

# Highbury Fields Association

Founded  in 1971.

Affiliated to Living Streets - Islington  
and the London Forum  
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## Newsletter - September 2005

### Chairman's Report

Some people are never happy. We have sometimes complained that the Council does not consult us enough, or at least that too few people are consulted. Now the reverse is starting to be true. We are going through a phase when we are being heavily consulted over a whole range of matters. The UDP (Unitary Development Plan), which was extensively revised two or three years ago, is being scrapped to be replaced by some 30 separate plans, collectively to be known as the LDF (Local Development Framework).

All of them have to be developed and then pass through local consultation over the next two to three years. What fun. We have *even* been consulted on a Draft Statement of Local Development which is to develop a policy on how people and groups should be consulted!

Perhaps more obviously pertinent to all of us living in North Islington has been the recent consultation on the "A1 Borough", in which the Council have sought people's views on how the A1 Street, stretching from Archway, via Holloway Road, Upper Street and Goswell Road to Old Street can be improved to "bring local communities together rather than dividing them".

An HFA sub-group concentrated on suggestions on how

Highbury Corner and the station area could be improved. Elsewhere in this newsletter Robin Nicholson gives his opinion on the possibility of giving pedestrian access to the arboretum; the wooded centre of the roundabout. Robin, a Senior Director of Edward Cullinan Architects, is also a Commissioner of CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and will talk about CABE's work at our AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

As always we find ourselves concerned about various planning issues which seem likely to threaten our local environment. We wait to hear whether the Aberdeen Works developers are prepared to produce a more modest scheme to placate threatened local residents.

Arsenal are already making a huge impact on the area. They now propose taking over control of the football pitches on the Fields, resurfacing and improving them and building a small one-storey community hall where Glendale currently store their lorries and materials at the top of Framfield Road. Possibly a welcome improvement. But, does this mean that the many youngsters who regularly use the pitches for football and basketball will be excluded? We need to jealously guard our open spaces. As John Ruskin said, "...the  
(Contd.)

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### AGM

On Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2005  
At Christ Church, Highbury Grove, London N5  
7.30 for 7.45pm

**Guest Speaker: Robin Nicholson CBE**, Senior Director of Edward Cullinan Architects and Commissioner for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), will speak on the work of CABE.

*measure of any great civilisation is in its cities and the measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and squares"*

Residents and shopkeepers have been concerned this year about groups of youths who gather after school hours in a number of our streets. There have been no major incidents but passers-by feel intimidated and there are noise and litter problems. After considerable effort by some members, the police have started to be more involved and, for the moment, the problems have somewhat subsided. However, if you experience such problems, contact WPC Julie Whewell, the Community Contact Officer for Highbury East on 07909 891 401 or ring the Borough Support Unit at Tolpuddle St. on 7241 0632 or Holloway station on 7263 9090. Remember to get a reference number so that the call is logged – the more calls that are logged, the more seriously the problem is taken.

Lastly, I would like to add my congratulations to 84-year-old member Sylvester Stein from Highbury Hill. He is not only the current over-80s British Masters sprint champion, but the author of the play "Who killed Mr. Drum", a thriller based on his South African experiences and running at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith until 6<sup>th</sup> October.

*Martin Jones*

## **Highbury Volunteers**

The Fields' new Ranger is now in post. She has started a scheme whereby everyone is welcome to join in for a couple of hours, with no experience necessary, doing something to be part of the regeneration of Highbury Fields. There have been two days so far, the last on 24<sup>th</sup> August, when volunteers painted bins and benches, Refreshments and tools are provided.

The next date for your diary is Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September, between 10am and 12noon and will probably have a nature conservation theme. Abbie will put up notices before the time to confirm where and when.

You will have fun, meet people and keep fit. If you have a query regarding the Fields, do call in at the ranger's office on Highbury Crescent

**Enquiries:** Abbie Jade Keeper on 07908 688 683  
e-mail: [abbie.keeper@islington.gov.uk](mailto:abbie.keeper@islington.gov.uk)



*Dull and Dirty*



*Painted by a Volunteer*

## **Why are there no fences? - a highly personal view of Highbury Fields**

Above all, there is one thing that I treasure about Highbury Fields – the lack of fences. The large field stretching down from Ronald's Road to Highbury Corner is, for most of its border, unfenced.

