fruits that resemble hop cones.

Primrose Hill park has some wonderful trees, for example a native Black Poplar, one of Britain's rarest and most endangered trees; also an unusual semi-evergreen oak called Spencer Turner by the gate into St Edmund's Terrace, a hybrid dating from the eighteenth century.



Compliments to the Chef

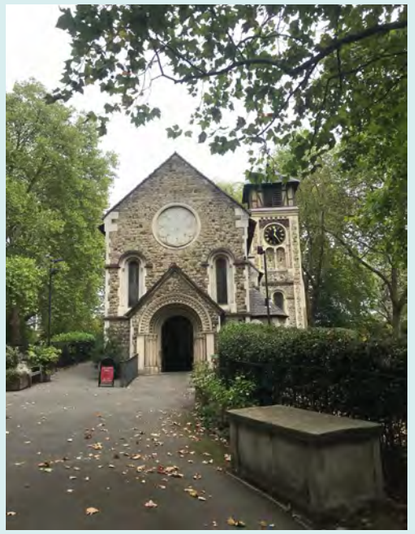
By Tracey Mitchell

In June, Lester Hillman gave an Open House talk at the Primrose Hill Community Centre about Daniell Clarke, Master Cooke for 29 years to Queen Elizabeth I and King James I (VI Scotland). He is still remembered in St Pancras Old Church, four hundred years after his death. A large stone plaque in the church extols the virtues of both Clarke and his wife Katherine. Today the monument and its materials are physically delicate, but still honour the couple's role at Court.

Clarke leased Tottenhall, at the north-east corner of Tottenham Court Road, for his living quarters in a grace and favour deal from James I. From Tottenhall, it was an easy mile-and-a-half walk for himself, his team and family to the kitchens of Banqueting House. Together Daniel and Katherine weathered state and kitchen dramas, wars, intrigues, plots and even poisonings. They lived during the era of the Armada, Gunpowder Plot, treason and William Shakespeare.

New foods and customs were being delivered to the table during Elizabeth's reign, not least potatoes. New products arriving from the Caribbean included nutmeg and other spices. Together spices and sugar were enlivening catering. Custard fritters, constructed of heavy pastry and lots of nutmeg, became a popular item on the menus of James I. In about 1516, after a pair of aristocratic friends accused one another, it was rumoured the fritters were a chosen vehicle for a non-fatal poisoning. Jesters, who were the food tasters, stayed alert to backstairs politics and reported back to the King about treason and other plots.

Clarke's role stretched beyond the Palace to the Inns of Court and Worshipful Companies. His status afforded him entry to the grandest events and could have contributed to enduring literature. In Act IV of *The Winter's Tale*, written around 1609–11, the Clown makes elaborate preparations for a Sheep-Shearing Feast: 'Three pound of sugar, five pound of currants, rice… I must have saffron to colour the warden pies (made with pears), mace (nutmeg), dates?… more nutmegs, seven; a race or two of ginger, but that I may beg, four pounds of prunes and as many of raisins o' the sun.' Lester believes that Shakespeare drew on conversations with Daniell Clarke for this list of ingredients in the later play, following the first performance of *Macbeth* at Hampton Court in August 1606.



Egg-rolling persists into the present as participants take to the pavement outside St Bride's Church on Easter Sunday. They roll brightly decorated hard-boiled eggs down Fleet Street, with prizes awarded for the farthest rolls without breaking. Echoes of this culinary history exist in a series of street names like Milk Street EC2, Honey Lane EC2, Saffron Hill EC1, Bread Street EC2 and Pudding Lane EC3.

Daniell Clarke's life spanned several monarchs, through Elizabeth I, James I (James VI Scotland) and into the reign of Charles I.

Lester Hillman is a member of the Camden History Society, occasional contributor to the Review and lecturer. He is an associate of the Camden-based Royal Historical Society, spanning six decades, and honorary heritage adviser to St Pancras Old Church.



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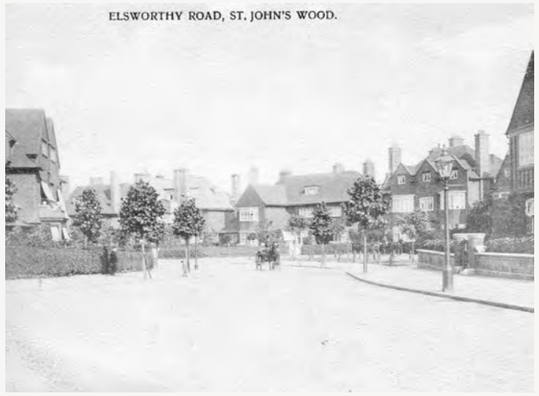
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Postcards from Primrose Hill

This postcard shows Elsworthy Road, looking east. In the far distance, just around the corner, is number 39, where an amazing historical episode took place. Here, on 19 July 1938, Salvador Dalí met Sigmund Freud. Freud, 81, had just fled Vienna and settled here; Dalí, 34, was already a surrealist star and eager to meet his idol. Their mutual friend Stefan Zweig arranged the encounter.



Dalí arrived with *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* and an article on paranoia, hoping to impress. Freud seemed more intrigued by Dalí himself, remarking: "I have never seen a more complete example of a Spaniard. What a fanatic!"

Dalí feared rejection, but Freud's letter to Zweig the next day revealed admiration: the young painter's "candid and fanatical eyes" and technical mastery had made him reconsider his view of the surrealists.

A brief meeting, yet one that shifted Freud's perspective and gave Dalí the recognition he longed for.

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NEWS & INFORMATION

from Primrose Hill Community Association

PRIMROSE HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Your regular update from PHCA, publisher of On The Hill

With Keir Starmer standing down as our local MP, we wish him well in his future endeavours. We will soon look forward to welcoming his replacement and be pushing to get the chance to meet up with whoever it is to discuss Primrose Hill issues. The Community Centre will be used as a polling station for the by-election and we are hoping to have a hustings on Thursday 1 October at 7pm.

On Thursday 15 October at 7pm we welcome you to our Annual General Meeting where neighbours meet over drinks and nibbles to discuss the PHCA governance and hear an invited speaker. Look out for details of our meeting on flood preparedness on 20 October. On Sunday 15 November do attend our Yeats evening, more details to follow. The following week, on 21 November, you can enjoy our annual Disco - **phca.cc/disco**
Sign up to our free weekly bulletin to keep up with events and how and when to buy tickets – **phca.cc/subscribe/**

This summer both the Community Centre and the Library, like many places, struggled to cope with the heat. As this looks like an ongoing trend, we will need to invest in measures to cool both buildings at peak heat times. We are fortunate to have local building performance adviser Bill Bordass to advise us.

Neighbourhood Nosh continues to provide food for isolated people in the community via home deliveries; the free market offers fresh fruit and vegetables to people in food need; and the Wellbeing Café offers nutritious hot food and drinks on a by donation basis. Anyone wanting to support these projects financially or by volunteering (18+ only), please get in touch.

We continue to offer many free or cut-price activities, including:

- Zumba Gold
- Qi Gong
- Sadie Yoga
- Chair Yoga/Pilates
- Narcotics Anonymous x 2
- Memory Singing Circle
- Wellbeing Café
- Weekly Meal Delivery Service (long- or short-term isolation)
- Free Market
- Informal Advice and Support (we can refer you on to appropriate services)

The Primrose Hill Community Library also offers a big programme of free or by-donation community activities and events. Mondays mean Rhyme Time in the morning, and early evening Board Games for adults. On the first Tuesday in the month is the Film Show (this is chargeable as the licence is expensive), and every Tuesday morning children's ballet. On Thursdays there are bridge sessions, and every third Friday special music events. There are also occasional author talks, and to find out about all these do subscribe to the library newsletter: **phcl.org/subscribe** or to find out what's going on in the area and at the Community Centre, sign up to the free weekly bulletin at **www.phca.cc/subscribe** or become a member at **https://app.joinit.com/o/phca.**

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Streets of Primrose Hill

By Eleanor Sturdy

Residents' reports help police to seize vehicle

Local officers stopped and impounded a vehicle that was being driven dangerously in the Primrose Hill shopping area on 21 August. The team received reports from local residents, including the vehicle registration number, enabling officers to quickly locate and stop the car. Recent changes to legislation empowered officers to seize the vehicle immediately. Previously, they would generally have been required to issue a warning before a vehicle could be seized. The vehicle had been hired and will now remain impounded until the necessary recovery procedures have been completed and associated fees paid.
The incident highlights the value of residents reporting anti-social and dangerous driving to police, which helps officers to take swift action and keep local roads safe.

