



HIGHBURY FIELDS ASSOCIATION

January 1991

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Another eventful year for Highbury Fields: some might say a year too full of events. Following the appalling mess during and after the Kiss FM concert in September we staged a sit-down protest later that month in an attempt to prevent the digging of deep trenches for the Waterboys concert tent. This led to a series of meetings and much correspondence with the Council. Margaret Hodge and the Chief Executive have promised both a review of lettings policy and improved maintenance of the Fields. Neither are yet in evidence. My thanks to all, young and old, who braved the bulldozer and to Robin Mabey and legal eagles Alan Taylor, Patrick Milmo and Jeremy Gompertz. Thanks are also due for year-round effort to our secretary Jennifer Aykroyd. John and Margaret Hardiman are thriving in Salisbury, but continue to watch over our activities with great interest.

We continue to profit from Jeannie Burnett's work on the borough conservation Advisory Committee (CAC). We have also kept a watching brief on affairs in the rest of the Borough and outside it; Red Routes, Kings Cross, the activities of the Islington Society, the Friends of Islington Museum and the London Forum. We are in touch with the Civic Trust, supporting regeneration throughout Britain.

As a new venture we have had two interesting talks this year: from Alec Forshaw, the Borough Conservation Officers and from Jim Lagden of 'Friends of Islington Museum'. We hope this coming year to have talks by distinguished local historian Mary Cosh, by the local Community Police Inspector and by a large local architect.

We have had our successes too. There is at last to be an attendant for the two public lavatories on the Fields. New lights, similar to those in Cranfield Path at the top of the Fields, will soon be installed in Highbury Place. Parking will become less of a headache, and the Tennis Tournament is the one annual Event no one objects to! Happy New Year.



Run for your Lifeboat

In March, Highbury Fields will be the scene of a sponsored fun run by the children of Drayton Park Primary School.

We have to raise £7,000 in order to bring a life boat from Poole in Dorset and install it, with a safety surface, in our main school playground. Our present play structure is rotting and the 37 foot redundant lifeboat, which we have been offered free by the RNLI, will be an exciting and inexpensive (as play structures go) replacement.

This is the first stage in a plan to facelift the main playground to create all enriching environment with trees and bushes, activity areas, quiet areas etc.

Parents of the school have already had experience of a smaller scale project in the Nursery playground - designing and building a play structure and pergola, planting bushes and flowers and renovation and installing a 10 foot rowing boat. Our efforts here won us a commendation in the Times/RIBA Community Architecture Awards and a £500 prize, which was to have been presented by Prince Charles except that he had broken his arm.

The lifeboat project is much larger and more challenging - offers of help most welcome.

CONTACT BRONWEN TAYLOR
TELEPHONE: 071 226 7240

Highbury Fields Association Annual General Meeting

The AGM will take place at the Roundhouse, 71 Ronalds Road at 7.30 pm on Thursday 24th January 1991 in the social area - main building at rear. Drinks will be served afterwards.

Conservation Note

We have lived at No 11 Highbury Place for 21 years. One of the many things we have always meant to do is to clean out the cornice in the entrance hall. One had always heard such horrendous stories about how difficult, messy, time-consuming etc. etc, it was that we funk'd it. On our latest round of improvements, however, we finally decided to have a go and were lucky enough to come upon a delightful person in the shape of, wait for it, Mr Gibbons (must be a descendant), who took on two hundred years' worth of overpainting which meant that only the eye of faith could discern the hint of a row of lions' heads.

There was a mess, but it was wonderfully well contained, and it all happened in one week. We are now the proud possessors of an extremely attractive and intricate cornice, far more elaborate than we had ever guessed. If anyone wants to do likewise, I can heartily recommend Mr Gibbons 071 923 2165. He is a true conservationist and will go to great lengths to reveal and preserve the original.

JEAN BURNETT

Planters in Ronalds Road

Most of us have long stopped believing in Father Christmas. However, when the planters were filled with shrubs on the last day of November, I know Christmas was about to come.

