

HIGHBURY FIELDS

A S S O C I A T I O N

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It is often only a distant relative, making a rare visit to the family, who will notice how things have changed in their absence; a child who has shot up in height or a room arrangement that the family had long forgotten.

As with families, so with our neighbourhood. In recent newsletters there have been stirring tales of battles fought and won; of planner dragons slain and conservation maidens rescued. During the last year, however, life in and around Highbury Fields has been less eventful.

Yet if there has been little drama, there has been steady progress; gradual improvement in many areas. On the Fields themselves, there have been a number of successes. The gate locks on the Upper Field will be replaced; the splendid lamps in Church Path are to be restored after a long campaign by Robin Mabey; the bonfire site has been promptly returfed.

We have managed to effect useful minor changes; estate agents' boards are to be limited in size and in number; advertisements on parking meters have been refused; the shelter near the tennis courts has been repaired. We have agreed a number of plantings to improve the Fields; a flowering hedge along Highbury Grove; bluebells near the church; shrubs behind the Oasis Cafe.

We were fortunately not beset this year by large events on the Fields. The Bubble Theatre and the Circus were popular, not unduly noisy nor very

damaging to the grassed area. The Malabar 'happening' was exciting and quickly over. Some larger schemes never reached fruition.

We continue to be consulted and have developed a good working relationship with the Borough Parks department. Since the New Year, work on the Fields has been privatised. The contract lays down strict and precise instructions for the upkeep of the Fields and I believe we can hope to see a higher quality of work in the future.

There have been disappointments too. The leaves were left far too long, spoiling the grass, filling the roads and pavements and clogging the drains. Our proper green enthusiasm to recycle our glass and paper regularly overwhelms the limited capacity of the banks near the swimming pool - we are promised they will be emptied and tidied more regularly in future. Frustration too that further efforts to slow traffic and improve parking have been, for now, victims of the Cuts.

In the last few months we have been concerned about the proposal by English Heritage to withdraw their stewardship of Grade II listed buildings in Greater London. We are fortunate in Islington to have an excellent but lone Conservation Officer who would find it quite impossible to cope with the increased workload this change would bring. Jeannie Burnett, as vice-chair of the Conservation Advisory Committee, worked with the London Forum to organise a public debate at the House of Commons on March 22nd. Four of us attended to hear universal condemnation of the proposed changes by members of English Heritage, Jennifer



Page, failed to persuade the meeting that the proposals made good preservation or economic sense

Lastly, many thanks yet again for all the support from the committee and other members. Most of all to Jennifer Aykroyd for her ever more enjoyable and successful Tennis Tournament and her all year round work as Secretary.

We look forward to seeing many of you at our AGM on March 31st where we intend to both inform and entertain you and to hear your views of what we should be doing in the future.

MARTIN JONES

HIGHBURY CRESCENT UPDATE

The Association keeps in close touch with the Islington Society which tries to improve the quality of life in the Borough. We support their meetings and activities.

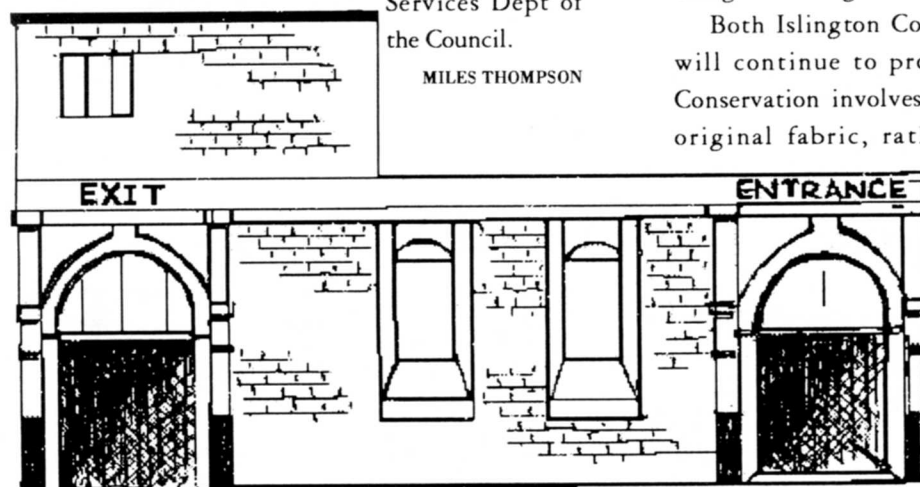
The new Mayor-elect has said that she would like to clean up some of the black spots in Islington and we are trying to get the mess around the swimming pool and the playground tidied up, particularly the dreadful bollards and the recycling area.

