



## Newsletter - May 1996

### The Highbury Fields Association comes of age 1975 - 1996

Do you remember that famous and rather hackneyed painting of 'The Childhood of Raleigh', with a young boy seated at the feet of an old sea dog, enraptured by tales of derring-do? The first Chairman of the HFA, Carrick James, is neither a mariner, nor ancient, but it was fascinating to talk to him recently about the early years of this Association.

March 1975 was a time of crisis for Highbury residents, with several major worries to be confronted. Many of the beautiful elms on the Fields were in danger of being felled and there was the prospect of a large sports complex being built. The Council were planning to impose parking restrictions and there was an urgent need to be involved in a proposed traffic management scheme for the area.

A number of local people acted very swiftly. At a meeting on March 12th a steering committee was formed and they met twice more before the first meeting proper of the new Highbury Fields Association on April 9th 1975.

Carrick James and Bay Hodgson, both still committee members, Hilary Mackaskill, Mel Pidcock, Chris Shelley and the other committee members are to be commended for the hard work of the following year or two.

A great deal of the initial effort was a concerted attempt to save the elm trees. Four or five had blown down in violent gales in 1973/4. Because of the Dutch Elm disease then prevalent, LBI had commissioned a report which had recommended felling 31 elms and one lime on the Fields with a strong doubt cast on a further 65. The HFA fought to prevent the fellers proceeding, holding sitdowns, preparing an injunction against the Council, appealing to the DTI and commissioning their own tree surgeon who pronounced them healthy and advised crown thinning to make them less top-heavy. Many of the trees were eventually felled and despite injections others succumbed to disease. The strong campaign however was rewarded by a careful study by LBI on the need for tree maintenance and a planting policy. In 1977 eight local schools had tree planting ceremonies on the Fields.

There used to be a large outdoor swimming pool and paddling pool on the site of the present pool. It was too large to heat up in the summer and in a poor state of repair. A

sports complex was proposed to cover the whole area from the War Memorial to the playground and there would have been additional features such as grass tennis courts, hockey pitches, cricket nets, donkey rides and outdoor theatres on other parts of the Fields.

The committee fought the plans, arguing that the complex should be sited elsewhere in the borough and suggesting that if the old pool could not be repaired the site should revert to open parkland.

In January 1975 the Council proposed the first parking restrictions for the roads around the Fields. The HFA held public meetings in March and April and received 80 replies to a questionnaire sent to local residents to gauge their opinions. Despite opposition, the scheme started in April 1976 and in April/May 1976 the Association interviewed 291 residents of whom only 3% were in favour. At the time there were only 89 parking bays available. The committee managed to persuade the Council in February 1977 not to increase the annual charge from £26 to £38 (only £5 in Hackney at the time!) and there were promises of an extra 94 bays.

Throughout this early period of the HFA and for a number of years to follow, there were constant discussions with the Transport committee over traffic management for the area. Newcomers cannot appreciate the relative calm produced by cutting out the worst of the rat runs and reduction of heavy traffic. By July 1977 the LBI had produced figures on traffic flow per hour in peak periods. The roads with the most vehicle movements ranged from 230/300 for Highbury Crescent and Horsell Road; 400/500 for Highbury Place and Arvon Road and 650/750 for the top of Ronalds Road and Baalbec Road. Nearly 20 years later, with traffic generally much heavier, it would be interesting to do a survey again.

Those first two or three years were a baptism of fire for the committee. They gained valuable experience in dealing with local issues and established the Association as an important body in the area.

Martin Jones

## THE RECYCLING DILEMMA

As good citizens I am sure most of our members have been using the bottle and paper banks by the swimming pool. I am also sure that you have been very upset by the horrid mess that is created by the overflow, broken glass and discarded cardboard containers. We have constantly complained to the Council about the mess with very little success. The task of collection has been privatised and the street cleaner does his best. Even the Council forecourt opposite is often covered with the paper and plastic bags which are blowing all over the place. However, we are now faced with the fact that green bottles are not economic to collect as the market is swamped with supplies. You may have noticed that the green, brown and white glass bottles are all tipped into one container. We understand that only plastic is economic and there is no machinery for plastic reprocessing in London. We are therefore asking the Council to remove glass containers from Highbury Fields. Please write to the Council if you support this policy.