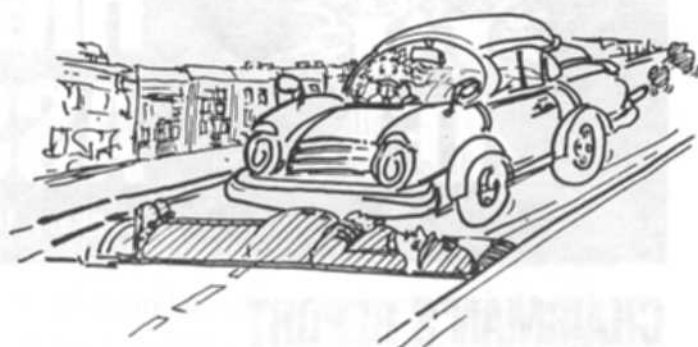
The problem is maintenance of the planters -(half-planted, the other half will contain new bulbs for the spring) - as the Council has no budget for picking rubbish, cans, paper, etc, and we beg all of you to be kind to the planters and remove anything unsightly and eventually that will enhance this very bare street. The two top planters are officially 'adopted by the H.F.A.' but let's hope that we, as a community will make sure the others are not forgotten. Thanks to the Council for this new planting.

MARYSE JONES

Puzzled about Planning?

The Association has a copy of a booklet "Planning for Householders" for loan to members. It covers all the problems and pitfalls that can confront someone wishing to alter their house, or objecting to a proposed alteration by someone else.

We also hold a paper written for us by Jeannie Burnett (our representative on the Planning Committee of the LBI). It covers the scope and function of the planning department.



Calming Measures

As part of the Red Routes Pilot Scheme, the Department of Transport have asked Islington Council to suggest traffic calming measures for the side roads, off the main route in order to lessen the adverse effects of the scheme. At this stage there have been suggestions for road humps in this area in the following roads: Corsica Street, Highbury Place, Fieldway Crescent and Highbury Hill. There has also been discussion on various methods such as road narrowing.

MARTIN JONES

HIGHBURY ROUNDHOUSE

1990 has been a thrilling and very fortunate year for this Youth and Community Centre. In January we were offered £40,000 by London Borough of Islington and the Department of the Environment to install sound-proofing in our Hall. For many years we had been a nuisance to our near neighbours in Whistler Street and Battledean Road.

There was a catch, as we had to raise a further £25,000 before being allowed to touch the £40,000.

By great efforts of our staff and management we achieved the extra funds thanks to five Livery Companies, and have recently had the building work completed. Nervously we await the testing of the efficiency of the sound installation!

We hope we shall now be able to let out our hall for social events and gain much needed income at 71 Ronalds Road. Did you know that the Youth Service in Islington face a 21% cut of funds in 1991/92. The Youth Service used to be funded by ILEA but now comes under the Education Department of LBI. That Department itself faces a 6% cut but feels Adult Education and The Youth Service should meet that cut as it would be wrong to reduce primary and secondary school funding.

We agree, but it does not make life at the Youth Club any easier and we expect to have to lose one of our two full-time workers in March 1991.

If there is any member of HFA who is interested in joining the Youth Club support Group of the Management Committee they would be very welcome and should contact Martin Jones or Bay Hodgson. Both groups meet monthly.

BAY HODGSON

"Vibrations"

I would like to start this piece with a salute to Mr Philip G Moss of Calabria Road for his dogged pursuit of British Rail, from the Chairmen Sir Robert Reid down to the aptly named Mr Colin Driver, Director of Railfreight. Mr Driver would appear to be the man with some of the answers (albeit in my view the wrong ones) to the problem of thundering trains in the night. The story so far:-

"The freight trains being operated do not have heavier axle-loading, nor are they operated at faster speeds, than those which have prevailed for many years" states Mr Driver in his first correspondence with Mr Moss.

25th March 1990 - British Rail conducts a series of tests, supplemented by tests carried out by London Scientific Services acting on behalf of LBI.

