

HIGHBURY FIELDS ASSOCIATION



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?)

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.

Annual General Meeting

at
7.30pm Tuesday 26th April
Highbury Roundhouse
71 Ronalds Road

COME AND GIVE YOUR VIEWS ON
HIGHBURY FIELDS

Traffic Jam



It will be 18 months before the traffic scheme for our area is in operation.

Islington Council

have agreed the scheme in detail and the GLC have agreed in principle but it still appears to take that long to go through the various stages.

The main points of the scheme are:

1. Width restriction in Benwell Road (between Bryantwood and Queensland). Designed to deter through traffic. But a hold-up point is that businesses in Queensland Road area ("a fairly powerful lobby") will have less easy access to their premises.

2. Diagonal closures in Horsell and Arvon Roads.
 3. Complementary one-way stretches in Ronalds Road and Fieldway Crescent. Introduced after local objections and should mean no through traffic in Melgund Road.
 4. Narrowing of Highbury Place exit to the Highbury Corner roundabout.
 5. Improvement of Holloway Road/Hornsey Road junction.
 6. Adjustments to Highbury Corner zebra crossing - maybe a Pelican.
- 5 and 6 needed to satisfy GLC/police requirements in order to speed up Holloway Road traffic.

Turn to page 2

Chairman's Report

Among the main concerns of the Association in the last year have been Robin's Garden (see page 1), the rebuilding of what was Highbury Home at 1-3 Highbury Terrace, the proposed traffic scheme (see page 1) and the Murphy's development on Holloway Road.

On these matters and others we have consulted the various officers at the Town Hall and have found them helpful and cooperative. The Planning Department sends out a weekly list of planning applications so we can keep abreast of what is going on in the area of the Fields. We also keep in touch with the GLC.

If anyone should know of any problems, the Association would like to know.

1-3 Highbury Terrace

For some years, since Highbury Home gave up its occupation, we have sadly seen this fine house deteriorate. In August 1980 the Crown Housing Association bought it and have now nearly completed rehabilitation into flats for elderly retired civil servants, to the design of Stillman and Eastwick-Field of Highbury Place. The flats are due to be completed in May.

1-3 Highbury Terrace Mews

In June 1982, an application was submitted to the Council for the construction of 18 2-person flats, one 2-person and one 5-person bungalows in the garden of Highbury Home facing the Mews. The Association, in conjunction with the Mews Residents' Association, objected. It was accepted that some building in the garden was inevitable - we were unhappy about certain features like the stark appearance and loss of trees.

As a result of the objections, the Planning Committee referred back the scheme for consideration. The result of much consultation was that the architect has incorporated many of our suggestions which included the setting back of the roof into a mansard style with dormer windows, cladding the roof with secondhand Welsh slates and preserving the frontage trees.

In February, the Council gave permission for the revised plans.

6-38 Holloway Road

This site is owned by Murphy of Highbury Crescent. They have proposed, and it has been accepted by the Council, a five-storey office block. The Association was concerned about plans for the rear of the building which would face 7-10 Highbury Crescent. The owner of the houses (converted into flats) had sold part of the gardens to Murphy who had built a brick wall and submitted plans for a landscaped scheme.

The Planning Committee refused consent on the grounds that the wall had been built without authority. The residents of the flats were concerned that the scheme would include car and lorry park and access road to Highbury Crescent. The Association wrote to the Planning Department in support of its decision.

Murphy appealed to the DoE and an Inspector was appointed. The appeal was allowed with the strict proviso that there be no car or lorry parking, access road or other disturbance. A reasonably satisfactory result.

Upkeep of Fields

We are pleased the Fields are well-maintained by a dedicated staff. We would like to thank both Mr Bonsall, the Chief Parks Officer, and Mr Bonar, area official, for all the good work they do.

We do, however, look forward to an improvement in the motley collection of different types of railings, some in poor condition. We have been assured that they should be renewed in the next four years and the defective ones are being repaired this spring.

The two derelict courts are being relaid at a cost of £20,000. It is hoped they will be ready by summer.

John Hardiman

TRAFFIC JAM contd.

Those of us who have been battling for many years to get a traffic scheme for the area have been impressed by the positive attitude of Councillors and Council officers who really seem to want to get things moving. Strategy now should possibly to challenge the bureaucratic GLC procedures that mean such a long wait before something actually happens. (Our GLC Councillor is Simon Turney.)

Carrick James

Birds of the field

Highbury Fields is Islington's main 'Open Space', at about 30 acres. Located as it is, at the geographical centre, it tends to fulfil a similar role to the village green or town common in having events like fairs and bonfires.

Despite its history and obvious visual attractions, Highbury Fields is ecologically relatively barren, although the adjacent varied garden habitats and the recent planting of oak trees will attract birds to the area.

