

# Highbury Fields Association

Founded



in 1975

Affiliated to Living Streets - Islington  
and the London Forum  
[www.highburyfieldsassociation.org](http://www.highburyfieldsassociation.org)

## Newsletter - September 2009

### Chairman's Report

*"Granny says, when she was a girl, they didn't have a television. Or computer games". "Yes, and Grandpa says he didn't have a bike till he was eleven. Or even a scooter. Really"*

Do you remember, not all that long ago, when people would ask you IF you had a mobile? Now, they assume you have one and ask you for its number. As with mobiles, so with websites. We didn't have one. They're just for large companies, and institutions. Several years ago, some enthusiasts on the Committee wrote a report – why we should and how we could. But we still managed to strangle it at birth – "Think how much it would cost to set up and who would maintain it?"

This last year however we became really grown up and established a whole series of sub-groups: one of them 'Communications & Publicity'. "People will Google us and dismiss us if they do not find we have a website". We had to give way, "Yes, a website, but who among you could set it up?"

'Cometh the Hour; Cometh the Man'. The subgroup scurried around, exchanged a mass of emails but it was Tony Miller who put the whole thing together, gently bullied us all to produce material, and tutored us on how to maintain it. A lot of midnight oil was burnt in Framfield Road.

\*\*\*\*\*

And we are proud of the result. Do please have a look: [www.highburyfieldsassociation.org](http://www.highburyfieldsassociation.org). Lots of useful and interesting information. A list of what we have done over the years and beautiful photos of the Fields, some sent in by members.

I report on page 7 on the first meeting of the new Highbury Fields Management Group, which we all hope will prove to be an effective body, working for all the users of the Fields. We have also been involved in meetings of the Highbury Corner Stakeholders group. It now seems likely that the Post Office will be built, paid for by the Council once Network Rail have agreed to free the land on the corner of Highbury Place and the roundabout, opposite Barclays Bank. It was feared for a time that funds would not be found for removing the gyratory but TfL say that the benefits in doing so are ten times the cost.

The HFA were represented on the panel which chose the architects who will also be responsible for the other parts of the scheme: the closed western arm, the central reservation, the changes to the station entrance and the square in front. It has been agreed to do new traffic modelling for the Fields and for Drayton Park/Madras Place in September.

*contd.*

### AGM

On Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009

At Christ Church, Highbury Grove, London N5

7.30 for 7.45pm

Guest Speaker: **Sarah Gaventa**, Director of CAFE Space,  
to speak on "The Importance and Value of Parks"





*Preparations for new traders behind the Post Office; when will it move across the road?*

So much else happens over twelve months. New dog control guidelines; a public toilet once again in the south end of Highbury Crescent; the utter failure to effectively deter football fans from walking across the Fields; the opportunity, twice in nine months, to respond to the very complex Core Strategy consultation and nine Street Environment Wardens to keep us all on the straight and narrow, during what seems likely to be another busy twelve months ahead.

Do join us if you are interested or if you feel there is something you could contribute.

*Martin Jones*

## From the Archives

Some of the interesting things to look for on our new website: [www.highburyfieldsassociation.org](http://www.highburyfieldsassociation.org) are the old Newsletters – we have managed so far to locate most of them from 1978 onwards. They give a flavour of what concerns there were in Highbury then. Below is a selection from the 80's to whet your appetites.

### **(1983) Covert Garden**

Behind the corrugated iron on Highbury Crescent, there lies a secret garden. Known locally as Robin's Garden – named it is thought, after a child who once played there – it has been left to grow wild for years. Now there is the possibility of temporary public access to Robin's Garden if Islington Council have their way.

The site has a history of remaining derelict and uncared for since the last war. In the 1940's there was an AA searchlight detachment dug in the middle of the lower Field. One night a bombing raid missed that but destroyed instead Numbers 21 and 22 Highbury Crescent, the site of Robin's Garden. (For interest – can any of the older residents give details of this raid?)



*Continuing damage across the grass; total failure of the attempt to discourage football fans*



*21/22 Highbury Crescent – where foxes used to play in Robin's Garden.*

The problem with the site is that there are two railway tunnels immediately beneath the foundations. Several developers have prepared new housing schemes but have apparently had difficulties with the expense involved in constructing suitable foundations. Now Murphy's, who have recently acquired the site, will try where others have failed, though no detailed planning applications have been made yet.

Since 1978, Highbury Fields Association has been attempting to get the site opened up as a public park with the idea of a pedestrian path from the corner of Melgund Road through Robin's Garden to the Fields. Temporary access, at least, would be welcome. The Planning Department are also investigating tree preservation orders for the site and the possibility of getting the corrugated iron replaced or painted.