11th June 1990 - Mr Driver assures Mr Moss that the results from the two sets of tests are being cross-checked against each other and "against the rest of the 24 hour operational situation". He also reveals the existence of "some ongoing monitoring which has only recently been concluded. All this is now coming together".

11th July 1990 - Mr Moss has discovered via LSS that the vibrations are at their worst at approximately 23 mph. The speed limit is 25 mph. He asks Mr Driver to either lower or raise the speed limit on the line.

18th July 1990 - Mr Driver agrees that 23 mph is the critical speed. He continues "you may also have been told of the other principal conclusion of the analysis, namely that the vibration transmitted at that speed, though significant, is not sufficient to cause damage to buildings within the area affected by it ...". Mr Driver refuses to consider a change in the speed limit but promises to "see if there is any way we can reduce vibration by further attention to the track ... We are ... determined to tackle the problem closer to source" i.e. the track.

6th August 1990 - Mr Driver reiterates BR's refusal to consider a reduction in the speed limit as not practicable, and he goes further, a "reduction in the size of trains or the content of the wagons, are not options either. The economics of our operation ... depends on running full trains with full wagons. Both our customer and Railfreight are in an intensely competitive market."

21st November 1990 - Mr A Worley, Group Leader Scientific Services Team from the Environmental Health Office of LBI (who has taken a keen interest in this issue and has been very helpful) gives notice of further tests to be carried out during the night of 25th November 1990.

Mr Worley what are the results of these further tests? Where does the Council stand on this matter? We are all dying to know.

EMMA HODGSON



Highbury Fields Two O'Clock Club

The Two O'Clock Club has been thriving, not so much activity outside in this cold weather but inside you'll find a most amazing range of creative and stimulating activities for your toddler and a warm and cosy atmosphere for the mothers or carers.

Newcomers welcome.; the club is open 2 - 4 every weekday, 30p entrance per family.

Canonbury Playgroup, which uses the Bandstand in the mornings, have moved to their own premises, so we have to decide what activity to run in their place - a 10 o'clock club? A new Mums' group, toddlers' dance classes, toddlers' French classes....

Ideas welcome. Contact Bronwen Taylor on 071 226 7240

BRONWEN TAYLOR



Highbury Station from Holloway Road, May 1939

ISLINGTON MUSEUM - NEEDING A HOME

The 'Friends of Islington Museum' was founded three years ago to assist and create a museum of local history in Islington. Their energetic Chairman, Jim Lagden, gave us a talk earlier this year. There are already exhibits in store but they are looking for items in areas of local employment within living memory such as printing, watch and clockmaking, brewing and pubs, transport and buses and trams (old time-tables, tickets etc.), dairying, the rag trade, and shopkeeping - not forgetting items from Islington homes.

There are now two people sharing the post of Museum Officer, funded by the Council: Alison Opyrchal is joined by Julia Porter, until recently acting Director of the Jeffrye Museum. The Friends are now fundraising for a building to house the exhibits and are hopeful of acquiring and converting the British Rail house at 2/3 Highbury Crescent, which is ideally placed and would make them a very local museum indeed.

They need funds, enthusiastic supporters and exhibits. If you can help in any way, please fill in the form opposite and return it to: Christine Johnstone (Treasurer) 3a Boothby Road London N19 4AA Telephone: 071 272 9504

MARTIN JONES

I wish to become a Member of the
Friends of Islington Museum

Name

Address.....

Postcode.....

Telephone.....

Date.....

I enclose a cheque/postal order payable to the
"Friends of Islington Museum" for the following
category:

Single £3

Couple £5

Child/Student/UW £1.50

Corporate and Institutional £10

I/we would also like to help the Friends in other ways

.....

.....

Wally Bites Back

No one enjoys stating the obvious, but this year it has to be done. Highbury Fields - the lower field particularly is in a shocking state of neglect.

Much of the grass has been overrun with weeds. There are bald patches everywhere. Pedestrians have trodden informal paths, one by the tennis courts, another by the playground, and nothing is being done to discourage them. Everywhere there is broken glass, ring-pulls and bits of plastic left over from the summer's festivities. The bonfire patch is bigger than ever, and surrounded by a barrier as useless as it is unsightly. The whole place looks like a bad hangover.

