

HIGHBURY FIELDS

A S S O C I A T I O N

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

In these early weeks of the Year of the Monkey, none as yet has been spotted on the Fields. A fox, foraging in the bushes near the swimming pool; an occasional squirrel; regular sightings of pairs of blinkered horses; and dogs, plenty of dogs, more of which elsewhere in this newsletter.



Our main role this past year, as other years, has been conservation. After the damage caused by Kiss FM and Waterboys concerts in 1990, we have strongly opposed frequent large events on the Fields. Although the Council do not share our concern, we have managed to get a commitment from the Recreation Dept for swifter action to prevent or repair oil stains and bare patches and to protect and replace trees. Early in January, many members of the committee had an interesting and positive walk with Peter Bonsall, Head of Parks, when we were able to convey our ideas for maintaining the Fields.

We want the existing housing to be preserved, where possible improved and are happy to support the setting up of the Islington Building Preservation Trust. We have been pleased during the year to have been consulted on a number of projects for new buildings in the area and have been able to give local residents the opportunity to influence the plans. We all benefit from Jeannie Burnett's position as vice-chairman of the borough Conservation Advisory Committee and we have a generally good relationship with many of the borough's officers and councillors.

We had an interesting visit from the Community Police Inspector and the two home-beat officers. We discussed the Arsenal traffic scheme, the increase in local crime figures and the need to encourage the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

Our fourth annual Tennis Tournament was once

again a very happy occasion. Plenty of keen competition but no umpires and not a tantrum in sight, interspersed with good food and conversation and followed by good wine and more conversation and a fencing display at the prize-giving in Jeannie Burnett's garden. Thanks again to Jennifer Aykroyd, Jeannie, Maryse and all the helpers.

There are other successes: the ambulance station reinstated, new lighting in Highbury Place, the caravan near the Two O'clock Club removed, the reprieve of the public toilets and a Clock Tower that works.

Our greatest blow has been the sad and untimely death of Richard O'Keeffe. He was a well-loved figure on the Fields, a valuable member of our committee and a fierce but witty defender of the environment.

MARTIN JONES

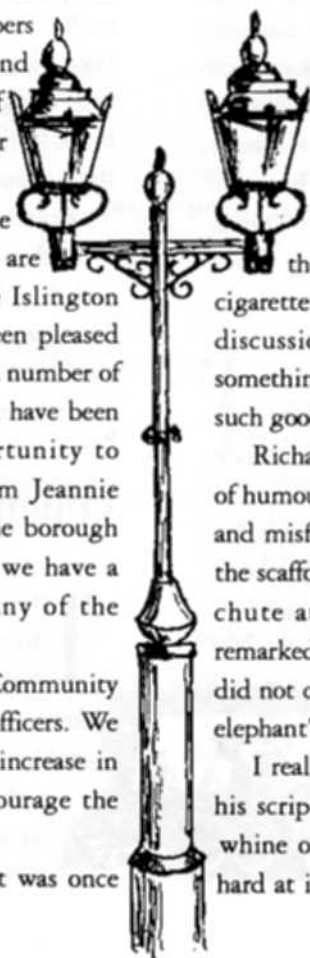


RICHARD O'KEEFFE

To those of us who worked with Richard on the Highbury Fields Association Committee, he was a memorable, larger than life figure. Sitting there quietly in a corner, drawing slowly on his cigarette through an elegant holder, he listened to the discussion, rarely interrupting. But when he had something to say, every one listened because he made such good sense.

Richard was cheerful and modest with a wry sense of humour. He was an original who laughed at himself and misfortune. Just before he died, he looked up at the scaffolding and the long yellow bucketted rubbish chute attached to my fire damaged house and remarked "a bit of an elephant you've got there!" I did not catch on. Then some days after it hit me - An elephant's trunk of course.

I really got to know Richard when he worked on his scripts in a room of my house. I could hear the whine of his over-worked Amstrad. I knew he was hard at it. Another episode of *Rockliffe's Babies* or *The*



Bill. The more I saw him the more I liked him. When I discovered that despite his physical handicaps, he was an Oxford graduate, a playwright, and a family man, a father of two daughters, I was struck with admiration and wonderment at his courage. He filled me with a sense of under achievement and was an example to all of us.