*(The HFA managed to persuade the Planners to turn down two applications but permission was finally given in 1990 – but not finally built until recently. – Ed.)*

*contd.*

### (1984) Shine On

The three fine lamp standards in Church Path are under threat. The Council thinks it may be necessary to replace them with a 'modern street lighting system'. HFA believes they should be preserved and asked the Planning Committee to list them as items of historical interest. HFA has asked the Borough Engineer to let us know the cost of painting and repair.

### (1987) October 16<sup>th</sup>

When the telephone rang at 3 am on Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, I was already out of bed looking at a rapidly deteriorating roof. The call from the Council night duty officer was to inform me that the police were reporting numerous trees across the highway, but, even I could not have imagined the devastation that greeted us all as dawn came.

Highbury Fields, whilst suffering the loss of a few large trees, was in many ways spared the worst ravages of the storm and no long term visual damage appears to have been done.

On a Borough wide scale the loss of street trees, young trees on estates and single specimen large trees in rear gardens is far more worrying.

Once the clearing up operation is completed and a proper assessment of losses is made, we must get a programme of replanting underway. This will be done in the autumn/winter of 88/89 allowing proper time for correct selection of species and the purchase of good nursery stock.

*(Peter Bonsall, the esteemed then Chief Parks Officer – post 1987 hurricane. – Ed)*

### (1989) Complaints Corner

I was shocked to read, in the minutes of the HFA's latest committee meeting, that there had been no complaints about the French circus which arrived on the Fields in September. Well, I want to complain about it. Loudly and publicly.

Quite frankly, I'm not keen on circuses. And I'd heard enough about the Archaos Circus of Character to be put off completely. They used motor-bikes and fork-lift trucks. They set off fireworks – noisy ones. They juggled with chain-saws. Sometimes their acts went wrong, horribly wrong. Well, I wasn't going and neither were my children. No way.

It took them a good week to wear me down.

But I'm glad they did. It was marvellous. It felt like a circus ought to be. A bit shabby, a bit down-at-heel, but thrilling, odd, unexpected. Sometimes I laughed and sometimes I gasped. Most of the time I just gaped.

Then one Tuesday evening, I noticed a line of lorries, trailers and caravans trundling across the Fields in the

near darkness. The beams from their yellow headlights flared through an early autumn mist. The procession seemed to go on for ages.

The next morning, where their amazing Big Top had been, there was only grass.

So, that's my complaint. They've gone. And they haven't said when they're coming back.

*(Richard O'Keefe, a very clever, funny man. Much missed. – Ed)*



## Open House London

Do you *know* about the Open House London weekend? **19-20<sup>th</sup> September** – the capital's biggest architecture festival – throwing open the doors of hundreds of buildings – giving you the chance to explore the best of the city's architecture **for FREE**.

"Grand, or famous, or small, or obscure, London's buildings open for us this weekend – a privilege not to be missed" Ranging from the grand – City Hall, Foreign & India Office and the Olympic site to the smaller but no less fascinating; including 27 buildings in Islington – the new King's Place concert hall and exciting conversions in Whistler Street and Calabria Road. Find them at:

[www.openhouse.org.uk/public/london/event.html](http://www.openhouse.org.uk/public/london/event.html)

### What is the real value of excellence in architecture?

"The way we plan, design and build our cities can transform our lives for the better in many ways: good architecture can capture our imagination, change the way we relate to our neighbours and fellow Londoners, create new employment and revitalise neglected areas and improve our health and well-being. The impact of good design is a more attractive environment, stronger communities with a sense of ownership and pride in their local area, and new financial investment. Well-designed buildings and public spaces are, therefore, vital in creating and sustaining a vibrant city, from Westminster to Waltham Forest and from Camden to Croydon.

*Victoria Thornton, Hon FRIBA  
Founding Director, Open House*

## Our AGM Speaker

In the article above 'Managing Public Spaces', on page 7, we quote from a CABE Space publication. CABE is a government advisory body – the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment – advising on architecture, urban design and public space and our speaker, Sarah Gaventa, is the Director of CABE Space.

CABE encourages policymakers to create spaces that work for people and helps local planners apply national design policy and advises developers and architects, persuading them to put people's needs first. They show public sector clients how to commission buildings that meet the needs of their users and seek to inspire the public to demand more from their buildings and spaces.

CABE Space is a specialist unit within CABE that aims to bring excellence to the design, management and maintenance of parks and public space in our towns and cities. Sarah Gaventa has produced a study which graphically illustrates the surprising fact that most councils, and certainly including Islington, value their public parks in their accounts at a nominal £1.