I can step off the tar macadam pathway, I can sit myself down on the grass, and I can let my children run around. I can chuck a Frisbee at a friend. I can take off my shirt in hot weather and disport myself, exposing myself to the benevolent rays of the sun (although, perhaps those of you who know me, would rather I didn't – and in deference to your wishes I won't)

It is an open space. I don't need any permission to use it. I am not trespassing – I have a right to be there. The lack of any fencing shows me that I can walk right in.

The two small fields at the northern end have waist high iron railings. But we all understand why. Small children can roam around and their parents don't have to be over vigilant – they can relax for a moment too. Schools can hold their sports days here with a minimum but necessary level of security. These railings don't exclude. They merely protect a space we can all enjoy.

In the teeming Borough of Islington where new building developments crowd in, where week by week the

population bulges, Highbury Fields is the only open space of any significance.

Yes, joggers will wear a metre-wide running track around the perimeter. Yes, commuters will follow their noses down to the tube and cut a barren pathway across the Fields. That is their right. We should merely try to mitigate these effects and call upon the powers that be to keep the Fields in as good a state of repair as possible. We should note that when folk walk or run upon the grass, it is because they want to, they need to and because they can. They have the freedom to do so and we should not deny it.

The principal reason I joined the HFA was that I valued the open space and the openness of it. I would contest any restriction, any diminution or any encroachment upon the openness of the Fields.

In these sad days the prevailing inclination seems to be to limit, to restrict, to curtail. Fear dictates that we put up fences. I hope that this trend can be resisted.

Oh dear. This started off as a personal appreciation of the Fields and their open verges – now I'm verging on the political (with a very small 'p' of course)

*Tony Miller*

## The 'Arboretum' on Highbury Corner

You probably know that the Council has been consulting on the future of their 'A1 Strategy' ([www.islington.gov.uk/A1borough](http://www.islington.gov.uk/A1borough)) but you may not appreciate that the excellent strategy of exploring the potential of the Great North Road as a continuous story from Old Street to Archway has been waiting to happen for far too long.

Right in the middle is Highbury Corner or Highbury Island as the sign on the fence proclaims or Highbury Square as this plan rather optimistically tags it. At first I thought the plan showed people gathered in a clearing right in the centre of the island but sadly it turns out to be a municipal flowerbed. Nevertheless the proposed pedestrian access raises at least three questions:

1. until we have fuel-cell cars who would want to sit in the middle of a roundabout?
2. should we have free access to the island 'arboretum' and



*Artist's impression of the Arboretum*

3. if the planting is special how do you make a clearing in the densely planted centre?

One might also wonder whether Alwyne Estates would continue to pay to clean up our mess in their support for so-called 'sustainable planting' as the present sign on the railing claims?

One of the best kept secrets, not least within the Council itself, is the reason for this strange collection of trees, every one different. They were planted in 1959 and then between 1974 and 1978 as an experiment to see which species would best survive in the most polluted environment in London. The trees' progress was monitored; then the lead was removed from petrol and we are left with a freak collection that some will see as being historically significant.

I, for one, think that the trees are rather suburban in character and inappropriate for such an urban site so would have no objection to the removal of some trees and the creation of a good space in the centre providing, of course, that first a final survey of the trees is done and the research wrapped up. But I suspect that some would tie themselves to the trees to stop their removal.

I also strongly support the removal of all the railings around Highbury Corner since traffic barriers tend to lead to abuse and even more accidents; may I recommend a visit to Kensington High Street for sceptics to see the potential of a barrier-free High street? Similarly I support the idea of a raised and 'pedestrian-friendly' paved road but I want to understand where it is proposed that the large number of buses and bicycles will go and that is not on the website.

I remain to be completely convinced that free access at all times would be a good idea and would ask for precedents across Europe. We definitely need proper pedestrian rights to cross Holloway Road by the Post Office and hopefully we can get a good space in its place and a new post office in a really wonderful concourse to the many railways. But the idea of 'revealing Highbury Fields' seems totally wayward. Every Islingtonian and everyone in the Premier League knows about Highbury Fields and their magic: the football fans bring life (and security) to the Fields but the Fields need protection from the relentless traffic noise and fumes and random invasion: they need to be discovered.

*Robin Nicholson*

## Reflections of a Grumpy Old Man Compacted into the brief *haiku* form

On any pavement, almost anywhere ...

I'm walking alone  
Towards a cheerful threesome,  
But guess who gives way!

Walking past any doorway ...

"I'm leaving my house,  
My bank, my shop ... Whoops! Look out!  
Look where you're going!"

His car passes by ...

