

THE FLASK WALKER NW.3.

The Flask Walker is the newsletter of the Flask Walk Neighbourhood Association, representing the interests of residents and businesses in the area of Flask Walk: Back Lane, Boades Mews, Flask Walk, Gardnor Road, Lakis Close, Lutton Terrace, Mansfield Place, Murray Terrace, New Court and Streatley Place.

Issue No. 29: April 2009

AGM and Winter Party, 2009

The Annual General Meeting of the FWA was held in Burgh House on 30 January 2009. Paul Moody, who was in the chair, welcomed those present and summarized some of our many activities and successes of the previous year (reported later in this issue of the *Flask Walker*).

Committee: The following officers and committee members were elected for the next twelve months: *Chair* – Paul Moody; *Deputy Chair* – Michael Lee; *Secretary* – Marianne Colloms; *Treasurer* – Simon Marshall. *Committee members:* Janet Balmforth, Mel Hampson, Manuela Macchi / Prit Mandair, Mark Nevard and Ann Stewart. The Committee intends to co-opt two Associate Members: Daniel McMahon (webmaster) and Linda Meadows (to represent Back Lane).

Accounts: The Treasurer, Simon Marshall, presented the draft accounts for 2008 (the final accounts will be posted on our notice board). The current bank balance stands at just under £4,700. It was agreed the minimum level of subscription should remain at £5 per household. Last year we had 44 members. Please show your support of the Association by joining, putting a cheque (with your name and address) through the letterbox of the Treasurer at 73 Flask Walk.

Constitution: A revision of the Association's constitution was proposed, mainly to remove several inconsistencies in the 1974 constitution. A draft of this had been posted on our notice board for several weeks prior to the meeting. The draft was approved by the meeting.

The Association's name: At last year's AGM it was suggested that a more inclusive name for the Association could be adopted. Ann Stewart spoke in favour of such a change, pointing out that the Association currently covered ten areas/streets, and that a change of name to reflect this fact could make people feel more welcome and more inclined to participate. The meeting voted in favour of changing the name to the **Flask Walk Neighbourhood Association**.

Email notifications: Members were invited to give their email addresses to our Treasurer (73 Flask Walk), as an indication that they would like to receive email updates on events affecting the neighbourhood.

Winter party: The meeting closed at 7.50, and the proceedings continued with the Flask Walk Neighbourhood Association's Winter Party.

A raffle was held, which raised £73 for the Association. Several individual members and the following local businesses provided very generous raffle prizes:

Exclusivo Secondhand Designer Clothing
Keith Fawkes, Antiquarian Secondhand Books
Judy Green's Garden Store
'enry 'iggins
Mystical Fairies
Paul, Maison de Qualité
J M Pennifeather
Simply Scrumptious Cafe
Unique Professional Tailoring
Zana

Do, please, continue to support these businesses, by way of saying thank you for their support of us. Very many thanks, also, to Mel Hampson for organising the raffle, to the individuals who donated prizes, and to members of the Association who helped with many other aspects of our work in the past year.

“Murphy loved to relax on top of parked cars, with a yawn: the King of Flask Walk”



Photo from Zoran's *Cattitude*, with kind purrmission

Flask Walk at Fenton House

There is a fine set of memories of Flask Walk in Fenton House. It resides there as the Barkworth Bequest.

Many of us will remember Peter Barkworth as a long-standing resident of Flask Walk. He had, in fact, lived here for about forty years, until his death in 2006. We remember Peter as a gentleman, urbane, courteous, always ready to exchange a few friendly words about our gardens or the state of Hampstead. The wider world remembers him as a famous actor: on television and cinema, and on stage. His best-known role is said to be as King Edward VIII in *Crown Matrimonial* or the banker in *Telford's Change*; we have a better recollection of his character appearances as a world-weary establishment figure in TV dramas and detective stories.

However, Peter was also a recluse. Few except his very closest friends knew of the existence in his home of a large collection of important British paintings. He loved the theatre – obviously – and his garden. But collecting paintings was a secret passion, pursued throughout his life.