Primrose Hill Park update
Only a few weeks after the murder of Finbar Sullivan in April, the Royal Parks ended their temporary extra Magenta security patrols. There is now a pilot scheme in operation, with Camden Safety Officers giving 18 hours per week. However, this means that there are still at least 125 hours per week when the Park is open but without dedicated supervision. Reports of fighting, drug use, anti-social behaviour and other crimes continue to occur.

If you are out in Primrose Hill Park and wish to report any issues to the Royal Parks, please contact them on this form from their website: **www.royalparks.org.uk/get-in-touch.** If you prefer to call during standard office hours, use the direct number below:
Regent's Park 0300 061 2300.

For emergencies, and to report crime, please call the emergency services on **999**. For non-emergencies, please call **101**.

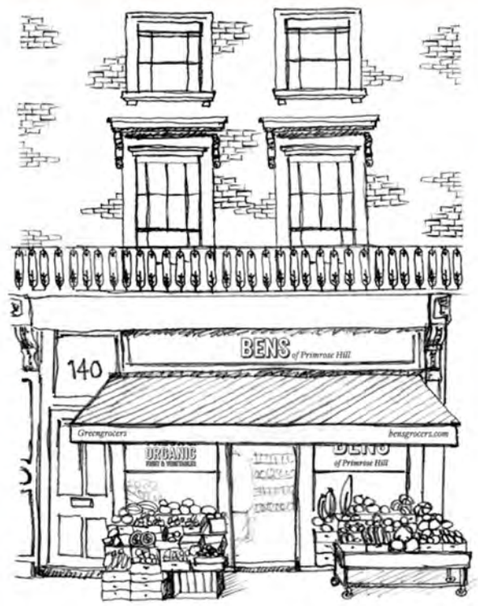
Please email **SNTEK-PrimroseHill@met.police.uk** to contact the team. The next Safer Neighbourhood Ward meeting will be on 22 October 2026 (venue tbc).



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A Blessing for Our Pets and Our Community

Join us at St Mary's Church, Primrose Hill, on Saturday 4 October at 3pm for our third annual Animal Blessing, held on the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals. With open hearts, St Mary's welcomes our local pets and their well-behaved humans for a joyful celebration of the special bond we share with our animals. Father Phil will bless each pet individually, Janet (Pen's mum) will share one of her uplifting stories, and our friends at Pet Pavilion will once again provide treats. Whether you have a pet, have loved a pet or simply enjoy being around animals, everyone is welcome. It's always an afternoon that feels like one big community hug.
Look out for our colourful posters around Primrose Hill. Every animal featured is a much-loved local pet from our community. It's our way of celebrating the wonderful animals, and the people behind them, who make Primrose Hill so special. Complimentary transport to the Pet Blessing is available for Oldfield residents.

To book a lift, please contact Helen on **helensweeney@mac.com**

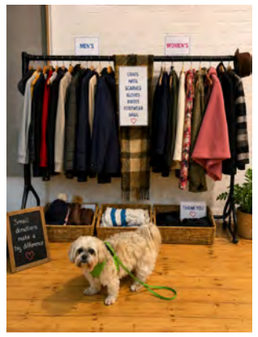
Later in November we'll celebrate Kukur Tihar, the Nepalese Day of the Dogs. Following its wonderful debut at The Albert pub last year, Primrose Hill's very own Don Pepe and his Nepalese friend Chowie will once again honour our canine companions with blessings, flower garlands and lots of love in aid of street dogs in Nepal. Follow @**dogtihar** on Instagram for details.

Help Keep Our Neighbours Warm This Winter

The Pet Blessing also launches our annual winter collection for St Mary's Winter Shelter and Euston Clothing Bank. We're collecting good-quality coats, jumpers, hats, scarves, gloves, warm footwear, backpacks and other winter essentials for men, women and children. If you can't make the event, our volunteer team is happy to collect donations and deliver them directly to the charities.

For clothing collections, email helensweeney@mac.com or message primrosehillcommunitydogs on Instagram.

To volunteer at St Mary's Winter Shelter, please contact Celyn at office@smvph.org.uk





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Sir Alex Younger

OTH were saddened to learn that local resident Sir Alex Younger passed away in early June. He always gave his support to the community, including speaking at one of the Primrose Hill lectures in October 2022, giving a talk at the Primrose Hill Community Association AGM in 2024, and introducing *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* at Primrose Hill Community Library Film Night in November 2025. Sir Alex led MI6 between 2014 and 2020 where he was known as 'C' or chief of the Secret Intelligence Service. In a 2020 interview with the *Financial Times,* he said "I am a romantic. I believe in human agency. I love the fact that individuals can make a difference . . . I wanted to be one of those people."



Free Auction Valuation Days

Sworders fine art auctioneers offer free auction valuation days at Primrose Hill Community Library on the last Thursday of every month. Whether you're considering selling or are simply curious, join them between 10am and 3pm on 29 October, 26 November and 17 December to learn more about your treasured pieces and explore their potential.

sworder.co.uk



New Patron for the Camden Choir



The Camden Choir is delighted to announce that actress Helena Bonham Carter CBE has agreed to become a Patron. She joins Dame Judi Dench, Baroness Joan Bakewell and the broadcaster and journalist Jon Snow in supporting them. Helena, who lives in Belsize Park, is best known for her roles in *Lady Jane, A Room With A View* and *The King's Speech,* for which she won a BAFTA Award. More recently she portrayed Princess Margaret in Netflix's *The Crown,* which earned her an Emmy.

The Choir's Autumn Concert takes place in St Mary's Primrose Hill at 6pm on Saturday 26 October, including Benjamin Britten's *St Nicholas (*accompanied by a children's choir) plus a newly commissioned piece by the accompanist Alessandro MacKinnon-Botti. There will be a Christmas concert on Saturday 28 November, and on 20 March next year the late Lyndon van de Pump's new translation of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. For further information please visit the website **www.camdenchoirlondon** or contact the Choir's Publicity Manager, Anthony Wills on **awpiers.org.uk**



Filming in Primrose Hill

In July, residents witnessed the refit of the Princess of Wales, Sam's Café and shops down Chalcot Road. Market stalls were set up in the style of Goldborne Road and streets were closed as a bus was filmed crashing into the stalls. Look out for the film on Netflix – *A Matter of Time* – starring Ben Stiller and directed by Harry Bradbeer.

News & Views

Bonnie Dobson's Book

Local folk musician Bonnie Dobson, previously featured in *OTH* last summer's edition, has a newly published book: *Take Me for a Walk in the Morning Dew: The Life and Times of Bonnie Dobson and the Story of her Iconic Song* by John Einarson and Bonnie Dobson. Canadian-born singer/songwriter Bonnie Dobson composed *Morning Dew* as a solo acoustic performer in 1961, and the song has been recorded by everyone from Robert Plant to the Grateful Dead, Rod Stewart and Nazareth. The book tells the story of a naive young folksinger from Toronto who grew up poor in a fractured family living in government housing. Gifted with a soaring soprano voice and a passion for traditional folk music, Bonnie began her career in North America, where she released half a dozen albums and appeared at all the major folk music venues, including Gerde's Folk City in Greenwich Village where the as yet unsigned Bob Dylan played. Bonnie continues to write and record new music, and in 2025 she recorded the album *Dreams* with the rootsy British group The Hanging Stars.



Marcus Davey CBE made a Peer in the House of Lords

The former Chief Executive and Artistic Director of the Roundhouse, Marcus Davey CBE, was announced as a Peer in the House of Lords in July. This incredible honour came shortly after Marcus stepped down from the Roundhouse in June, following 27 pioneering and transformational years. Having previously been awarded an OBE in 2012 and a CBE in 2019, Marcus's appointment to the House of Lords marks a brand-new chapter where he can continue to champion diverse young voices and the transformational power of the arts.



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What's On October 2026

SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER
Feldenkrais Workshop
The Four Corners 1, Hips & Shoulders. PHCC. 1.30–4pm. More info: www.feldenkraiswithana.com.

TUESDAY 6 OCTOBER
Film Show
PHCL. Doors open 7.15pm. £8 including a glass of wine. Tickets at phcl.org/filmshow.

THURSDAY 15 OCTOBER
Primrose Hill Community Association AGM 2026
PHCC. 7–10pm.

WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER
Book Club
PHCL. 7pm. Check website for details of the book, phcl.org. Free.

FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER
Gig at the Library
PHCL. Doors open 7.15pm. £5 online, £6 on the door. Tickets at www.phcl.org/gig.

SATURDAY 24 OCTOBER
Feldenkrais Workshop
The Four Corners 2, Shoulders & Hips. PHCC. 10.45am to 1.15pm. More info: www.feldenkraiswithana.com.

WEDNESDAY 28 TO FRIDAY 30 OCTOBER
Circus Glory Children's Camp
PHCC. 9.30am – 3.30pm.

KIDS

MONDAY
Rhyme Time
Library Rhyme Time for under-5s. PHCL. 11–11.30am. Suggested donation £2. Contact 020 7419 6599.

Circus Glory
Trapeze for ages 2½–16. All levels welcome. PHCC. 2–7.15pm. Contact Genevieve 07973 451603.

Rhyme Time
Library Rhyme Time for under-5s. PHCL. 11–11.30am. Suggested donation £2. Contact 020 7419 6599.

Board Games
Come along to the Library for our board game evening. Bring your own or join in with one that we have. PHCL. 6pm. Free.

TUESDAY
Monkey Music
Music and play for under-5s. PHCC. 9.45am–12.15pm. Contact 020 8451 7626.

Ballet
Introductory ballet sessions for children, using storytelling and imagery to teach the basics of dance. PHCL. 10–10.30am. Suggested donation £2. Contact lilykourakou@hotmail.com.

Ready Steady Go ABC
For children 3–15 months and their parents/carers. Fun, engaging sessions that focus on sensory discovery and gentle exploration. PHCC. 10–11am. Contact 020 7586 5862.

Hartbeeps
Multi-sensory music movement and drama classes for infants and toddlers. PHCC. 2–5pm. Contact clarelouise@hartbeeps.com.

Chess Club
Every other Tuesday (9 and 23 June). PHCL. 6.30pm. Free and open to all ages and abilities. Check Library website for more details.

WEDNESDAY
Ready Steady Go Beginners
For children aged 1–2 years and their parents/carers. Group class to develop independence, curiosity, resilience and readiness for learning. PHCC. 9.30–11.15am. Contact 020 7586 5862

Circus Glory
Trapeze for ages 2½–16. All levels welcome. PHCC. 2–6.45pm. Contact Genevieve 07973 451603.

Primrose Hill Children's Choir
Exciting performances, fun singing. St Mary's NW3 3DJ. 4.30–5.30pm. primrosehillchoirs.com. Contact: maestromatthewW@yahoo.co.uk

THURSDAY
Mini Mozart
Musical story time. PHCL. 9.30–11.10am. Book at www.minimozart.com.

First Class Learning
Maths and English tuition. PHCL. 3.30–6pm. Contact primrosehill@firstclasslearning.co.uk

Catherine's Ballet
Nursery and primary ballet classes for ages 3–7 years. PHCC. 4–5.30pm. Contact 020 8348 0262, info@chalkfarmschoolofdance.co.uk or chalkfarmschoolofdance.co.uk.

FRIDAY
Tales with Tracy
A fun and educational session featuring a well-loved children's book, enhanced with props, expressive character voices, interactive storytelling and singing for under-5s. PHCL. 10.30am. £3.

Circus Glory
Trapeze for ages 2½–16. All levels welcome. PHCC. 3–7.30pm. Contact Genevieve 07973 451603.

SATURDAY
Perform
Drama, dance and singing for ages 4–12 years. St Paul's CE Primary School. 9.30–11am (4–7s) and 11.15am–12.45pm (7–12s). Contact 020 7255 9120 or enquiries@perform.org.uk.

Family Dance Sessions
PHCC. Under-5s: 10am. Ages 5–11 years: 10.50am. Ages 12–19 years: 11.45am. Contact info@icandance.org.uk

Tales with Tracy
A fun and educational session featuring a well-loved children's book, enhanced with props, expressive character voices, interactive storytelling and singing fo under-5s. PHCL. 11–11.30am. £3.

SUNDAY
Perform
Drama, dance and singing for ages 4–12 years. PHCC. 10am–11.30am (4–7s) and 11.35am–1.05pm (7-12s).

What's On October 2026

ADULTS

MONDAY
Board Games
Come along to the Library for our board game evening. Bring your own or join in with one that we have. PHCL. 6pm. Free.

Chilled Strings
Beginners' orchestra rehearsals. PHCC. 6.15–8.45pm. Contact sueandhercello@gmail.com.

Primrose Hill Choir
Love to sing? All styles of music, all levels welcome. PHCC. 7.30–9.30pm. Contact maestromatthewW@yahoo.co.uk.

Voices on the Hill Choir
A community choir singing soul, blues, pop, jazz classic songs. Everyone welcome. PHCL. Mondays, term-time, 7:30–9pm. Contact voicesonthehillchoir@gmail.com for free taster.

Chalk Farm Piano Club
A chance for adult piano players (any level) to share piano playing in a safe and non-judgmental environment. Chalk Farm Baptist Church. Every 2nd Monday of the month. 6.30pm. Contact Catherine Minns chalkfarmpianoclub@gmail.com or www.chalkfarmschoolofdance.co.uk

TUESDAY
Pilates
Dynamic sessions 10.15–11am; gentle sessions 11.30am–12.15pm. PHCL. £15 per class, £120 for 10 classes. Contact patricia-pilates.com.

Laban Explorers
A small, eclectic group of actors, singers and dancers meet once a week, term-times, online and in person. PHCC. 12.30–1.30pm. Contact jennyfrankel.laban@gmail.com

Zumba Gold
Zumba class for seniors looking for a fun, modified, low-intensity workout, made easy with simple-to-follow steps. PHCC. 2.30–3.15pm. £3 per session or free for benefit claimants. Check PHCA website for details.

Memory Singing Circle
Singing and socialising sessions aimed at people with dementia or other neurological conditions and their carers. PHCC. 3–5pm. Check PHCA website for details.

Morris Dancing Class
All welcome, no experience required. CSH. 6.30pm. Book online.

Chess Club
Every other Tuesday. Free and open to all ages and abilities. PHCL. 6.30pm. Check Library website for more details.

Fellows Singers
A local chamber choir with a wide repertoire across the centuries, styles and languages. PHCL. 7.30–9pm. Contact 07901 555 785 or jeremy@jeremylewison.co.uk. More information at fellowssingers.com

Qi Gong
Introduction to mindful movement and conscious breathing. Every Tuesday 5.30–6.30pm. PHCC. Free for the general public. Contact ChiKungGuy@icloud.com for more info.

WEDNESDAY
Wellbeing Cafe
Cafe space and warm bank serving delicious home-made soup and cake, tea, coffee, jacket potatoes and more. PHCC. 10am–2pm. Pay what you can.

Open House
Talks, museum and gallery visits, films and more, always followed by tea. PHCC. 2–4pm.

English Folk Dance Club
Fun for dancers of all abilities and none. No partner needed. PHCC. 7.30–9.45pm. Contact camdenfolkdance@yahoo.com.

London Sound Project Choir
A friendly community-led choir in North London, performing contemporary songs with a pro band, open to all (18+). PHCL. 7.15 9.15pm. More info: ldnsoundproject.co.uk.

THURSDAY
Silver Swans Ballet
Ballet classes for over 55s. PHCC. 11am–12pm. Contact katie@primrosehillballet.co.uk.

Gentle Pilates
Gentle but effective Pilates class. PHCL. 12.30–1.30pm. £15 per session. Contact jane_seal@hotmail.com.

Narcotics Anonymous
Support for people with narcotics problems. PHCC. 1.30–3.45pm. Free. More information via NA helpline 0300 999 1212.

Primrose Hill Community Orchestra
A symphony orchestra for all strings and woodwinds. PHCC. 2–4pm. £10. Contact sueandhercello@gmail.com.

A Day of Discovery – Valuation Day
Join the specialists from Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers for a complimentary valuation day. PHCL. Last Thursday of every month. 10am–3pm.

Life Drawing
All levels welcome; friendly group. Please bring your own materials. PHCC. 6.30–8.30pm. £12 card, £10 cash. Follow on Instagram @lifedrawingph. Just drop in or sign up online at meetup.com/Primrose-Hill-Life-Drawing-London.

