

Highbury Fields Association



Newsletter - 1998

Chairman's Report

Has anyone ever calculated how many miles are clocked by people running round Highbury Fields? Joggers come in all shapes and sizes. Some, clearly built for more leisurely activities, struggle painfully for twenty minutes or so and are never seen again. Regular runners pass them, eating up the tarmac and return week after week, especially as the evenings lighten in the period before the London Marathon.

The HFA's race seems more like an extended steeplechase. There are easy stretches when we feel fairly comfortable. We deal with Thames Water over the design and camouflaging of their booster station or with the Parks Department - should film crews be allowed to park on the inner walkways and do the Fields contractors drive there too often and too fast? How best to remove graffiti from the Clock Tower? Should there be a superloo near the tennis courts? There is a little bunching and jostling on the bends but we have sharp elbows.

But there are some hurdles to get over. Judge the pace wrongly and you fall flat on your face. Some residents for example wish to end the parking free-for-all that occurs in roads beyond the parking zone. Others are likely to oppose any change. Views will be surveyed before we decide to support change.

And then, the water-jump; higher and harder still. Every year there are a few major obstacles to overcome. A year ago our main area of concern was the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and the likely impact of the vent shaft behind Corsica Street. We wait to hear whether funding will be found for that to go ahead later this year.

The redevelopment planned for what we call "Robin's Garden", the large overgrown site running down the hill from Highbury Crescent to Ronalds Road and Melgund Road is a matter of considerable concern to local residents. Thirty-four units with a total of 82 bedrooms are proposed. We have fought very similar developments on this same site several times before. Exactly the same issues recur: over-density, mediocre architecture, insufficient provision for parking. We hope to hold a public meeting in May to allow residents to express their opinion to the developers and planners.

We are also concerned about the proposed expansion of Arsenal Stadium. We oppose the threat to many homes, the blighting of so many others and the impact on the whole area

We share the doubts that the club will be satisfied with even 50,000 seats or that the extra 12,000 spectators will arrive only by public transport. We must be aware however of the risk that a departing Arsenal could sell the stadium to two sharing football clubs, so doubling the potential number of match days.

A further and more recent cause of concern is the emergence of gangs of youths on the Fields with a spate of attacks on people reported. We are stressing to the police the urgent need to stamp this out. Please report any incidents you witness. (Phone 0171 263 9090 or 999 if urgent)

At our AGM on 18th May at Christ Church, Ian Crawley in his new post as Head of Regulatory and Planning Services will be talking about the extensive changes taking place in the Council and the effect on this area. One unfortunate result of the restructuring has been that Peter Bonsall, Head of Parks, has retired. Although in the early years of the HFA we crossed swords with him on many occasions, we had formed a good working relationship and wish him well in his retirement.

There are no prizes or laurel wreaths to be won in our steeplechase. The race never really finishes. There are, however, some pleasurable occasions. One such was the ceremony in December to mark both the Centenary and the magnificent restoration of the Jubilee Clock Tower at Highbury Barn. And Christ Church, our hosts that evening and for our AGM, are to be congratulated on their 150th anniversary this year.

Martin Jones

Invitation to the AGM !

The 1998 Highbury Fields Association AGM will be on Monday May 18th at 7.30pm at Christ Church, Highbury Grove.

Ian Crawley, Head of Regulatory and Planning for Islington Council will speak on the Council Reorganisation - "New Council, New Committee Structure, New Management Structure" - and what it all means for The Highbury Fields Association and its continuing role.

Come and meet your neighbours and find out what is going on in Highbury. Tell us what you want us to do about it. The talk will be followed by refreshments.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) - Update

Will the CTRL be built? On the 28th January, London & Continental Railways (LCR) informed the Government that they could not fulfil their obligations under the Development Agreement. They had miscalculated revenue from Eurostar train services and cannot raise the necessary money. The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, gave LCR 30 days to come up with revised proposals for completing the CTRL, on the "agreed route".

This so called "cure period" has been extended twice; now to the 29th May. Mr Prescott confirmed speculation that LCR, in conjunction with Railtrack and others, are proposing to construct the CTRL in two phases. The first is thought to be between the channel tunnel and Southfleet in Kent, where trains would access existing tracks into Waterloo International Station, with the second being between Southfleet and St Pancras.

Will it stay in the tunnel? The CTRL Act 1996 provides for a tunnelled route under the vast majority of Islington (emerging to the west of Caledonian Road). This does not rule out changes, but if the project's momentum is to be maintained and the "agreed route" stuck to, the CTRL should remain in tunnel.

When will it be built? The works to build the ventilation shaft at the rear of No. 10 Corsica Street had been planned to start this summer. This is clearly not now going to happen, and it is thought unlikely that work on constructing the second phase would start before 2002.

Have the proposals for the ventilation shaft changed? The details of the Construction Arrangements and the permanent structures above ground at Corsica Street were set out in the HFA's Newsletter of May 97. The one-way lorry route for general construction traffic (via St Paul's Road, Corsica Street, Calabria Road (West), Highbury Place to Highbury Corner) was accepted by the Council's Development Control Sub-Committee, providing that certain traffic management measures were set in place. There has been little progress in agreeing these measures with LCR.

