

Highbury Fields Association



NOV 1989

DEVASTATING ROADS

We are all on tenterhooks waiting for the publication of the stage 2B report of the East London Assessment study by OVE ARUP and the Department of Transport.

Eight out of twelve options mentioned in Stage A advocated NEW ROADS. Our area could be devastated by a motorway running beside or astride the North London Railway line from Hackney, through Highbury Corner, to Camden Town. How would a new road from Finsbury Park to King's Cross be tolerable?

It is now vital to put pressure on the Department of Transport because once they have announced the stage 2B proposals it will be harder to change their opinions. Even if you have already written to Peter Bottomley, please write to Robert Atkins MP, (new Minister for Roads) Department of Transport, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1, and say that you are opposed to new road building and support improved and increased public transport.

Bay Hodgson has pre-printed postcards available. Please ring 226 8393 if you need them.

Later this year, when the shape of the 2B proposals is clearer, we plan to have another public meeting and maybe set up a petition.

Bay Hodgson

ROBIN'S GARDEN

This derelict site, fenced in with corrugated iron sheeting at Nos 21/22 Highbury Crescent, continues to be a source of anxiety to us all. After four years, or so, Murphy's have at last been kind enough to paint the fence green.

Meanwhile, a recent planning application for development as a housing estate was turned down by the Planning Committee as being inappropriate for this conservation area, which includes the Ronalds, Arvon and Melgund Road sides.

We are concurrently monitoring a further application and we hope that we shall achieve some success on this prime site.

John Hardiman

CAN-CAN PLAN

A national programme has been started by the Aluminium Can Recycling Association to collect and recycle aluminium cans. We are asking the Council to consider the feasibility of a can bank alongside the bottle banks on Highbury Fields.

Meanwhile, a collection scheme is being set up locally. Participants are provided with a special collection bag, which the local organiser will collect and deliver to the nearest depot.

Any money received would be sent to an agreed charity.

Please contact Gordon Wigglesworth (226 7734) or Rory, Rowan or Carrick James (226 7785) if you can help.



I was shocked to read, in the minutes of the H.F.A.'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'Keeffe

HIGHBURY FIELDS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will take place at the Round House, Ronald's Road on Thursday, December 7th, at 7:00 pm and all are encouraged to attend.



PELICAN CROSSING AT Highbury Corner

The Association has been trying to get some improvements to this crossing ever since it superseded the Zebra crossing.

A few modest crumbs have now been offered:-

- a) The central island will be extended
- b) an extra traffic signal will be installed
- c) the pedestrian crossing studs will be repainted
- d) lighting will be improved by the provision of two further long columns

These measures should help stop traffic from blocking the crossing.

However, they do not go far enough in my view.

If they do not produce any real improvements we must press for further changes.

Robin Mabey

THE Highbury Roundhouse

The Highbury Roundhouse is a voluntary Youth Club and Community Centre. The catchment area is similar to the HPA. The Youth club has been running since 1974 and the Community Centre since 1981. We have a varied programme and more details can be obtained from Rene Lee - phone 359 5916; 71 Ronald's Road. The Roundhouse is a charity supported by Islington Council and ILEA. We have twice monthly car boot sales and we are having a special Christmas Sale on Sunday 3rd December. The excellent pensioners' Christmas dinner is on Sat 9th December and helpers would be welcome!

COMMUNITY SPIRITS

Highbury Roundhouse ATLANTIC BALL

With the one time wood yard converted for the evening into a luxury liner; with the skyscrapers of New York on the exotic horizon (thanks to the oceans of local talent unleashed for the occasion), £3,000 was raised last May when an astonishingly successful Dinner Dance was held to keep Highbury Roundhouse, the neighbourhood community centre, afloat.