Let's not apportion blame. Those who do care, those who do buy look the other way, rotten Council decisions, even the weather - they're all responsible for the present state of affairs. The dilapidation began about three years ago. Another three years of

the same and Islington's sole open space will have gone quite literally to the dogs. Well at least they'll still use it. I won't, and neither dear reader, will you.

Let's carry on stating the obvious and spell out what has to be done. The Fields need to be cleaned, rolled, reseeded and fenced off for a season to give them a chance to rest and recover. An impossible thought? Not really. The old LCC did it when the Fields were their responsibility. But perhaps they knew what most people actually want from a small, but potentially useful and beautiful, inner city open space.

RICHARD O'KEEFE

New Brooms Needed

HFA are planning a clean-up of the Fields. Trying to rid the grass of ring pulls and glass etc. The date for this will be in the next minutes.

Islington Alert

Since the last Newsletter the threat of new motorways through or over Highbury Corner has thankfully receded. All members who took part in that campaign and wrote letters to the Department of Transport expressing their views against such a proposal are cordially thanked.

The Red Routes Pilot Scheme starts on 7th January 1991 along the A1 from Archway, Holloway Road, Highbury Corner, Angel and City Road. Islington Alert will be monitoring its effects and may hold protest meetings of which HFA will be informed possibly at the AGM.

BAY HODGSON

...ILL WIND

There is an addition to the roofless population beside the swimming pool at Highbury Fields. On the 16th October 1987 a great wind sweeping across the country gave the possibility of new life to an old plane tree. Having lain across the old paddling pool that is now the mound of grass between the war memorial and indoor pool. Islington council parks department chose to give it to a local school that thought to use it for a project. Unfortunately nothing was done about it for almost a year until a sculptor and woodcarver called Friedel Bückling noticed it being removed. He discovered that the Council had contracted a forester to move it and then to use it as firewood. Friedel, who has a studio on the South Bank, had greater things in mind and for the promise of a carved dog for the contractor's wife and a month's time limit for the Council, he was given it.

With a chainsaw he began to shape and mould the figure that now stands beyond the fence, displaying his other creations as he did so. After a month of working on it he sought to find some sponsorship. It was not forthcoming, so without the resources, Friedel had to leave it there, lying on its back. Despite this, it was still appreciated by those for whom it was a seat as they ate their lunches and by those for whom it made an unusual climbing frame. It was only recently that the Council chose to adopt him and stand him up out of harm's way on his three legs where he can watch the life and hubbub of our park passing by and perhaps provide company under the stars for the more transient occupants of Highbury Fields.

Friedel Bückling can be contacted on 07278 392 374

ZAC NICHOLSON

We recommend: "The Parish of St Mary Islington". A Portrait in Old Picture Postcards by Jim Connell and Dick Whetstone Price £5.95 - SB Publications



A Clean Sweep

A familiar and jovial face on the streets of Islington is Jimmy Lord, who has been sweeping our streets for 21 years. There are 150 sweepers in the district, including two women, and drawn from many ethnic backgrounds.

"It's a healthy life, plenty of fresh air and exercise, but you have to enjoy your own company because you get few words of encouragement and lots of abuse".

"It's a frustrating job", says Jimmy, "especially in the Autumn, you sweep down to the end of the street, look back, and it's just the same as before you started!"

"People don't realise what hard work it is - they think we are lazy but they have no idea that we've been working since 7.00 am and that we've probably swept three streets by the time they've gone to work".

Mr Lord thinks that a lot of litter is dropped by children. "They don't seem to realise that all the rubbish they fling down has to be picked up again". It might be a good idea if school children spent a few hours with the sweepers to see what a mess is left.

So the next time you see your local road sweeper, and you think he/she is doing a good job - tell them!

JENNY BLANCHARD

Tennis Tournament 1990

On Saturday, June 23rd, the Highbury Fields' Association held the Third Annual Tennis Tournament.