The Council are in the process of selling No. 10 Corsica Street to LCR. The consortium want to amend the Construction Arrangements to take advantage of the extra space afforded by demolition (in whole or in part). They are expected to submit their new proposals in May. The local Corsica Street Working Group, which includes representatives from the HFA, will be consulted on any new application. The external materials of the vent shaft building have also to be resolved, following the Council's refusal to approve concrete panels.

Graham Harrington

Senior Planner in Development Planning Office, LBI

Highbury Corner Update

We have long been concerned about Highbury Corner: the poor environment, inadequate facilities for pedestrians and the deplorable entrance to the station. We decided to open up a line to Railtrack, as one of the largest landowners, and had a useful discussion with David Macormack who is responsible for the property issues at Highbury. We stressed the importance of doing something about the CAB site, the Marie Curie shop, the station and of trying to develop a vision for the whole of the Corner.

David said he would take all these points away. He said he had already asked engineers about the loading that the CAB site could take so that he could judge the development possibilities. He said he was in discussion with the owners of the Marie Curie shop, which is on a lease from Railtrack. There is, therefore, the possibility of development on the whole site not just the CAB part. He also said he was talking to the Post Office and London Underground about the station site and to the LBI planners. It was a positive meeting and he promised to keep in touch with us.

Robin Mabey



Container Gardening

Gardening in containers whether they are terracotta, plastic, old sinks or tin baths, painted oil drums or washing up bowls requires much the same ingredients for success. They must have good drainage holes in the bottom and the earth in the container must suit the plant. Always buy good quality compost mixture such as John Innes, that is loam based rather than peat based as it as it will not dry out so quickly. In order to avoid watering more than once a week sprinkle a teaspoon of Swellgel into the earth two inches below the roots before planting. This looks like white sugar, but is an ingenious invention really meant for hanging baskets. When water is added it expands and holds the moisture, releasing it to the plants gradually. Before you plant anything always soak it in a bucket of water in its pot for at least ten minutes.

The choice of plant is endless but some seem really to enjoy the root restriction. For winter scent and evergreen foliage try *sarcococca humilis*. For the spring try *geranium macrorrhizum* varieties, irises, *choisya ternata* and rosemary. Lavender, hebe, cistus, box, periwinkle and euonymus varieties all thrive and are pretty reliable in all conditions except complete shade. Hostas look wonderful but the slugs and snails love them and their leaves soon look tatty. Mattocks have brought out a series of patio roses named after the counties of England. They are perfect for containers; try Avon, a soft pink and Kent, a pure white. Some more unusual plants (that well repay the time you may have to spend hunting for them) have evergreen, silver foliage - try *teucrium frutescens* with soft blue flowers and *convolvulus cneorum* with exquisite white bindweed shaped flowers. No Edwardian garden was complete without hydrangeas or agapanthus in a tub, they flower all summer and come back the following year, as do all the plants I have suggested.

Plants in containers soon get exhausted and their earth gets stale. Feed them in the spring with a sprinkled scoop of Osmocote worked gently into the surface of the earth. A topping of grit is also a good idea - it looks nice, keeps the ground moist and stops the earth flying out of the pot when you water. If you want to see good examples of container gardening in the Highbury area visit the Old Forge Garden Centre in Corsica Street.

Capability Green

Editorial thanks

to all the contributors who supplied the copy and to diligent proofreaders who found the errors; to Mary Kleinman for her illustrations for the 2 O'clock Club and the Container Gardening articles, to Jane Tuely for her linocut for the Islington Arts Circle feature, to Jean Burnett for two pictures of 11, Highbury Place, to Briscoe Craig Hall for permission to use their sketch of the proposal for the Baptist Chapel and to the Islington and Highbury Express for permission to use their photograph of the Jubilee Clock Tower restoration ceremony; and to Hanway Print Centre for their help in the printing process.

ACdeL

Islington International Festival

The fourth Islington International Festival takes place from 16th to 27th June and this year Highbury Fields will be the focus for much of the activity.

Following their sell-out run in Paris, the avant-garde and exotic French circus trio, **Que-cir-Que**, make their UK debut in a Big Top on the Fields between 17th June and 5th July.

Also on the Fields this year will be the famous **Spiegel tent**, the original 1920s magic mirror marquee. It will provide an atmospheric venue for a stunning line-up of local and international talent, which includes Michael Nyman, Jocelyn Pook, Ian Shaw & Clare Martin, Black Umfolosi and Irla O'Lionaird. It will also be a beautiful location for daytime refreshments and lunchtime concerts and will offer daily sessions of aromatherapy, tarot and reflexology.

Final Festival Saturday on 27th June sees Upper Street closed to traffic while more than fifty contemporary artists put together a fabulous interactive exhibition called **BeachLife**, including a giant seaside extravaganza at 'St Mary's-By-The-Sea', aka St Mary's Church Gardens. International street performers and live music from all over the globe will provide entertainment, there will be a bustling market of fine foods, crafts and delicacies from around the world at Islington Green and finally a parade by Spanish company, Sarruga, back with their wonderful creatures from the deep, for the 1998 Year of the Ocean.