She argues that this way of valuing parks means that there is no reason, no need, to assess methodically the quantity and condition of the assets each park has – assets such as paths, shrubs, trees, benches etc. all of which are valuable. Without this information it is harder for park managers to manage their assets strategically, anticipate future expenditure and plan over different periods. The study examines and values two English parks in detail – one of them is Highbury Fields!

*Martin Jones*

## Highbury Fields Tennis League

When I took up tennis, about 8 years ago on the courts on Highbury Fields, I thought I would need a few lessons and that would be it. How difficult could it be, I reasoned, to hit a ball over the net? The answer was: very. When I wasn't slamming shots into the net they were sailing out, and I asked James, my coach what was missing. "Matches," he said. "The way to get better is to play matches".

This is counter intuitive. Beginners, as I was then, assume you have to get better before you compete. In fact, it is by competing that you improve. Since there are few if any clubs in Islington, James recommended starting a league.



*An illustration used for the HFA Tennis Tournament in the 1995 Newsletter.*

My partner designed a poster, a friend laminated it, and we then designed our modest website (<http://highburyfieldstennis.tripod.com>). Then, with help and support of the coaches on Highbury Fields, I began twisting arms.

In April 2005, I had a trial run. There were thirteen people divided into two groups and everyone played everyone else in their group over eight weeks. It took off beyond anything I could have imagined. Today the format remains the same, but in the current round there are 125 people playing, there are 18 groups, and I no longer have to pressgang friends. There are four mixed singles rounds a year (each round lasts two months), two or three mixed double rounds and we have just completed the first men's and ladies' doubles events.

In the four and a half years the league has been running, hundreds of people have taken part, and thousands of matches have been played. We have had many parties, made many friends, and even started similar leagues on public courts elsewhere.

As for me, not long after starting the league, I had a back injury and couldn't play for two years. But last round, I started again, in the bottom group. I am very pleased to say I won it.

<http://highburyfieldstennis.tripod.com>  
[highburyfieldstennis@gmail.com](mailto:highburyfieldstennis@gmail.com)

*Sally Kinnes*



## 'The last chance saloon'

As you will have seen in the Press, things are really 'hotting up' on climate change issues as our carbon emissions continue to rise; and the final round of talks following the Kyoto Treaty, known as COP15, which some have tagged 'the last chance saloon' is happening in Copenhagen (7<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> December 2009).

Back here CABE (The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) has released the excellent [www.sustainablecities.org.uk](http://www.sustainablecities.org.uk) after two years of work with the Core Cities, and at the DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) the Zero Carbon Schools Task Force is due to report to the Secretary of State by Christmas on how all new schools can be zero carbon by 2016. The Task Force has adopted the mantra 'Halve the demand, double the efficiency and halve the carbon in the supplies and you are down to one eighth of the emissions'.

*HFA member Robin Nicholson is Joint Deputy Chair of CABE and Chair of the Zero Carbon Task Force.*

## Gardeners beware!

Shakespeare got the British climate wrong when he wrote 'Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May'. Mid-May often goes downhill thanks to the **Ice Saints**. From May 11 to 14th, the feast days of **St. Mamertus, St. Pancras, St. Servatius and St. Boniface** each line up to deliver cold, frost and even snowfalls on occasions. The warning of bad weather was spelt out in an old saying: "He who shears his sheep before St. Servatius' Day loves his wool more than his sheep". And the Ice Saints were widely feared and their reputation was known through much of Europe.

Exactly why these Holy men were so keen on a cold spell in May remains obscure. I wanted to share this with the many gardeners who will read this Newsletter. All I know is since I was a child, I was always told 'never plant a geranium until the 15<sup>th</sup> of May'. I told many people of my knowledge of the Ice Saints (Saints de Glace in French) but they always nodded with great doubt. For the first time this year on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, the 'Weather Eye' in The Times mentioned it.

*Maryse Jones*



*Early morning bags*

## Plastic bag free Highbury Barn

Are you eating plastic? 1.6 billion plastic bags (PBs) are given out in London each year. Many end up in the sea – often to be eaten by fish. If you eat fish, you're probably eating plastic. Eating plastic may not kill you, but it kills many sea creatures, from seabirds to whales. There is now a global campaign against PBs.

Plastic Bag Free Highbury Barn was formed in December '08. We've had two showings of a film on the danger of PBs. We did a survey of Barn users: 81% are against PB's. We discovered one trader was already PB free. Our successes so far:

- \*one dry-cleaner says his use of PBs is much reduced;
- \* another trader is now charging for them.

We plan to support the PB Free Day in September, on a Saturday without football – and other initiatives.