We have also been involved in the Islington Museum project. For the last three years, we have been trying to get London Underground to let us have the use of their empty building in Highbury Crescent. It is now thought that they are going to convert it into the headquarters of the Victoria Line prior to privatising the line.

In the meantime, part of the Canonbury Bookshop is being made available as museum premises. There are two part time museum officers in the Leisure

Services Dept of
the Council.

MILES THOMPSON



LIGHT AT LAST

The three lampstands in Church Path are remarkable examples of high quality street furniture. Elegant and practical, they shed a good quality light over a wide area.

However, they are in a poor state of repair and for some time - at least 10 years - this Association has been pressing the Council to rehabilitate them not least to make them safe. The Street Lighting section, under Jim Hyder, has obtained estimates for the work and Peter Bonsall, Head of Parks, has found some money in his budget to do it. So with a bit of luck.....

ROBIN MABEY

BUILDINGS AT RISK

A priority for Conservation work for 1993 will continue to be the Buildings at Risk Programme. In the continuing recession it is not always easy to persuade the owners of run-down listed buildings that it is in their interest to repair them or sell them to a more enthusiastic owner. In the last year, progress has been made. For example, at No.3 Highbury Crescent where, after years of inaction, the owners have at last started refurbishing the building. There is still much to be done throughout the borough.

Spreading the word must also be a continuing theme and priority. Prevention is often the best cure and there is no substitute for education. All too frequently undesirable changes occur not through deliberation or malice but out of ignorance, either for what the rules are or as to what is the best way of doing something.

Both Islington Council and English Heritage will continue to promote the view that good Conservation involves the retention and repair of original fabric, rather than its removal and

replacement with new or replica.

If in doubt it is always best to seek advice from the Conservation Officer at Islington Council or from English Heritage.

ALEC FORSHAW

(L.B.I. Conservation Officer)

FAREWELL TO AN INTREPID FRIEND

On Saturday, February 6th, 1993 Jeffrey O'Mullone was 65 years of age and officially retired by the Islington Cleansing Department. A familiar friendly figure in checked tweed cap and short sighted spectacles, he was an intrepid all weather sweeper, scooping soggy leaves from behind the wheels of tightly parked cars, sometimes wearing an extra waterproof emerald green rubbish bag when the rain was too heavy; he tackled areas of the Fields which were beyond his duty. Every day, to protect the many school children and families visiting the swimming pool, he sorted out and dumped cardboard boxes and tins and, with extreme care, swept up the broken remains of green, brown and white grass left by enthusiastic environmentalists around the overflowing bottle bank. He made many friends on the Fields and will be greatly missed. If you have any sweeping or tidying up jobs which need attention, Jeffrey can be contacted through this Association.

GINNIE WORSLEY

TENNIS TOURNAMENT 1992

The Fifth Annual Tennis Tournament took place on Sunday, June 21st, and, once again, there were a record number of entries with 24 in the Men's Singles and 14 couples in both the Mixed and in the Men's Doubles.

Most competitors did not like last year's arrangements when the first rounds were played in advance. So this year, playing flat out with never an empty court, we just managed to finish the tournament on time - sadly, at the expense of the women's events. For the 1993 tournament, however, we have taken extra courts after lunch so there will definitely be a Women's Singles and Doubles.

At the last minute, the reigning Men's Singles champion, Dave Allen, had to withdraw so, rather than give his opponents a bye, a late entry, a young Ethiopian called Desta Liyew took his place with the approval of several competitors. They might not have been so keen to let him play had they foreseen that he would go on to become the new champion beating all the old stalwarts as well as another new competitor,

Raymond Vernon, in a riveting final.