In the meantime the Islington Festival Community and Education Programme is involving the local community, from 8 to 80 year olds, in a range of exciting projects such as the Poster Project, a circus extravaganza, Wacaturu, a series of theatre workshops and animated film-making in local schools which will be shown at Screen on the Green on 27th June.

The Festival has set up a **Friend from the Fields** patronage scheme. It is still not too late to sign up - for your name in the programme and an invitation to the launch party - send a cheque for £25, payable to Islington International Festival Ltd, enclosing your name and address to: Friend from the Fields, Islington Festival, 9 The Green, London N1 2XH.

For Festival information phone 0171 833 3131 from 18 May, for Que-cir-Que and Spiegel tent tickets phone 0171 288 6700 after 5 May, or browse the net at www.islington-festival.co.uk.

Catherine Reiser

Executive Director, Islington International Festival

Events on the Fields

For several years the HFA has been trying to establish a sensible compromise about the letting of the Fields by the Council. They see the Fields as a valuable asset to be exploited; we in turn, have come to accept that we cannot prohibit the larger events on the Fields, but have been determined that they should be strictly regulated.

Last year Robin Mabey produced on our behalf a set of rules which we considered should be accepted by the Council. They responded with a revision of that draft and several revisions later eventually emerged what we think is a workable compromise.

The number and size of events is stipulated. The degree of noise permitted, the hours allowed both for working and for accessing and leaving the Fields, the protection and repair of the turf etc are all strictly regulated.

Time will tell if the new rules prove satisfactory in practice and are strictly enforced; we intend that they should be. Proposed events in 1998 include:

June 16-July 5	Islington International Festival
July 6-16	Royal National Theatre
August 17-24	Fun Fair

Olden Garden Community Project

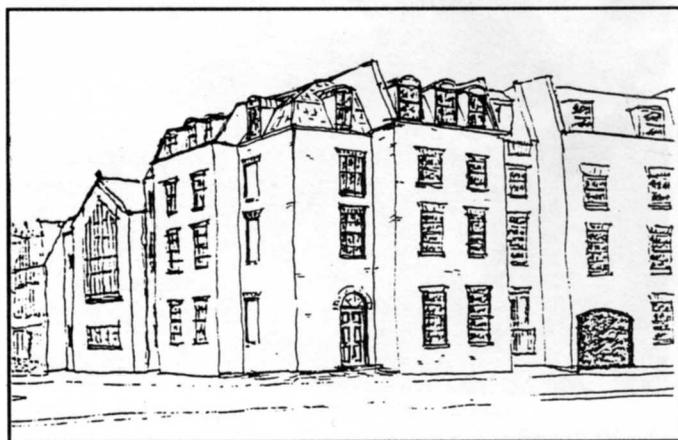
In 1992, British Gas plc gave the Garden a grant from their Grass Root Campaign. A pond, about 20 feet in diameter, was built by members of a Community Service Volunteers project, with additional funding from Islington Council. Children recently broke in causing hundreds of pounds worth of damage, and severely damaged the pond, and help is needed from local residents to repair it. If anyone would like to lend a hand (you wouldn't have to know anything about ponds), they should call Pat Tawn (see below) and leave a contact number on her answer phone. She will let you know the date - a weekend in a few weeks time.

The Garden is situated alongside the railway cutting opposite Drayton Park Station, and is a community project to provide an old fashioned garden especially for older people. The garden faces south(ish) and is a lovely place to sit during fine weather with a covered area to keep members dry when it rains. It includes one of the few wooded areas in Islington, a meadow strip, an orchard and many wild areas, providing a valuable opportunity for the study of local wildlife. It is administered by a local management committee, chaired by Tom Jamieson, a Whistler Street resident. All work in the Garden is carried out voluntarily by members of the project and there is wheelchair access.

The Garden received awards from Shell, in 1989 and 1990, for best London environmental project under their Better Britain Campaign, and in 1995, came 2nd in the Islington Gardeners competition.

To celebrate the Garden's 10th anniversary a party/barbeque is planned for June this year and everyone will be welcome.

Membership of the Project is £1 per year, (free to senior citizens and unwaged). Keys to the garden cost £2 from the Secretary, Pat Tawn, 22 Whistler Street, London N5 (0171 704 8678).



Sketch Perspective of the proposed development of the Baptist Chapel, reproduced with the permission of Briscoe Craig Hall

Providence Baptist Chapel in Highbury Place

The Baptist Chapel, on the corner of Highbury Place and Baalbec Road, was built in 1887 to replace a small chapel in Providence Place. It is Early English in style, built of red brick with stone dressings, and was designed by C J Bentley. There is a proposal, justified by concern about structural damage, to demolish it and replace it with flats advancing onto Highbury Place and a much smaller church behind. Islington Council asked the Islington Building Preservation Trust (IBPT) to give their opinion of this proposal. David Gibson (Dip Arch RIBA: Chairman of IBPT) and Andrew Smith (MA CEng MTStructE) made an inspection of the external elevation of the building and concluded that the damage was not as excessive as had been indicated and that the claimed non-viability of merely refurbishing had not been demonstrated. The sketch above gives an impression of the proposal. It may come to the Planning Committee in May.