"It is very hot,  
I need my window open.  
I love Rock! You don't?"

At Highbury Corner ...

NO ENTRY FOR CARS!  
"But me on my bike's O.K.  
I'm in a hurry"

Waiting at the Pedestrian Crossing ...

Excited children,  
Marshalled, on their way to swim,  
But uncontrolled noise!

On the Underground ...

PLEASE KEEP FEET OFF SEATS  
Did we have to be told this  
Those long years ago?

## Section 106 Agreements Do they benefit the Community?

A Section 106 Agreement consists of an agreement which is intended to provide Planning Gain, that is to say in return for giving planning permission, the developer is required to provide a benefit for the community. It then came about that Planning Gain could be provided as a cash payment to the council. Some might consider this legalized bribery.

I would like to question the real usefulness of Section 106 to the community:

Councils often feel they are in a weak bargaining position because the developer can argue, before permission is granted, that their project is highly risky and they cannot afford to give too much away. If the council demands too much the developer can abandon the project. Equally, once planning permission is granted the land value will shoot up. It is a somewhat unpredictable and messy business.

I would prefer to cut out 106 agreements and make sure that a development is really good on its own merit. This would give the council far more power to regulate very toughly on the actual built environment. The developer, for example, may pay for a road to be remade because more traffic will be generated by the new development – that might seem right and proper, but somehow it always seems to end up with the council being over a barrel rather than the developer.

Another example: the developer on the King's Place development at Kings Cross offered a theatre as a Section 106 Planning Gain. The price for this was being allowed to build to an excessive height. This set a precedent on the Railway Lands, across the street, to build to an equal height, which was very disappointing as much work had been put in to the P & O site further down the road to keep building heights to a sympathetic level.

Sometimes the council seems to benefit hugely from Section 106. I question how much the local community does. Often the negotiations are secret even after agreement has been reached.

Local groups should demand open negotiations with the council, in line with the requirements of the London Plan. This lays down that "local neighbourhood needs, identi-

fied by local community organisations and other local partners, should be used as a basis for negotiating local community benefits from development”  
Section 106 could have outlived its usefulness.

*JeannieBurnett*

## **An asset in the making The theatre by Islington Green**

An exciting development is taking place just behind Islington Green where Collins Music Hall used to be. Thanks to the involvement of many Islington people a theatre will rise again from the ashes of the fire. I was the chair of the Anderson's Yard Campaign Group (named after the timber yard there for forty years) which produced a ten-step plan for the area up to Gaskin Street, based on residents' wishes instead of the huge office block originally planned.

Most of the plans have been achieved, including the public right of way next to Browns restaurant, through a delightful garden leading through to St Mary's churchyard. And Waterstones spent an extra £250,000 reproducing the frontage of the Collins Music Hall as it looked in 1890.

Number One on the priority list was a modern day theatre to replace the Music Hall and has been much harder to achieve. New theatres are practically never built these days, especially in London. A lottery bid failed because Sadlers Wells had just been awarded millions and is too near the site, although for dance and not drama.

The very experienced theatre entrepreneur devised a scheme with the developer, using a design by world-renowned architect, Piers Gough, on the theme of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' with a crescent of oak-balconied flats behind the towers on Essex road, facing St Peter's Street.

There will be a new town open space entered from between the towers, protected from the weather by clear roofing which lets in the light and surrounded by pillars in the form of tree trunks, between which will be chairs and tables from the restaurants and cafes.

Islington Green Road will be pedestrianised and will be like an extension of Islington Green, which will be restored and tidied up.

The theatre will occupy three floors under-ground, can be viewed through a skylight in the square and will be a circular open space capable of taking many different productions and types of scenery.

The other levels will be for rehearsal rooms (possibly also used by Almeida theatre) and for costumes, offices and lifts to allow access for the disabled. The intention is that youth in Islington can see ten productions, have ten drama lessons and ten technical lessons annually free. It is going to be far beyond what we ever imagined and will be a great compliment to the borough, drawing people from far and wide

*Avis Saltsman-Baldry*

## **The Fleet River and the Orange Party**

The Fleet's natural course runs from Hampstead Heath to Blackfriars' Bridge, via St Pancras. Except for on the Heath, it has been buried underground all the way and is used as a sewer. There are many springs on the Heath feeding into the Fleet and other 'Lost Rivers'; the two main identifiable sources or springs are just below a 17<sup>th</sup> Century sheep pen above the Vale of Health and to the left of Kenwood House as you look at it. The springs are not signposted, merely a muddy, marshy, oozy patch which rarely dries out, like the spring on Highbury Fields (opposite 14 Highbury Place), which was culverted to the City as a source of water

The Fleet's Kenwood spring feeds a tiny stream which runs down to the Lily and Concert Ponds below the House. It then emerges, a proper running little brook, until it reaches the Highgate Swimming Ponds, before going underground. The Vale of Health spring feeds the pond just below it, and, further down, the Viaduct Pond then the Hampstead Ponds. Parliament Hill divides these two tributaries.

