

Alley tribute to Day of the Triffids

Plans to rename wheelie bin-filled passage after notorious killer plants in sci-fi classic

by Tom Marshall

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It's a "rather grim" alleyway that serves as a little else but a store for rubbish and recycling.

But this dreary stretch of land could soon become an unlikely stop on Hampstead's literary trail – after plans were unveiled to name it in honour of science fiction classic *The Day of the Triffids*.

The South End Green Residents Association (Sega) is hoping to have the narrow passageway officially named Triffid Alley after the killer plant that ravages humanity in John Wyndham's 1951 novel.

It is set to canvass residents and businesses before contacting Camden Council and the owners of the private alley.

Sega chairman David Kitchen said: "It's a rather grim little alley, there's nothing splendid about it, it's just full of wheelie bins, but it's clean.

"Any literary name or famous name we can associate with South End Green, all the better."

Mr Kitchen hopes the alley will be named in time for a rumoured blockbuster remake of the 1962 film adaptation, which renowned director Mike Newell is said to be making.

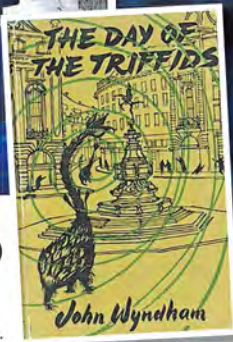
Sega embraced the proposal after it was suggested by a retired English professor who recently wrote a biography of Wyndham – and happens to live in nearby South Hill Park.

David Ketterer, now an honorary research fellow at the University of Liverpool, which holds the Wyndham archives, said the alley makes a brief but important appearance in the book.

The hero Bill Masen uses it to escape an onslaught from the venomous triffids, after they surround



■ The alleyway (above), original book cover (right) and a triffid (far right)



■ David Kitchen (left) and David Ketterer
Pictures: Polly Hancock and Neil Pollard

him in a grocery store. Before the triffids strike,

he arrives in South End Green to find an eerie silence hanging over the area – and dead bodies strewn about the streets.

Mr Ketterer said: "When I reread *Day of the Triffids*, I knew immediately this was just down the road.

"I can't really think of any good reasons not to do it. *Day of the Triffids* is a classic science fiction novel and the episode is a significant one in the novel structurally.

"The alley is unnamed and it

would be another point of literary interest in this part of London."

The area is only identified as being near to Hampstead Heath, but Mr Ketterer says the description is so clear he was able to pinpoint Masen's precise movements.

The alley is off Pond Street, behind the shops of South End Road, while the grocery store was a Co-op at the time, but is now Starbucks.

Mr Ketterer said the street name would stand as the first memorial of any sort to Wyndham or his

work in England, after three failed attempts to get a Blue Plaque erected at his former home in Bloomsbury.

He added: "He obviously knew the area pretty well and he worked the episode out fairly carefully – it's a very precise description of things as they were in 1949 or 1950, when he would have written the piece."