Policing Highbury

Burglaries, car crime and muggings seem to be on the rampage in Highbury. Concerned residents will be comforted to know that a Neighbourhood Watch meeting will be held soon to explain to groups who do not yet have one how to set one up and to revive interest in the existing groups. It is hoped to announce the date at the HFA AGM on 18th May.

In the meantime, you can contact the local Home Beat Officer, PC Danny Docherty by phoning 0171 421 0645. He is based at Highbury Vale Police Station which is open from 10am to 6pm on Monday to Saturday and on Sundays when Arsenal is playing at home. He has worked in the Highbury area for over ten years in a variety of roles and took over the Highbury Home Beat from PC Rachel Callaghan, who is just about to have her first baby.



picture by Duncan Phillips
reproduced by courtesy of the Highbury & Islington Express

Jubilee Clock at Highbury Barn

Islington Council were successful with their bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the restoration of the clock finally happened. It was officially opened by the Mayor of Islington, Rupert Perry, on 8th December 1997. Many Islingtonians joined in the party afterwards at Christ Church, hosted by the Reverend John Littlewood, the estate agents Hugh Grover, and the HFA.

The bottom of the clock tower has been coated in an anti-graffiti varnish which protects the paint and makes it easier to clean, especially if treated quickly. Please telephone Anita de Lotbinière (0171 359 6934) if you notice any graffiti and/or if you would be prepared to join a rota of cleaners. To date there have been three occasions when the anti-graffiti spray has been called into use and so far it has worked very well.

Thank you to Alec Forshaw, Peter Bonsall and many others for helping to restore this beautiful landmark.

Maryse Jones

My kind of Town

In the morning building workers and City dealers are the first to head south down Highbury Place towards the underground station and beyond, to be followed by office workers and hurrying school children. Every day rituals involve joggers and swimmers, tennis players and dog walkers, the dispossessed and petty criminals. Annual events include fireworks, tawdry funfairs, revivalist gatherings, mobile theatres and a comic tea-party for London mayors. In summer family cricketers and frisbee throwers dodge sun-worshippers, while on rare winter days snow lays a blanket of awesome silence. The generosity of the tree-lined avenues shelters the football fans as they stream up to the Arsenal in hope and down in - well it depends. There are no fences, yet most walk easily down the paths surrounding the two fields. The overall geometry results from historical accident but magically there is an almost invisible circle of planes in the middle of the avenue that crosses the lower field.

Layered by sunlight, the buildings can be seen in elevation only through the trees, just as the gently sloping fields are seen from the raised ground floors. But the genius of the place is threatened by the age of the trees and the conservationists. The parks department has a genuine problem in preparing for the future by under planting, since the existing is so powerful; nevertheless they cannot resist the temptation of the exotic, placing a low-spreading cedar in the middle of one tree-lined space.

Some well-meaning conservationists are confused by the processes of history and wish to reverse it. The original standard Georgian stock brick terraces have been elaborated over 200 years in response to inhabitants' needs and vanities. Some have added porches to their fronts, many extensions to their backs and nearly all boast mansards on the roofs. One house was refaced in fine-dressed red brick when it became a post office.

Highbury Fields have been developing over a long time. They might be a model for the heart of a sustainable urban development. I believe they are strong enough to survive and look forward to more contemporary contributions. Meanwhile we can enjoy their contradictions: active and passive, noisy and quiet, dangerous and safe.

Robin Nicholson

extracted from an article previously published in 'Architecture Today'

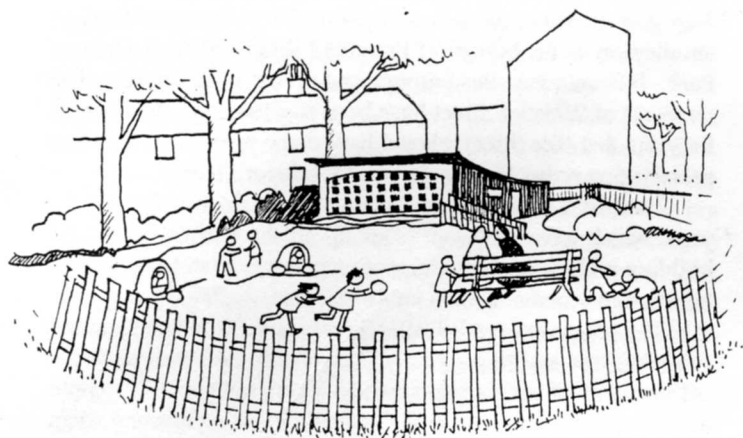
Thames Water - Highbury Fields Booster Station

Thames Water are currently carrying out works to improve water pressure in the area. This involves the installation of an underground booster station and an above ground kiosk on a large water main which runs along the pedestrian pathway adjacent to Highbury Pool, and minor streetworks in Highbury Crescent and Highbury Place.

Construction commenced in March and by Easter excavation of the underground chamber had been completed on time, despite heavy rainfall. Completion of the structure is expected by the end of April when installation of the pumping plant commences. A new pipe has been laid in Highbury Place adjacent to the construction site and was put into service on 8th April.