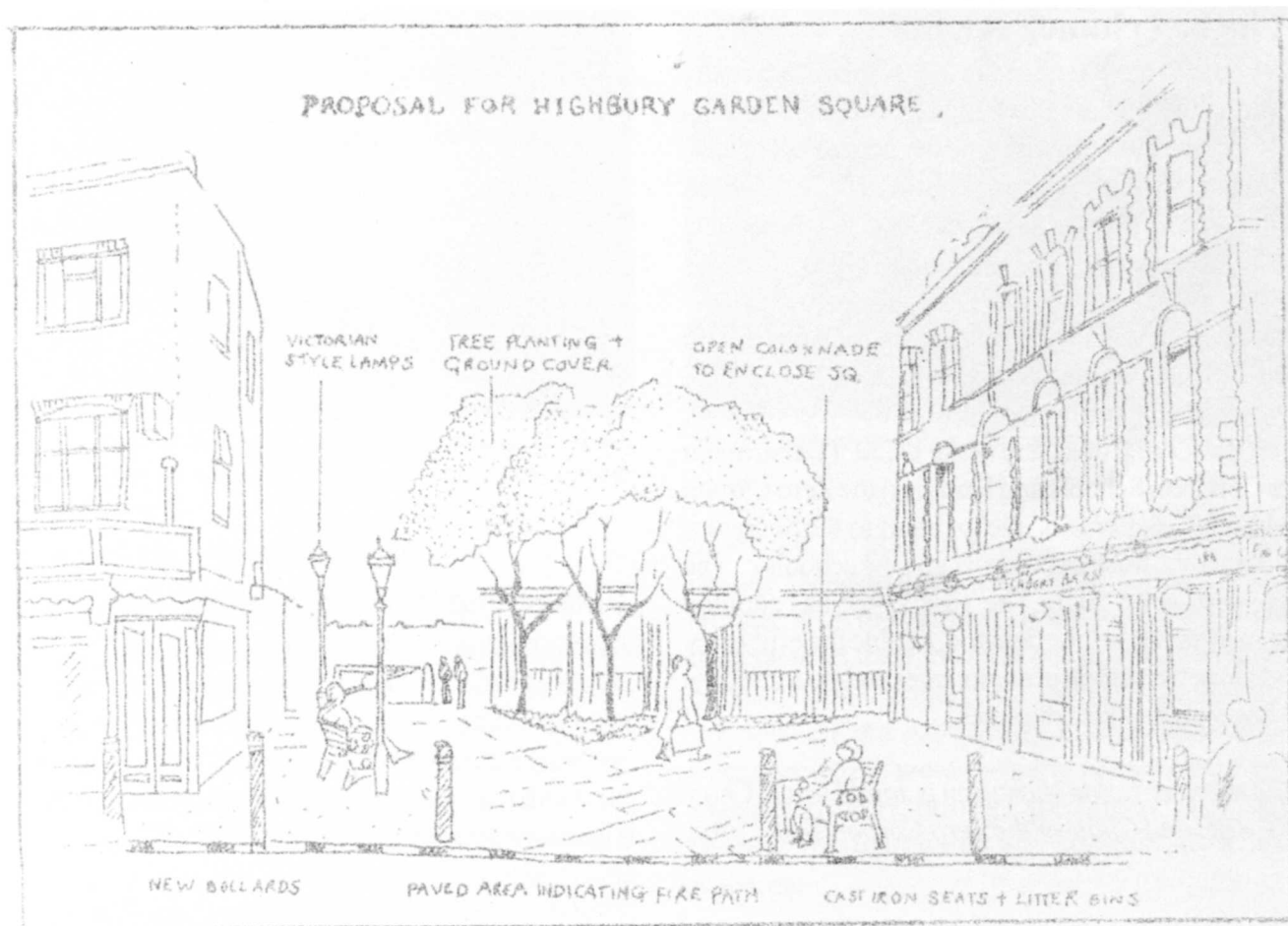
I usually find the Fields free of PBs, but early in the morning they can be seen. If our campaign is successful, I bet that we'll lighten the load of ground staff.

We welcome new members. For more:  
<http://plasticbagfreehighburybarn.org.uk>  
or 020 7700 7131

*Neil Devlin*

## Don't fence me in

Tooting Bec Common campaigners oppose 12 new floodlit, five-a-side football pitches on public space because the pitches would be fenced and not accessible to the public. A warning to us here.



*Drawing from the 1988 Newsletter.*

## **Highbury Barn For Ever!**

Statistics regularly remind us that the large supermarket chains are taking an ever-increasing share of what used once to be referred to as 'high-street shopping'. Local shopping areas are suffering in consequence and one Islington campaign, attempting to at least slow down the trend, has the slogan "Use them, or lose them".