Surrounded by 1930's decor and dressed for the part, revellers blackbottomed to the swinging sounds of Brian Booth's orchestra, indulged in a lavish dinner and were able to make and lose fortunes at the Vanderbilt casino!

protect the Roundhouse

The even better news is that it could all be going to happen again next year in Al Capone's racket riddled Chicago - the only thing that's needed is the same amount of enthusiastic good will as before. Please rush your good ideas and offers of time and talent to Alan or Bronwen Taylor 226,7240

PARKING PERILS

The parking scheme was introduced to the Highbury Fields area in 1975, against the wishes of local people.

Indeed, its impending introduction was one of the reasons why the Highbury Fields Association was started.

In a survey conducted in April/May 1976 among 291 local residents, the main grouse was "not enough residents bays".

From 1976-8 the HFA campaigned by holding public meetings, organising a deputation to the Council and sitting on a Council working party, to try to get things changed.

We successfully pushed for more residents' bays and our plans for lifting Saturday restrictions and making arrangements for visitors' parking were accepted by Islington Council, but faltered somewhere in the GLC bureaucracy.

Eleven years further on and the situation is as bad as ever. Increased car ownership and multi-occupancy make it virtually impossible to park in residents' bays late at night anywhere near one's home.

Although some new bays are on their way in Highbury Place and Highbury Crescent, these will not solve the problems elsewhere. There seems no compassion in the implementation of the scheme. Residents' cars are ticketed when they overlap a bay or a yellow line, and no allowance is made for builders' skips occupying designated parking spaces. Business bays are badly signposted (and why shouldn't residents use these anyway?)

This is a call to Islington Council for measures to be taken to help local people by providing more residents' bays and by putting into operation the suggestions we made over ten years ago.

It is a call to the Police and the Parking Authorities to realise that the intention of the scheme was to help the people who live here, not to punish them. This principle should guide all their actions.

If the scheme cannot be run humanely, would it not be better to listen to what people wanted in 1975 and abandon it altogether?

Carrick James.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

We have had another interesting year of varying problems, successes and failures, much of which you will read about in other parts of this letter.

But, I think, that the main success has been the goodwill of so many people in understanding our main object of conservation in the Highbury Fields area.

Our committee has been especially helpful with advice and suggestions and generally supportive; this was particularly so when I was working in Uganda for three months this year. My grateful thanks go to Martin and Maryse Jones and Jennifer Aykroyd for their support.

We are sad that Pete Broadbent, one of our local Islington Councillors and a member of this committee, is resigning from both the Council and the HFA at the end of October. He is leaving the area on accepting the living as Vicar of Trinity St Michael, Harrow. He has been exceptionally helpful and understanding of our Association's problems and we shall miss his wise counsel and vigorous action on so many occasions.

Our thanks are also due to the help and advice we have received from many of the Council officers, particularly Peter Bonsall, Pauline Stuart, Cliff Barker (Recreation Dept) and John Leahy (Planning Dept).

It is a compliment to our committee that one of our members, Jeannie Burnett, has been elected for a second term as a co-opted member of the Borough Planning Committee. She is also our representative on the Borough Conservation Advisory Committee and the Panel of Architects. This has proved a fruitful liaison with the Council and we are grateful for the excellent work which she is doing.

I shall be resigning as Chairman at the AGM as we have decided to move to Salisbury. I shall, however, continue to take an interest in the activities of the HFA and wish it every success in the future.

John Hardiman

PLANTING SOON

The first phase of the Highbury Barn Garden Square has been completed! There is now new lighting similar to the lamps in Queen's Walk, plus attractive benches, new bollards and four centenary cast iron litter bins.

The paving stones are particularly attractive in their texture, colour and variety of shapes and special details have been incorporated such as using yellow paving stones instead of painted double yellow lines.

All this will look even better when trees and shrubs are planted in Spring 1990.

It all makes a very welcoming entrance to Kelvin Road.

Thank you to all those who have been involved, whether in the Council or as residents. It shows how much can be achieved if we are determined enough.

Maryse Jones

LIFE SAVING

The Highbury Pool has been with us for a few years now, but continues to find new ways to serve the community.