Minor works on Highbury Crescent will start shortly and should be completed by the end of April with minimal disruption to traffic. We hope that the booster station will be put into service by the end of May 1998, at which time the site will be cleared and all reinstatement completed.

Thames Water apologise for any inconvenience which may be caused by this essential improvement work. If you have any queries, please contact the Customer Centre on 0645 200800 quoting reference BB 312 778. The lines are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and all calls are charged at local rates.



The 2 O'clock Club

Following the AGM in March, the appointment of a new committee and a revamp of the interior, the 2 O'clock club is looking forward to a busy summer. Last year there were on average around 60 children and their parents or carers in the garden on warm sunny days for staff Roy and Gary to supervise. Funded by the Council and others as a drop-in play place for under 5s, the club still needs to raise running costs and money for new projects and play equipment. At present fund raising is also in progress for a ramp in front of the club (to do away with the muddy slope and to lay a soft play surface) and with quotes starting from £3,500 there is much to do.

One of the main ways the club raises funds is by renting out the premises for children's parties (for under 5s) on Saturday and Sunday afternoons until 6.30pm. Party bookings cost £40 with a returnable deposit of £40. Contact Claire White on 0171 354 9124 for further details. The next event is the summer fair in July - ideas or any help with fund raising would be warmly welcomed. Contact the Chairperson, Annie Austin on 0171 278 8332.

The 2 O'clock club is open 2-4pm, Monday to Friday for children under five.

Lucy Smith

Tennis in Islington - Upgrading and Improvement

The Council is eagerly awaiting the outcome of its recent application to the Lottery Sports Fund to upgrade and improve a whole range of tennis facilities across the borough.

At the heart of the application is a proposal to double the size of the Islington Tennis Centre in Market Road, to provide six indoor courts, together with gym facilities, a sauna, aerobics studio, spectator gallery and office accommodation.

Of particular interest to the residents of the Highbury Fields area is the fact that as part of the Lottery application there are plans to re-surface each of the eleven existing courts at the Fields, to floodlight an additional four courts and to provide a practice wall on one of the courts.

If the Lottery bid is successful, it is hoped to start work later in the year, with the work being staged to ensure that no more than four courts are out of use at any time. In addition, should the bid be successful, it is hoped that the Lawn Tennis Association will fund the appointment of a Tennis Development Officer who, although working out of the Islington Tennis Centre, would assume responsibility for a borough-wide programme of courses, classes and other tennis related activities.

For more information, contact the Council's Sports Development Officer, Tom Bogie, on 0171 477 4915, or Anthony Jarrett, the Manager of the Islington Tennis Centre on 0171 700 1370.

Tennis Tournament 1997

It's midday, Sunday June 22nd, a few days off Midsummer's day, already the day before Wimbledon - and there is torrential rain, hailstones in fact, with a river running across Highbury Fields.

More than 80 keen and competitive tennis players are gathering from all over Highbury and beyond, and where is everyone? They are sheltering, dripping wet and drinking hot coffee in the Oasis of the thunderstorm. Well, what would you do - as the organisers of this popular annual tennis tournament, secure in its previous nine years of success and sunshine? Cry or laugh? It didn't really matter which, there was so much water around anyway!

But in true British tradition, the show must go on and so it did! Players became instantly bonded with opponents as they grabbed brooms at every possible moment, sweeping rain off courts, hitting soggy cannonballs and envying those so wanted, all weather, non-slip trainers of the finalist-to-be! The park attendant gallantly attempted to blow dry the courts with the leaf machine. Who could be responsible for such appalling weather? The Test Match at Lords had been cancelled and cricket sweaters hovered under umbrellas but nothing was to put a stop to this day in Highbury.

Lunch brought a lightening in the skies and jazz on the Fields as nearly 150 people tucked into a delicious lunch, heroically provided and organised by the Jones's and their first rate team! No need to do the washing up and the jazz quartet organised by Richard Halvorsen kept spirits up.

The afternoon even managed to bring some sunshine as competitors gathered renewed energy and determination to get through their rounds. By now there were 7 different events going on and despite the damp balls, soggy t-shirts and dripping notice boards the tennis was played with its normal decorum, high standard and friendly competitiveness.

Play went on until 7.00pm. New trophies were generously donated by committee members and presented to all champions by the past Chairman of the HFA, John Hardiman. In the evening sunshine, amongst wine and Highbury chat, past and new members and their friends and families concluded this successful day.

We look forward to seeing everyone again in 1998, when normal weather will be resumed!

Charlotte Halvorsen and Peter Fuggle

1997 Results

Women's singles: Wendy Proudfoot;

Men's singles: Alastair Mackeown;

Women's doubles: Wendy Proudfoot & Yolanda Campbell-Smith;

Men's doubles: Ahmad Zahedieh & Ray Vernon

Mixed doubles: (which was the only event not to finish): Wendy

Proudfoot/Peter Fuggle & Judy Graham-Blair/Steve Nugent;

Family doubles: Rene & Robert Wiesner;

Junior doubles: Jonathan & Alexander Weil

STOP PRESS The 1998 tournament will take place on Sunday 21st June - entry forms will be circulated to all HFA members during May. For more information please phone 0171 354 0031.