The HFA has been very aware, for many years, of the need for the Highbury Barn traders to be supported; for the area to be 'improved' but, above all, *used* not *lost*. The drawing is from our 1988 Newsletter, showing the proposal then to transform what had been a most unattractive and forbidding no-go area – to be re-christened "Highbury Garden Square", following a public meeting where it had received unanimous support.

In recent years the Council's Transport Planning department has encouraged the formation of a Highbury Barn Trading Association and bids for funding to improve the infrastructure of the street.

There are to be a number of proposals for the area to be put to a public consultation, probably in September, hoping for approval by the East Area Committee in November and, all being well, the implementation December 2009-March 2010.

There are considerable physical restraints to what can be achieved, particularly the narrowness of the road and the need to cater for the frequent buses and delivery lorries. Parking, both for traders and for customers, is a recurrent problem. At a recent LBI Sustainability Review meeting both of us made pleas for the parking problems to be studied carefully again.

The current proposals will suggest improved lighting; extra cycle parking; more trees and planting. The square could have a uniform level surface and the bollards may be able to be moved further into the square to allow a loading bay, clear of the roadway.

*contd.*

Further north, close to the turning to Hamilton Park, it may be possible to widen a short strip of pavement on the western side where the road is slightly wider. There have also been proposals for Gardner court, behind the square, to be gated off, with access implications for the residents of Kelvin Road. Homes for Islington have submitted a planning application to LBI which can be viewed in the normal way (P091250).

Those residents close to the Barn can watch out for the consultation. But all of us can try to give the shopkeepers extra support and custom to help ensure we do not lose an excellent local shopping centre.

*Maryse & Martin Jones*

## Managing Public Spaces

"It's our space" is a guide for community groups working to improve public space. It is published by CABE Space and in the Foreword it says:

*"CABE knows that people value great local parks, streets and open spaces. While providing these facilities had always fallen to the local council, the tide is now changing to let community groups demand and deliver improvements to public space themselves"*

The lengthy public consultation in 2006/7 asking people how they wanted to see Highbury Fields develop, was followed by the report "A Vision for Highbury Fields", in which the following statement supported the CABE approach to management:

*"The Vision can be achieved at Highbury Fields subject to further commissioning of a masterplan with a management and maintenance plan promoting a combination of high quality design and integrated management. Its success will lie in the continuing collaboration with and commitment to the community, through a structured management group of officers and community members with appropriate professional advice and skilled operatives"*

The Vision called for a 'Highbury Fields Management Group' (HFMG) to be established. Two years later, encouraged by the HFA and HCA, the first meeting of such a group took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

That first meeting was attended by two councillors and chaired by the East Area councillor and Leader of the Council, Terry Stacy, plus the Principal Parks Manager, two other Parks Managers, a Projects and Development officer and the Arboricultural officer. The Highbury West councillor, Katie Dawson, will also be a member.

The community was represented by two from the HFA, and one from each of the Highbury Community Association, Highbury Roundhouse, Islington Cyclists Action Group, Islington Living Streets, Highbury Fields School for Girls, and Christ Church. There were two from Arsenal Soccerschool and from Transition Highbury, although only one of each would count if there was a need for a vote. The Transition group are hoping to find space on the Fields somewhere for allotments. They are most unlikely to be given access to any of the existing green space, but might be able to use the depot area at the top of Framfield Road, previously used for the Fields maintenance vans and equipment.

Other groups had been invited, including Disability Action in Islington, Drayton Park and Highbury Grove Schools, the Oasis Café, Bandstand and Aquaterra and the Baptist Church and they will continue to play a role.

The main business of the first meeting was to discuss how to prioritise capital spending. To achieve all that the Vision envisaged would cost £12million but presently there is only £1million available, although other funding sources may be found. The meeting considered all of the options listed, ranging from refurbishing the sport pitches to repairing the Oasis café and the Bandstand, new fencing, benches and litter bins and decided all were a priority.

The projects officer was asked to update the costings and come up with some projects that could be accomplished quickly. The next HFMG meeting will be on 6th October at Christ Church at 6pm.

The principal parks manager, Andrew Bedford, talked about the progression of the Vision, saying that it would be fuelled by guidance from the Management Group meetings. The HFA hopes that the HFMG can play a real management role, proactive rather than merely passive.

*Martin Jones*



*August 2009: Advertising banners are attached to three sides of the island at Highbury Corner, devaluing the natural scene.*

## **Distracting stimulation: intrusive signage**

Islington council has shown a will to put us all in better contact with Nature, witness all the wooden planters being placed in the neighbourhood, such as the group at the junction of Ronalds Road and Highbury Crescent. They are also maintaining, assisted by some local people, small but significant plantings such as at the bottom of Fieldway Crescent. These things help to take the hard edge off the urban journey, which is an important contribution to our mental health.