Attendance figures continue to rise but there is increasing concentration on lessons.

Families are being encouraged to come together as a group with their under-7s learners.

Also, since Easter, there are life-saving classes. Naturally, however, when classes are in session, the pool involved will be closed to the general public.

Equally it is hoped that people appreciate that there are times when relief workers cannot be found at short notice to cover unexpected sickness and for safety reasons the pools then have to close.

Best wishes to Manager, Bob Holmes, who is himself away sick at the moment.

Martin Jones



WILDERNESS FOUND

The playground seems to be surviving well the intensive use by thousands of children over this exceptional summer. It has proved to be strongly and durably built and despite some graffiti is looking very good.

The planting is becoming established and it is interesting to take a closer look (now that some of the paling has been removed), at the great variety of colours and leaf textures.

The "wilderness" area is not totally successful; many people do not realise there is such an area beyond the grassy bank behind the train, (though that makes it all the more exciting for children who do discover it).

The banks are fun to run on or roll down, but more planting is needed to create a more adventurous wilderness.

The planted slopes of the slide embankment, on the other hand, has attracted too many children from the start, with the risk of erosion.

Many small saplings suffered, knocked over, or deliberately uprooted, however, most of the plants have survived and the erosion doesn't seem too serious.

Vandalism has been a problem at times, but the only sign that remains is the graffiti. This should be cleaned off immediately and I suggest users of the playground query with the attendant any graffiti which has not been removed.

One serious shortcoming of the playground had been the lack of a toilet. Many users will be surprised to know that there is, in fact, one in the round building for the use of children. The attendants seem reluctant for it to be used, explaining at various times that it is blocked, or leaking, or directing people to use the toilets in Highbury Crescent via a hand written notice. If it is broken, it should be mended promptly. It is perfectly reasonable to expect a working, (and signposted) toilet in a playground, and parents should demand this.

Bronwen Taylor

NEW SPECIES

Looking at the trees on Highbury Fields, one might be forgiven for thinking nothing much has changed over the past 20 years, but there has been a considerable change both in the number and the species.

In the mid 1970s the ravages of Dutch Elm disease took its toll. The original planting had consisted of lines of alternate elm/plane, elm/plane and so on around most of the outer edges of the path system.

Apart from an odd oak tree and a few limes, little else could be found.

It is interesting to speculate that the original intention may well have been to plant the elms as a "short term" investment and to remove these once the plane trees had reached a significant size.

If, indeed, this had been the aim then it was not followed through, because prior to the onset of Dutch Elm disease very few trees appear to have been removed.

Residents who were here at the time may well recall the understandable opposition and dismay that proceeded the felling of, as I recall, about 130 trees, even though it was clear that no method existed of saving them. Possibly the thought of so much opposition had prevented earlier thinning taking place.

Following the loss of the elms, consideration was given to the planting of a number of different trees to add interest and avoid the repetition that the planes inevitably produce, magnificent though they may be.

A site survey was undertaken but it was clear from the outset that the planes would soon grow to fill the gaps left by the elms and the planting of trees within the larger grassed areas was not considered desirable, as this would alter the character of the fields, something local people were keen to retain.

Nevertheless, a few sites were chosen and new species, such as Norway maple, mountain ash, Gean (wild cherry) pear, hornbeam, silver maple, ash, zelcova, plus a few plane trees, were introduced where appropriate. Planting took place in 1978 and some of this period can be found around the fields.

This planting was followed in 1980/81 by the planting of a row of oak trees either side of the plane trees in the area of Queen's Walk. These have made some growth, but the plane trees do suppress them to a greater extent than was originally envisaged and it may be necessary to take some action to allow reasonable development of both species.

The next phase of planting came with the opening of the extended playground in 1987 where the opportunity to plant not only trees but also shrubs and roses was taken, and this despite problems of children using the beds as an extended play space.