I knew he could argue his corner on most topics and was interested in politics and the Arts. He brought an incisive, logical mind to any problem.

When we battled against the vandal trench diggers in Highbury Fields, there he was sitting right in front of those lethal active mechanical diggers. A steadfast friend and activist in a communal crisis.

Richard O'Keeffe had a large number of friends in the Theatre, the Law and Islington. He gave much more to life than he took.

Much of Richard's literary ambition will remain unfulfilled for he had great abilities and left much behind. No one who knew him will ever forget him.

HARRY BRACK

TRAIN VIBRATIONS ABATE AS THE RECESSION BITES

Will BR take remedial action when the economy improves? With the economy bumping along the bottom, fewer freight trains are hauling heavy aggregate along the North London line.

But has the problem of train vibrations gone away? British Rail, in a candid discussion with area residents last November, said its aggregate haulage business had dropped since the start of the recession. This is why some homeowners may be experiencing fewer train vibrations than in the past. But officials did not accept the residents' claim that the train vibrations, taken over time, could cause structural damage to homes. Nor did they accept the residents' view that trains run for Forster Yeoman Limited, an aggregate company, were the source of the problem.

"We recognise there is significant vibration (from the Yeoman trains)" said one official. "But our attention is on the interaction between the track and the wagons".

Yeoman and a company called, ARC are BR's two main aggregate freight clients. Residents living along the embankment have observed that Yeoman trucks set off vibrations but trucks owned by Yeoman's competitor, ARC do not. One resident suggested BR ask Yeoman to lighten its freight load on a trial basis.

BR said this would give ARC a competitive advantage. The ARC and YEOMAN trucks do have different suspension systems and the ARC trucks are newer and more costly to manufacture. Both ARC and Yeoman trucks meet BR's technical standards, officials said. Both companies carry 102 tonnes of aggregate per wagon (an axle weight of 25.5 tonnes). They travel on track built a century ago during the reign of Queen Victoria. The freight weight is limited by the gradient of the route and by the signalling infrastructure. "But within these constraints, we try to run the biggest trains we can" said one official.

BR officials said aggregate haulage was a competitive but not very profitable business. It nevertheless makes a contribution to the earnings of BR's rail freight division, the company's only profitable business. The upshot is that BR is paying a consultant £165,000 to do a survey of geological conditions in the Highbury area. When it is complete, BR may decide to take remedial action. Equally, it may decide to do nothing at all.

It is up to area homeowners to keep the pressure on BY by logging instances of severe vibrations ...the time, date and severity. Discussions among residents and Islington Council have revealed that the problem is not limited to the Highbury area alone, but extends throughout the borough and into Camden.

Readers who have logged vibrations recently, are invited to correspond with *William Ellington, 39 Calabria Road, London, N5 1HZ*. Mr. Ellington also has copies of three surveys conducted by BR on how the train vibrations have affected area homes. Readers may wish to borrow or copy one or all of these surveys.

WILLIAM ELLINGTON

SUBSIDENCE IN BAALBEC ROAD

The depleted avenue of London plane trees behind the houses of Baalbec Road are unfortunately causing some of the houses to develop cracks.

Until the 1970's, every alternate tree had been an elm. These were doomed by the Dutch Elm disease and in the 1980's, the storms brought down a large plane so that now, on the South



side of the path, there are only six remaining.

These beautiful trees have been further threatened by the low rainfall in recent years and their roots have sought water further afield. Planes have a shallow, horizontal root system and as a general rule the roots do not extend further than the branches.

I can remember the trees being pollarded and cut back on three occasions in the last twenty years. Would this have retarded root growth?

Bert Agstagg, who has resided at the terrace for many years, can remember that before 1970, a trench was dug by the Council, three or four feet deep, the length of the Baalbec perimeter fences, every year. Was this to crop the tree roots?

He went on to say that the Council do not trim the branches as much as they used to and perhaps it has been false economy to stop this maintenance. So, what of the structural damage caused by tree roots?