If Desta Liyew was the singles star, then Patrick Milmo was certainly the star of the doubles, winning both titles. He and Angela Webb beat last year's winners, Justin and Penny Cartwright, in an exciting final. There was some consolation for Justin who shared the Men's Doubles trophy with Patrick beating teenage enthusiasts, George Edmunds and James Hunt. Watch them!

This year 135 members and their families enjoyed the traditional buffet lunch followed by strawberries and cream in the Two o'Clock Club. Once again, special thanks to Maryse Jones and her helpers, Mia Beaumont, Marina Milmo, Muriel Feder and Miles Thompson who always manage to produce such delicious fare.



Thank you, too, to John Hardiman our ex-Chairman who came from Salisbury to present the prizes and to Tim and Jeannie Burnett for making available their beautiful garden.

We must not forget Peter Bonsall and his staff for contributing to the success of what is always a very enjoyable day for competitors and spectators alike.

JENNIFER AYKROYD

THIS YEAR'S TOURNAMENT - SUNDAY JUNE 20

TRAFFIC

Islington's voluntary organisation, Islington Alert, continues to exist and a small group meets twice a quarter to discuss events and to approach the Department of Transport on major matters. Red Routes are threatened to increase throughout London after the "success" of the Pilot Scheme from Archway to City Road. The D.O.T calls it a success. Islington and its traders call it a horrible failure. Islington Alert is concerned about King's Cross and Channel Tunnel traffic along the North London Line or preferably in a tunnel between Stratford and King's Cross or St

Pancras Station. It also wants more bus priority and less commuter cars. A Public Meeting may be called later in the summer.

London needs many things to improve the quality of life for its citizens: more homes, more parkland and better public transport. What it does not need is more smog, tarmac and traffic.

BAY HODGSON

PLANNING NEWS

The Islington Development Plan (The Unitary Development Plan) is important news for Highbury residents.

There has been a public inquiry, modifications to the plan have been advertised and the Planning Department is now considering objections to the proposed modifications.

The plan is important because it will guide future development control. One of the modifications includes policies for the Highbury Fields Conservation Area. This is a good idea except some of the policies are very detailed. For example, large numbers of individual properties are identified with policies to stop any roof extensions or dormer windows. I think this is too detailed for a development plan and removes flexibility. Also, it will have the effect of freezing the way Highbury looks in 1993.

The attraction of Inner London is the variety of the urban scene. If our predecessors had followed the proposed approach, it would all look just too neat and boring.

However, go to the Library and ask to see the UDP July 7th, 1992 draft and look at pages D16 - D20. If you don't like it, tell your local councillor.

ROBIN MABEY

LOBBY FOR OUR LIBRARIES

The Friends of Islington Libraries (FOIL) is a growing group of Islington people who value their libraries. Our members come from all sections of the community and from all age groups and we are lucky enough to have as our Chairman, Michael Ignatieff, a Highbury resident and a member of the HFA.

We were established in 1991 with two strands to our existence: to urge Islington Council to give

libraries the maximum possible resources and to hold regular meetings to discuss library issues or to have conversations with prominent local authors such as Nina Bawden, Antony Sher, Stephen Fry and John Hands.

We have campaigned actively to maintain the library service at as high a level as possible. Over the last few years of financial pressure, there have been swingeing cuts resulting in shorter opening hours, a reduction in the book fund and the proposed closure of West Library which latter decision was thankfully reversed at the eleventh hour. Following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, there have been further cuts but, despite this, we have continued to urge the Council to restore lost library hours as soon as possible and to maintain the book fund at a practical level.

