

Highbury Fields Association

Founded  in 1971.

Affiliated to Living Streets - Islington
Member of Islington Stadium Campaign Alliance
email: hfa@fsmail.net

Newsletter - August 2003

Chairman's Report

A rose by any other name ... The HFA was formed to respond to a threat to the elms on the Fields at the time. The Fields themselves remain as a core issue for the Association - the state of the grass; damage from events; the drains (soon to be helped by a new storm drain); ugly clamping signs (slowly being removed); new lighting; tree policy; 'Buildings at Risk' etc. We were happy to facilitate both the launch by Clive Anderson and Councillors of 'Vision for Highbury Fields' in the spring and the installation of the Neo-Victorian lamps in Church Path.

We get involved with residents in neighbouring streets and their concerns about important issues close to home - the impact of the vent shaft (a party of members visited the site in July); the worry over mobile phone base stations; dangerous road crossings; and irritating but more minor matters: parking on pavements; litter and noise. Thank you for all your helpful letters. Conservation of our fine buildings remains a priority. We have many fights and successes over planning applications.

Too often we are referred to as the Highbury Fields Residents Association, a title which I always try to correct. For now our horizons are wider. We feel the need to look at Islington and at London-wide issues, some of which are reflected in interesting articles here on the Kings Cross and Arsenal developments. We are now represented on the London Forum. Many other issues we have no room for here, but will keep a close eye on, such as Mayor Ken's fascination with tall buildings and new Enforcement policies.

... would smell as sweet?

Martin Jones

What will Highbury Fields look like in 2043?

The Mayor of London wants to plant a million trees in a city that the Forestry Commission calls "the largest urban forest in the world" But what will the Fields look in

AGM

On Monday 22nd September 2003
At Christ Church, Highbury Grove, London N5
7.30 for 7.45pm

Guest Speaker: Mr Patrick Pugh, of English Heritage, Assistant Regional Director, London Region. All are welcome; those who are not members can join at the door.

forty or fifty years time when the original plane trees are gone? Nearly all the new trees are of a different scale from the original planes; each tree is placed in the largest available gap but without any plan. The planting of smaller trees such as cherries as memorials to local people is inexorably eroding the grandeur of the Fields. Surely it is time to stop any more planting until there is an agreed masterplan.

Each part of the Fields has a different character defined by its trees. My favourite part is Queen's Walk where the plane trees howl on a windy winter night while in summer they provide very necessary shade. Part of the magic is the circle in the middle, marking where once there was a bandstand. Now look at the new oak trees that have been erratically under-planted, 7 to the north and 7 to the south; but there will be no order, no avenue and no circle when the planes have all gone.

One of the most varied collections of trees is around the triangular mound at the southern end; unfortunately this is being relentlessly filled up with trees. Five years ago I wrote to our hard-working chairman to complain about the inappropriateness of the cedar tree that had recently been planted in the centre and I suggested that it be moved to Clissold Park where it might at least have the space to flourish in the grounds of the house in a nineteenth century way.



The cedar was originally planted on this third of an acre patch surrounded by four huge mature planes, an oak and a false acacia and lined by the rapidly growing woodland hiding the swimming pool. Five years later it is still growing, slowly, but it has been surrounded by seven memorial trees, including an oak that is less than ten metres away.

Urban trees like ours are reaching the end of their lives all over the country but now there is money available as the Government has recognized the need to do something about the nation's parks and other green spaces. We made a model play-ground, so why don't we devise a model tree regeneration plan?

There are only two opposing strategies, since the present laissez-faire is clearly flawed; the first would accept that when the planes come down there would be quite a period without them before their successors matured and the second is that we start cutting down some of the trees now and interplant to the original pattern. But we all need to discuss this.

Let us stop this well-intentioned destruction of the Fields and develop a model masterplan that shows the anticipated life and size of every tree on the Fields and develops alternative strategies for our grandchildren. Oh and let's sell the cedar tree while it is still relatively easy to move it.

Robin Nicholson

The People's Needs

Some thoughts from a Highbury Pensioner

London/City of London will become a 24 hour/7-day City. People are returning to live within the Square Mile and surrounding Boroughs - Islington is leading the way. At the moment the Corporation of London estimate the residential population is nearing 10,000. Furthermore, there will be 9 hotels and there are over 600 Residential Planning applications approved. Is buzzing.

London/City of London will continue to be the leading International Financial Centre of the World and Europe. Single currency is inevitable.

Needed projects i.e. Crossrail, East London Railway link, Channel Railway, King's Cross etc. will continue to be delayed entirely to lack of funding.

PRIORITIES. Re-opening of the Accident & Emergency Ward, Bart's. Existing problems - medical equipment too expensive, Nursing costs too high. The Minor Injuries Unit at Bart's is only open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. Sometimes there is no nurse available. Affordable Housing needed for low paid workers.

Conclusion: I remain optimistic and at 83
Looking Forward To Another Golden Age.

Eddie Scilloe, Senior London Citizen,
1940 Conscript Serving in North
Africa, Italy, Austria and Bulgaria.

New Arts Role for Chris Smith

Chris Smith, MP for Islington South, has been appointed a Founding Director of the Clore Cultural Leadership Foundation. He has already started work, and is based in Somerset House.