The Hampstead and Highgate Ponds are effectively the last that can be seen of the Fleet except for brief, smelly glimpses looking down drains along the route (they have a distinctive shape) and an arch-shaped hole in the Thames North bank right under Blackfriars Bridge, which can only be seen at low tide by craning one's neck or braving a dangerous looking ladder down. It can also be seen in a pipe crossing the railway line beside the footbridge to the west of Acland Burleigh School between Churchill Road and Ingestre Road.

Despite the proximity of the sources to each other, the two tributaries meet up surprisingly far south just above Camden Town, crossing the Canal at College Road (A big black, ever-dripping pipe) then runs down St Pancras Way, past the ancient St Pancras Church, under St Pancras platform No 5, and acts as the ancient parish boundary between St Pancras and King's Cross. The latter was until recently called Battle Bridge because tradition states, even though historians don't agree, that Boadicea met her Roman match here. A statue of Boadicea can be seen high above you here to mark the alleged site of her last battle by the bridge over the Fleet.

The Fleet Valley can be clearly seen from the vantage points of Primrose Hill and The Angel which are on either side, as it winds its way to the Thames. You can also get a feel for the steep banks of the lower reaches if you stand in the middle of Farringdon Road and look up Cow Cross Street and Greville Street to either side. Geologically speaking, the topography of London is quite new. During the most extensive, Anglian Ice Age, which ended 400,000 years ago, the very southern boundary of the glaciers was North London. The glaciers came down the valleys and were stopped by these hills then retreated. The grave diggers in Finchley cemetery come across fossil remains from far afield indicating that they are digging a glacial moraine, left by the retreating glacier.

Another name for the Fleet is the River of Wells, because of the preponderance of them along the route. For example the Clerk's Well, Black Mary's Hole, St Chad's Well, Bagnigne Wells etc... Examples of other buried rivers include the Tyburn, the Westbourne & the Hackney Brook.

The Fleet is highly significant in the early foundation of London. The first Roman Fort was built on the point where the Fleet met the Thames thus giving natural defences on two sides as well as access to fresh water. At this stage, it is believed the river was navigable by boat even as far north as Kentish Town.

Into the Middle Ages, the story of the Fleet is one of misuse and neglect. It was turned into an open sewer, made worse as it passed Smithfield Market where the butchers used it as a running dustbin. So polluted did it become that it was culverted (buried) for health reasons, piece by piece.

The only serious attempt at preserving some of the

River was made after the Great Fire by Christopher Wren who was given the mandate, and actually built, a mini-Venice along the lower reaches, although his plans to redesign the whole of London in a grand Avenue style were stymied by Londoners' will to maintain the old road pattern. It must have looked spectacular as shown by a painting by Canaletto, originally thought to be an architect's vision, but now known to be an actual painting of the finished article. Unfortunately no-one thought to solve the pollution problem and after 20 years or so even this last part of the River Fleet was buried underground.

Never to be seen again? One hopes not. The Orange Party was set up in January this year with the objective of "raising" the river Fleet. This means running a six-foot wide shallow "V" shaped cobbled conduit as close to the original route as possible, with a cycle lane down one side and a pedestrian walkway down the other. This would require the closure of a number of roads to traffic, but not create significant disturbance, in my opinion, and not require the knocking down of buildings.

I have lived and worked in London for ten years, without ever hearing about the Fleet River for the first 8 years. About two years ago, fed up with the uncertainty and inconvenience of catching buses to Clerkenwell Road, where I work, I bought my first bicycle since I was a teenager. Uncertain at first, I started cycling along the canals and the New River and discovered the pleasure of cycling without fear of being knocked over by a car along waterways.