Our house has been underpinned, three more houses have plans for remedial work. Our house has 'detached' its back extension from the main building.

However each householder copes with these problems, we want to keep our avenue of trees which provides pleasure to residents and visitors and I feel the annual remedial measures of years gone by should be reinstated.

If ever this avenue is replenished perhaps a tree with a deep tapering root system e.g. oaks would be less hazardous.

LORNA JAMES

THE GRASS ON THE FIELDS

For some time we have felt that the grass on the Fields has been neglected. This has not been helped by events which have destroyed the grass cover and which the user or the Council have failed to rehabilitate. For example the trenches of the notorious 'Waterboys' Concert are still in evidence and whilst the 'Footsbarn Theatre' was a delightful evening it left behind oil spillage and bare patches.

We have asked the Council to:

- repair the damage
- ensure that future users of the Fields do this immediately they leave the site and indeed take precautions to prevent oil spillage
- undertake an annual seeding. This year the Committee has offered £50. for grass seed. See it grow in May.

ROBIN MABEY

DOGS ON THE FIELDS

This is a subject where 'Angels fear to tread'. The Association has been concerned about dangerous dogs (now hopefully dealt with), damage to young trees (the Council has promised tree guards) and the public health nuisance caused by dog faeces. On this last point there has been significant change in the law. Since last year the Council has been under a duty under the Environmental Protection Act to keep public open spaces clear of dog faeces. Furthermore, as with litter anyone who has evidence that this duty has



not been carried out, and that there is a nuisance, can get an order from the Magistrates Court requiring the Council to deal with the problem. The Association has no wish to extend the dog free areas, or ban dogs but we do think that the main open field in particular should be kept in a clean and pleasant condition for all those walking and playing on it. We have asked the Council to consider both a poop-scoop scheme and a contract to clean up the main field once a week.

ROBIN MABEY

RED ROUTES

The Pilot scheme from Archway to Moorgate along Holloway Road, Upper Street to the Angel and down City Road has been considered by the Government to be a success. Now many more routes are to be made red routes. Your local traders feel the Pilot scheme to be a disaster and shops have or are closing along the route. We should help them by using the shops despite the difficulty caused by not being able to park cars nearby.

Islington Alert is against Red Routes as bus routes have not been improved. Traffic does at times speed along the Red Routes and it is now more dangerous for pedestrians.

BAY HODGSON

PELICAN CROSSING

After 2/3 years the Council has carried out a small but important improvement to the Pelican Crossing at Highbury Corner between the Post Office and Barclays Bank. A new traffic light has been installed and the traffic island extended. Not perfect, but when the crossing is illuminated by a new central light they are installing, it will be better than before.

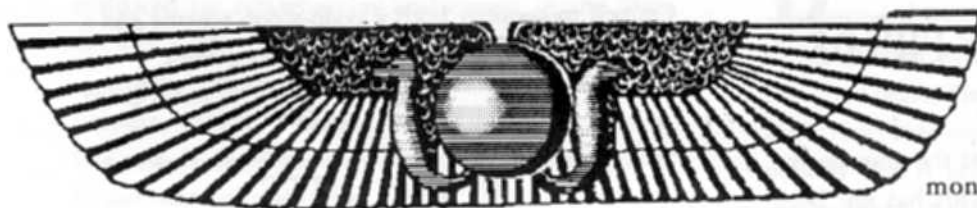
ROBIN MABEY

WATCH FOR RA AND THE NEXT STREET PARTY

Rain forced street party-goers indoors last June but this year, the Calabria and Liberia Road Neighbourhood Watch has made a pact with Ra. In exchange for wine, the Egyptian god of Heliopolis has promised sun for the next street party.

The party, the 4th annual street-together, is expected to take place on Liberia Road in early June. Police approval forthcoming, the road will be closed to traffic and residents will be invited to bring food that can be eaten by hand. Wine and juice will be provided for a small contribution.