In October 1987 came the great October gale when despite the loss of one or two large trees and damage to numerous others, the area escaped with remarkably little damage. A programme of skilled arboricultural work was undertaken and all that remains is a large log on one verge, a "giant" sculpture on his side, near the Highbury Pool and the odd tree where scars are still visible.

As for the future, there are no immediate plans save possibly a tree planting to commemorate the period of Mr Hardiman's term of high office in the Highbury Fields Association!

Peter Bonsall



TENNIS TOURNAMENT 1989

Last year it was "Anyone for Tennis?" This year there were no less than 40 people for tennis.

Midsummer's day, June 24th, saw intrepid members doing battle on courts 5 and 6 of Highbury Fields.

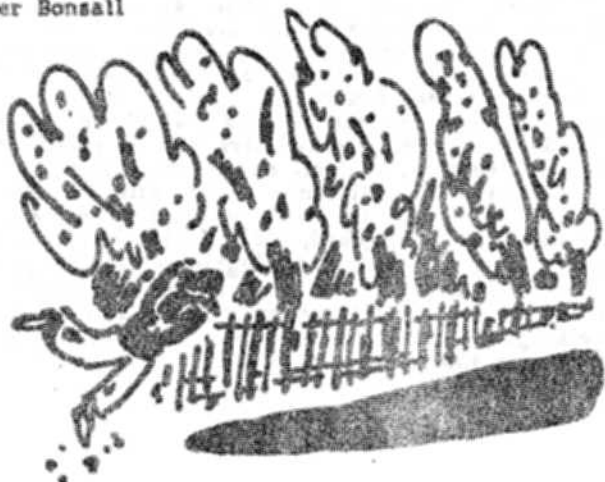
The weather was perfect and lunch was served to over 70 members in the Two O'clock Club enclosure. Tables were set out under the trees and cold ham, spicy chicken legs, sizzling sausages and an excellent choice of salads were followed by strawberries and cream.

There was even a bookmaker this year. "Honest J Gomp" who was rigged out in style outside his tent. Enthusiastic though he was, he claimed he made a heavy loss as Marc Milmo, the Men's singles champion, was backed 5-1 down to 5-4 on. Marc, at 17, defeated Charlie Nairn in the finals. Justin and Penny Cartwright beat Chris Milne and his sister, Alex, in the Mixed Doubles finals and Dave Allen and Jim Butler beat Marc Milmo and his father, Patrick, to win the Men's Doubles. Once again, very few women competed but Judy Blair has promised to hound them out next year and organise a Women's Singles match.

Like last year, the prize giving took place in the garden of 11 Highbury Place, where many non-playing members gathered to drink a glass of wine and admire Jeannie Burnett's pretty garden. James Aykroyd, last year's Men's Singles champion, presented a silver tankard to Marc and the Cartwrights and Dave and Jim collected their well deserved trophies from John Hardiman, HFA Chairman.

There were a few complaints about the high standard of tennis and it was suggested that perhaps "average" players could have a separate tournament next year.

The tournament is becoming popular all over Islington and this year we had contestants who do not live close to the fields but who frequently use the tennis courts, swimming pool and playground, so they welcomed the opportunity of joining the HFA and now they automatically receive copies of Committee Meeting Minutes.
Jennifer Aykroyd



"AU REVOIR" JOHN

Everyone is sad that John and Margaret Hardiman are moving soon from Highbury to Salisbury.

John has given us many years of devoted service as Chairman of the Association, with great style, tact and diplomacy. He has not only been prepared to give a lot of his time, but also much thought and hard work and has established valuable working links with borough officials.

In his time as Chair, membership has rocketed and the Association has become increasingly influential in local conservation and planning matters.

John and Margaret will be greatly missed, but we hope they will maintain links with Highbury.

I feel sure that they will soon be playing an important role in the affairs of Salisbury.