“I first came to Hampstead in 1946”, he wrote, in *Hampstead Memories*, in 2000. “I was a fledgling RADA student, excited and raw in London, and I wanted to see where Constable had lived. I'd done the History of British Painting for Higher School Certificate at Stockport School and knew, like everyone else, that Constable and Turner were the greatest British painters who had ever lived. I got out of the tube, turned left down the hill, left into Flask Walk, passed the house I now live in, passed Burgh House, and along to that high bit of pavement across the road from 40 Well Walk. I stood and gawped and had tears in my eyes. Was this really where he'd lived? I'd already read *Memoirs of John Constable* by C.R.Leslie, and knew something of the appalling highs and lows of his family's life there. I stood and stood, looking neither to left nor right, deep in my memories of his paintings and what I'd read. ‘Walked across the fields to Hampstead...’

“... Hampstead is still Constable country to me: the graveyard in Church Row, Admiral's House, 2 Lower Terrace where he lived when he painted his famous sky pictures in 1822. I imagine him looking out of his back window, and walking up to the top of the hill, overlooking Branch Hill pond, and setting up his easel there. And I still think of him whenever I see a distant view of St. Paul's, visible from many of my favourite walks over the Heath...”

About one third of the paintings in his collection were given to friends; the other 55 were donated to Fenton House. Why Fenton House? Well, it is said that Peter first wanted to give them to Burgh House but, either

because of the cost of insuring them or because of the problems of displaying them properly, this option was rejected. Peter had requested that they be hung as a discrete collection, something that would have been, at best, difficult in Burgh House. Fenton House was in any case perhaps a more appropriate choice – Peter was a frequent and appreciative visitor to the house and garden; and his paintings beautifully complement the interior and in turn are themselves seen to good advantage in the context of this seventeenth-century country house.

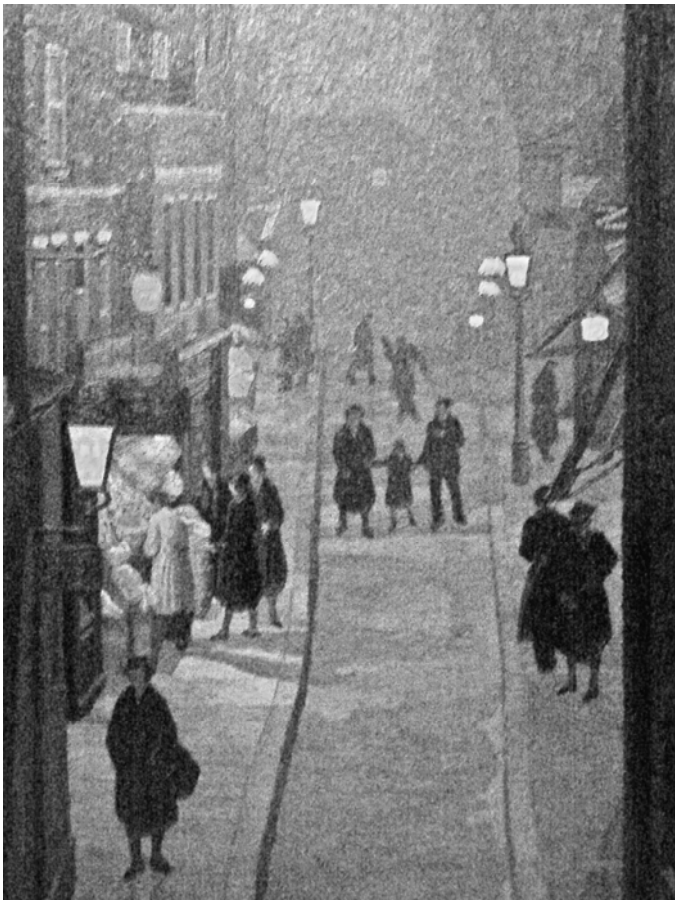
The paintings themselves are heterogenous but clearly the individual choice of one Englishman who loved his country and the theatre.

As befitting a Hampstead collector, there is a particularly fine collection of pictures by the Camden Town Group (1910-1913). This was a movement described by Tate Britain as embracing “the life of ordinary people – its beauty and magic as well as its boredom or anxiety – and [representing] life sympathetically as it was led, rather than how it ought to be”. The Barkworth Bequest includes paintings by our own Charles Ginner, by Ginner's good friends and Hampstead residents Robert Bevan and Walter Sickert, as well as by other members of the Camden Town Group – Harold Gilman, Spencer Gore, Malcolm Drummond and Duncan Grant. Critic Peyton Skipwith comments that this “is as good a group of Camden Town and early twentieth-century English Impressionist paintings as one can hope to see outside a museum”. Sickert and Gore contributed three of the collection's theatrical pictures.