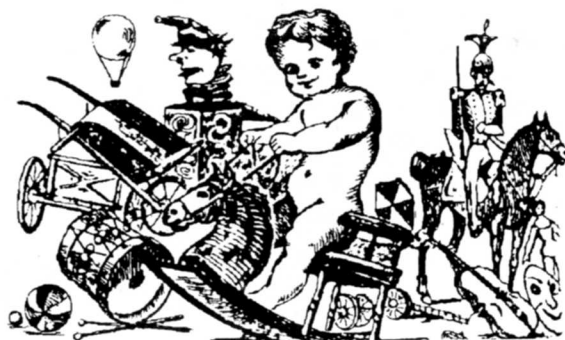
We offer a series of entertaining evenings and an opportunity to make your voice heard in defence of Islington libraries. £3.00 will buy you a year's subscription: FOIL, 3 Kelross Road, N5 2QS - 071 359-3143.

KATHLEEN FRENCHMAN

THE TWO O'CLOCK CLUB

The Two o'Clock Club is a drop-in centre for children under five years of age accompanied by their mothers, fathers or carers. It is open every weekday from 2:00pm - 4:00pm and costs 50p per family. Tea, coffee, juice and biscuits are available at a small extra cost.

Inside the bandstand are a varied selection of toys to play with including an area with toys for small babies. Two different 'activities' are set up by the play leader and assistant every day and include painting, waterplay, sandtray, sticking, glueing, collage, dough-play, etc. Outside there is a large grassed area with a sand-pit and outdoor climbing



frames and slides.

The Club has a new play leader, appointed in January 1993, who is full of enthusiasm making the Club a fun place for children and a welcoming spot for parents and carers.

A volunteer group of parents runs the Club through a committee. We always need new parents to join so if you are interested, please contact the play leader on 071-704 9337.

With regard to fundraising, we always need replacement toys and equipment and we organise stalls and parties in the summer to raise funds. If there are any businessmen or private individuals who feel they can help with a small contribution, the under fives would be most grateful.

The Club can be hired privately for under fives' parties at weekends. Please telephone during the afternoon to book.

TERESA MCGOWAN

HIGHBURY FESTIVAL OF MUSIC AND ARTS

Sir Colin Davis will be performing on home ground for the first time ever on June 17th when he conducts the Haydn Chamber Orchestra at Christ Church, Highbury, as part of the Highbury Festival of Music and Arts.

Brainchild of Scott Stroman, Head of Jazz at the Guildhall and Musical Director at Christ Church, the first Highbury Festival in June 1992 offered a successful blend of classical, contemporary, folk music and jazz. This year's Festival will add to this popular formula, dance, drama, a late night jazz cafe, and a Welsh choir concert.

The Festival will present top professional and amateur artists, many who live locally, including saxophonist John Harle, the Haydn Chamber Orchestra, Opus 20, Eclectic Voices, traditional music specialist Roger Digby and Sir Colin Davis and his family and friends.

All members of the Highbury Fields Association are warmly invited to a tea party in the gardens of Christ Church on Saturday, June 12th from 3.00pm - 6.00pm to celebrate the opening of the Festival.

Highbury Festival of music and Arts takes place on June 11th - 20th, 1993 at Christ Church, Highbury and the Highbury Roundhouse. Full

programme details are available from either: Alison Glaister, 39 Huntingdon Street, N1 Telephone: 609 1401 or Diane Fernyhough, 8 Highbury Terrace, N5 Telephone: 226 0582.

DIANE FERNYHOUGH

WILDLIFE IMPROVEMENTS TO HIGHBURY FIELDS

You can see quite a number of different species of bird on and around Highbury Fields - magpies are frequent visitors as are jays and tiny wrens.

During the past few months, this Association has been discussing several welcome proposals for improving the wildlife on Highbury



Fields with the Parks Department who will fund this venture jointly with the Countryside Association.

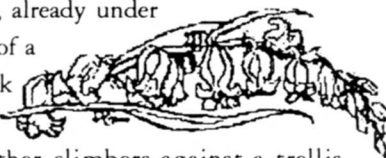
One such proposal is to plant a hedge along the existing fence beside Highbury Grove. This will provide cover for wildlife, soften the severity of the fence and muffle traffic noise



which often distracts the tennis players.

This will not be just privet but will combine blackthorn, dog rose, guelder rose and other shrubs with the planting of new bulbs at the base. If funds permit, planting will take place this Autumn.

Another proposal, already under way, is the planting of a small bed at the back of the Oasis Cafe.