Perhaps the most readily noticeable birds are the ones attracted by the open area of grass. During the dull days of February, brilliant white sea-gulls enlivened the scene with 345+ black-headed gulls and 14 of the larger common gulls. Irregularly the 'winter thrushes' - fieldfare and red-wing - can be seen and, when the Fields are very wet in Spring, pairs of mallards are occasional visitors. During the breeding season especially, the grass is vigorously attacked by foraging starlings, blackbirds, song thrushes and the larger mistle thrush.

From the more vegetated areas, like Robin's Garden, bursts of song and colour emerge, with regular records of the explosive wren, the melancholy robin and the retiring dunnoek. Of the finches, the spectacularly-coloured goldfinch often astonishes and the wheezing of greenfinches is frequently heard, as well as the various calls of the great tit and blue tit. Raucous carrion crows are regular at all times and the splendidly-coloured jay is often seen dashing through back



gardens. The cooing and waddling but beautifully-coloured wood pigeon must rank as one of the few birds which regularly nest in London plane trees, while the frequently -heard tawny owl certainly finds these perimeter trees useful.

Birds seen overhead include a hovering kestrel, a heron commuting between Lea Valley and Regent's Park and the herring and lesser black-backed gulls flying to and from their roost sites. Sunbathers dozing during the summer days are often surprised by low-flying, insect-seeking house martins which nest in good numbers in the area.

Records of breeding birds, counts, sightings of rarer birds are needed for the Islington Bird Report. Information to Thomas Gittings 226-1997

Chris Ashby & Pat Tuson
Islington Wildlife Group

The Islington Wildlife Group was set up in 1982 to encourage urban wildlife conservation and is forming links with many other 'green/environmental/conservation' groups in the borough, including the H.F.A. Membership is open to all at £2 and £1 for the unwaged. Contact: Chris Ashby/Pat Tuson 14 Bryantwood Road, 609- 5093.

Pool winner



The swimming pool is now well advanced and on target for completion in April or May next year. There will be a learner pool and a large pool 25m by 12.5m. Outside will be a paddling pool and a sunbathing area. Plans of the new pool and its surroundings will be available at the AGM for those who are interested.

The roof of the pool will be of glass and asbestos slates. The Association suggested that, in view of worries about the safety of asbestos, real slates would be more satisfactory-

and would look better. But these would be too expensive and the roof, as designed, would not bear their weight. The GLC Technical Department says that the type of asbestos slates to be used are safe. If anyone has any comments on this, the Association would like to hear them.

The GLC has recently agreed to grant the Council £300,000 for landscaping around the swimming pool and for improvement to the play area. There will be some new play equipment, a toddlers play area and the London Transport vent shaft will be incorporated into the playground as an attendant's hut.

Robin Mabey



Healthy Hungarians

We are pleased to see the young Hungarian oaks to replace the avenue along Queen's Walk have been planted, after growing for a few years in a nursery. We understand from the Parks Department that Hungarian oaks are more resistant to disease than are English oaks.

The oaks have been planted on the outside of the existing avenue in order to have sufficient light. Eventually - several years into the next century - the avenue of planes and elms will have to be cut down when the oaks have grown to the point where one row of trees

hinders the well-being of the others. In normal circumstances, the plane trees could live for 70 to 100 years.

A few of the elms near the swimming pool were found to have Dutch Elm disease and had to be cut down but the remaining elms seem healthy.

The nine trees given by local schools continue to grow well as does H.F.A.'s own Norway Maple.

Again, the daffodils on the Fields were a delight in Spring and it is pleasing to see flowers through the seasons in the Boer War Memorial enclosure.

We are very grateful to Mr Mugford, the Council's Arboricultural Officer, and to Mr Bonsall, Chief Parks Officer, for their interest and their informative answers to our questions.

Dora Howard

Help...help...help

The committee meet about every two months. If anyone has, or knows of, a problem affecting Highbury Fields or the area, then the committee would be pleased to discuss the matter and take what action is possible. Or perhaps you might like to come to the next committee meeting.

John Hardiman, Chairman, 9 Highbury Terrace
Mia Beaumont, Secretary, 13 Highbury Terrace
Mel Pidcock, Treasurer, 15 Highbury Terrace
Peter Collymore, 13 Highbury Terrace Mews

Nigel Forrest, 26 Horsell Road
Janet Grillet, 43 Fieldway Crescent
Dora Howard, Ashhurst Lodge,

Highbury Grove
Margaret Hardiman, 9 Highbury Terrace
Bay Hodgson 10 Highbury Place
Maryse Jones 16 Highbury Place
Carrick James 13 Baalbec Road
Robin Mabey 42 Highbury Place
Hilary Macaskill 19 Framfield Road
Tina Shapur 10 Highbury Crescent

Last words

4 Baalbec Road.

Works are in progress on this property which is owned by the New Islington and Hackney Housing Association. The house will be designed to accommodate two severely handicapped people.

WARNING

Recently a resident received a parking ticket at 12.20pm on a Saturday. For some time traffic wardens have been charitable to residents on Saturday mornings. Apparently no more. Be warned!

COME TO THE AGM