Miles Thompson

## THE COUNCIL'S POINT OF VIEW ON RECYCLING

In 1992 at the Rio Summit, the world's nations agreed that some attempt should be made to hand the planet on to future generations in a condition at least no worse than it is at the moment. It is a long way from Rio de Janeiro to Highbury Corner. The two locations might seem to have little in common. But: it is bottle and paper bank sites like Highbury Fields which are the visible evidence of mankind's attempt to stop destroying the planet. The two-and-a-half tonnes of glass and the nine tonnes of paper which are collected each week from the bottle and paper banks outside the swimming pool represent only a tiny fraction of the hundred thousand tonnes of rubbish thrown out every year by the residents and businesses of Islington; an even smaller fraction of the unimaginable quantities of materials thrown away to no good purpose across the world as a whole. On the other hand, every bottle and every newspaper (from vintage Claret to Ribena; from 'The Sun' to 'Pig Breeder's Monthly') which goes into a bottle or paper bank is one less buried in an old gravel pit. Each bottle that goes for recycling is also a saving in the fuel required to make glass from raw silica. Recycling paper means the destruction of fewer forests. Recycling is also beginning to afford opportunities both to companies and voluntary groups to make money. There is a real possibility of saving the planet and making a profit out of it.

The paper and bottle banks at Highbury Corner are clearly popular with the public. In fact this is the most successful recycling site in the Borough. This must reflect, in part at least, both the popularity of the area to visitors and the conscientious concerns of local residents. There is unfortunately a negative aspect to this popularity. Even when the banks are full to bursting, many enthusiasts go out of their way to build attractive pyramids of waste around them. The real artists of the area decorate these same constructions with piles of old boxes, bags and any old rubbish they can lay their hands on. I am glad to say that this occurs less often than was once the case. The banks are emptied more regularly, and the Council clears up far more frequently in the area. It would be helpful of course if the Council did not have to clear up as often as it does. Some of the money which can be made from recycling has to be set against the cost of cleaning up. Some of the mess still occasionally results from problems with emptying the banks; some results from genuine accident; a major part does unfortunately result from behaviours ranging from active carelessness to dumping and vandalism.

Please may I ask regular users of recycling facilities

To take home your boxes and bags

To have patience with us if you find that the banks are full -

I know it's a nuisance, but we do try our best. You really will be serving everybody's interests better if you take your papers and bottles back home with you and come back another time;

Or take them to the recycling centre in Queensland Road or to the Council dump in Ashburton Grove.

And if you keep finding that the banks are full every time you go there, tell us by telephoning Cormac Stokes on **477 4744** (or **4782** or **4692**). We do try and respond to public demand. If they are needed, we will try to arrange extra collections or extra banks.

The good news is that recycling is definitely on the increase. It has taken a long time, and there is a long way to go before the principles agreed in Rio can come true. Each small effort can make a difference.

Bob Lapsley, Manager  
William Johnston, Technical Support Officer  
Cleansing Department

## LESS LITTER

Believe it or not, Islington is a cleaner place to live than it was a year ago! The 1996 cleanliness survey carried out by the Tidy Britain Group in September to November 1995 shows that Islington improved its litter rating by 19 points, the fourth best improvement of all thirty three London boroughs. Overall London improved by 10 points so this is well above average. It is still, however, at the bottom of the league in the dog fouling stakes but its fly-posting rate which was the highest last year was almost halved this year. The survey found that although most boroughs showed an overall increase in dog fouling, graffiti and fly-posting, this tended to be concentrated on the sites classified as poorer on the litter front. So - drop less litter and encourage dogs, paint spray experts and glue merchants to desist!

Source: Tidy Britain Group: 01942 824620

## HIGHBURY FIELDS

A number of local residents have asked what plans the Council has to repair or renew worn areas of turf around Highbury Fields. It is anticipated that within the next few weeks, subject to reasonable weather, some re-turfing will take place. This will be the area occupied by the 5th November bonfire and a few small worn areas on the main fields. It is not planned to re-turf the path which runs across the main fields because, having done so once before, the grass was worn away within a few months. This path is a direct result of people being able to walk across the fields throughout the year following extensive drainage works. Certain other areas which are fairly thin but under heavy shade will also be left, because it is not practical to water these in the summer to ensure their survival.

Peter Bonsall  
Head of Parks and Cemeteries

## SAVE OUR LUNGS

Can living in Islington seriously damage your health? The Council monitors nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide emissions on a daily basis at specific places, and statistics for last year show that the annual average of measurements taken at Highbury Corner (and other roadside sites in the borough) is in excess of the European Council recommendations. Regular exposure to air pollution affects us all - one in five London children suffers from asthma - so perhaps we should all be lobbying to reduce the volume of traffic and to improve public transport.

Jenny Blanchard



View up Holloway Road from Highbury Corner c 1910. The old station is on the left and Barclays Bank on the right.

## HIGHBURY CORNER

**1. All Change at Highbury Corner.** Well not quite, but changes are afoot. The Council has a working group on which the Association is represented looking at the future of Highbury Corner. The long term vision is of a strongly defined urban place with a distinctive character; where traffic is less dominant and the environment is improved for pedestrians. The short term measures, on which the Council is consulting, include the following; moving bus stops closer to the station, better arrangements for cyclists, upgrading the pelican crossings to improve them for pedestrians, the closure of Highbury Station Road, the conversion of Corsica Street to make it one way northbound, and making the Highbury Place exit to the roundabout more pedestrian friendly.