Honeysuckle and other climbers against a trellis would also be ideal here. The area in front of Christchurch will be planted with native bulbs such as bluebells and the mud-sodden track will become a hoggin pathway so that the grass is better conserved.

Whilst these improvements apply only to the top field, it is hoped that in time similar landscaping might be proposed for other parts of the Fields.



BEN JONES

BABIES

A lot has been going on behind closed doors in Highbury which is affecting the character of the neighbourhood. I am of course referring to the making of babies. Many of my neighbours have just had or are expecting, a baby, and having an eight-month-old myself, I am convinced that the neighbourhood is on its way to becoming one big kindergarten.

Local health authorities report, however, that births in the Highbury Grange Health Centre area last year amounted to 466, a similar amount to 1991.

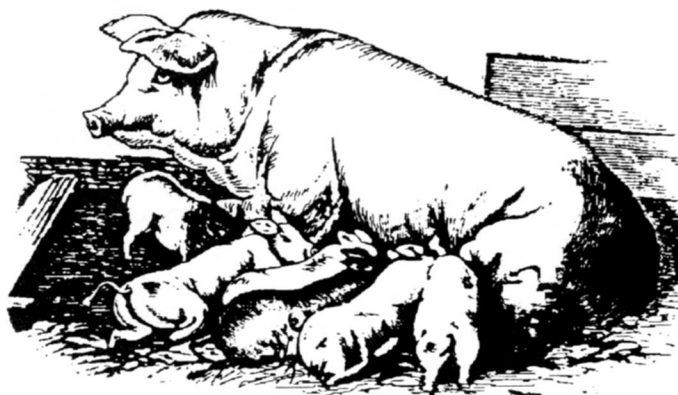
I have discovered that there are excellent local facilities in the area for taking care of infants. As well as the children's pool, the playground and the Two o' Clock Club, there is a toddlers' reading group which meets each Wednesday afternoon in the Fieldway Crescent Library. Mothers and/or childminders can also meet up at Christchurch each Monday from 10:00am - 11:30am.

Highbury Roundhouse has organised a toddlers' session with soft toys every Friday 1:30pm - 5:30pm; a parents and toddlers' play group with a toy library on Wednesdays and Fridays 10:00am - noon and creative dance classes for the under fives on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 10:00 - 10:30am.

For children who love animals, there is Freightlines Farm in Sherringham Road (off Liverpool Road). Open every day except Monday from 9:00am - 1:00pm and from 2:00pm - 5:00pm. The farm has cows, calves, pigs, ducks, chickens, rabbits and goats.

Finally, for working mums, there is an organisation called Working Women, 77 Holloway Road.

VICTORIA ELLINGTON



W R SICKERT AT

1 Highbury Place - 1927-1934

On August 13, 1927 the following advertisement appeared in The Times: "Mr Sickert ARA will on October 1st open for male students his sixth private school of painting, illustration and engravings in a studio on the ground floor within the four-mile radius. Division of year into terms will follow existing schools. Fees £20 a year payable in advance. Following the practice of the Paris 'ateliers' Mr Sickert will draw no fees himself. Vacancies will be filled in order of application accompanied by fees. Apply by letter to Southey Villa, 15 Quadrant Road, Essex Road, N1. No models will be employed at all."

However, on the appointed day, the number of students presenting themselves at No. 1 Highbury Place amounted to no more than six or seven. Among their number was Robert Emmons, Sickert's biographer. This interlude in the painter's long and prolific life was short but well documented.

October 1st, 1927 was a fine autumn day on Highbury Fields and his new pupils found Sickert preoccupied with overseeing the felling of a tree in the garden which took up too much light. The new arrivals were surprised to find his head swathed in bandages but Sickert, ever conscious of the tragicomic, reassured them: "My wife says I'm suffering from a swelled head....but really, I tell you it's a boil...very annoying...I can't have my bathe in the morning. You're not allowed to suppurate into the public baths." He was chiefly interested, that morning, in the workmen in the garden; he was delighted with the work and, in great spirits, sent out for a bottle of champagne which the tree cutters were invited to share with the company.

