

# Highbury Fields Association



Nov '87

October 16<sup>th</sup>

When the telephone rang at 3 am. on Friday, October 16th. 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. - Chief Parks Officer.

*the AGM will be held on  
NOV 13<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm at  
highbury roundhouse*



## PLAYGROUND

Six months since its opening the playground has been a great success. What a wonderful facility we have here on Highbury Fields, free and available to everyone.

Before anyone mentions the obvious snags, let's give credit for its positive features. There are three ways in which I think is quite remarkable: Firstly, its design is such that it has the capacity to absorb vast numbers of children. Everyone has been surprised by the crowds it has attracted (people have come from all over London). What amazes me is that there is something for them all to do; the equipment is never "full up".

Secondly it provides a wide range and richness of play experience ; the type of equipment makes it far more stimulating and satisfying than the old style 'exercise' playground. Of course there are the old swings, roundabout, slide, but the climbing frames and the train provide : small enclosed spaces for hiding, sitting quietly, talking, pretending as well as wonderful scope for dramatic climbs, jumps, chases. There is also sand play, water play and later on the wilderness area for hide and seek, cowboys and indians, etc.. The playground means different things to different children ; my children are still finding new ways of using it.

Thirdly, it provides such a pleasant place for parents to wait and supervise. It has almost a village atmosphere with its winding path and acquaintances to meet at every corner. There is ample seating, on benches, along the edge of the sandpit, on the inviting grassy banks, ideal for sunbathing and picnics. The nightmare of the old playground is over, now parents can relax in pleasant surroundings knowing that the playground is much safer than anything before.

Of course there have been snags, some of which are to be remedied :-

A telephone is to be connected up in the next few days, further competitive quotes are being obtained for a toilet to be installed in the round vent building. Quotes are also being sought for fencing off the diggers from the rest of the sand area ; there is a replacement programme for trees on the slide mound, though it will be 2 - 3 years before there is total cover ; a drinking fountain will be installed when a suitable vandal-proof type is found - any suggestions to Peter Bonsall, Islington Recreation Department.

The incidence of graffiti seems to be on the increase nationally but any on the playground equipment is cleaned up regularly and so far the playground looks remarkably good.

Some rough behaviour has been reported but it seems unlikely that we will be allowed more supervisors in the light of economies throughout the borough.

Highbury Fields playground is at the fore front of a movement to improve playgrounds already visible throughout the country. People will soon demand standards such as we have here for every playground. We are fortunate to have this facility now, - as one mother expressed it : 'It's so wonderful - it's like a dream come true !'. BRONWEN TAYLOR

## *Going Swimmingly*

The Highbury Fields Pool continues to attract plenty of customers.

Despite a poor summer the attendance figures have risen equally strongly for both junior and adult bathers. The total for the six months ending 30th. September 1987 has risen more than 30% over the same period last year to 109,000.

MARTIN JONES.

## *New Pelican*

The association committee has discussed the operation of the new Pelican crossing at Highbury Corner. While traffic flow has been increased the position for pedestrians has worsened. There is not enough time to safely cross the road, and traffic frequently blocks the crossing making it impossible to get across when the green light shows. Also the lighting on the crossing is worse than with the zebra, which had a lamp standard in the middle. Councillor Pete Broadbent has agreed to look into these points.

If you are concerned about the operation of the crossing write to the Town Hall.

ROBIN MABEY.

## Chairmans' Report

A significant event this year has been the opening of the new playground by the Mayor of Islington in May. Generally it has been received with considerable acclaim which is evident by the pleasure it has given to many children and parents. In fact this is so much so that people are coming to enjoy themselves from all over Islington and other parts of London. We are grateful to the Director of Recreation, the Engineers' department and the playground sub-committee for their enterprise in the selection of play equipment and the high standard of workmanship. The Association has kept in close touch with this development, despite some difficulties in the early stages.

Regrettably, it has become so popular that we are experiencing far too many instances of rowdiness and misbehaviour from older children. We are very conscious of this problem and are taking what action we can. Recently, for example, we have had a meeting with the Social Services, the Police and the staff of the Children's Home in Highbury Crescent.

The clock tower has at last been painted and the clock is shortly due to be fixed in position. This minor work has been an extraordinary saga of bureaucratic delays for the past three years and has on occasions reduced your committee to tears.

The proposed improvements to the Barn shopping area, in the form of suitable landscaping, is under way and members of the committee help with advice in conjunction with the Drayton Park and Quadrant Neighbourhood offices. (the Barn is within our conservation area, with the boundary of the two wards running down the centre of the road).