FRIDAY
Aerial Pilates
Feel stronger and more flexible with the support of an aerial sling. PHCC. 10–11am. Contact Pieta at pieta.ruckkeene@gmail.com

Chair Yoga for Seniors
PHCC. 2.45–3.45pm. Free. Register at www.phca.cc.

SATURDAY
Primrose Hill Market
St Paul's School playground, Elsworthy Road, NW3 3DS. 9.30am–2.30pm. Contact www.primrosehillfoodmarket.com.

Narcotics Anonymous
Support for people with narcotics problems. PHCC. 5.30–7pm. Free. More information via NA helpline 0300 999 1212.

SUNDAY
Primrose Hill Community Bar
A chance to meet neighbours over discounted drinks and play pool. PHCC. 12–3pm.

CONTACT DETAILS

Primrose Hill Community Centre (PHCC)
29 Hopkinson's Place (off Fitzroy Road), NW1 8TN
Contact: 020 7586 8327, info@phca.cc
www.phca.cc

Primrose Hill Community Library (PHCL)
Sharpleshall Street, NW1 8YN
Contact: 020 7419 6599
events@phcl.org
www.phcl.org

Cecil Sharp House (CSH)
2 Regent's Park Road, NW1 7AY
Contact: 020 7485 2206
www.cecilsharphouse.org

Reflections of a Primrose Hill Newcomer

By Tammy Simon

As fledgling residents in Primrose Hill, this is not our first experience of living in a railway terrace, the Victorian brick constructions built to house workers during the rapid development of the railway network in the 19th century. Whilst the erections of this period reflected the industrialisation and urban population growth of the time, other periods of terraced housing still define many cities across the country. There are distinct districts, styles and degrees of grandiosity, from impressive Regency crescents and decorative Georgian terraces leading onto squares and gardens to the modest, narrow terraces speculatively constructed for the workforce.

As a young married couple we lived in a similar London railway cottage, and then as now we have found the brickwork of these terraces to be modest. On one occasion, we returned home to be met by a neighbour holding out a bottle of wine. We soon learned that in attempting to put up a picture, he had inadvertently gone right through the single course of brick into our house. He was mortified – the hole was large enough to peep through – and so the term 'Weetabricks' was coined.

Or how we laughed as a smug young couple, listening through the walls as our harassed neighbour bellowed at his tween-age sons, 'I wanted children, not hooligans.' Fast forward twenty years to this Primrose Hill railway terrace, and I'm self-consciously dialling down my voice as I negotiate with our teenagers.

Bricks aside, the position of our Primrose Hill terraced home is in all other ways enviable. Nestled between two protected parks – Primrose Hill Park and Regent's Park – and between the canal and railway, it feels a rather special location.

A short, sharp stroll to the top of Primrose Hill, at approximately 63 metres above sea level, offers majestic views of the city's skyline. The view, which is itself protected as a significant public asset, was once part of royal hunting land. For centuries, Primrose Hill provided strategic views of approaches into London, as well as enviable proximity to the capital's heartland and power.

When Primrose Hill was opened to the public in 1842, its significance shifted to predominantly civic and social use, embodying the Victorian ideal that open air recreation improved public health and should be accessible for all. Today it still projects a sense of openness and a space to be shared. Indeed, I learned that even the pruning of trees is subject to scrutiny to ensure that the view is carefully managed, naturally framed and visually enhanced.

We arrived here in winter, the blossom arrived and then the hot summer, and I continue to reflect on this patch of London. On its position, between boundaries of canal and railway, park and city. On its architecture, ranging from narrow terraces to grand properties bordering wide boulevards. On the surrounding listed buildings, like the Chalk Farm Tavern, now Lemonia restaurant, yet once a stopping point on the medieval route north out of London, and often also the first resting place of manual labourers killed in 19th-century construction work. And there are pubs aplenty in which to sit and socialise. Where once the hostelries existed to lift the spirits of railway workers after long shifts of hard labour and soot, today it is the price of a pint that is sky high.

There is a sense of public pride in this shared communal area. Primrose Hill feels like a hill for the people, in a city full of people.

And yet there has been tragedy too in my short time as a Primrose Hill resident. Suddenly people did not flow freely into the space; respectfully they did not choose any path up and around the hill. Instead, flowers were placed, footsteps paused.

Primrose Hill will remain reflective, celebratory and uniquely connected to the pulsing city below. There are no grand gates or monuments, and at the end of the day, it is just a hill.

It does, however, feel that there is connectedness to its historic legacy: not only in the area's listed buildings and commemorative blue plaques, but also in the conservation groups who helped to save parts of the railway terraces and who work on behalf of the local community.

It all makes me wonder what this hill would wish to reveal of its past. Would it remind us how it was originally laid out as building plots? Would it speak of gatherings held in solidarity and protest? Of the writers and painters who congregated in this place? Of the labourers who lived cheek by jowl in the terraces, and who helped the city grow into what it is today?

Or would it just be content to be a place for walkers and runners, visitors and Londoners to come and ascend and sometimes sit to contemplate.

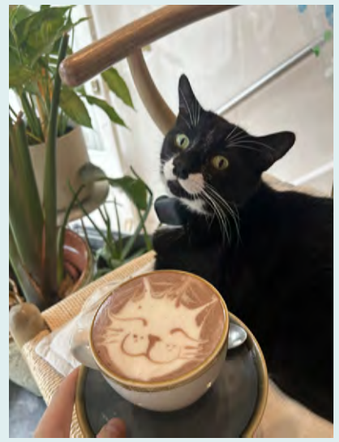
The Coolest Cat in Primrose Hill

Many unusual characters live in Primrose Hill but few have as wide an acquaintance or are as generally admired as Coconut. Combining affability, civility and charm, Coconut can be met strolling over a remarkably wide area. He combines life as a habitué of all the pubs, cafes and shops in the area with his regular job at Roots in Regent's Park Road, where he appears amongst the portraits of the staff. Other favourite haunts are the Albert, Gail's, Lemonia, Nadia's, Sam's and the Queens. He has recently been seen, as a visitor, in the Zoo.

The phrase 'as cool as a cucumber' is as nothing compared to 'as cool as a Coconut'. Coconut shows a complete indifference to dogs, however large, and disdains foxes. He sits in the middle of the canal towpath, ignoring bicycles and pedestrians. Recently, he seems to have been going through a religious phase and has been seen lying on the altar at St Mark's. Although his human family is Kosovan and Muslim, Coconut is very much an interfaith cat. Such is his piety that he has been locked in St Mark's overnight more than once. In the evening Coconut often relaxes at the Albert, next to his house in Auden Place, and can be found helping the staff count the day's takings.

Born in 2015, Coconut had a remarkably quiet early life for such a cosmopolitan and outgoing cat. He was an indoor cat in Hackney until he was three. He would, however spend hours staring out of the window, dreaming of the wider world beyond the glass. Then one day he decided that the distant view was simply not enough. He launched himself from the fourth-floor balcony of the flat where he then lived, landing perfectly on all four paws, and somehow walked away with just a chipped nail. That was the moment that his owners realised that they owned a fearless explorer.

Not long after this dramatic leap, Coconut's family moved to Primrose Hill. Since then Coconut has lived exactly the life of which he had always dreamed. He goes out at 7 in the morning and is usually not back until 9.30 in the evening. When I called recently at his house, in the hope of an interview, he was out at an event at Primrose Hill School. Only the tracker he wears gives an indication of his whereabouts at any one time. The outdoors is his kingdom, every path is an adventure and every stranger is simply a friend he has yet to make. He adores people, confidently greeting everyone he meets.



The non-stop social whirl in which he exists, including accepting hospitality at a very wide range of cafes and pubs, has at times led to Coconut putting on weight, despite the miles he walks every day. Many of his local friends cannot resist giving him titbits, despite the clear instruction, 'Do not feed me', on his collar. It is unsurprising to learn that, from time to time, Coconut has to spend time at a health farm. He also is a regular at keep fit classes at St Mark's.

At home, Coconut lives with his tabby rescue sister Cookie, originally from Greece, and his loyal husky friend Luna. Indoors, he is always impeccably behaved, though his dislike of being brought home at the end of the day sometimes leads to him scratching whoever is collecting him. He occasionally watches television, but it is usually not long before he decides that it is time to go out. He then taps on the outside door.