Farewell Len and Welcome Tom

Our local postman in the Highbury Fields area, Len Smith, has retired after many years. He was the most friendly, obliging and helpful person, generous with his smiles and his rubber bands. We have been very spoilt indeed to have his wonderful service for so long. And are equally lucky to have Tom Dunkley to take his place. We will miss you Len, but do hope that you can make lots more trips to New Orleans in your retirement and that we will continue to see you locally.

Ginny Worsley

Framfield Road Street Party - 100 years down the road

In 1997 Framfield Road was one hundred. Well, some of the houses were built in 1894 but enough deeds were registered in 1897 to be an excuse for a party - last year was also one hundred years on from Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee which the Highbury Barn Clock was built to celebrate.

On the 7th September 1997 the youngest residents kicked the party off with a children's fancy dress competition, won by a suitably futuristic space monster made from green bubble wrap. As the afternoon progressed residents took part in a treasure hunt, wellie-throwing, bingo, traditional singing, dancing, a disco and a raffle.

Bunting fluttered as the bouncy castle bounced and a local fire engine was a major attraction for the kids. The street barbecued throughout the afternoon and tables were brought in to line the street for our current residents, ex-residents and their guests.

The 'frammies' of Framfield Road had a great day. We had got to know each other as we organised the day, stapling programmes and delivering leaflets and on the day itself whilst consuming a vast birthday cake of the street. Stronger links were forged with local businesses who generously contributed prizes and gave their support.

The day was recorded in photographs, on videos and in our memories. It certainly won't be another 100 years before the next Framfield street party. We 'frammies' would be delighted to share how we did it with anyone who would like to make a street party happen for another local road. **Phone Caroline Pare (0171 704 9761) or Judith Frame (0171 226 3980).**

Disability Action in Islington

This is a completely new organisation taking over from Islington Disability Association in 1996. DAI operates from 91-92 Upper Street, N1 0ND (0171 226 0137, fax 0171 359 1855)

In two years it has attracted many members and is keen to help all disabled persons. A conference on Transport has been held and consultation with Railtrack and bus companies to improve access for disabled people should bear fruit.

There is an advocacy section and any disabled person who wants help should be encouraged to contact DAI.

Bay Hodgson

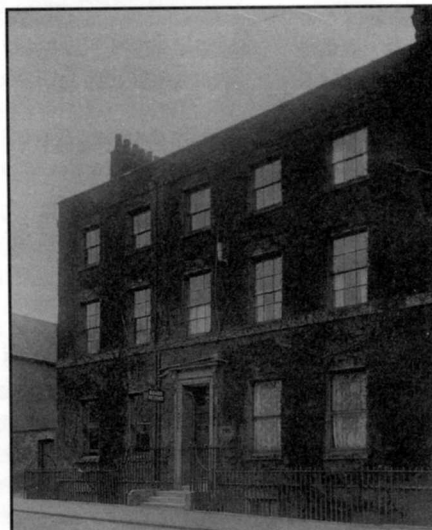
Management Committee and Access Group

Conservation

The Planning Department have produce a series of conservation guidelines for the various Conservation Areas in the borough, so that streets which are untouched and pristine remain so. This prevents alterations to an unspoilt terrace which, if allowed, can set a precedent for others to do the same.

However in some cases there is not the same need for rigid similarity. Highbury Place for instance has many houses which have mansard roofs. In the two illustrations here of No. 11, a 'before' and 'after', one is struck by the fact that the mansard roof (added many years ago) and dormer windows give a balance to the building and take away what was a rather stark roof line. Since then our neighbours at No. 10 have also been allowed to add a mansard roof.

Should we not retain some flexibility in our planning laws? **Jean Burnett**



Whistler Street threatened?

Whistler Street is a delightful quaint little Victorian square of 2-up, 2-down houses just below Highbury Fields, reached through an alleyway at the bottom of Framfield Road and from Drayton Park. It is unique in this borough and probably in London. The residents of Whistler Street have been suggesting to the Council for years that 'the Street' should have some form of listing, or a preservation order, to save it from 'Developer Sharks'.

There have been various planning proposals over the past 20 years which have included knocking all the houses down and building a block of flats; and more recently, a plan to turn eight houses into accommodation for 78 students.

The response from Whistler Street residents to this planning proposal was amazing - nearly everyone in the Street signed a petition, a lot of people sent personal letters and about 20 people felt strongly enough to go to the Council's Planning meeting when they considered the application and turned it down.

Everyone in Whistler Street thinks the houses should be returned to their original use - homes. Although the houses in question have been zoned as light industrial for quite a few years, they are still separate units and could easily be turned back into family homes. The developer seemed to be suggesting at the planning meeting that if residents didn't accept the plan to turn the buildings into a student hostel, the owners would allow the property to fall into total disrepair. Surely, if houses like these start to deteriorate, they should be declared Buildings at Risk and the Council should take them over? There are many families who would be delighted to have one of these little houses as a home.