Clearly one of the key problems is the entrance to the station. Action is complicated by the physical constraints of the site and the fact that Railtrack have shown no interest in developing it. However the Council is preparing a planning brief seeking views on the development of the site with a landmark building.

Highbury Corner is important for a lot of people. What sort of place do we want it to become? Is there scope for substantial development? Are we happy with the Island as it is? Do we want public access to it? Is there an opportunity for a piece of art in the middle or even, as has been suggested a walkway across? As the consultation process continues we would like your views.

Robin Mabey

**2. Long term strategy.** Professor John Stilgoe is a celebrated historian at Harvard who finds surprise packages hidden in our everyday surroundings. He reflects how much of our life is lived with our eyes closed. Television has provided such a surfeit of visual images that people no longer pay attention to their surroundings. Is this the reason, or part of it, why people have not reacted before now to the appalling mess at Highbury Corner?

At last after many false starts it appears that the problem is really being taken seriously and progress is being made. I will try to give a summary of what are the Design Strategies and Vision for Highbury Corner.

Highbury Corner is in many ways the Gateway to Islington

and London when one approaches from the North. Therefore it is enormously important to have the overall vision; a "Strongly defined Urban Place", - a pedestrian, public transport and cultural Hub for the Borough; one which will make a real impact.

A new station complex will be the centrepiece of an improved Highbury Corner. This is the transport and pedestrian heart which we want expressed as a major architectural structure. A planning brief will set out detailed requirements. The site is owned by Railtrack and London Underground Ltd.

The Citizen's Advice Bureau site is the other major development in Highbury Corner. It is a key focal point visible on the Upper Street, Holloway Road and Highbury Fields axes. Development of this site will need to complement a station development, not to compete or conflict. There are various ways in which the two sites could set up a positive visual and formal interaction. The site is wholly over rail track and this constrains any structure. The corner site next to Highbury Place offers potential for enhancing and extending the public 'square'. This is a development site in Railtrack ownership and a planning brief will be prepared in due course.

Another part of the brief will be to improve the area around the Bottle Bank and includes the possibility of a re-design for the W.C. Building. We have stressed the need for W.C.s in the area.

There are also very exciting ideas for a landmark project for Highbury Corner which could be a building, a structure, a piece of art or a virtual entity using light and images. It should be a logical and positive addition to the urban environment of Highbury Corner, not just another disconnected object contributing to the existing sense of disorder. It should be genuinely forward looking and original. It goes without saying that all the buildings should be of a high quality and stand out for being really good design.

Copies for the strategy for Transport and Environment for Highbury Corner as compiled by Llewelyn-Davies are circulating in the Highbury Fields Association. This shows plans and everything in very much greater detail.

This is an endeavour which is worthy of the support of all of us, and which will affect all our lives.

Jean Burnett



## THE FIELDS - LETTING POLICY

Everyone knows that Highbury Fields is the only sizeable open space for the public in the borough. It is a serious responsibility to see that the Fields are properly maintained and open and being conscious not only of today but particularly of tomorrow. If we let the Fields degenerate then the next generation of Islingtonians will suffer and the generation to follow might not have the Fields at all!

There are two problems - maintenance, which seems to be in good hands at the moment; and 'lettings'. We have the tradition of Guy Fawkes - can this be confined to a family-style gathering of folk from the neighbourhood with bonfire, fireworks and a couple of stalls for gingerbread and toffee? Converting November 5th into an open air 'disco' detracts from the family atmosphere and introduces a false note.

We have, also, a tradition of London funfairs, small and homely gatherings that come and go with little fuss and damage to the grass. Similarly, there is the occasional circus, again a tradition we should help maintain. People come from roundabout, not from all over London and beyond to such gatherings: the Fields are being properly used by Islington folk.

Beyond such gatherings different conditions apply. To let the Fields to big special events means that the Fields are closed to Islingtonians perhaps for a whole week or more whilst equipment is installed and then taken away. If the event is for several days at a time then the Fields could be closed for two weeks or more. Large numbers assemble from all over London, people who have no association with, nor any interest in, the future of the Fields: they damage the grass and perhaps the trees and it takes an increasingly long time for the Fields to recover.