We have had four committee meetings this year and I should like to thank the members for their work and excellent attendance record. In particular, to thank the Deputy Chairman, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Membership Secretary and those who have taken on special assignments in connection with traffic, parking and

playground, planning applications, the Newsletter and the distribution of papers etc. and etc. Not least, Peter Broadbent, our local councillor, who is very conscious of our various problems and has been a great support

With best wishes,

JOHN HARDIMAN  
Chairman.



## Robins Garden

The Association has been concerned for some time about the neglected state of the land in Highbury Crescent. This is owned by Murphy the civil engineers. We have been in touch with them about their future plans and we have stressed to them the importance of the site. They say they will have plans prepared in the next few months and promised to consult us about them. Meanwhile, we have asked them to paint the corrugated iron sheeting green - Murphy green.

ROBIN MABEY.

## HIGHBURY ROUNDHOUSE

The Highbury Roundhouse Community Centre provides a wide variety of activities and entertainment features for the community based in and around Highbury Fields

These activities are provided by the Highbury Roundhouse and other community groups in Islington. We also have a number of rooms available for hire for various activities.

Some of the activities provided on a regular basis are:-

Parents and Toddlers Group/Toy Library

Childrens Dance Classes

Karate Club

Tai Chi (Martial Art)

Youth Club - Various sessions according to age/sex/activity

Unemployed Youth Project

Young Mums' Project

Childminders Groups

Asian Youth Group

Hungarian Parents and Childrens' Group

Pensioners Lunch and Social Clubs

Dram Group

Flea Market - Every first Saturday of the Month

Saturday Club (Children under 12)

The Roundhouse also features various entertainment items including theatre groups, childrens theatre groups, talks etc.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY OF THESE ACTIVITIES, PLEASE CALL RENE OR DEBORAH

on 359-5916



## DECEMBER PROGRAMME

Christmas Fayre/Flea Market DECEMBER 5 1987

Tombola/Dolls clothes/cake stall/crafts/new and used clothing/bric-a-brac/Mother-Father Christmas/childrens entertainment etc.

Karate Club Display Tournament DECEMBER 13 1987

Involving Karate Clubs all over London - tickets on sale for spectators at the Highbury Roundhouse.

'WHODUNNIT' - Play DEC' 17/18 1987

The Elfrida Rathbone Association in conjunction with All Change Arts and The Highbury Roundhouse present this integrated project. This play 'mysteriously' combines a DHSS Office with Old Tyme Music Hall to provide a piece of entertainment guaranteed to be fun/interesting.

Pensioners' Christmas Party DECEMBER 19 1987

For this day we have planned a meal, to be foll  
For this day we have planned a meal, followed by Car singing from gospel singers and a Cabaret with the day culminating in dancing - music provided by a big band. The final arrangements for this day are still being made - however volunteers and donations toward the evening would be more than welcome. We expect 120 for this event.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: RENE/DEBORAH/BEVERL (Pensioners activities) on 359-5916

HIGHBURY ROUNDHOUSE COMMUNITY CENTRE - 71 RONALDS ROAD, HIGHBURY, LONDON N5 1UX

## Non-Conformist view?

I had not a moments' hesitation when I first saw "Streets with a Story: Islington" in the Canonbury Bookshop window: I had to buy this historical gazetteer of Eric Willats who recently retired as Principal Reference Librarian at the Central Library. It presents 35 years of expenditure of the where, what, when and 'important' whos with great virtuosity. But it doesn't attempt to explain the why: the socio-economy of 200 years of urban Islington escapes the pen of this most assiduous cataloguer.

Now all this is by way of introduction to a dilemma I share with my neighbours about a proposed development at the bottom of our gardens. Not suprisingly, we consider a three-storey terrace a mere 10 feet away an outrageous infringement of our privacy and with the workshops/offices on Corsica Street a gross over development and a major traffic hazard, and and....a very healthy profit for the developer. In the present climate of free market and fair robbery, it seems that we have begun a long process of all out opposition. Yet what would be a reasonable redevelopment?

And does the same apply to the sometime family house, often fallen on hard times, that yet another developer plans to convert with at least one flat per floor? The house are repaired, the 'Fields' economy is bolstered but the cars increase and the estate agents' boards multiply.