Last December, American researcher Marc Berman demonstrated the value of “involuntary attention”, the kind of attention we give to our surroundings because, simply, we notice something interesting. It’s our brain in holiday mode not work mode; it’s when our brains are drained and we forget for a few moments the distractions of the urban environment – that need always to be on the lookout, to be focussed on safety or the need to obey a sign and when we are battered by a succession of adverts making claims on our attention.

Berman, of the University of Michigan, says of a walk in nature, “There typically isn’t this distracting stimulation, so the person can find a kind of defocus in some sense, or mind-wander”. And a result of this is that his study groups showed a walk in the park improved memory and attention span by one fifth, but a walk down an urban street showed no improvement. It’s curious that there seems to be a need these days to have science inform us of what we really know already; why would people like their parks so much if they didn’t feel this benefit? I sense my heart rate lower every time I leave Highbury Corner and come into Highbury Fields.



*The one banner-free side offers a delightful spectacle.*

So what is the point of writing this piece? It’s that a change seems to have come about where intrusive signage is on the increase. It becomes all the more difficult to let the mind relax and appreciate the little pockets of nature that could do this valuable work if we but let them. Advertising, in particular, is taking over spaces that were formerly considered almost sacrosanct. Park railings are littered with large banners, notice boards and smaller advertising placards.

Safety notices abound; instructions and punishments for transgression are attached to every park gate, and businesses seem to take over whatever they can to advertise in inappropriate places. Can we not recognise, as a society, that there is a different balance to be struck, so that all these quite understandable, but only occasionally essential, signs do not undermine or negate, as they do now, the very qualities many of the largest banners say they support but which appear rather to be a branding exercise by corporate Islington than having anything to do with the particular green space they are attached to?

*Robin Hull*

## **Helping – or is it Snooping?**

You are concerned about a problem in the locality – aren’t we all, sometimes? It may be graffiti; an unsafe, broken pavement; waste material dumped and left for days, unsightly and unhygienic; dog-fouling; a noisy party late into the night; picnic litter on the Fields – to name but a few! You need help? You want to help improve the quality of our surroundings? It all sounds reasonable and worthy, but BEWARE!

*contd.*



A national newspaper has apparently suggested that 'Eyes for Islington' volunteers are a pack of citizen snoopers, spying on their neighbours; and another recent report in 'Islington Tribune' tells us that a "legal adviser accused the Town Hall of playing 'Big Brother' after he was fined £50 for stubbing a cigarette out on the pavement".

So, when we report a local problem are we behaving like snoopers? Bridget Fox who launched "Eyes for Islington" when she chaired the Council's Environment Committee in 2002, thinks not: "That's being a good citizen and neighbour, it's nothing to do with snooping and everything to do with having pride in where you live". And, speaking of our new team of Street Environment Wardens, Councillor Greg Foxsmith stresses that many people "are thanking the wardens for keeping the streets clean of littering, cigarette butts and dog-fouling".

So, you are concerned but you don't feel confident enough, brave enough, to confront a stranger committing an anti-social and, perhaps, illegal act. You are not big enough to be Big Brother. What do you do? Where can you seek help?

Luckily there are many organisations whose brief includes just that – to offer help. We all know that our own Highbury Fields Association does respond to a wide range of local concerns, from the condition and maintenance of the Fields itself to planning matters within the three local Conservation Areas. And, over many years of serious and considered intervention, has gained some respect and the ear of Councillors and Council officers, and persuaded them to take action. Our new website gives a clear picture of the wide range of our concerns and initiatives.

And, of course, there are many other local organisations. To name but a few: Highbury Community Association, which for many years has directed our attention particularly to the problems created locally by the building of the new Arsenal Emirates stadium, and those experienced by shopkeepers in Highbury Barn. Our local branch of Living Streets has recently sought our opinion on the safety of pedestrian crossings, the landscapes of our streets cluttered with excessive street furniture, the impact of bendy buses on traffic and the perennial problem of anti-social and dangerous cyclists.

And then the organisations created by local authorities: the aforementioned "Eyes for Islington", now with over one thousand members, who are asked by the Council to "tell us how we can help you to make Islington a greener, cleaner and safer borough to live and work in". If you would like to become a member, call Contact Islington on 020 7527 2000 and ask to speak to the "Eyes for Islington" co-ordinator.

More recently, there is our Highbury East Safer Neighbourhood Team, very much in evidence at Highbury Corner recently, seeking to learn from residents and passers-by about their concerns. At the moment, burglary, theft from motor vehicles, dangerous dogs, youth anti-social behaviour and illegal cycling are the priorities.

The team has organised two public drop-in meetings at the local Victim Support Office recently, and a Ward Panel meeting where representatives of local community groups, schools and businesses meet to pin-point current issues. As their latest Newsletter says: "You see it, hear it, report it. We deal with it" Call the team on 020 7161 9385.