Broadly, the other half of the collection consists of many fine landscapes and coastal scenes, often drawings and watercolours by English artists.

The first picture to greet a visitor entering the house is Charles Ginner's *Flask Walk, Hampstead – Night*. Peter thought this was executed around 1920, which is how it was described by Sotheby's at the time he bought it, but research for the *Flask Walker* dates it being much more likely from 1933.

Flask Walk – Night, like Ginner's other pictures of our street, was painted from his flat above what is now Starbucks. Although described by Skipwith as ‘gloriously murky’, we see this oil as full of early evening life and colour: the eye is drawn to people shopping from the overflowing display of Thos.M.Hill, fruiterer (assisted by a shopkeeper, maybe Mr Hill himself). Hill's was 3 Flask Walk, now part of Fawkes' bookshop. In the picture, the next-door boot maker is closed at this time of night, but the street is illuminated by the light from the shops further along the road. There are people window-shopping, and walking to and from the High Street, and a person carrying a heavy load and unsteady in gait, outside The Flask.



Charles Ginner. Flask Walk, Night

Photo: Michael Lee, by permission

Many of Ginner's street scenes contain meticulous records of buildings with every brick in its place, and lonely human figures; his sketches, less often seen, can be riotously colourful scenes. This painting is a good cross between the two genres: balancing colour and sombre shadows, no detailed brickwork, and with real people engaging in day-to-day activities.

Other Hampstead pictures in the Fenton House collection include another Ginner, of Pond Street from its top end (on which Peter has commented "This was painted before the Royal Free was there, of course. The church tower is still there, though the church itself has been scandalously derelict since I came to live in Hampstead.") More speculative is the setting of a fine little cloudscape by Constable. This lovely work has no distinguishing geographical features, but is very likely to have been painted from Judge's Walk. We can only speculate, from the evidence of his writings in *Hampstead Memories*, that, together with a seascape attributed to Constable, these may well have been Peter's favourites.

The Barkworth Bequest was first seen by the public in April 2007. Many of the watercolours, and the oils by the Camden Town Group were hung on the staircase between the upper two floors. Sickert's painting of two Mozartian opera singers was hung in the Porcelain

Room with the resident Meissen figurines, an apt juxtaposition. One of the attic rooms has most of the theatrical paintings. Peter's Constables have been hung adjacent to Fenton House's other (supposed) Constable – which now looks to have been painted by a somewhat less inspired artist.

The display was designed by Fenton House custodian Jane Ellis, with the help of the National Trust's Curator Tessa Wild and their painting advisor Alistair Lang. "I was nervous about how to hang them", says Jane. "We had them for three months before we were able to decide where they should go. We thought of grouping them by artist, or by theme, but neither of these seemed to work well." In the event, the paintings were arranged pretty much as Peter had had them in his own home, albeit now with more wall space. Some of the house's old prints had to go into storage (but identical prints can anyway be seen in other Trust properties), and a few pictures have been brought out of Fenton House's own vaults to be seen by the public for the first time, to complement Peter's collection. Jane believes "we got the arrangement pretty well right the first time; we made hardly any changes subsequently".

The Barkworth Bequest has attracted a measurable increase of visitors, perhaps 2,000 more in the first year. There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to this addition to Fenton House; it possibly now displays a better conceptual balance between the musical instruments, furniture and pictures. Friends of Peter say that he would have been pleased by the arrangement. Peyton Skipwith has described this as 'one of the finest domestic hangings of post-impressionist art in England'.

Fenton House is open from now until the autumn 2-5pm on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and from 11am to 5pm on Saturdays and Sundays. Early opening on bank holiday Mondays, too.

Michael Lee

We would like to acknowledge the generous help in preparing this article of Jane Ellis, Custodian of Fenton House. Information was also taken from Peyton Skipwith's The Peter Barkworth Collection at Fenton House, Hampstead in the British Art Journal, Spring 2008. The extract from Hampstead Memories is reproduced by kind permission of the publisher, Pumpkinseed Productions.