Architecturally, the developer naturally follows the line of least resistance when set upon by a formidable alliance of the HFA, the Islington Conservation Committee and the ever more orthodox English Heritage. I do regret this prohibitive aspect of conservationism and as I look out of the back window at the strikingly romantic composition of gables, flat roofs, escape stair and an unexplicable semi-circular window that house sweat shops and workhouses, I know that I like my non-conformist view, which no one else would dream of conserving but which reflects that difficult-to-write history of Islington.

I wonder if these issues concerned the Highbury Terrace Residents Association, whose Minute Book (from 1812-1834). Mr. Willats tells us is just round the corner in Fieldway Crescent.

ROBIN NICHOLSON.

from little acorns.



## Whirr & Stench

This is the first year in which the bottom field has been unavailable for summer tent events and the like because of the opening of the children's playground. The Parks & Recreation Committee response was to permit an unbroken chain of summer events, for the period of one month or longer, on the eastern side of the middle field. Many of these events were poorly attended. When at last the funfair left the result of this policy was there for all to see: The grass is rutted and damaged over a wide area and there are smaller bald patches which may well not recover in time for next year's invasion. This field is now the only one in Islington large enough to support informal games of football, rounders and so on which - it cannot be sufficiently stressed - give great pleasure not only to the participants but those onlookers who, like me, are fortunate enough to live opposite.

The Parks & Recreation Committee appears to think - erroneously - that those of us who oppose their current policy of free-for-all lettings are a bunch of snobs and killjoys. On the contrary. But Highbury Fields is not a proper park, it is a residential area set around a green. In upper Highbury Place especially we had this year to endure the constant whirr and stench of generators; loud amplified music from mid-morning onwards, for hours at a time; and all-night barking from so-called 'guard dogs'. No attempt was made to consult or inform local residents; no attempt was made to mitigate this manifest nuisance or the consequential damage to the grass. The Committee has so far given no indication that it intends to alter its policy in future, or to consult residents in advance.

Something must be done. *Richard O'Keefe.*

The effects of the gale were emotionally heightened because it wrought its devastation on an already depleted species. Although the numbers of trees lost in the triple disasters of Dutch elm, drought and gale are great, they probably would pale to insignificance were we to know the numbers torn up annually by vested interests up and down the country.

Before this crisis, a small percentage of the population were very concerned about the plight of our trees. Now, thanks to the hand of nature, every household in the country with a television set has been made aware of the magnitude of the disaster.

Gifts and donations are flooding in to newspapers and organisations who are sponsoring a massive regeneration programme. Now, spinneys and small copses will re-appear all over the country, and with luck, the old hedgerows as well.

PAT HANNING.

### MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION WHO HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO THE COMMITTEE :-

John Hardiman  
Chairman

Martin Jones  
Vice-chairman

Isobel Boucher  
Secretary

Jennifer Aykroyd  
Membership Secy

Maryse Jones  
Treasurer

Jenny Blanchard

Jenny Burnett

Peter Broadbent

Day Hodgson

Carrick James

Delphine Jelbar

Robin Mabey

Robin Nicholson

Richard O'Keefe

Hiles Thompson

Rob Wood

Ginny Worsley

Proposed - 13

Jean Engel

Newsletter typed and printed by  
Maryse Jones and John Hardiman.  
Designed by Jenny Blanchard.  
Front page illustration by Sue Hellard.

A final word from Jennifer Aykroyd, the Membership Secretary.

In the past few years, residents will have seen many improvements to Highbury Fields. The new playground has now become one of the best in London; the tennis courts are second to none and the daffodils, grass and trees are a joy to us all.

However, this year has not been without problems - the controversy over the vent shaft mural and the noise and vandalism surrounding the Highbury Crescent Children's Home - but as you will have seen from the Newsletter, members have been involved with these problems.

The Council recognises our status and is willing to discuss all projects with us. It might well be fencing, drainage, traffic flow or the planting of new trees but whatever it is, it is important.

Membership is still only £2.00 per year per household (£1.00 for pensioners and the unemployed). Your household will receive copies of all Committee Meeting Minutes. You will have an opportunity to attend these meetings and put forward a special grievance or a suggestion you wish to make. We are always looking for new members to join the Committee. Why not you?

You live or work near Highbury Fields and benefit greatly so don't you think it's time you joined the 102 households who are now members of the Association? Don't just sit there.....

JOIN NOW!

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

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Name

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Address and Telephone Number

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Amount enclosed

Date

TO: MRS JENNIFER Aykroyd, 5 Highbury Terrace, N5 (226-9750)