The Calabria and Liberia Road street party was first organised in 1989 following a spate of thefts which galvanised residents into forming a



Neighbourhood Watch. The idea was to bring the local community closer together by helping neighbours get to know each other eg Did you know that our local postman is an amateur archivist who has photographs of Calabria and Liberia Roads from 1890? Street parties, of course, are not unique to our area:

- In Amsterdam, the Dutch celebrate the Queen's mother's birthday each year with a street party.
- In New York, Americans celebrate the arrival of summer or raise funds for charity at street parties, Please contact: *Victoria Ellington, 39 Calabria Road, London, N5 1HZ* if you would like to contribute.

VICTORIA ELLINGTON

A LIFEBOAT FOR DRAYTON PARK SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

Have you seen it? Did you wonder where it came from and what it's doing there? It all came about because we have a 10ft rowing boat in our award-winning nursery playground Hearing of this, the RNLI in Dorset, through a contact, offered us a redundant 39 ft lifeboat.

So there it stands, the centre piece of a play structure, representing adventure on the high seas, selflessness and heroism. It brings the outside world into the playground in more ways than one. Quite by chance, we found we had connections through a parent, with the very life boat crew which had worked our lifeboat in Bridlington. They are keenly interested in the boat's fate and are coming to the 'launch' in May.

A team of teacher-training students working have made the lifeboat their project and have visited Bridlington, talked to the crew and filmed a record and made a teachers pack.

We thought initially and naively that the lifeboat would be a cheap alternative to a catalogue bought play structure. But stringent quality and safety demands have added thousands to the cost ; it was not, in the end, a self-build job for the parents. The Education department demanded extra hand railing, steps thicker, safety surface. The original estimates rose from £9,000 to a final bill for £32,000.

Yet, amazingly, we raised the money, and seemingly effortlessly. From a Fun Run, an opera visit, a Bric a Brac sale, T-shirts donated by Anchor Butter, we raised £8,000. Thank you all readers who contributed sponsorship, bought trainers, donated bric a brac, etc. The rest of the money came through charitable trusts, (the Clothworkers, City Parochial, etc..) and statutory bodies (Islington Council and Inner City Partnership, Safer Cities Project, etc..) and local donations (the Royal Bank of Scotland, Islington Chamber of Commerce). We had generous donations of supplies of services, (Murphy's, Mountgrove Builders, Range Transport, the RNLI). Pulling the whole thing together represents a tremendous achievement. Mainly due to the tireless efforts of the Head teacher, Linda Le Fevre, Dave Steve of Islington Schools

Environment Project (who designed and co-ordinated), Ron Weisner and Gordon Schwefel (engineering design and on site direction), Maggie Hartley (appeals for outside funds) and myself (fund-raising from school events). We were amazed by the positive interest and support of so many outsiders, the RNLI, the Neighbourhood Office, the Islington Chamber of Commerce, to mention just a few.

The boat will be in use on June 27 and then starts the work on the rest of the playground. A scheme of planting and landscaping improvements will involve children, parents, helpers and teachers. Watch out for our next fund-raising campaign!

BRONWEN TAYLOR

THE Highbury Roundhouse COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Highbury Roundhouse was set up in 1974 to meet the needs of young people living in the area. Since then it has grown into a Community Centre providing facilities for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Pre-school children come to us through childminders, parents and toddlers groups. Senior citizens attend lunch and social clubs on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. Many community events are held regularly and we now hold over fifty different classes ranging from dance and karate to activities for children. The project is staffed by five full-time workers, three part-time workers and a number of volunteers.

The main hall is available for hire seven days a week. Our hall is suitable for any occasion; it holds a maximum of 300 people and can be booked until midnight for public functions and later for private functions. The studio is suitable for dance and theatre rehearsal. There are also other spaces for hire.

Fax, Desk top publishing (Apple Mac), high quality photocopier is available. For further information contact Sue or Eileen on 359 5916. For more details on the Youth Club phone Aston on 354 2418.

THE BANDSTAND

I wonder if any long time residents and members of the HFA, remember the bandstand which used to be situated in the centre of Queens Walk?