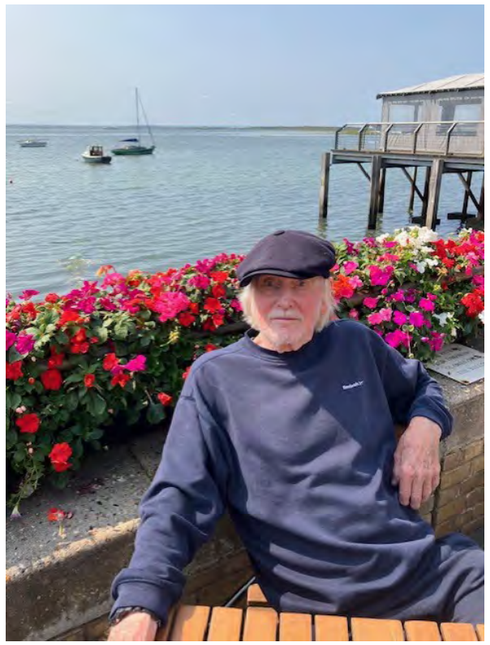
Recently, Coconut has somewhat restricted his range, as two other local cats, Gigi and Winston, have muscled in on some of his long-term haunts. Coconut regrets their intrusion but is too high-minded to become involved in any vulgar and distasteful local spats.

Besides adding tone to the neighbourhood, Coconut sets a standard of politeness and sociability, and exhibits an unfailing commitment to high standards of behaviour, which all readers of *On The Hill* would do well to emulate.

Martin Sheppard

THE MOLE ON THE HILL UNMASKED AT LAST

BY S.L.



There is a quiet magic in not knowing who is watching over you. For twelve years, the residents of Primrose Hill have been observed, reported upon and gently held to account by what many thought was a creature none of them could quite place: a column-writing mole with sharp eyes, a dry wit and an opinion on absolutely everything about the unique residents of the Hill.

His identity was the neighbourhood's best-loved secret; but now, with his 90th birthday behind him, as he sets down his pen, the Mole has agreed to step out of the shadows.

So who is the Mole on the Hill? His name is Jim Mulligan: retired teacher, writer, father of six, grandfather, journalist, volunteer, actor, and one of the most quietly remarkable people ever to have called Primrose Hill home.

From Middlesbrough to the Top of the Hill

Born in Middlesbrough, after his schooldays Jim spent four years in a seminary in Ireland before coming to London to train as a teacher. He began at St Gerard's School in Clapham at age 24, then taught at three further London schools, finally as Head of English at Pimlico; he retired at age 57 after 33 years in the classroom. Along the way he squeezed in an English Literature degree part-time at what is now Middlesex University, and later an MA in novel writing, because for Jim Mulligan learning has always extended beyond any formal obligation.

His arrival in Primrose Hill came through a Labour Government scheme enabling teachers and essential workers to rent properties from housing associations near their place of work. This meant that he and his wife Nikki Haydon, who taught at Haverstock School, could take up the offer and settle on the Auden Place estate in 1983. He has lived here now for 43 years, long enough to have witnessed the transformation of the neighbourhood. When he arrived, some railway workers still lodged in the large multi-occupied houses that have since become family homes, though the railway cottages had already passed into private ownership. Today the area is one of the most photographed, most visited, most talked-about neighbourhoods of London.

The BBC, the Books and the Burrowing

When Jim retired from teaching, the BBC rang almost immediately and asked him to do interview work for *The English Programme*, a series that sent him touring schools across the country. After that came Methuen, where he continued interviewing and writing, and then Community Service Volunteers, where he worked as a staff writer producing books on volunteering and on training teachers: this combined the fruits of his 33 years teaching and his experience in volunteering to give him the satisfaction of writing about how to volunteer.

It was somewhere in all this – the schools, the interviews, the community work, the long walks on the Hill – that the Mole was born, though Jim will tell you the animal had a precursor: a ferret, which he invented when a teacher to host a column for the school magazine. This animal-columnist device had proved so useful and so freeing that when the editor of *On The Hill* magazine, Maggie Chambers, came looking for a writer, his instinct was already well-established.

The Mole, Revealed

The conceit was elegant: a mole looking down from the top of Primrose Hill, observing the world below with curiosity and no particular agenda. Jim has written dozens of articles under the Mole's byline over the years. The character grew as Jim grew comfortable in him, and at some point he gave the Mole a granddaughter, inspired by his own grandchildren: a small girl who would tug at her grandfather's hand and ask, "Grandad, what's that down there?" It gave the column permission to explain, to wonder aloud, to treat the neighbourhood as worthy of understanding rather than merely recording.
He has decided to stop writing for the magazine for the simplest of reasons: he turned 90 in January, and 90 felt like the right moment; though he did pause to note, with a gleam, that his retirement may not be entirely permanent.

Six Children, 43 Years, and a Neighbourhood That Keeps Changing

Jim has six children, none of whom seem to have taken the obvious path, which is perhaps the most Jim Mulligan thing about them. Jim also has several grandchildren who are distributed across Bath, Derbyshire and London.

The neighbourhood, Jim will tell you, has changed in ways both visible and less so since he arrived 43 years ago. Sunday mornings are busier now, thick with tourists climbing the Hill to look across at the skyline. The park closes at 10 pm, a change brought in partly to control the drug activity that used to cluster there after dark. Jim is familiar with the problem from having interviewed those working on the front line. He knows that knife crime among local young people is a more present reality than the neighbourhood's elegant exterior might suggest.

The area's working-class roots have given way almost entirely to architects, artists, yoga studios and coffee shops. Jim watches this with the clear-eyed objectivity of someone who has been here long enough to remember several different versions of the same Hill.

Still on Stage, Still in the Room

What is perhaps most striking about Jim Mulligan at 90 is that he doesn't seem to be stopping any time soon: volunteering at the Community Centre, helping with washing up at the Wednesday community café, performing songs and readings at care homes, and attending a splinter group of Southwark elders every Monday, a habit sustained by a genuine and undiminished love of being in a room where theatre is being made.

Jim co-ran the summer fair in Chalcot Square for years, alongside his late friend Keith Bird. He still sees volunteering not as an optional extra of Primrose Hill life but as its connective tissue, the contribution that holds the Community Centre, the Library and half a dozen other essential enterprises together.

Jim has also written plays and poetry. When asked where his love of writing began, Jim says he has been a writer for as long as he can remember. Having left home at seventeen to enter the seminary, he was required by his mother to send weekly letters home, a rule she enforced across all nine children. He didn't realise it at the time, but the memory of those letters remains the closest thing to a sustained personal record he has, and he suspects they are what made him a writer in the first place: not any formal programme or creative epiphany, but simply the discipline of having to find something to say every single week, whether you felt like it or not.

The View from the Hill

The Mole may have put aside his column, but Jim is still very much on the Hill, still writing, still watching, still involved, still turning up for the community.

Before we finished our interview, Jim asked me, with the mischievous directness of someone who has spent decades interviewing other people, whether perhaps I might be the next Mole on the Hill. I said I could never be. There is no one who can take his place, and it would be a disservice to the column and to the neighbourhood to pretend otherwise.

When I suggested that 90 is not, in the grand scheme of things, a definitive reason to retire, and perhaps there was room for a yearly comeback, a special dispatch from the Hill, he paused and said with a smile that suggested retirement denoted rather more flexibility than advertised: "I might come back. You never really know."

And with Jim Mulligan, the Mole on the Hill, you really never do.

Jim Mulligan wrote the Mole on the Hill column for On The Hill *magazine for twelve years. Even though he has reached the grand age of 90, he reserves the right to make a comeback.*

When David Hockney Came to Tea in Primrose Hill

Xandra Bingley remembers her friend David Hockney

I knew David Hockney in the 1960s, a long time ago, when his wonderful early drawings started to be shown. I loved his bleached blond hair, his different-coloured socks and his huge white-rimmed circular specs. I wanted to be him; to look like him. He changed what I wore then to the bright colours I've worn ever since. And his art changed how I saw the world.

I overheard Hockney and Kitaj, his artist friend, grumbling about how figurative drawing had become so unfashionable in England that you had to go to Paris in the 1970s to find a good figurative drawing class. He said, "The teaching of drawing is the teaching of looking, that's what it's about, to teach you to look hard at things. The most complicated and interesting thing we look at is another human being. That's the hardest thing to draw."