When a gigantic crowd is anticipated, then the Fields must suffer even greater damage. The serious deterioration of the Fields that must follow such huge gatherings is too high a price to pay - not only will it deprive those living in the vicinity of the Fields of the regular use of the open space, it will begin to destroy the Fields as recreational space for the next generation. The grass will deteriorate and the trees will begin to suffer from exposed roots. It should be the Council's task to maintain the Fields in their happy present state, not endanger their future by staging huge gatherings that can only attract large numbers of people who have no association of any sort with Islington. That the Council may earn some financial profit in the short term is not a sufficient reason to imperil the future of the Fields. There are alternatives to the present arrangements, of which allowing the Highbury Fields Association a determining voice in letting policy is only the beginning.

Ben Jones

Note: Ben Jones was a tireless worker for many causes and was especially keen to preserve the grass and trees of the Fields. He wrote this article in 1994, the year he died.

## CABLE LONDON

Cable London has the cable television franchise for Islington and they can provide every home and business with a potential cable link providing television and telephony. Most of our area has been completed and cabinets have appeared on many street corners. Cable London produced tree care guidelines and their motto is 'Help to build the future whilst protecting the environment'. Trees take a long time to die, up to 5 years if the roots have been damaged. If you think a tree might have suffered and should be monitored, do ring Vincent James who is now our arboricultural officer (477 3878). This will ensure that trees are replaced where necessary. Do also inspect your street and report to the Council (477 2674), or to us, if you feel pavements have not been properly re-instated and could be unsafe.

Maryse Jones

## ROBIN'S GARDEN

The wildlife in Robin's Garden must be marvellous. A squirrel comes to drink at the fishpond in our own tiny garden adjoining Highbury Fields. The thrushes tug at the dried reeds and grass, busily building their nest and blackbirds bathe vigorously. We've even had a pair of mallard ducks mating in our 6ft pond. So what is the fauna and flora like behind that green corrugated barrier along Highbury Crescent? A wilderness of life? Rumours are that it has been a dumping ground for years, and used hyperdermics and sordid trash are buried under the rampant undergrowth.

In the twenty-five years we've lived in Highbury nothing has been done to this derelict wasteland. Why? At face value, a prime site for more homes or offices, Murphys are unable to build viably as a railway tunnel burrows diagonally just under the land. Above, the bushes, brambles and no doubt the wildlife continue undisturbed. Is there a family of foxes there? Maybe we could introduce badgers: Address, "Mr and Mrs Badger, Robin's Garden, Highbury Crescent".

Or, perhaps, Murphys could make a public spirited gesture and take down that corrugated iron and open the gates and add a welcome extension to highbury Fields. Green space is SO precious. In the last 25 years, had this been done, it would have been a convenient path for residents of Arvon Road to the tube and more open space to walk or sit, maybe under a mature tree.

So, Mr Murphy, while you are deciding over the next twenty five years what to do with your property, show Highbury a generous face and extend the perimeter of the Fields. Why not add a pond and a bog garden to attract the ducks and frogs and give some magic to your secret garden.

Lorna James



## WINTER FLOWER POWER

In the last few years the green area between the War Memorial and the swimming pool has looked more and more neglected. It is not helped by the omnipresent bottle bank, the brick path by the pool entrance too unstable to use (now repaired) and the squalid empty beer cans scattered round the bench legs and in the flower beds. The thrice replaced tree has been broken in two again. It was obviously not meant to be planted just there. However one must remember that what was once an empty, open air, concrete paddling pool, used by the local lads for BMX stunts, has been transformed into an undulating mound of grass. This is the warmest, least windy part of the fields, hence its popularity, not least with the serious drinking fraternity who are always cheerful and friendly. It is also the perfect place to grow something a little more interesting than the dreary evergreens that are all that remain of the original planting scheme, designed to shield the swimming pool from view. What a pleasure it would be, to the hundreds of people who pass by every day, to look at some cheerful winter flowering trees and shrubs. Perhaps they could fill up some of the gaps beside the wooden Cyclops, to give us a hint of spring beyond the usual crocuses and blind daffodils.

Virginia Worsley

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

While writing an account, on the first page of this newsletter, of the early years of this Association I was reminded how closely many of our present concerns mirror those of the past twenty-one years.

Some matters never seem to go away; we have been trying since 1977 to achieve a successful resolution of what we refer to now as Robin's Garden - apparently after a small boy named Robin who used to play there - but then known as Marigold; the wilderness area between Highbury Crescent and Arvon Road. The GLC and successive developers have produced housing schemes which we opposed as unsatisfactory; we in turn have tried to preserve it as a natural area for wild flora and fauna.

In 1978 we called a special meeting to discuss a Highbury Corner Planning Study. A local resident has told us that even forty years before that and before the last five houses of Compton Terrace were demolished in an air raid, local schools had offered solutions to the problems of Highbury Corner traffic! The 1978 effort eventually came to nothing but, more recently, several members of our committee have been very active in an ambitious new study which will be discussed in detail at our AGM.