Emmons took it into his head that the empty champagne bottle would make a suitable subject for a painting and spent many sessions struggling with the unlovely, lifeless bottle as it gathered dust and dead flies. Sickert was disparaging and, with a twist of irony, named the picture 'The Chief Clerk's Birthday'. It served as an illustration of all that Sickert despised. His advice to young painters was: 'Paint pictures with something happening in them'. Sickert did not paint direct from nature; he liked what he called 'moments of truth'; aphorisms, perhaps, expressed in paint. He cultivated the sense of 'pages torn from the book of life' and told his pupils that his aim was to capture 'just

that something that only the pencil or brush can give, an emotion whose bouquet will not survive decanting from the skin of painting into that of letters'. From the mid-20's Sickert used 19th century illustrations and newspaper photographs as the starting points for pictures.

He had acted as a young man in Sir Henry Irving's company, and was an actor manqué. He was a personality in North London, a handsome figure with top hat and ebony, silver-topped cane but yet a lover of the little shops and back streets. He said that the Caledonian Market was his idea of heaven.

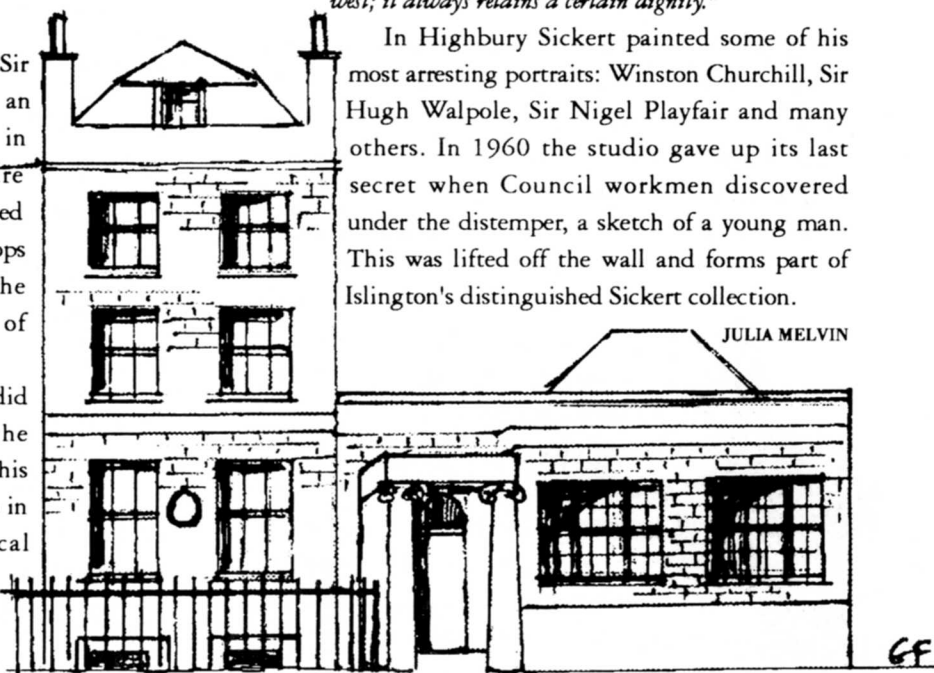
His school in Highbury Place did not last long but he retained the premises as a studio until 1934. This had previously been the music room in the household of Mr May, a local dentist, and was papered in a dark red wallpaper. Knowledge of that room in Highbury Place gives us an insight into Sickert's methods.

In the recent exhibition at the Royal Academy hung the strange and startling painting *The Raising of Lazarus*. In 1927 a life size wooden model of a man, which had belonged to Hogarth, was given to Sickert by his brother-in-law, Major Lessore, the owner of the Beaux-Arts Gallery. Bowed under its weight, the delivery man carried the figure into the studio. The appearance of this inert shape interlocked with the man who was carrying it, struck a cord in the artist's mind: the figure coming into the room looked like Lazarus being lifted from the tomb.