So I asked them to do an interview about figurative drawing. We three sat in my kitchen by Primrose Hill; and then I took my copy of the interview to Kitaj's studio to check they were happy with it. I asked them for a photo of the two of them together, and they had one already, but they kept saying, "No, we can't show her that photo." "No, no, not that one." The photo was of them standing side by side naked, except Kitaj had his socks on.

I said, "We'll put it on the cover," although I had a very lowly job at *The New Review* literary magazine and was in no position to decide such choices. But the photo did go on the cover. The day it went on sale my telephone rang in my tiny office above a strip club in Soho and a man with a Yorkshire accent said, "This is the Mayor of Bradford and I think your magazine is disgusting and should be banned." He ranted on and on till I said nervously, "David?" and he admitted, "Oh, I thought you wouldn't remember my brother is Mayor of Bradford," and he laughed uproariously. That issue sold more copies than any other *New Review* issue. It's a great photo! Hockney was a phenomenal worker. His painting of 'Bigger Trees Near Warter' is great in every sense: it measures 4.4 by 12.2 metres, made from fifty canvases joined together. He said, "I'd sit there for three hours at a time just looking," then prepared for the painting by doing many drawings. The painting was essentially done in one breathless three-week sprint. "Once I started, I had to carry on until it was finished. The deadline was not the Royal Academy exhibition, it was the arrival of spring which changes things." Hockney was both exhilarated and exhausted by the end.

He once faxed me a big black-and-white picture of his breakfast table in California. Page after page of black lines and no words spilled out of my fax machine. I was busy running a literary agency from home. My daughter, Charlotte, came in from St Paul's Primary School and I asked her, "Can you look at this, I've no idea what it is." She laid the pages out on the floor next door in the sitting room and called out, "Mum, it's a picture." We were so happy. It still hangs in my kitchen. I'm very proud to have it. Hockney said, "Van Gogh could draw anything and make it enthralling ... a run-down bathroom or a frayed carpet."



And when talking about painting still life pictures, he said, "I get very excited because I look at something and say there are a thousand things here I can see. Which will I choose? It's fantastic. These simple little things are unbelievably rich. A lot of people have forgotten that. But you can remind them, make it exciting."

How to paint time interested him enormously. His photo collages came from him looking at Chinese scroll paintings where the viewer walks along and travels through time like the artist did while painting. Hockney said, "It takes a long time to paint a picture; the time in the top corner is different to the time in the bottom corner."

Hockney was so good at showing us how to celebrate life that it is sad to realise his time in this world is over. Maybe now he is painting somewhere in another time. He did say, "For all I know, there might be another adventure." I hope so.

Xandra Bingley's latest book, *Ways Of Telling*, is available from Primrose Hill Books.

GARRY TRAINER

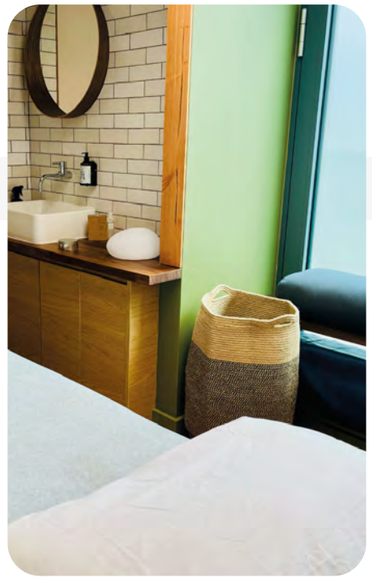
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Mary's Charity

By Ylwa Warghusen

This is the third time that Jason Allen has graced the cover of ***On The Hill*** – a record! Jason founded Mary's Charity in 2005, and readers may know about the important work they do to prevent youth violence. This includes gang mediation, safeguarding, prison work and maintaining knife bins, where anyone can safely and anonymously dispose of weapons; one of these is located just outside the charity's office in Primrose Hill.

When I ask what's new about Mary's Charity, Jason proudly shows me images from the charity's Instagram account, @maryscharityyouthwork. "Because we're so good at mediating violent situations, people sometimes don't see the other part of what we do – the youth work." In fact, as much as 80% of the charity's activity is focused on these youth programmes, with the remaining 20% dedicated to crisis response, conflict mediation and serious youth violence interventions.

The youth work is extremely varied and includes everything from candle making, baking and cooking clubs to football and art therapy. The charity runs homework clubs and helps with college and UCAS applications, as well as preparing young people to find employment. They also organise residential trips, where the youngsters learn real-life skills such as budgeting when shopping for groceries. All this youth provision primarily supports young people aged 11–18, alongside specific 18+ provision.

Mary's also holds the distinction of being a recognised educational centre – they facilitate training for students to achieve the Level 1 and Level 2 National Accredited Certificate. In 2025, 482 young people successfully gained these qualifications



Photograph by Sarah Louise Ramsay

through Mary's. This preventative work aims to stop young people falling into violence by providing guidance and alternative activities – helping them see that they have a choice in how they lead their lives. "It takes a community to save a community," as Jason puts it.

I ask him to describe a typical day. "Every day is different but, as an illustration, on any given day, members of our team could be running groups at three local secondary schools, providing mentoring (available 24/7), facilitating a sports workshop for kids not currently in education, mediating serious conflicts and tensions between young people or guiding an educational trip to London Zoo. Then there are statutory meetings with local authorities, social services, the police, plus a lot of paperwork."

The team consists of around 25 people in total, with a core team of 10. They often take a therapeutic approach, and many in the team have psychotherapy training. The goal is to equip youngsters with the emotional skills to make sound choices and form healthy relationships. A case in point comes from research conducted by Mary's Charity in conjunction with Middlesex University, in which Mary's staff interviewed over 200 young people. This revealed some striking findings: 83% said that "being excluded from school meant they couldn't build positive relationships with other people"; and 84% said that "being excluded from school exposed them to criminal activity which their friends in school did not experience". School exclusion is clearly a tipping point for many young people.

I ask if there are plans to expand the charity. "We've had multiple opportunities to grow in other areas, but Primrose Hill is our home. It's quality over quantity." Even just one life saved is worth everything. In 2025, just over 2,000 youths were supported by Mary's, around 80% boys and 20% girls. "If we had more resources we could definitely help more kids. We're inundated with referrals – from schools, social services, parents." More resources would also enable the charity to provide one-to-one sessions in schools in addition to the group sessions it currently runs.

I ask Jason to give me an example of a success story. "We can't talk about many of the success stories for safeguarding reasons, but there are numerous examples of kids who have turned their lives around." One that they can mention is that of Abdisamed. He grew up in an environment with entrenched gang violence and lost three family members to youth violence. He was close to going down this path when Mary's started working with him and supported him through school, UCAS applications, a bachelor's degree and on to a master's degree in Law where he attained the top grade. Now in his early 20s, Abdisamed is a trainee solicitor at PwC, yet he still finds time to give back to the community by overseeing part of Mary's employment section. "When we can work in-depth with people, we can guide them to fulfil their potential, to what their life can be."

Still, Jason says, "we can't eradicate violence. Conflict exists across society, but people resolve it differently. In business, you might write to your lawyer; for vulnerable young people without those tools, conflict can lead to violence or carrying a weapon. Our work helps young people to develop safer ways to manage conflict. For some, carrying a knife has become normalised as self-defence, but carrying a weapon can actually increase the risk of harm."

I ask why young people join gangs. "There are a variety of factors – lack of confidence, lack of choice and opportunities." The gangs we're talking about here are mainly the small, local gangs as opposed to larger organised crime groups (OCGs). The former are essentially friendship groups who grew up in the same area, sharing similar experiences of trauma and lack of opportunities. Criminality is a by-product. "They fall into what they see around them, the familiar. Not everyone can make a better choice, it's not really available to them; but if you work with young people and enable them, the overwhelming majority will flourish." When supported by Mary's, these kids realise they have a choice.

Things are improving around knife-enabled crime, with the Metropolitan Police reporting a London-wide drop of 17% from 2024 to 2026. Furthermore, in England and Wales the Office for National Statistics recorded a 21% drop in killings using a knife or sharp weapon last year. Still, Mary's has lost four young people to knife crime this year. This is extremely tough for the team.

My final question is simple: what can readers do to help? "Reach out. There's always a need for funding, but also for different skill sets. There are openings on the committee. And providing job opportunities or work experience for young people would be hugely valuable."