Naturally, on a bike, you follow the lines of least resistance and I avoid main roads. In so doing, I noticed the distinctive valley shape as you come down the hill at Angel and follow it down Penton Rise, into King's Cross Road. Frederick Street, Cubitt Street, Pakenham Street, Wren Street, Gough Street & Mount Pleasant. It is particularly obvious on Warner St. and Ray Street before crossing the Farringdon road, down Turnmill St, past Smithfield Market, under the Holborn Viaduct before running down Farringdon Road, New Bridge St and, finally, Blackfriars Bridge.

I asked my barber, Vic, if he knew why there was a valley without a river. Was it a chalk valley? (I remembered from my Geography lessons that Chalk Valleys aren't created by rivers) "No" Vic said "Haven't you heard of the Fleet? As in Fleet Street?" He then proceeded to tell me his anecdote about seeing the River burst out onto the road nearby when

careless workmen managed to break the Fleet sewer's main pipe. I was hooked. I went back to my desk and "Googled" the Fleet. There is surprisingly little information about it on the internet, but what there is, was fascinating, to me at least. That was the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004. It didn't take long before the combination of my waterside cycling and historical interest in the Fleet led to the conclusion that the River of Wells, so maltreated for so long, needed to see the light of day again. For a number of reasons, which I am happy to clarify in future, I believe that now is the time to make this a reality.

I'd be very happy to hear people's opinion about such a project and any errors I may have made in the above text. I am building a database of interested parties and am planning regular email-shots to keep them informed about the Party's progress. If you are interested, or would like to send me any information, please email me on [gooldj@orange.net](mailto:gooldj@orange.net). I am also building a website on the subject: [www.freethefleet.com](http://www.freethefleet.com), although this is still under construction at this stage.

*James Goold, Orange Party*

## Highbury Fields – the early days

In 1884 the Fields were owned by the descendants of John Dawes, who in 1773 had purchased 247 acres of Highbury Manor land and leased off some of the land to speculative builders between 1774 and 1779 to build Highbury Place. In addition to the large gardens behind, they had allotments in the meadow ground in front, now the Fields.

*"The Vestry, being apprehensive that the fields between Highbury Place and Highbury Crescent were about to be sold for building purposes, resolved in May 1884...to acquire them by purchase with a view to their being retained as an open space available to the public for ever". On 24<sup>th</sup> December 1885 Highbury Fields were formally declared open as a public recreation ground 'from henceforth and forever'.*

The Vestry, (the precursor of the Council) soon after, chose to fence off the Fields in some way leading, little over a year later, to the following protest letter to the 'Islington Gazette'



*A Park-keeper (or 'caretaker') before a list of the Fields' Bye-Laws and a notice giving the hours of opening and stating that "A Bell will be rung at closing time"*

## HIGHBURY-FIELDS

*Sir, Will you permit me to trespass on your space for the purpose of protesting against the action of the Vestry in closing Highbury-Fields at dusk.*

*By this action (a very expensive one) the use of the fields is entirely denied to a large section of the population to which it would be highly beneficial; nor would the benefit affect that section only, but indirectly the whole neighbourhood. Until almost dark, the fields are full of children of various ages, playing and, of course, shouting and howling, rendering the place a perfect pandemonium, quite impossible as a place of rest and recreation for grown persons, the hard-worked bread winners, to whom a quiet stroll on the turf, or a seat in the fresh air, would be an inestimable boon in the summer*

evening. As it is, a great many of them must sit at home in a close and foetid atmosphere, loaf about the streets, or go to the public house. Also there are others whose work is not over until a late hour.

I have been told that the cloture was applied, on account of the 'disgraceful scenes' witnessed last summer after dark, I presume, by the dwellers in Highbury-grove, Highbury-place and Highbury-crescent, aided, perhaps, by the caretaker who patrolled the fields, and found the work tedious.

Now I think that few persons have had a better opportunity of bearing witness on this subject than myself; as on two or three evenings in each week throughout last summer, I walked about the fields with my dog, or sat down on one of the comfortable seats, and smoked the pipe of peace. I always went there after dusk, say between eight and ten o'clock, and never saw anything more shocking than the arm of a lover round his lady's waist, which I must allow did not strike me as being very disgraceful, considering the time and place, but perhaps my code of morals is not so exalted as that of the inhabitants of Highbury-grove, &c.

I hope, sir, that you will give the matter the benefit of your influence, and that during the summer evenings the fields may be kept open to all well conducted persons up to ten o'clock.

I am, &c.,  
Canonbury, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1887.

H.F.J.

Martin Jones

## Grumpy Old Man (contd.)

At Marks & Spencer – the lady ahead ...

She looks for her purse  
In her bag. She finds it! Then ...  
Opens it to pay.