There were even more competitors this year. Judy Blair, true to her word, rounded up 16 (formerly) bashful ladies for a Women's Doubles and eight juniors entered the Men's Singles. I telephoned the boys and enquired in my superior way whether they would prefer their own under 15's event and was told, in no uncertain terms, that that wanted to compete against the men. And how right they were! They were brilliant, with 11 year olds effortlessly knocking our 40 year olds.

My task was not easy. When I tried to organise Mixed Doubles, some were competing in the Women's Doubles and some wanted a rest because they had just won a gruelling match. Added to all this disorder, the heavens opened at 3.00 pm and there was no play for an hour. This prevented the Men's Doubles finals being played but, on points, it was clear that Jim Allen and Dave Butler should keep the trophy they had so valiantly won last year.

Marc Milmo, last year's Men's Singles winner was away, so my intrepid husband, James, seized the opportunity to regain the cup he had won two years ago. He beat Jim Butler in the finals putting his victory down to his very old shoes which didn't slip, and since they played in the pouring rain I'm sure he was right!

Mark Potter and Annabel Falks won the Mixed Doubles and Judy Blair and Toni Ross won the Women's Doubles.

As usual an excellent lunch was served in the Two O'Clock Club by Maryse and her band of helpers with over 80 members enjoying cold meats, salads and strawberries and cream.

Once again, the prize giving took place in Jeannie Burnett's pretty garden and we were delighted that John Hardiman, our ex-Chairman, came all the way from Salisbury to present the prizes. Our grateful thanks go to Mr Peter Bonsall. I am sure that both he and his staff appreciate what an enjoyable family day this event has become and, with so many up and coming stars competing, next year's tournament promises to be even more fun and the sun had better promise to shine all day.

JENNIFER AYKROYD

Residents' Parking

The HFA have been trying for some years to increase the provision of residents' parking bays in the area, as the present number is greatly outnumbered by the permit holders. The Islington Transport Department have now recommended an additional 48 bays be provided for Highbury Crescent and Highbury Place and it is hoped they will begin in the Spring.

MARTIN JONES



Members of the Association who have been elected to the Committee 07/12/89:

Martin Jones

Jennifer Aykroyd

Maryse Jones

Jon Blair

Jenny Blanchard

Jeannie Burnett

Harry Brack

Anita de Lotbinière

Jean Engel

Bay Hodgson

Carrick James

Delphine Jelbart

Mary Kleinman

Robin Mabey

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Robin's Garden

In spite of all our efforts the building development plans for Robin's Garden site in Highbury Crescent has been given planning permission.

This site has never been designated as a public open space, so it was inevitable that one day the owner, J Murphy and Son, would want to build on it. The plans submitted by their architect were turned down twice by the Planning Committee as a result of the HFA efforts on the grounds that they did not positively enhance a conservation area. Eventually their architect came up with a design which the Planning Committee (while by no means enthusiastic about it) felt presented no grounds on which it could be turned down bearing in mind the threat of appeal.

It does seem likely however that due to the recession in housing that the site will not be developed in the near future.

As a result it has been suggested to Murphys that the corrugated iron fence be removed and that the nature trail should be created leading to Melgus Road. We consider this work could be done by volunteers and school children.

Councillor Pat Hughes is supporting us in this venture - to date Murphys have not replied.

JEANNIE BURNETT
MILES THOMPSON

A Tale Of Two Cities: London and Paris

The London Forum is a group representing local amenity societies. Its Chairman, also Chairman of the Islington Society, Marion Harvey says that the Forum is "committed to helping rebuild London's morale and sense of purpose". They held a conference of international experts in November to compare planning methods in the two capital cities. It is often felt that while Paris is well-organised, London planning is uncoordinated.

There is an overall strategy and massive public investment to make Paris the commercial and cultural capital of Europe. The TGV railway lines will shortly bring 150 million people within an hour and a half of Paris. The third Paris airport will probably be as far away as Normandy or Picardy. However there have been mistakes and the Paris region already suffers half the traffic jams of the whole of France.