We are lucky enough to live in a leafy, privileged enclave of the capital, yet a few streets away many are struggling in very different circumstances. The work of Mary's Charity is noble, tremendously important and deserving of all our support.

maryscharity.org

Mental Health Starts Close to Home By M Moustafa Tager, Clinical Pharmacist

In busy communities like Camden and Primrose Hill, many people are quietly managing stress, poor sleep, anxiety, low mood, burnout or the pressures of daily life. Mental health is not always obvious from the outside. But some may still be going to work, caring for family, studying or keeping up with responsibilities while internally feeling overwhelmed.

The important message is that people do not need to wait until they reach crisis point before asking for help. Mental health support can start with a simple conversation — with a GP, pharmacist, therapist, support worker, trusted friend or local service.

One of the earliest signs that our mental health needs attention is often to do with sleep. Difficulty falling asleep, waking during the night, waking too early, or feeling tired despite a full night in bed can all be signs of stress, anxiety or low mood. Sleep problems can also make emotions feel harder to manage the next day, creating a difficult cycle.

Medication is another important area. Antidepressants, anxiety treatments and sleeping tablets can be helpful when used correctly, but they should be reviewed regularly. Some people continue medicines for years without discussing whether the dose is still suitable, whether side effects are affecting their daily life, or whether stopping suddenly could cause withdrawal symptoms. A medication review is not about judging someone for taking medicine; it is about making sure treatment remains safe, effective and appropriate.

Small changes can also make a difference. Opting for a regular routine, daylight exposure, more movement, reducing alcohol, limiting late caffeine, maintaining social contact and having realistic expectations can all support mental wellbeing. These steps may sound simple, but when someone feels low or anxious, even small routines can become difficult. That is why support, reassurance and early conversations matter.

As pharmacists, we are often one of the most accessible healthcare professionals in the community. People may come in for a prescription, but the conversation can open the door to something deeper: poor sleep, panic symptoms, low mood, medication worries, stress at work or concerns about a family member. Sometimes the most helpful thing we can do is listen properly, provide safe advice and guide people to the right service.

It is also important to know when help is urgent. If someone feels unsafe, at risk of harming themselves, severely distressed, confused or unable to cope, they should seek urgent help immediately. Mental health should be treated with the same seriousness as physical health.

Support is available locally. Camden and Islington NHS Talking Therapies provides free confidential help for stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia, and people can self-refer online or by phone. For urgent mental health crisis support in Camden and Islington, people can call NHS 111 and choose the mental health option; or contact the Camden and Islington Crisis Single Point of Access on 0800 917 3333, which is available 24/7.



Mental health is not a weakness; it is part of health. Whether someone is struggling with sleep, anxiety, depression, medication concerns or simply not feeling themselves, the first step can be speaking to someone. Help is closer than many people think.

If you are registered with **Primrose Hill Surgery**, you can contact the reception team to request a pharmacist medication review, where appropriate. This may be helpful if you would like to discuss your mental health, medication, side effects, dose changes, withdrawal concerns or long-term medication safety.

Camden support box

Local mental health support in Camden

Camden & Islington NHS Talking Therapies Free support for stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia. Camden self-referral phone: **020 3317 6670**.

Urgent mental health crisis support Call **NHS 111** and choose the mental health option. Camden & Islington Crisis Single Point of Access: **0800 917 3333**, 24/7.

Camden Crisis Sanctuary Free evening support for adults aged 18+ in Camden. Open 7 days a week, with last walk-in admission at 10:30pm according to Camden/NCL information.

Samaritans For confidential emotional support: **116 123**

Emergency If there is immediate danger or someone has seriously harmed themselves, call **999** or attend **A&E**.

M. Moustafa Tager

MPharm, Independent Prescriber, Member of the Royal College of Pharmacy. Clinical Pharmacist and Independent Prescriber working across community pharmacy and primary care. I have a particular interest in mental health, including anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties, antidepressant reviews and the safe use of long-term medicines.

Primrose Hill Community Library

Curl up this autumn with a good book! The Primrose Hill Community Library has plenty of new acquisitions for you to work your way through. Enjoy!

Paperbacks

Sara Nisha Adams
The Reading List

Ben Aitken
Shitty Breaks

Giorgio Bassani
The Garden of the Finzi-Continis

Caro Claire Burke
Yesteryear

Jem Calder
I Want You to Be Happy

Robert Galbraith
The Hallmarked Man

John Grisham
The Widow

Jonathan Haidt
The Anxious Generation

Natalie Haynes
No Friend to This House

Emily Itami
Fault Lines

Travis Jeppesen
See You Again in Pyongyang

Daniel Kehlmann
The Director

Elle Kennedy
The Deal

Min Jin Lee
Pachinko

Sarah J. Maas
A Court of Mist and Fury

David McClonskey
The Persian

Frieda McFadden
The Divorce

Bob Mortimer
The Long Shoe

Jennifer Niven
Meet the Newmans

Eric Puchner
Dream State

Lauren Roberts
Powerless; Reckless; Fearless

Francesca Segal
Island Calling

David Sheff
Beautiful Boy

Andy Weir
Project Hail Mary

Yang Shuang-Zi
Taiwan Travelogue

Hardbacks

Nelio Biedermann
Lazar

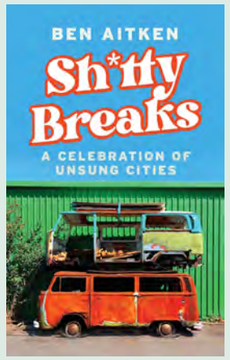
Matt Haig
The Midnight Train

Daisy Johnson
Long Wave

Maggie O'Farrell
Land

Ann Patchett
Whistler

Colson Whitehead
Cool Machine



Children's Books

John Patrick Green
InvestiGators Books 2 & 3

Kieran Larwood
The Legend of Podkin One-Ear

Judd Winick
Hilo: The Great Big Boom

TYLER

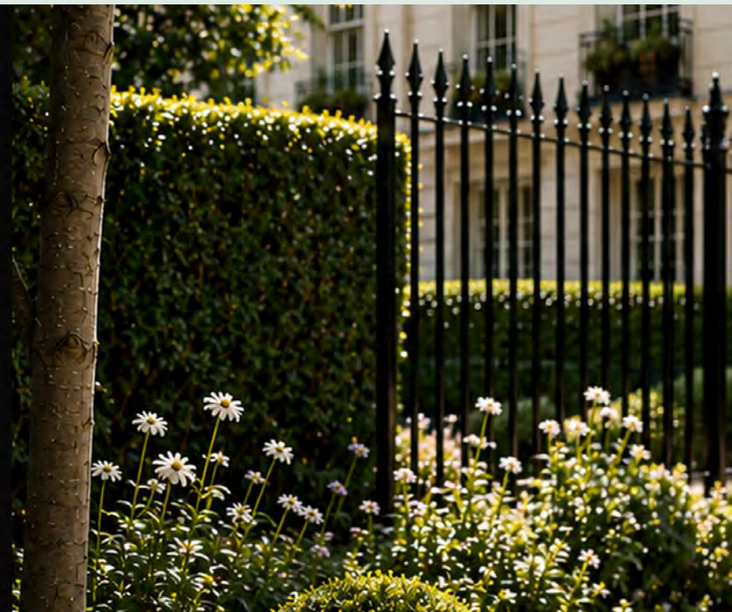
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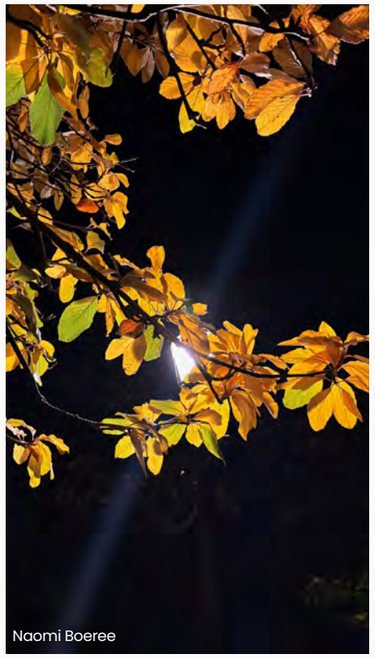
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info@tylerlondon.co.uk
tylerlondon.co.uk



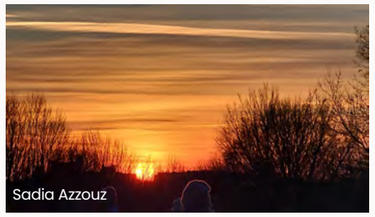
PICTURES FROM PRIMROSE HILL

Thank you to Simon Wolfe and Naomi Boeree from the Netherlands for their autumnal shots; Damjana Kevric for the dappled leaves in Chalcot Square **@primrosepanorama**; Sadia Azzouz**,** Jeff Gitter and Catherine Wei for the sunsets; Dylan Al Farsi for the rainy twilight; Paul Allen for the autumnal jogger; Katie Lord **@kateplord** for the images of Pongo and the blackbird; Janet Dulin Jones for the picture of her dog Pendleton; Jane Harris for the autumnal trees and canoeists on the canal; Wendy Hiscox for the photo of the calm before the storm on Primrose Hill and Mark Stubbings for the image of the harvest moon taken from the top of Primrose Hill.