Add to these, the newly established team of Street Environment Wardens; "working to an ethos of 'educate, encourage, enforce' – the team will be concentrating their efforts in areas affected by anti-social behaviour". Call them on 020 7527 6587. Persistent noise problems at night? – contact the Noise Patrol. Your pavement is regularly blocked by parked cars, contact Parking Enforcement.

And, of course, there are our local Councillors, all of whom offer surgeries twice a month; and your M.P. – I have received an immediate and positive response when I have approached ours.

How to contact organisations and Council officers who may be able to help? The Council has produced the "The really ... really useful service guide" containing the phone numbers, web and email addresses of all the services available.

You are not snooping on your neighbours, you are not acting like Big Brother; you are seeking help to make your locality a more agreeable and safer place for all of us.

*Paul Williams*

## The London Plan

The first London Plan was published in 2004. Last year Boris Johnson became Mayor with new policies and the Government extended the Mayor's powers. He has, therefore, decided to undertake a full review of the London Plan. He recently published his 'Initial Proposals'. There are no detailed policies but 6 Objectives.

These are in brief:

**(1) A city that meets the challenges of economic and population growth** in ways that ensure a good and improving quality of life for Londoners and help tackle the huge issue of inequality among Londoners, including inequality in health outcomes

**(2) An internationally competitive and successful city** with a strong and diverse economy and an entrepreneurial spirit that benefits all Londoners and all parts of London; a city which is at the leading edge of innovation and research, while also being comfortable with – and making the most of – its rich heritage.

**(3) A city of diverse, strong, secure and accessible neighbourhoods** to which Londoners feel attached, which provides all of its residents, workers, visitors and students – whatever their origin, background, age or status – with opportunities to realise and express their potential and a high quality environment for individuals to enjoy, live together and thrive.

**(4) A city that delights the eye** and takes care over its buildings and streets, having the best of modern architecture while also making the most of London's built heritage and makes the most of its wealth of open and green spaces, realising its potential for improving Londoners' health, welfare and development.

**(5) A city that becomes a world leader in improving the environment** locally and globally, taking the lead in tackling climate change, reducing pollution, developing a low carbon economy and consuming fewer resources or using them more effectively.

**(6) A city where it is easy, safe and convenient for everyone to access jobs, opportunities and facilities** with an efficient and effective transport system which places more emphasis on walking and cycling and making better use of the Thames, and supports delivery of all the objectives of this Plan.



Calabria Road – a new circular wooden planter; next to a resident's own attractive planting.



Ronalds Road – large wooden planters.

The Mayor also intends that the document will be shorter, more strategic and more user friendly. We can all say 'hurrah' to that, but, although we have heard it all before, anything would be better than the highly prescriptive nature of the present plan, the highpoint of a very centralist approach to planning our many-faceted city.

The timetable for all this is public consultation on a full draft new London Plan in the autumn of 2009. This will be followed by an examination in public, led by a panel of independent inspectors in the summer/autumn of 2010.

The examination panel will submit a report to the Mayor, indicating what changes they would recommend are made to the Plan – Spring 2011. Following consultation with the Government it is intended that the new Plan will be published in the winter of 2011-12.

We shall see but Boris will have to be pretty tough to achieve this.

Robin Mabey

## Thumbs down to Chelsea Barracks

I wrote to object to the proposed redevelopment of Chelsea Barracks. What we are losing sight of is that new development should positively add to and enhance our surroundings. The built environment has much more impact on us than we are conscious of. If we walk down a pleasant street with good architecture, we experience a positive feeling whereas a depressed and uncared for street or one where we are overwhelmed by overscale and oppressive buildings leads to negative and aggressive feelings.

What is good design? Hard perhaps to define, but at its heart are good proportions and pleasing materials. I understand that architects may want to make use of new and exciting materials which can have positive results, but what is disappointing is when a development is built down to a price rather than up to a standard. This leads to the mediocre buildings which we see only too often in this country. Good design, however, has no need to cost more than bad, which is why planners need to keep tight control over developers and their architects.

I endorse heartily a letter in the *Sunday Times* where it says that the "planning system is skewed in favour of major projects, with architects of variable quality attempting to emulate Le Corbusier to the detriment of towns and cities. Mediocre developments are a result of targets, lack of design competency and the fear of the expense of appeals". It is exactly my own experience with the development of the Kings Cross Railway Lands. I fear that greed is the motive rather than any desire to enhance our environment by producing worthwhile architecture. London is a very special city but one that is in danger of losing the very reason why people want to live in it. Cramming in these huge, high and densely built developments is misconceived, leading as it does to overlooking and loss of light.