A heroic effort to save trees had been one of the main reasons for founding the Association. Trees continue to crop up in our plans and discussions and always will. Problems of parking, ice-cream vans, dog mess, events on the Fields and bottle banks are perennial subjects among ourselves and with council officials with varying degrees of progress and success. Similarly, we continue to try to persuade the Borough Licensing Committee that the Fields are not a suitable venue for large concerts.

And yet, as I look back through old minutes and correspondence there have been equally intractable problems where we did eventually succeed, though some took years to resolve. Newcomers to the area probably take for granted the relative lack of through traffic in the area, thanks to the Traffic Scheme; children enjoy a superb playground that was highly controversial and nearly brought us all to blows, and can also attend a Two-o'clock club where a bandstand operated on Sundays in the old days. The once boggy fields are drained; crocuses and daffodils bloom; the paths are lit and resurfaced.

Can we lay sole claim to all that and more? No, but we did play a major part. We argued, leafleted, held public meetings and attended other lengthy ones at the Town Hall. We canvassed our MP's, our councillors and officials and in many cases established good working relationships. This is particularly true in the areas of planning and conservation. Jeannie Burnett and Maryse Jones continue to play an influential part in helping both to preserve what is old and good and ensuring that new developments are well designed and enhance their surroundings. We have been involved in the new University buildings both in Melgund Road and Holloway Road, the Precinct in Highbury Terrace, threatened houses in Leigh Road, the new gymnasium at the swimming pool but also in smaller projects in private houses.

Despite dividing her time between Yorkshire and Highbury, Jennifer Aykroyd has kindly agreed to stage once again this year's Tennis Tournament - the ninth in a series of very successful events. Jennifer had also been both our secretary and our membership secretary for several years. Anita de Lotbinière is prepared to take over as membership secretary, but we are anxious to find someone to step into the breach as secretary. Any offers?

We are sad to announce the passing of two of our senior committee members, Ben Jones and Wilmot Bennitt; both of whom gave their time to many local groups.

Do try to come along to the AGM on May 7th. As well as an interesting talk on plans for Highbury Corner and the tree warden video, we are hoping to have a display of old photographs of the area, if we can persuade you to lend interesting examples. Please

contact Lorna James on 226 7785 or Maryse Jones on 226 2145. There will be comment sheets available on the night so that you can tell us what you would like the HFA to be doing in the future. It is a social occasion too; you will get the chance to meet other local people over a glass of wine.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

who currently represent the membership

Martin Jones, *Chairman*

Jennifer Aykroyd, *Tennis*

Maryse Jones, *Treasurer*

Judy Blair-Graham

David Boniface

Jeannie Burnett

Anita de Lotbinière

Victoria Ellington

Jean Engel

Muriel Feder

Sarah Gillett

Bay Hodgson

Carrick James

Ian Kelly

Randall Keynes

Mary Kleinman

Robin Mabey

Jennifer Purchase

Miles Thompson

Ginnie Worsley

## A NEW LOCAL PAPER ROLLS OFF THE PRESSES

The Highbury & Islington Express was launched on March 1st and is now going great guns after a marvellous welcome from residents and businesses in the borough. Appearing every Friday priced 40p, the paper covers news, events, arts, features, sport and opinion throughout Islington and is located at offices in the heart of the borough - at 1 Aztec Row, Berners Road, N1 0PW. A team of 15 staff has been put together under the editor, Roger Blitz, and the parent company is the Ham & High, or Hampstead & Highgate Express, the established weekly newspaper based in Hampstead.

The Highbury & Islington Express is the realisation of months of planning and is now fostering links with communities throughout Islington, reporting news in an analytical way and giving readers the facts and information they need to weigh up the important issues of the borough. We write about politics, housing, planning and development, education, health, business, crime and various other issues, keeping abreast of stories over many weeks.

Any time you are down our way, please pop in and see us - we are next to the Business Design Centre. We are always interested in meeting new people and talking about life in the borough and we welcome your suggestions, comments and letters. Alternatively, phone us on **433 0000** or fax us on **288 1065**. We look forward to hearing from you.

Roger Blitz, Editor

## THE ISLINGTON MUSEUM

The Islington Museum Gallery can be found at 268 Upper Street, though it hopes soon to find a more permanent home in the borough. They put on a regular programme of exhibitions which cover a wide range of topics of local and historical interest. A mosaic workshop is on until 5th May and after that from 15th May to 9th June there will be an exhibition on 'The Gunners - A Fan's Eye View of Arsenal Football Club'. An active Friends organisation supports the museum by providing volunteers to staff the exhibitions and an annual subscription of £3 (£5 for a family and £1 for concessions). You can also become a Patron for £25 per year. Find out more by contacting Jim Lagden, Chairman of the Friends, on **354 9442** between Wednesday and Sunday or Alison Lister, the Museum Development Officer on **477 3851**.