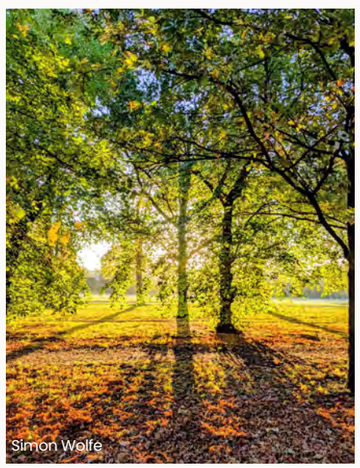
If you have any photos of the area you'd like to share, please send them to **editor@onthehill.info f**or possible inclusion in our next issue.


Naomi Boeree


Paul Allen


Sadia Azzouz


Simon Wolfe


Simon Wolfe

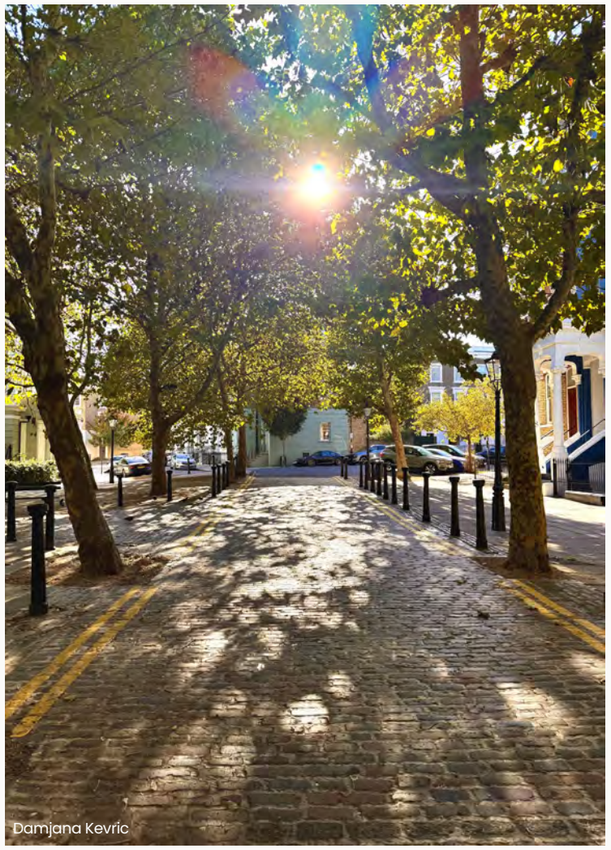

Wendy Hiscox

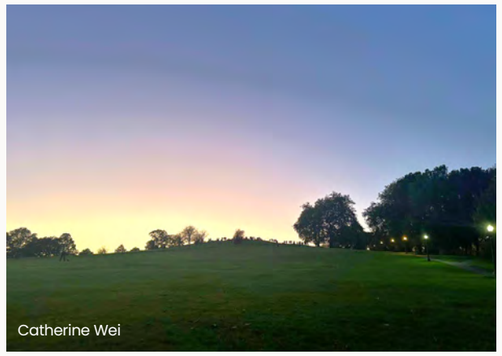

Katie Lord



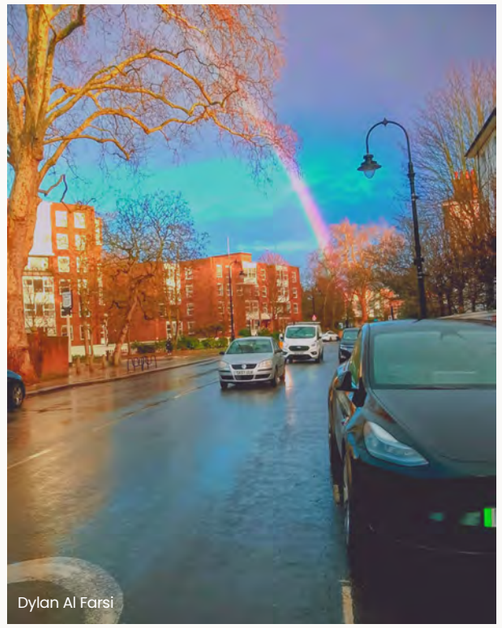
Katie Lord

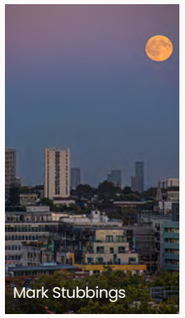

Jane Harris


Damjana Kevric


Catherine Wei


Jane Harris


Dylan Al Farsi


Mark Stubbings


Jeff Gitter


Janet Dulin Jones

Right at Home

Supporting the PHCA Memory Singing Circle

The Memory Singing Circle is a local success story that brings people together through music, friendship and shared experience. Held weekly on Tuesdays from 2.45pm to 4.30pm, the sessions welcome those living with memory problems and their carers for a relaxed and uplifting afternoon.

Each Memory Singing Circle begins with time to catch up over tea, cake or biscuits, before everyone is handed a booklet of well-loved lyrics and welcomed with an opening song. After a few fun warm-ups, the real singing begins with choices ranging from the Beatles, ABBA and Rat Pack classics to pub songs, jolly numbers from musicals and sea shanties, giving everyone something familiar to enjoy. There is a lively 'Bop' break during the session, when people are encouraged to dance, join in and enjoy the moment in whatever way suits them. More than just a music group, the circle offers a sense of connection and routine, helping people feel included, supported and part of the wider community.

For more than three years, our memory-focused activities at the Primrose Hill Community Association (PHCA) were supported by Right at Home Camden, a CQC-rated outstanding care-at-home provider, through the monthly Art for the Mind Memory Café. When that service recently came to an end, Right at Home Camden Director Darshan Vora chose to continue the partnership by sponsoring this Memory Singing Circle, recognising the difference it makes to local people and their families.

Mick Hudspeth, Manager at PHCA, said: "PHCA has been fortunate to be supported by many local businesses and organisations through the years, including Right at Home Camden, who supplied the Art for the Mind sessions; these have now ended, but they have agreed to sponsor our popular Memory Singing Circle, which brings together people living with memory problems. Here they can sing the songs they know and love in a fun and friendly environment."

The Memory Singing Circle is always keen to welcome new members and volunteers. It has become a valued part of life at PHCA, offering an environment where memories can be stirred, spirits lifted and new friendships formed. Carers and family members also benefit from the chance to meet others and spend time in a supportive atmosphere.

Anyone interested in joining or supporting the sessions, please contact Mick Hudspeth at PHCA on 020 7586 8327 or by email at **mick@phca.cc**. or **www.phca.cc**. If you would like more information on Right at Home Camden's care through home services, call 020 3921 1111 or visit **www.rightathome.co.uk/camdenandhampstead** and their friendly team will be happy to help.

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Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.
The value of pensions and investments can fall as well as rise and you can get back less than you invested.

Hello, Primrose Hill!

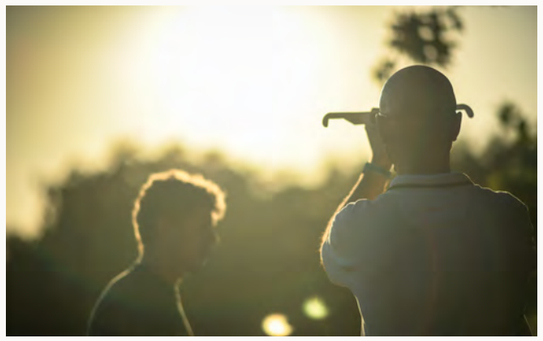
The partial solar eclipse in August drew a huge crowd of people to Primrose Hill. Here are some images of their creative use of sun-gazing implements!

Photography by Sarah Louise Ramsay










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