London was described as being 'congested, costly and dirty' and was likely to deteriorate further to 'a state of disorganised, chaos'. There was debate as to whether London would be 'villages and parks' or a world-class business city - or could it be both?

As discussion followed, it was pointed out that whereas London is felt to be in need of more centralized strategic planning, in Paris there is growing opposition to major developments and high-handed governmental decisions without consultation; a mid-point is called for.

The HFA, represented by Miles Thompson, is a member of the London Forum.

Tree Culture

Imagine the Fields with no trees, it would dramatically alter the atmosphere of the area.

The trees provide a sanctuary for wildlife in the city. Oak trees supporting approximately 300 species of insects, these in turn attract predators like birds and small mammals. The branches provide space for nest building.

We have to consider the location of services like drains, electricity, water and gas before we plant, as these are usually hidden from view, so close cooperation with each authority is essential.

Trees, like all living things require care and attention if they are to thrive, particularly in the artificial surroundings of Islington. Unfortunately we cannot provide this environment. All our trees are from nurseries in different parts of the country. From our nursery they are transported to site and planted in their selected location in cold London clay.

Care of the new tree is therefore essential and help from its new neighbours - the residents - in the form of a bucket of water during the summer months is greatly appreciated. The new tree also requires support from a stake while it re-establishes its own root system which has to be constantly monitored.

As the young tree grows it has to contend with problems ranging from small and big boys to errant drivers who appear determined to run over or maim these static targets.

Notwithstanding these problems the occasional pruning is required to ensure good relations with immediate neighbours and maintain the tree's health.

The tree is consistently monitored and maintained as shown by the recent work carried out on mature trees in Highbury Fields.

As with all living things the tree becomes old and thus prone to infection by a variety of pests and diseases. The loss of a limb or a section of trunk combined with reduced vigour enables those pathogens to gain a hold and begin the process of decay. This process can start on any part of the tree. The indications of trouble being early loss of leaves, fungal bodies appearing etc.

The Arboriculturist has to constantly monitor the tree to ensure its safety. If the tree is considered a potential hazard, it must be removed as in the instance of the chestnut tree by the Tennis Courts.

A new tree is planted and the cycle of life of an urban tree begins again.

R H STRIDE
PRINCIPAL ARBORICULTURAL OFFICER

DEAR RESIDENT

Suddenly It Matters To You

This year I am not going to eulogise about how lucky we are to live or work so close to Islington's largest open space, nor to praise the hosts of golden daffodils which cheer us up in March.

You woke up on September 10th after the Kiss FM concert and saw the litter. You either wrote to the Council to complain or you simply stared in disbelief. Shortly afterwards, as if you couldn't believe your eyes, you stood and watched as the Fields were ploughed up for a one night stand by a group of lads from Ireland - The Waterboys.

The more intrepid of you sat under the mechanical diggers for almost 24 hours and the national press was alerted. Our Chairman, Martin Jones, acted swiftly with top legal

advice and Margaret Hodge and Eric Dear were made aware of the vandalism - BUT TO NO AVAIL. Unbelievably, the rape of the Fields went ahead - and, today in December, as I write this, the Fields are full of deep ruts and bald patches and no effort has been made to restore them. It is our aim to have one or two of our Committee Members co-opted on to the Council's Letting Policy Committee so that we might have a say, on your behalf, in approving those events which we consider acceptable. So far this has not been agreed.

We only represent 200 households but the time has come to double that number. Ask your friends and neighbours to join us now before it is too late. They will receive copies of all Committee Meeting Minutes and have a chance to attend meetings.

**JUST TAKE A LONG HARD LOOK AT
Highbury Fields AND JOIN TODAY**

**JENNIFER AYKROYD
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

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

Name:.....

Address:.....

Telephone Number.....

Subscription: £3.00 per household per year

£5.00 for two years

£1.00 for pensioners, children and unemployed

Amount enclosed: £

To: Mrs Jennifer Aykroyd, Membership Secretary,
Highbury Fields Association, 5 Highbury Terrace, London N5 1UP (Telephone: 071 226 9750)