She pays; and closes ...  
Her purse, her bag; and picks up  
Her shopping and ... leaves!

At the bus stop: young woman in front of me ...

Young flesh bulges out  
Between jeans and skimpy top.  
I try to hide mine!

Mobile!

"I'm on a bus, dear.

I shall be home very soon"  
Am I glad! Goodbye!

In hospital ... "No more than two visitors at a time, please" Seven opposite!  
In the next bed a woman  
Slides to death alone.

On their feet ...  
They are called 'trainers'.  
"Training to be what?" I ask.  
"Real shoes, I wonder?"

In our street ... any street ...  
Anti-social youth.  
Failure: of parents, of schools,  
Of police? Who not?

"A child of 15 challenges the government,  
dispersal zone illegal" A High Court ruling  
In the name of Liberty.  
But whose liberty?

Envoi ...  
I feared that I was  
The only grumpy old man!  
But friends could add more ... and more

Perhaps you will, next year.

Paul Williams

(An anything but grumpy old man – Ed.)

## Two Celebrations of Lives Well Lived

Twice in recent months I have been to funerals in St Mary's Church in Upper Street. Both were sad, sad occasions but at the same time were celebrations of the lives of really wonderful people – Dan and Gerrard.

More recent was that of **Dan Crawford**. Dan arrived in Islington in 1970, and found the decrepit Kings Head pub, not decorated since 1938. Upper Street at the time was quite different from today – pet shops, a button shop, tailors but very few eating places. (I have counted over 100 recently between the Angel and Highbury Corner)

Dan persuaded the brewery to let him open a theatre and transformed the pub into the magical place it



became – a wonderful theatre in the back room, a packed pub with great music in the front. Décor in the pub was laid back, informal and decorated with pictures, posters, theatre announcements – a hub of Upper Street in the 70s, 80s and 90s. The pub and theatre were always there, with Dan often behind the bar rushing around. For decades after decimalisation, Dan kept to giving prices in pounds, shillings and pence – a touch of nostalgia which seemed natural in the environment.

St Mary's Church was full on 21<sup>st</sup> July. We sang 'Jerusalem' and 'Spread a Little Happiness'. Tributes given by people like Anita Dodson, Steven Berkoff and Maureen Lipman talked about his professionalism, his mischievousness, his kindness, his scruffy jacket, the cramped changing rooms. There was a recorded reading from Corinthians by Dan himself.

Outside the Church the horde of press photographers were busy. One realises how something special and local like the Kings Head Theatre with an involved person like Dan Crawford can influence the future of the London theatre and the development of the buzzy area that Islington is today.

In the pub afterwards, there was talk about what happens now. I found myself somehow in charge of the tribute book. There seems to be a huge goodwill towards what Dan did and hope that the essence of the Kings Head will continue. Happily the last play that Dan chose, 'Who's the Daddy?' is doing well.

**Gerrard Feder** was also an immensely kind person. Muriel and Gerrard have been staunch supporters of our Highbury Fields Association with a keen interest in everything going on around us. It was a great shock when Gerrard died suddenly in June.

As one spoke to Gerrard one realised what a rich and eventful life he led. This was brought out in his autobiographical book "Rendezvous with Yesterday".

Gerrard was born and brought up in the Northern part of what is now the Czech Republic. The story of his childhood and teens during the wartime years of Nazi occupation of Prague give a frightening insight into the terrible things that went on in Czechoslovakia at that time. His descriptions of the Hitler regime make painful reading.

The service at St Mary's on 22<sup>nd</sup> June was a great tribute to a very special man, attended by many people, both local and from further afield. Gerrard's nephew, Christopher spoke of "a very wise man who touched us all in some way with his dignity, his generosity, his level headedness and his common sense, a man who gave and gave, never asking of expecting anything in return".

So true.

Peter Muller, who also spoke at the funeral, is from a family that had known the Feders for over 100 years. Peter told us about how Gerrard was forced to leave Czechoslovakia by the communists in 1948, and how he got to know Muriel and Gerrard after they moved to Wales in the late sixties. He mentioned Gerrard's business acumen, his tennis playing, his "great compassion and understanding".

Muriel and Gerrard were married for 53 years. It has been a pleasure to meet them both at HFA gatherings and Committee meetings.

So Dan, so Gerrard, it was a privilege to have known you.