## LOCAL RESIDENTS FORCE REMOVAL OF HOARDING

It is surprising that an illegal advertisement hoarding 18ft high and 39ft long could be allowed to stand at pavement level in a prominent location in Highbury for some 35 years with no protest from the public or action from the Council. This was true of the hoarding that stood opposite the clock tower and adjacent to the parade of shops at No.2 Highbury Park from 1957 until it was removed on order of the Secretary of State for the Environment in August 1995.

The site at the junction of Highbury Park and Kelvin Road had, in living memory, been occupied by a plant nursery with glass houses and a shop. It is believed that the nursery was destroyed by the very large German bomb that did so much damage in the area. The only recorded opposition to the hoarding appears in a note in the Council's Planning Department file. It is dated 11.7.1969 from Mr Healey, chief planning officer to Mr G Rouse, planning officer, and states "There appears to be unauthorised ads on this site, they mar the approach to the shops - suggest a challenge - and we could plant some trees in their place." However, the Council did not take action until David Boniface, chair of the then Quadrant Neighbourhood Forum and Jenny Sands, at the time ward Councillor, independently took up the issue in 1991.

The Council attempted to force Mills and Allen, the owners of the hoarding, to remove it on the grounds that it had no planning permission. This turned into a complicated argument about "deemed consent" which could have dragged on for many years. At a meeting with the Council's Legal Department in February 1994 it was decided instead to serve a "Discontinuance Notice" on grounds of damage to visual amenity. The owners appealed against the notice and a public hearing of the appeal took place in the Town Hall on 22 February 1994. The inspector who conducted the hearing refused the appeal and wrote "The appeal display panels are situated in a prominent position overlooking the grounds of the listed church and clock tower and numerous residential properties. I conclude that they are substantially injurious to the visual amenity of this part of the conservation area."

The rental income from the hoarding had inhibited development of the site. The owners, Hayller Estates, have now applied for planning permission for a shop with two small flats above. This could bring to an end 50 years of various problems including rubbish dumping on this site.

David Boniface

### Editorial thanks

to all contributors without whose efforts there would be no Newsletter.  
Anita de Lotbinière, Martin and Maryse Jones - Editors



## HIGHBURY FESTIVAL MAY 3rd - 12th

A big-name open air Jazz Extravaganza, a Children's Arts Carnival, the Haydn Chamber Orchestra and a Contemporary Music Day featuring new works by some of Europe's most stimulating composers are the highlights of the fifth Highbury Festival of Music and the Arts.

The Festival will bring together top international stars, local musicians and hundreds of schoolchildren for 10 days of performance from May 3rd to 12th. Julian Josephs, Jean Toussaint, the Vortex Jazz Band and others will be joined by the Islington Schools Jazz Orchestra for eight hours of music on Highbury Fields during Bank Holiday Monday May 6th. The Highbury Festival Orchestra (formed especially for this year's event) will give a charity performance of Haydn's 'The Creation' with Eclectic Voices, while the Haydn Chamber Orchestra present a special Saturday night concert.

A series of morning lectures will be held in Christ Church, Highbury Grove and locally-based artists will be displaying their work in the church.

More details from the Box Office, 49 Aberdeen Park, London N5 or phone **359 2896**. Tickets are also available from Highbury Barn Pharmacy.

Liz Webb  
Administrator

## ISLINGTON BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST

The Islington Building Preservation Trust (IBPT) was created to save decaying 'listed' buildings in the borough. The Trust organises and supervises their restoration with the guidance of our Conservation Officer, Alec Forshaw. English Heritage publish an official list of 'Buildings at Risk'. An example of the HFA involvement was to report and monitor the full restoration of 2 & 4 Leigh Road. The latter two buildings were due for demolition and a very ugly modern building was to replace them. Instead, alerted by one of our Councillors, Jeannie Burnett and I took a camera and interviewed the local shop-keepers. We informed various local bodies, and produced a comprehensive portfolio of photographs, inside and out, of the premises which gave ammunition to the Council to put a strong case for salvation. Eventually the IBPT became active in the restoration of the facade, thus keeping the Leigh Road terrace intact. The Council has also recently appointed a 'Buildings at Risk' officer. Do get in touch with one of us if you know of any house in the borough which needs rescuing.

Maryse Jones





Highbury Place c 1930

## JAMES SPILLER AND THE BUILDING OF 1-39 Highbury Place: 1774-1777

Members of the Highbury Fields Association may feel a glow of pride to know that Highbury Place has the great good fortune to be the set piece design of a young neo-classical architect of quite some distinction. James Spiller, friend of Sir John Soane, was still under the tutelage of James Wyatt at the time that his father, John Spiller obtained from the freeholder, John Dawes, the building leases of the rising ground upon which Highbury Place was to be built. Perhaps, as is often the way with the fathers of young architects, John Spiller, who was a builder from Southwark, saw himself as giving an opportunity to his young son. In the building of Highbury Place, however, two more factors in addition to the design skills of the apprentice architect contributed to the finesse of the concept.