Section 106 agreements are an outmoded bargaining counter allowing developers to buy the right to overdevelopment. Social housing is clearly desirable but too often it simply means that the developer crams too much on to the site in order to make up for his loss of profit. It would be preferable to re-use the many buildings that are at present vacant. I agree with the Mayor that money should be put into identifying and re-using existing housing stock.

In some locations pastiche can be appropriate, but the overriding criterion must be to produce well proportioned buildings that enhance their surroundings.

*Jeannie Burnett*



*Corner of Framfield Road/Highbury Terrace – the depot which may be transformed into allotments.*

## Transition Highbury

Transition is all about creating communities that are resilient to the twin shocks of Peak Oil and Climate Change. Transition Highbury, which was formed in November 2008, has been going from strength to strength in recent months as it reaches out to the community with its programme of raising awareness around low-carbon living. There is a website (<http://transitionhighbury.ning.com>) where all the upcoming events such as the regular Tuesday film nights, alternating with Transition Tuesdays for project planning, and Transition Drinks in the Compton Arms are listed: everyone is welcome.

Real progress is being made on the development of several key initiatives around growing and selling food locally, mounting workshops to re-skill our way into self-sufficiency, greening the Highbury Quadrant Estate and developing low-carbon energy programmes. Their next big event is London's Greener Future at Highbury Fields School on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October.

*Isabel Carlisle*

## Friends of Highbury Roundhouse

The Friends of the Highbury Roundhouse is a small group of volunteers who support the community centre by organising fund-raising events and networking with the local community.

*contd.*

Over the past two years, the Friends has raised more than £4,000 for the centre through lectures, dances and a private birthday party. In two lectures co-sponsored with the Whittington Hospital, we were able to raise money both for ourselves and for the hospital's recently expanded neonatal intensive care unit. More recently, a Valentine's Day dance, which was supported by the London Medical Orchestra, raised substantial sums for repair and maintenance of the centre.

An important job of the Friends is to create a network of people who can come together on an ad hoc basis to support our activities. In Highbury this includes the Highbury Fields Association and the Highbury Community Association. Further out across London, the network includes the charitable arm of the American School in St John's Wood. On several occasions in the past two years, the school has dispatched teams of volunteer painters and gardeners to help us maintain the buildings and the grounds.

The Highbury Fields Association has supported the Roundhouse for years with donations and by locating events on our premises. More recently the Highbury Community Association has donated its high-quality printer to our office at 71 Ronald's Road. The HCA still has access to the printer for its newsletters, but the printer is now mostly used by the Roundhouse staff to print our annual reports, minutes of meetings of the Board of Trustees, and reports to the many regulatory authorities that monitor our work.

On the fundraising side, Bronwen Taylor and her team of supporters have worked energetically to produce a series of gala dinners and dances, the most recent of which was the Valentine's Day dinner-dance on 14 February this year. Nearly 100 members of the community enjoyed a home-cooked meal and danced to music by the London Medical Orchestra.

Our next charitable dinner-dance will be held on Saturday 14 November this year. We are pleased to announce that the music will be provided by the Crouch End All Stars, our renowned, local jazz band.

Anyone is welcome to become a Friend of the Highbury Roundhouse. For more information, please email me at [EllingtonBill@aol.com](mailto:EllingtonBill@aol.com) or phone 020 7354 0397.

*Victoria Ellington*



*At last – the second automatic toilet on the Fields; near the redundant toilets in Highbury Crescent.*

## HIGHBURY FIELDS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Martin Jones, *Chairman*  
David Boniface,  
*Vice Chairman*  
Anita de Lotbiniere,  
*Membership Secretary*  
Maryse Jones, *Treasurer*  
Pamela Welson  
*Secretary (Co-opted)*  
Jeannie Burnett  
Victoria Ellington  
Muriel Feder  
Carrick James  
Octavia Jennings  
Ian Kelly  
Robin Mabey  
Nicky Manby  
Jennifer Purchase  
Caroline Russell  
Paul Williams  
Nicolas Witter

Ginny Worsley  
Paul Magrath  
*Legal Consultant*  
Tony Miller  
*Web Consultant*

**Nominations for new members (proposed and seconded by members of the HFA) should be made to Martin Jones by Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October. Appointments to the Committee will take place at the AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> October. Do join the HFA, and keep in touch with developments in our area. Please advise the Membership Secretary if you wish to receive Minutes by email.**

Members of the Association are welcome to raise and discuss any particular concerns they may have. We like to hear your views. Please telephone Martin Jones or via our website:  
[www.highburyfieldsassociation.org](http://www.highburyfieldsassociation.org)

*Editors: Martin & Maryse Jones*