*Carrick James*

## **Highbury Barn Shops Use them or Lose them?**

Most of us do tend to really appreciate things only when they are gone. Neighbourhood and local shopping centres in Islington have been in decline for many years, as have many other local shopping centres throughout the UK. Specialist food shops are closing nationally at a rate of 50 per week

LBI Transport Planning have asked Islington Transport Aware to put forward ideas for an Area-Based Bid, to pilot an initiative in support of Highbury Barn's specialist shops. We have had an initial meeting with some of the shopkeepers and other groups and also with a Transport planner.

TFL (Transport for London) have funds to support local shops, where it can be shown they are in need of support and where their continued good health can help to reduce longer shopping journeys to large supermarkets. The Council also in their "One Islington" policy are anxious to achieve sustainable communities and see shops and



Views of the square and the shops in Highbury Barn



local businesses as vital ingredients in that – providing local services and employment opportunities.

Initial funding would probably be for a feasibility study. The shopkeepers themselves need to work together and discover from their customers what they like and dislike about going to the Barn to shop and help us to prepare a strong case for financial support. The longer aim would be to actively promote the shops and also to improve the Barn environment and the shopping experience.

The 32 shops at the Barn can satisfy almost all our shopping needs, frequently on bicycle or on foot. We as residents should not take our local shops, there or elsewhere, for granted and we should support them as much as possible.

## **Hidden Incentives for shop-keepers How to get some tax relief**

If you are a shop owner, do you know about “flat conversion allowances”? If you are in a traditional shopping street, the building is no more than four storeys high and built before 1930, you could get substantial tax relief for converting the residential floors above the ground-floor shop, restaurant or offices. If the space has been vacant for more than a year or only used for storage, you might well qualify for this tax relief. Find out more at: [inlandrevenue.gov.uk/specialist/flatovershops.htm](http://inlandrevenue.gov.uk/specialist/flatovershops.htm)

## ***Are there amenity open spaces for public use in new housing?***

*Across London there is a lack of spaces for children, teenagers and adults being incorporated in housing schemes, particularly in areas that have received regeneration grants or are designated for ‘opportunity and intensification’ growth in the London Plan. London Forum members should pay particular attention to this aspect of planning applications for all future housing developments; and take it up with their local authority as appropriate. Good living environments is a policy of the Mayor’s Plan for London, and that should mean provision of local amenity space – not an improved park a long way off.*

Comment by Tom Ball, London Forum

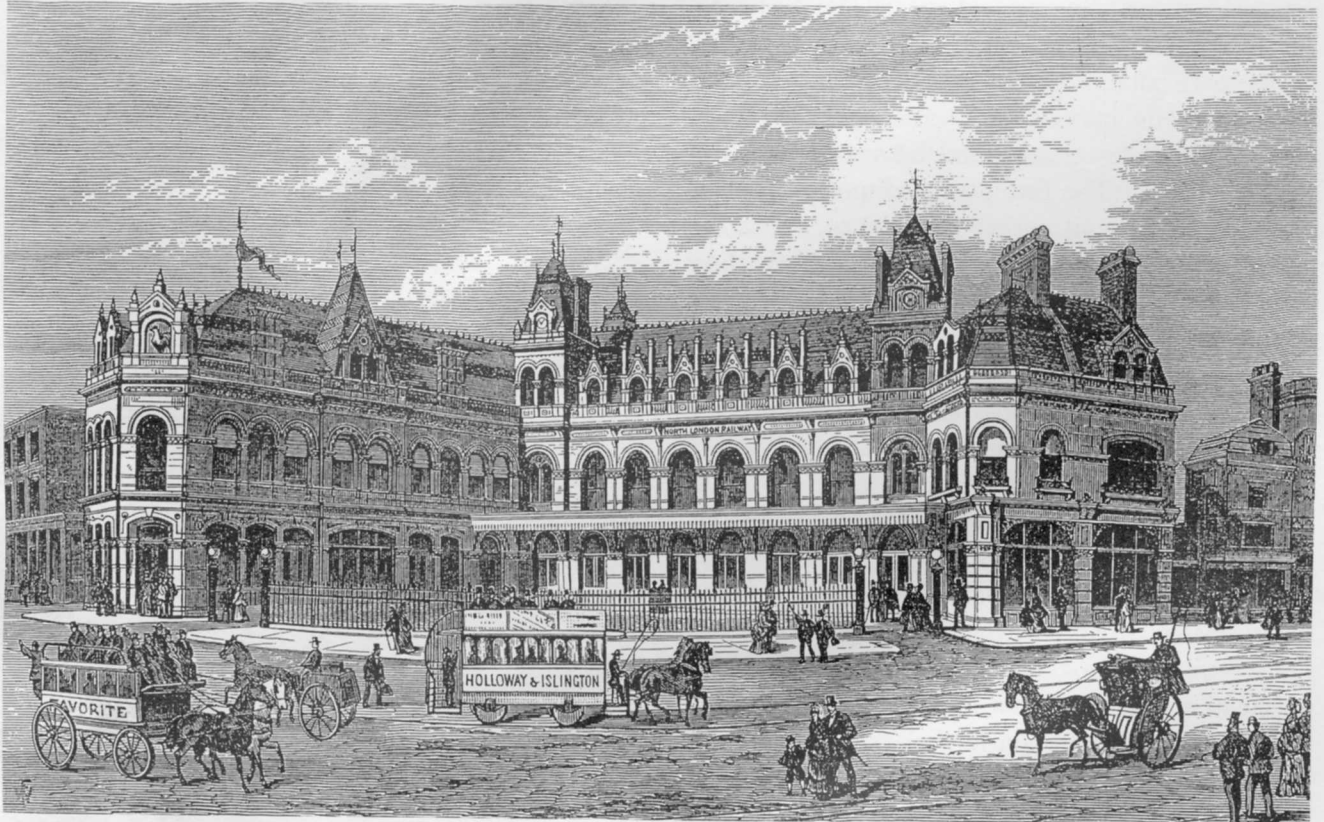
London has always been a green city with a wealth of spectacular open spaces at her heart, including the world famous Royal Parks. These spaces are finally being recognised for the opportunities they offer for leisure, rest and relaxation – **free** for everyone and accessible to all.