Firstly, Dawes was at pains to ensure that these new houses would be an enhancement of his land-holding. He committed himself to a covenant, whereby the land or fields in front of the new row would not be built upon, but would be retained as an amenity for the residents. This remained the case, until 1885 when the Fields as we know them were bought from Dawes' descendants by the Islington Vestry, and became public property. Dawes was also able to ensure that these houses would be, from the start, provided with water and that each would have its own well, supplied with water drawn from the conduit on the field opposite No 14. In fact, the lower Field, as we know it, was from late Medieval times called the Conduit Field.

The second fact which must have assisted James Spiller as he addressed his scheme was the great London Building Act of 1774, the very same year that the Spillers embarked on their Highbury venture. This Act was drafted by Sir Robert Taylor and Nathaniel Dance and responded to the need to put a stop to slipshod building and all possible fire-risk. It required uniformity of design to the front elevations of the London street. In order to lay down strict rules of construction, a system of defining the London house according to its square footage and its valuation was devised. Each dwelling was thus categorised as either 'first-rate', 'second-rate', 'third rate' or 'fourth-rate', and ascribed a local property tax accordingly. Highbury Place was one of the first streets of London to be built under the Act and these were by definition 'first-rate' houses. This is where the phrase 'first-rate' originated.

The houses of Highbury Place were very handsomely fitted out, with refined and varied internal detailing. Pevsner singles out the designs for the door cases as being of particular note. John Spiller, father, lived until his death in No 39; and his son, John also lived in Highbury Place. James Spiller died in 1829 without a large corpus to his name, though St John's, Hackney is his.

Julia Melvin

## HIGHBURY POOL

Let me introduce myself. I am Andrea Keeble the Centre Manager at Highbury Pool. Hopefully I do not need to tell you where Highbury Pool is, but maybe it is a while since you visited us, so I will run through some of the activities we provide. We have a 25 metre pool which is open 7am - 8.30pm weekdays and 7.30am - 5pm at weekends. Different sessions include lane swimming for adults, lessons, women's sessions (Tuesdays from 6pm), water workout and children's funsplash. The small pool is open the same times as the main pool and there are some usage restrictions due to lessons, but if you ring **704 2312** you can find out what the programme is.

There is also a gym which is very popular, so popular in fact, that we are building a bigger one on the patio, funded in part by the National Lottery. This should be completed in early July and I hope you will take the time to come along to some of the various opening events/activities planned. While we have taken up some of the patio space to build the new gym, the paddling pool and a substantial part of the sunbathing area will still be available to customers. We have a sunbed as well and hope to improve, with newer and more sunbeds, this part of our operation when space is made available in the old gym.

As I hope you have experienced during your visits to the pool, the staff are friendly and helpful. We hope to improve the general relaxed and open ambience by redesigning the reception area. This will be of real benefit to reduce queues during busy times. Hopefully this can be done prior to the new gym coming on line.

I urge you to come along for a swim or another activity and if it is to be a regular thing, to check out our membership scheme (IZZ Card) which offers very good discounts.

See you soon.

Andrea Keeble  
24 hour timetable 226 4186  
Enquiries 704 2312

## THE ARM OF THE LAW

**1. Crime prevention.** Many of you may already be aware that there is a Crime Prevention Officer at Highbury Vale Police Station. For those of you who don't, may I take this opportunity to introduce myself. I took over from Peter Ginn (now retired) 18 months ago. My work ranges from giving advice on domestic security to arranging crime prevention seminars. If you would like any further information or advice on a crime prevention related matter, I can be contacted on **421 0612**.

Wpc Sylvia Saunders

**2. Community Officer.** I am the local community officer for the Highbury Fields area. I am based at Highbury Vale Police Station, and cover an area between Highbury Grove, Aubert Park, Hornsey Road and Holloway Road, working an eight hour shift between the hours of 8am and 10pm. I deal with numerous problems ranging from neighbour disputes to dealing with missing persons to gathering information on my local criminal fraternity. I also liaise with the Neighbourhood Offices that cover the area and every Wednesday between 2.30pm and 3.30pm I have a surgery at Drayton Park Neighbourhood Office. However, having said all this, my duties at present are High Visibility patrolling of the Highbury Area, due to the bombing threats made by from the IRA. Hopefully this won't be for much longer. If in the meantime you would like to contact me then I can be reached on **421 0645**.