With the composition already in his mind, Sickert sketched the preliminary design in green over the red wallpaper which lined the studio: the panel has the proportions of wallpaper - 8'x3' and the colour composition was dictated by the colour of Mrs May's music room. This sketch panel passed into the collection of Sir Osbert Sitwell but the finished canvas was presented in 1932 by Sickert to Sadler's Wells "in memory of my perpetual adoration of Sam Phelps and my gratitude to Isabel Bateman, of whose Sadler's Wells Company I was a utility member", to be auctioned by Christies in aid of badly needed funds. In his presentation speech Sickert declared that he celebrated the union of stage and art. "Islington" he went on to say "has always been kind to me. My life was saved at the age of

five by Alfred Cooper, surgeon at St Mark's Hospital, City Road. It is extraordinary how this district has had in it something aloof and poetical. For some reason or other it has not copied the vulgarities of other districts perhaps further west; it always retains a certain dignity."

In Highbury Sickert painted some of his most arresting portraits: Winston Churchill, Sir Hugh Walpole, Sir Nigel Playfair and many others. In 1960 the studio gave up its last secret when Council workmen discovered under the distemper, a sketch of a young man. This was lifted off the wall and forms part of Islington's distinguished Sickert collection.



THE OASIS IN THE PARK

For many years the small café next to the tennis hut has remained very firmly shut. Several people have attempted to run it, selling sandwiches and soft drinks but they were fair weather birds opening only when the sun shone.

In March last year, Anna and Tony Tropea arrived and it was obvious that they meant business. Originally from Calabria, for many years they ran a highly successful restaurant in Holborn which became a favourite lunch place with the legal profession in Lincoln's Inn. The Oasis is now open all year from 7.30am until dark, come rain or shine. Their enormous £2.00 cooked breakfasts are well known to the early risers in the building trade as are Anna's home made pasta (£2.10) and fruit pies (60p) which are available all day long. Mothers and toddlers enjoy lunch and tennis players are offered a large selection of sandwiches and ice cold drinks. Needless to say, there is plenty of frothy cappuccino (40p or 90p for an enormous 16oz cup).

We are delighted that Anna and Tony have chosen Highbury Fields for their latest venture and we wish them well.

JENNIFER AYKROYD

DEAR RESIDENT

A QUIET YEAR ON THE FIELDS

This past year has been a quiet one with no pop concerts disturbing the peace, no major differences with the Council and a continued good working relationship with the Parks & Recreation Department. Isn't this how it should be?

Although this Association has apparently kept a low profile during the past 12 months, our committee has continued to meet on a regular basis to discuss and monitor proposed events, maintenance, lighting, parking, litter and many other relevant topics.

People come and people go but we still represent 200 households in the area who receive copies of all committee meeting minutes and who are welcome to attend these meetings should they have an item they wish to discuss.

We are all fortunate that we live so close to Highbury Fields and it is very important that we continue to influence decisions concerning their appearance and day to day management.

THE Highbury Fields Association exists to act as a watch dog on your behalf and I hope that those of you who are not already members will support us by joining today.

JENNIFER AYKROYD

NEWSLETTER DESIGNED BY SUSAN BUCHANAN, ILLUSTRATIONS OF BOTTLE BANK, LT BUILDING, 1 Highbury Place & SQUIRREL BY GWEN FROUD

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

STANDING FOR ELECTION IN 1993

Martin Jones, *Chairman*, 1

Jennifer Aykroyd, *Secretary*, 1

Maryse Jones, *Treasurer*, 1

Geoffrey Adams, 1

Jon Blair, 1

Jeannie Burnett, 1

Victoria Ellington, 1

Jean Engel, 1

Muriel Feder, 1

Bay Hodgson, 1

Carrick James, 1

Ben Jones, 1

Ian Kelly, 1

Mary Kleinman, 1

Anita de Lotbiniere, 1

Robin Mabey, 1

Miles Thompson, 1

Ginnie Worsley, 1

1993 ACM

WEDNESDAY MARCH 31ST 7.30PM

AT Highbury Roundhouse.

ALL WELCOME

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

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE NO. _____

Subscription: £3.00 per household per year

£5.00 for two years

£1.00 per year for pensioners and the unemployed

Amount enclosed : £ _____

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