FWA Annual Review, 2008

Traffic: A sub-committee worked with Camden to resolve or reduce traffic problems in our area. Flask Walk and Back Lane have since been designated as 'Unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles', with a sign erected at the corner of Flask Walk and Willow Road; this, we believe, has helped to reduce the number of wide and heavy lorries trying to use our streets as a thoroughfare. Camden also responded positively and

(generally) pretty quickly to our requests for minor repairs and maintenance to the streets and street furniture. Many thanks to the Council officers who have helped us solve routine problems, and to our local councillors who have intervened on more significant issues.

The Flask Walker: The *Flask Walker* appeared four times during the year, and was delivered to all households and businesses in the area. New articles, photographs and information are always welcome.

The Hoggin: We've worked on the Hoggin – that's the green strip on Flask Walk between the road and the footpath on the north side; the word 'hoggin' actually refers to the material that was used to fill in this land, gravel-with-soil. Following several failures to green the bottom corner of the Hoggin and save it from becoming a dogs' toileting area, the FWA paid for the hoggin material to be replaced by soil and planted with *pyracantha*. In addition, a working party spent time pruning some of the more recalcitrant shrubs and cleaning up the accumulated rubbish. Thanks also to the several individuals who have planted bulbs and other plants, and who do some weeding and clear up whatever litter they come across.

Winter party: The AGM and winter party were held in Burgh House on 1 February 2008. A report of the meeting was included in the April 2008 issue of the *Flask Walker*.

Summer street party: The summer party was held this year on Sunday 29 June, bigger and better than ever. Camden helped by suspending parking for the day around the Green. We enjoyed music from the local Salvation Army band and performances by Morris dancers. Stalls were staffed by FWA members and friends; thanks to Mystical Fairies who painted faces of our younger members, and to our local fire service who encouraged visits to their fire engine. Receipts were up on the previous year but because, for the first time, we followed advice and paid for insurance against mishaps, net proceeds fell to a little over £500. Donations were made to the Marie Curie Hospice and to the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Bulletin board: We designed, commissioned and erected a new notice board for the Association, at the High Street end of Flask Walk, to replace the old board

that was falling apart. Do, please, keep an eye on it, as important notices are posted there much more frequently than can be published in the *Flask Walker*.

Street lighting: Following intensive representations made by your Committee, Camden cleaned the glass of most of our street lights, thus improving the light output by about 25 percent; we also lobbied for the pruning of leafy branches obstructing street lights.

Local consultations: The FWA has participated in several forums for matters affecting our neighbourhood, including Safer Neighbourhoods consultations, the Camden Community & Police Consultative Group and Camden's Area Forums. (The latter are promoted as a new way for members of the community to influence the decisions that affect the places where we live and the public services available to us. Anyone can attend.)

Your committee reviews all planning and licensing applications for the area, and submits comments where we believe our community would be adversely affected. We successfully opposed an application by Meghna Grill for a late-night extension to their license for alcohol and music, which would have given sleepless nights to residents in Mansfield Place, Streatley Place and New Court. We also monitor and where necessary follow up problems of local noise and disturbance, rubbish collection, repairs to the streets, footpaths and street furniture, and more.

New constitution: A sub-committee reviewed the Association's constitution and made recommendations to update it, mainly to correct inconsistencies with current practice. Our guidelines included the requirement to 'keep it simple' and to maintain compatibility with the understood aims and objectives of the Association.

The committee: We are sad to have had to say goodbye to committee members Scott Cano, Laline Paull and Julia Simkins. This means that your committee no longer has representatives from Streatley Place and Mansfield Place. If you would like to be considered as a representative of those areas, please do put a note through the door of the Secretary (29 Flask Walk).

*The Flask Walker is the newsletter of the
Flask Walk Neighbourhood Association
PO Box 59217, London NW3 9FD; www.flaskwalk.org.uk*

✂-----
Yes, I would like to be a paid-up member of my local neighbourhood association – the Flask Walk Association (FWA)

I/We enclose a cheque/cash for £_____ (minimum £5 / household) as my/our subscription to the Flask Walk Association for 2009. Please return this form with your payment to Simon Marshall, FWA Treasurer, 73 Flask Walk. Thank you for your support.

Name and contact details (address, email, phone):