London’s historic environment is an asset, not a constraint, our future as well as our past

ENGLISH HERITAGE



*Highbury Fields without fences*



*Highbury and Islington Station, 1872. It was built in 1872 to cater for the many commuters who travelled daily from Highbury to the City. The Cock Tavern, owned by the railway, was rebuilt as a wing of the new building*

## Arsenal on the move Stadium on schedule in Ashburton Grove

Arsenal Football Club has occupied a large part of my life over the last seven or eight years. No, not as a fan, avidly attending all their Home and Away matches. Instead, to begin with, discussing in committee the implications of their proposed new stadium and attempting with others to scale and mitigate their demands.

Then, realising the enormity of their likely impact on our area, helping to form arguments and evidence to try to combat their planning application. And recently, we have been appalled to find the Council prepared to bend over backwards to accede to ever-increasing demands to enlarge still further the size and density of their residential developments.

So, it was with mixed feelings that I accepted *an invitation in August to visit the new stadium* and see the progress being made. And I have to admit that it seems likely to be a stunning success.

From 35+ metres above ground one can look eastwards across the Drayton Park valley and see very clearly the present stadium, only 400 yards away. The contrast is amazing. Highbury stadium – all straight lines, squat, dark and, from that distance and that viewpoint, not at all impressive. The Emirates stadium, even in its unfinished state, all curves and waves, colourful, gleaming, and very, very spacious. And likely to be finished before schedule and within budget.

And yet and yet. From those same, high vantage points I could also see where factories have been demolished, where new Arsenal offices and residential buildings will tower over the houses in Drayton Park. The two vast, white bridges - one as wide as the M1 Motorway

And then, more factories to be Compulsorily Purchased in Queensland Road. 711 flats at the present stadium. Huge buildings in Lough Road. Further Planning applications are even now on the drawing board to enlarge still further the non-football part of the Arsenal Empire.

So, were we so wrong to try to oppose?

*Martin Jones*



*Touring the Emirates Stadium*

## HIGHBURY FIELDS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Martin Jones, *Chairman*  
Anita de Lotbiniere,  
*Membership Secretary*

Maryse Jones, *Treasurer*  
David Boniface  
Jeannie Burnett  
Victoria Ellington  
Muriel Feder  
Carrick James  
Ian Kelly  
Randal Keynes  
Liz Lydiate  
Robin Mabey  
Paul Magrath  
Nicky Manby  
Tony Miller  
Jennifer Purchase  
Caroline Russell  
Paul Williams  
Nicholas Witter

Ginny Worsley  
Tony Jones (*Co-opted*)

Nominations for new members (proposed and seconded by members of the HFA) should be made to Martin Jones (see above) by Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September. Appointments to the Committee will take place at the AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.