Although it seems obvious to us in and around Whistler Street that it should be preserved, the Council does not agree. Only last year, one of the houses in the Street was demolished simply because it was cheaper to demolish it than renovate. The excuses given were that there were no foundations - but, like many in Highbury, none of the houses has foundations - and that the internal walls were no good - since they were lathe and plaster - yet the wood in that particular house was in excellent condition. The Planning Department were not consulted about knocking this house down.

If anyone has influence that could be brought to bear on our behalf, **please contact Pat on 0171 707 2672.**



Highbury Community Association

It was in defence of local homes that residents living around Arsenal Stadium rallied nearly a year ago to create the Highbury Community Association (HCA). They argued that Arsenal's proposal to expand the capacity of the stadium by 30% could not be justified in the light of the need to demolish at least 25 homes and eject up to 100 people, many of whom are elderly and infirm.

They are not against Arsenal as a club, but are against the proposed development. "Football is no longer football; it is big business". The Arsenal controversy has since become the subject of radio and newspaper commentary and been debated on television and at countless community meetings. With no resolution in sight, the HCA is continuing its campaign to save local homes.

But the HCA is not a single-issue group. It now has a constitution and a membership of nearly 500. Its boundaries stretch from north of Highbury Fields to Seven Sisters Road and from Holloway Road to Green Lanes and so it overlaps slightly with the Highbury Fields Association.

Among non-Arsenal issues occupying the group's attention are the upcoming local elections, litter along Blackstock Road, helping to raise money (with the aid of a national lottery grant) to renovate a house in Hurlock Street, as a youth and community centre, and working closely with local businesses to identify the impact of the proposed Arsenal expansion on shops on match days. This role has broadened into one of helping local businessmen voice their environmental concerns to Islington Council.

The HCA's constitution says that the organisation aims to promote the interests of the community in and around Highbury; to preserve and enhance the environment and the architectural heritage of the area and to represent the views of its members to the Council. This means that the HCA shares many of the objectives of the HFA. There has been contact between the two associations from the outset, with the HFA committee equally opposed to Arsenal expansion plans. Representatives from the two groups met again in March to discuss how they might cooperate.

Victoria Ellington

The Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square (entrance on Canonbury Road)

The Collection with its core of Futurist works, Modigliani, Morandi and Chirico opened on 28th January for the first displays from the permanent collection.

We have to charge admission as we rely entirely on private donations for running costs. However, you can drop into Zwemmers gallery shop and sample Saffron's delicious Italian style cooking in Cafe Panini without paying admission. And from April (magistrates willing) the cafe will have a full Licence... so summer drinks in the garden (once it is landscaped). How many places in Islington, or London for that matter can you look at great art and eat and drink in an oasis of calm?

Now we are planning for the future, an exhibition of 23 important Futurist paintings from the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome, 8th September to 12th December, and more in 1999. We are also developing a range of educational events which will include talks by artists, curators and writers on Saturdays and a monthly evening lecture programme. Local schools are testing our education packs, the first of which will be available in June. By autumn we will have material for children of all ages.

Our galleries and/or garden can be hired for private events; we intend to launch a Friends Scheme and we may open on Sunday afternoons when we have special exhibitions. We hope you will visit us soon and feel free to make suggestions in our visitors' book.

Alexandra Noble, Curator

Admission £2.50, £1.50 (concessions). Tuesdays free.
Open Tuesdays - Saturdays 11am-6pm. Tel: 0171-704 9522



Houses in Orton, Cumbria: Linocut by Jane Tuely
Member of Islington Arts Circle

Spring Exhibition - Islington Arts Circle

Don't miss the Islington Arts Circle's 150th exhibition which was opened on 22nd April by Clive Anderson and which continues until **noon on the 12th May** at the Central Library, Fieldway Crescent, London N5. Tel 0171 609 3051.

The Islington Arts Circle (IAC) was founded in 1941 and is flourishing with 144 members. These include painters, sculptors, print makers, carvers etc who may be amateur, semi-professional or professional artists as well as a number of associate members who are not practising artists. All members are welcome to join the committee or help with exhibitions. The Arts Circle holds Spring and Autumn exhibitions every year with an occasional summer show and smaller shows in churches and local festivals. The IAC has also exhibited in the Netherlands. Talks, outings and social gatherings are also arranged from time to time.

Membership fees: Full member £8.50; Associate member £7.50; Full time students £1. If you would like to join, contact Shirley McKenna on 0171 226 2767 for further details.

Highbury Roundhouse Association

The Highbury Roundhouse Association is a busy local community centre in Ronalds Road. Founded in 1974 and supported by Islington Council, it caters for all ages, with activities ranging from three Pensioners' Lunch and Social Clubs to Soft Play and Toy Library facilities for the Under 5's. There is a lively Youth Club four evenings a week with a homework class on Tuesday and a wide selection of classes ranging from Dance (including children's ballet and tap for ages 3 - 18) to Karate, via Meditation. There are also several rooms and a large hall which may be hired for private parties. For details of the current programme, ring Conrad or Sue on **359 5916**.