Wpc Rachel Callaghan



### 1995 TENNIS TOURNAMENT

The eighth annual tennis tournament took place on Sunday June 25th, the day the rather dreary early summer weather suddenly cheered up and stayed with us, if you remember, for week after glorious week. Moving with the times (I would hate to be thought 'stuffy'), at the suggestion of several lady players, we abolished *Men's Singles* and *Men's Doubles* and the events became open to all comers. However, those same ladies got cold feet and stayed away from the Singles, with Charlotte Halvorsen and Wendy Proudfoot the only women's pair fearless enough to enter the Doubles. And very well they played too.

As usual the Singles knock-out was of a very high standard with 16 year old Dominic Gibberd just beating Ray Vernon in a nail-biting final. The four semi-finalists in the Doubles competition were Edmunds/Gibberd, Buckley/Webb, Milmo/Cartwright and Aykroyd/Vernon with Edward Buckley and Andy Webb ending up the winners. The Mixed Doubles was won by Sarah Luther and Ray Vernon who beat Edward Buckley and Julia White in the finals.

Just under 100 HFA members sat down to the delicious cold buffet in the garden of the Two o'clock club. Once again thanks to Maryse Jones, Muriel Feder, Jennifer Purchase, Miles Thompson and many other helpers including our Chairman, Martin Jones, who seems to have given up tennis so that he can 'help organise' - well, that's his excuse! We hope he'll play tennis again this year.

I would especially like to thank Rod Paine from Islington Council for contributing to the success of what is always an enjoyable day for competitors and spectators alike.

This year's tournament will be on Sunday 23rd June. Entry forms will be sent to all members, but if you have any queries, please phone Jennifer Aykroyd on 607 9335 or Maryse Jones on 226 2145.

Jennifer Aykroyd

### HIGHBURY ROUNDHOUSE ASSOCIATION

Highbury Roundhouse Association is a busy local community centre in Ronalds Road. Founded in 1974 and supported by Islington Council, it caters for all ages, with activities ranging from three Pensioners' Lunch and Social Clubs to Soft Play and Toy Library facilities for the Under 5's. There is a lively Youth Club four evenings a week and a wide selection of classes ranging from Dance to Karate, via Meditation. There are also several rooms and a large hall which may be hired for private parties. For details of the current programme, ring Conrad or Sue on **359 5916**.

### THE FLORENCE TRUST

In his poem, 'St Saviour's, Aberdeen Park, Highbury, N5', John Betjeman opens with, 'Great red church of my parents.....Where the organ set them singing and the sermon let them nod.' It was then an Anglican Church but became redundant when the parish merged with Christ Church. It now houses The Florence Trust, an organisation, established in 1990, which uses the church to provide short term studios, support and exposure for resident artists. The side aisles are divided up to provide space at minimal rent for nine artists at a time. Apart from these artists, there are twice weekly life drawing sessions for others to attend and talks, lectures and recitals open to all. The Trust is supported by Friends, Patrons and Trustees and donations from individuals but if it is to continue it needs more financial help. There will be an Open Weekend in September when everyone is welcome to visit the studios, and see the current artists at work and talk to them. For further information, contact Jane Willis on **354 0460**.

### EXHIBITIONS AT 14 Highbury TERRACE

Finding my ground floor rooms ideal for showing pictures and craft works, and with a lovely view of the Fields, I embarked in 1989 on a programme of occasional exhibitions from which the commission for all sales goes directly to Cancer Research charities. Last year's exhibitions were very successful. Anita Young showed water colours in May and a group of artists/crafts people exhibited in early November. A group show of paintings, organised by Linda Binnington, rounded off the year in late November. In March this year, local artist Peter Spens exhibited delightful figures in a landscape. Our next exhibition will be in September so please look out for the poster in my window. If you agree that looking at paintings can be an enriching experience and would like to be on our mailing list, do contact me on 359 5119.

Mary Kleinman

Vice-Chair of Islington Arts Circle

### JUBILEE CLOCK TOWER



At the top of Highbury Hill near Christ Church is the Jubilee Clock Tower which was erected to mark Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. The inscription cast into the door on the east side states, "Presented to the Islington Vestry by Alfred Hutchinson in celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the reign of her most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria 1897". Despite its complete overhaul a few years ago, the clock has again stopped working. However, Peter Bonsall had a site meeting with Smith of Derby, the company who restored the clock at the Angel. They are the country's experts and they have priced

the schedule of works for repair. As a result, a lottery application for funds for restoration will be made. Let's hope that we can have a celebration next year to mark the centenary of this wonderful clock.

Maryse Jones

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Dick Whetstone for permission to reproduce the pictures on pages 3 and 7 which are taken from 'The Parish of St Mary Islington - A Portrait in Old Picture Postcards'.

Thanks also to Alfred Head for permission to use his drawing of the Jubilee Clock Tower on this page - taken from 'A History of Highbury' by Keith Sugden.