This was quite a feature of the Fields before the

war, and I very well remember brass bands playing there on summer Saturday evenings. There was also dancing to the bands on the paths surrounding the bandstand, which followed the lines of the trees in a circle as they are still today.

I cannot remember exactly when it was demolished as I was called up to serve in the WRNS in 1940/41. It must have been about that time when the field next to the existing children's playground was given over to allotments to help the war effort.

The Central library has only one postcard left showing the bandstand as it must have been in about 1920/30 judging by the size of the trees. A photocopy of it can be had on request from the reference library if anyone is interested.

GWEN FROUD



TENNIS TOURNAMENT 1991

The Fourth Annual Tennis Tournament took place on June 30th, a Sunday, this year and, despite some initial apprehension, the record number of entries showed that this was more popular than a Saturday.

This year's programme was remarkably streamlined. Well, after four years it should be! I realised, after last year's nightmare that, however athletic people might be, there was no way they could be on two courts at the same time. We took each event in turn playing it through to the Semi-Finals and it worked.

As there were 24 entries in the Men's singles, the first two rounds were played the day of the tournament but this was not popular, so this year, if we have the same number of competitors, they will probably have to be on court at 5.00 am!

Many senior players dislike competing with

juniors so we might consider an under 15's event in June and perhaps just allow the two finalists to take on the men. Dave Allen and Jim Butler, the popular Doubles pair, battled it out in the Men's Singles final with Dave just beating Jim in an excellent match. The Men's Doubles was won by Patrick Milmo and his son Marc, who beat Mark Potter and Charlie Nairn in the final.

A special cheer for the young Gibberd brothers, Matthew and Dominic, who reached the semi-finals and gave the Milmos a very good game.



We were delighted to see Martin Jones, our esteemed Chairman and his partner, Judy Blair reach the Mixed Doubles Final. However, they were beaten by Justin and Penny Cartwright who have won this event before.

Judy Blair beat Laura Hill to win the Women's Singles and Judy and her daughter, Tania Graham, took home the Women's Doubles trophy. There was no winner of the Men's Singles Plate as Justin Cartwright and Steven Chitolie failed to finish their very long and close match.

About 110 members enjoyed a lunch of cold meats, sausages, pies, tandoori chicken and salads followed by strawberries and cream in the Two O'clock Club.

Special thanks to Maryse Jones and her band of helpers, Muriel Fedder, Marina Milmo, Mandy O'Keeff, Miles Thompson and not forgetting Mia Beaumont who cooked 35 lbs of new potatoes single handed!

Prize giving took place in Jeannie Burnett's attractive garden. Sadly, our ex Chairman, John Hardiman, could not escape from Salisbury this year so we invited Mark Potter to present the prizes which he did with his usual aplomb.

Our grateful thanks to Peter Bonsall and his staff for contributing to what is now firmly established as one of the highlights of the Islington social scene.

JENNIFER AYKROYD

**THIS YEAR'S TOURNAMENT IS ON
SUNDAY, JUNE 21ST.**

THE ISLINGTON BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST (I.B.P.T.)

There are few more disheartening sights than an old building, boarded up, slipping from the roof, buddleia sprouting from drain pipes, walls daubed with graffiti, unlovely and obviously unloved.

It is a sight which provokes incredulity, indignation, even anger. Why has such a building - which could be providing much-needed housing, shop or working accommodation - fallen into disuse, been allowed to deteriorate, to become an eyesore instead of an attractive feature of the street or neighbourhood? What can be done to put it back into commission?

The most practicable alternative to wringing one's hands while a historic building decays is for the local buildings preservation trust to step in, buy the freehold, undertake a high-quality restoration, with the aid of grant and low-interest loan finance, and sell or lease the refurbished building on the open market.

WHAT ARE BUILDINGS PRESERVATION TRUSTS?

Buildings preservation trusts (BPT's for short) are voluntary organisations, set up by like-minded individuals who are willing to devote time and effort, without pay or other financial reward, to a good cause. They exist principally in order to save high risk, low return historic buildings in which nobody else is prepared to invest. Not the major monuments, whose long term preservation is of national concern and may require continual subsidy, but more local, everyday buildings which are able to earn their keep once repaired and rehabilitated.