Martin Jones

GETTING THE "SHAKES"

Over the past year some residents have noticed and complained of an increase in the quaking of their houses which heralds the passing of a mega-loaded goods train, especially in the wee small hours of the morning. The Drayton Park Neighbourhood Forum has brought this to the attention of the Environmental Health Officer and are to approach BR, so all corroborating information and evidence would be welcome.

In the meantime, perhaps those who are being disturbed by this should start sending bills for cracking joists and falling plaster to British Rail in case they feel they can continue to overload their trains with impunity.

Emma Hodgson

BRIGHT RED BUBBLE CAR CLUB

The Two O'Clock Club is a thriving drop-in-centre for mothers or other carers and children under 5.

It has been particularly well used this summer, partly due to the fine weather.

The Two O'Clock Club is an ideal place for mothers or minders to meet up, with plenty to entertain the children; a good range of outdoor toys (our bright red bubble cars are the envy of every toddler), and many small indoor toys and activities led by a qualified playleader (children can enjoy the messy activities which mothers aren't so keen on at home.) Highbury Fields 2 O'Clock Club is open every weekday 2-4 pm, in the Bandstand, Highbury Fields. 704 9337.

Bronwen Taylor

CALMING MEASURES

The traffic management scheme has not stopped cars from speeding on roads around the fields. This is particularly dangerous for pedestrians and for children crossing to get onto the fields.

The Association has written to the Council asking for traffic calming measures, such as "sleeping policemen" to be introduced.

If you agree with this idea, please write to the Council.

Robin Mabey

TERRACE CELEBRATIONS

1787 - not only the year of the French revolution, but also the year that Highbury Terrace was built. To celebrate this fact I have held a series of art exhibitions and concerts at my home No 14 Highbury Terrace.

We have shown the work of a number of artists from Highbury and it has been fun for friends and neighbours to drop in to view the works and sometimes to buy a painting, etching or sculpture.

Our next exhibition will be open on Friday 17 and Saturday 18 November from 11-7pm and on Sunday 19 November from 11-3pm. Do come.

The concerts have included works from the 18th century and contemporary composers and we have been fortunate to welcome gifted musicians, conductors and composers.

We can only accommodate small chamber groups and a limited audience, but the concerts have been so delightful that the idea of "Music on the Fields" is very appealing.

Anyone else's thoughts and suggestions for such a project would be most welcome.

From all these enterprises we have been able to donate a substantial sum to charity and feel that the house has really enjoyed its 200th year.

Mary Kleinman

If you ever need anyone
with experience of leadership for
The Salisbury Close
association, don't
hesitate to
call me.



MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION WHO HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO THE COMMITTEE (15.11.1988)

John Hardiman
Chairman

Martin Jones
Vice Chairman

Secretary

Jennifer Aykroyd
Membership & Social
Secretary

Maryse Jones
Treasurer

Jenny Blanchard

Jeannie Burnett

Harry Brack

Peter Broadbent

Jean Engel

Bay Hodgson

Carrick James

Delphine Jelbart

Robin Mabey

Julia Melvin

Robin Nicholson

Richard O'Keeffe

Lesley Orme

Miles Thompson

Ginny Worsley

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Highbury Fields Association



FINAL WORD FROM JENNIFER AYKROYD THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

During the last, glorious summer of 1989, the facilities of Highbury Fields were used as never before. It was hard to book a tennis court unless you were up with the lark, the swimming pool was always full, either with serious swimmers or with those who just jumped in to cool off, toddlers rushed in and out of the paddling pool and the playground was always in full swing.

The Council, with whom we have an amicable relationship, recognizes the status of the Highbury Fields Association and, with our 155 members we are a force to be reckoned with! All new projects are discussed with us, be it fencing, drainage, traffic flow or the planting of new trees.

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 Minutes and you will have an opportunity to attend these meetings and put forward a special grievance or any 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 DONT' YOU THINK IT'S TIME YOU JOINED US NOW?

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

Name

Address and Telephone Number

Amount enclosed

Date

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