Highbury Pool

Nestled in amongst the trees on the fields, very close to Highbury Corner, is the pool. But we are more than just a pool, in fact there are 2 pools (25 and 10 metres), a state of the art gym, solarium and sauna/steam suite. And, as many of you know, a very happy day can be spent in summer sunbathing on our patio, while the kids cool themselves in the paddling pool.

We are hoping to instal a second sunbooth. There is also a vague idea to increase the size of the gym. This remains pure fantasy at the moment and a decision to move in this direction or not, is to a large extent dependent on our next 12 months' trading. Aquaterra Leisure will, of course, consult with local residents regarding any future building work.

I hope you will come and visit us soon if you are not already a customer. Activities include: swimming, water workout and funsplash. Considerable discounts are available for those who become members under the Izz Card scheme and once you are a member the card may be used at all our other sites and you can telephone to book courts and other activities.

Andrea Keeble

Enquiries 0171704 2312: 24 hour timetable 0171 226 4186

Christ Church - 150 years old

In the 1840s Highbury was still mostly rural. Speculative builders had built Highbury Place and Terrace; Highbury Crescent and Aberdeen Park were being developed; but apart from a few scattered mansions, the area was undeveloped. A few prominent local residents had a vision ahead of their time and sponsored a competition to design a church for the northern end of the parish of St Mary's. Thomas Allom (1804-1872) won with a grand design which would cost much more than the £5,000 specified by the rules of the competition but which made clever use of the site so that from every angle the view of the church is impressive. Christ Church was consecrated on 10th October 1848 and by 1875 the congregation was large enough to merit extending the nave westwards by about a third.

The present congregation intends to celebrate the church's first 150 years and the recent refurbishment programme, scheduled for completion this year. A series of events have been planned starting with an **Art and Flower Festival** on the weekend of May 16th and 17th. The church will be filled with flowers, including displays from the Department of Floristry, Southwark College and on May 16th a canopy will be erected over Church Walk, under which will be held an exhibition of twenty working artists, including many from the Islington Arts Circle. A children's Art Exhibition will be shown in the church garden. Several concerts have been arranged - **Susie Zumpe** (duets and arias for piano and voices) on May 23rd, **The Angels of Islington**, promoted by Pat and Peter Woolf from the Dome Antique Shop on June 13th and on 20th June **A Victorian Evening** - a few professional musicians performing Victorian 'turns' - followed by refreshments.

A **traditional church fête** is planned for the weekend of July 11th and 12th and a **Service of Thanksgiving for the Restoration** will be held on July 12th. There will be a **children's party day** in August. The **Haydn Chamber Orchestra** will give a concert on 12th September and a **Service of Victorian Evensong** will take place on September 13th. Finally, on 12th October, the official **Anniversary Service** will celebrate the original consecration.

In addition to these events, Anne Marsh has been commissioned to produce a book on the social history of the parish - if anyone would like to contribute reminiscences or anything else relevant, please contact Anne on 0171 226 5726.

For more information, watch the railings for notices, or phone the church office on 354 0741.

Save Our Bonfire?

Why did Islington Councillors move the firework display to Finsbury Park last year? Because it was believed by the police that the 25 year old bonfire and firework display had begun to attract "too many people to be safe. They could not get anyone who was hurt out quickly enough or dispel the crowd if necessary", wrote Angela Neustatter in the Islington and Highbury Express.

Why were so many people there? A huge bonfire and splendid fireworks? Certainly, but might it not also have been as a result of the entertainments, the funfair and the music? That helped to attract the crowds, but why were so many people travelling from so far? Because, as Angela put it, "of the council's prodigious publicising of it across London. Highly desirable bands.....have been brought in and other side shows encouraged. All of which have persuaded people who would not have bothered that it's worth trekking to Islington..... What was a safe, fun and relatively low-key event that worked for the local community has become victim of the bigger-is-better ethos to the detriment of the local people".

Do we want it back here on Highbury Fields as a communal event, aimed at entertaining locals and providing an evening which all those who pay council tax can imagine is funded by their monthly payments? Or do we want our Islington show to stay in Finsbury Park, a big impersonal place which can accommodate more people from all round London?

One Highbury Fields local, Val Miller, founded the Save Our Bonfire group (SOB) and, backed by a large number of supporters, petitioned the council. As Angela suggested, let us all be IMBYs (In My Back Yards) and write to our Councillors (at The Town Hall, Upper Street, N1) and ask them not to go abroad to Haringey, but to use our money to set off fireworks here on Highbury Fields. No need for funfairs or live music, just fireworks.

Henry de Lotbinière

Highbury Fields Association: Committee Members

Martin Jones, *Chairman*

Anita de Lotbinière,

Membership Sec

Maryse Jones, *Treasurer*

David Boniface

Jeannie Burnett

Victoria Ellington

Jean Engel

Muriel Feder

Judy Graham-Blair

Bay Hodgson

Carrick James

Ian Kelly

Randal Keynes

Mary Kleinman

David Knight

Liz Lydiate

Robin Mabey

Jennifer Purchase

Miles Thompson

Paul Williams

Ginny Worsley

Nominations for new members for the Committee, proposed and seconded by members of the HFA, should be made to Martin Jones (see above) by Thursday 14th May. Appointments to the Committee will take place at the AGM on 18th May.