- BPT's have a number of advantages over both the private sector and local government..Because they have charitable status, BPT's can raise and co-ordinate various forms of finance.
- GRANTS from central and local government.
- LOW-INTEREST LOANS from the Architectural Heritage Fund.
- DONATIONS, GIFTS in kind and

concessionary loans from companies, charitable trusts and the public at large.

Because their principal motive is preservation, BPT's are unlikely to cut architectural corners in the interests of a quick profit

THE ROLE OF THE ISLINGTON BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST

The aim of the IBPT is to 'preserve for the benefit of the people of Islington and of the nation at large whatever of the historical, architectural and constructional heritage may exist in and around the Borough in the form of buildings of particular beauty or historical, architectural or constructional interest'.

I see the role of the Trust as being that of an adjunctive conservation lobby, but taking matters a step further. When a building is at risk, there is generally one of three reasons for it :

- there are planning problems.
- the owner is unknown or is unwilling or unable to do anything about the property
- it is owned by the Council and there are funding problems.

I see an important part of the trust's task as one of liaison, chiefly with the planning department, with English Heritage and with the owners of properties.

The trust also carries out research into the background and particular problems and then may act as negotiator between owners and statutory authorities, trying to set the wheels in motion. The Trust may also try to find someone interested in developing a particular property. If all else fails, the Trust would try to persuade the Council to make a compulsory purchase order. Before seeking a C.P.O. the Trust would endeavour to identify in advance a known purchaser or lessee for the property in question.

Local amenity Societies can greatly assist the work of the Trust by identifying and listing buildings in their area that are in need of care and attention.

BUILDINGS AT RISK

It is seldom difficult at local level, to identify 'problem' buildings which are at risk. Textile mills, churches, public baths, schools or railway stations for example, made redundant by changes in technology, demography, economic patterns and popular taste, are threatened by dereliction.

A newer, through perhaps less immediately obvious challenge is posed by traditional high street shops, many of whose upper floors are unused and poorly maintained, putting the whole property at risk. And there remains, throughout the country, a great deal of down-at-heel Victorian and earlier housing.

Market forces will ensure that some of these buildings are saved but others pose problems so complex that few private owners are willing or able to make the investment required to give them a new lease of life. It is precisely here that BPT's can and should step in.

JEAN BURNETT

STOP PRESS

Learn to dance authentic Argentine Tango with Los Del Rio whose diverse talents combine to express the real flavour of Latin America. Alison trained in classical and contemporary dance, and Eduardo trained in Latin American rhythms. Together they reach the Tango in its most authentic and driving form. Tuesdays 6.30-8pm at the Roundhouse.



DEAR RESIDENT

HAVE YOU LOOKED AT Highbury FIELDS LATELY?

If not, it's probably because you are one of those people who only notice things when they need putting right. I have lived here for twelve years and can honestly say that I have never seen the Fields looking so spick and span. During the year, most bald patches have been returfed, the ruts have been filled in and many young trees have been planted. Not to mention the newly arrived attractive Victorian style lighting in Highbury Place.

Although we are still not represented on the Council's letting Policy Committee, the Highbury Fields Association does enjoy a good relationship with the Parks & Recreation Department and most residents will agree that those events which are held during the year (which we monitor closely) caused little disturbance.

Last year I invited you to join our Association because the Fields were in bad shape. This year I want you to join so that we can all continue to take pride in Islington's largest space,

We represent 200 households in the area and by joining you will receive copies of all Committee meeting minutes and have a chance to attend meetings.

**IT REALLY IS MONEY WELL SPENT. JOIN
TODAY.**

JENNIFER AYKROYD
Membership secretary

I/We would like to remain/become members of the Highbury Fields Association.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE NO _____

Subscription: £3.00 per household per year

£5.00 for two years

£1.00 per year for pensioners and the unemployed

Amount enclosed : £ _____

TO: Mrs Jennifer Aykroyd, Membership Secretary
Highbury Fields Association, 5 Highbury Terrace, London, N5 1UP (071-226 9750)