The Foundation is a new project to strengthen leadership across the UK's cultural sector. Each year, twenty people will be selected as having the potential to be future arts leaders. It is likely that they will already have substantial experience in the arts or another relevant area. The successful applicants will be known as Clore Fellows and will develop their leadership skills by taking part in an individually tailored programme, which may include coaching, mentoring, attending existing specialist courses, secondments to other organisations, academic research and participation in a specially devised intensive leadership course.

The first Clore Fellowships will be advertised later this year and will commence in 2004. Chris Smith will initially carry out his directorial role alongside his parliamentary and constituency work, but he is also announcing his intention not to stand for Parliament at the next general election. In his new post, he will also be responsible for establishing partnerships with funding bodies such as Arts Council England; Resource; the Arts and Humanities Research Board; The Department for Culture, Media and Sport, as well as bringing together a consortium of cultural organisations to accept Fellows on secondment, and establishing links with training providers.

Last year Chris Smith was appointed as a Visiting Professor of the London Institute - a federation comprising the major London art, design and communication colleges. In this role he works closely with HFA committee member Elizabeth Lydiate, contributing to the Institutes's part-time Masters programme, Enterprise and Management of the Creative Arts. The London Institute has recently been awarded university title by the Privy Council and will now become the first specialist university of the arts.

Elizabeth Lydiate

Further information on the Clore Cultural Leadership Foundation from: www.cloreduffield.org.uk

Further information on MA Enterprise and Management of the Creative Arts (next intake January 2004) may be obtained from: Ralph Brown 020 7514 6500, v.brown@lcp.linst.ac.uk (until 15.9.2003) or from Elizabeth Lydiate 020 7514 6521, l.lydiate@lcp.linst.ac.uk (after 15.9.2003)

Highbury Roundhouse

Patrick Danzig, who helped scores of youngsters gain self-esteem and self-discipline by teaching karate at the Roundhouse over the past 20 years, died in hospital on 21 June 2003, after a long illness. Patrick, who was a black belt, 5th Dan, in the Wado Ryu school of karate, encouraged entire families to train together. His traditions and methods will be carried on by Andy Michaelides, a black belt, 4th Dan. Patrick was also a cherished member of the Management Committee since 1984. His colleagues will miss his cheerful and pertinent advice.

Although the Roundhouse operates at near capacity levels, it continues to try to improve and vary the services it offers. For instance, it now provides activities for children of different ages during almost all of the school holidays. This is in addition to providing a breakfast club, which takes children to school, an after-school home-work club and its original Youth Club for teen-agers. The Roundhouse also operates a fully equipped computer school, which can provide training in different areas according to demand. Andrew Berthier is currently organising classes and can be reached on 7359 5916 if you have a particular learning need.

Your community centre, (at 71 Ronalds Road) is currently looking at the possibility of holding more musical events following the success of Schubert Evening in May. The basic idea is to provide a showcase for talent within the neighbourhood. The Roundhouse is also examining the possibility of offering holiday music courses for children and becoming the venue for adult ensembles. If you have any thoughts on the subject, please contact the writer on 7354 0397.

Bill Ellington
Chairman, Highbury Roundhouse

Canonbury Telephone exchange Mobile phone base station

On the roof of the BT telephone exchange on Highbury Grove there is a cluster of mobile phone base station antennae which are radiating to houses and schools in the neighbourhood. Crown Castle have recently erected a new set of antennae on this site to support the roll-out of Three's videophone service and have submitted a planning application for this. This base station is more powerful than other mobile phone base stations in the area and, because of its relatively low height, will radiate directly into bedrooms and the schools in the vicinity. Many scientists claim that exposure to the electromagnetic fields produced by these stations can be very harmful to health and may cause leukaemia, headaches and sterility. No scientists have demonstrated conclusively that exposure at the levels proposed is safe.

Crown Castle have already built the mobile phone base station on the roof of the Highbury Grove Telephone Exchange. This was done without proper consultation with residents. According to the 'Sitefinder' database operated by the Radio-communications Agency - www.sitefinder.radio.gov.uk - this will operate at 500 Watts per channel and is licensed at up to 1585 Watts per channel. It will also support three different services - each having up to 8 channels - giving a high cumulative electromagnetic field. This will be significantly higher than other mobile phone base stations in the area and will be of a similar power to many TV transmitters; by way of comparison O2 operate a base station on Highbury Corner at 3 Watts per channel and Orange operate one on Holloway Road at 28 Watts per channel. The Canonbury Base station is close to three schools in the area and, because of its height and the fact that it is at the bottom of a hill, will direct its strongest beam into first and second floor bed-rooms which have direct line of sight to the antennae.

Are Base Stations dangerous?

Health risks from mobile phones were looked at in 1999 for the UK Government by an "Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones". Although this group found no conclusive evidence mobile phone base stations could cause harm it did not conclude that they were safe. It was sufficiently concerned to recommend that:

"Planning authorities should have the power to ensure that the 'RF' Fields ...will be kept to the lowest practical levels"

"In relation to macrocell base stations sited within school grounds that the beam of greatest intensity should not fall on any part of the school grounds or buildings without agreement from the school and parents".

There have also been a lot of other studies into the possible impact of mobile phones on health ... rather than risks from the base station. There have, however, been a number of studies which have demonstrated that radiation at these frequencies has harmful health effects.

One analysis showed a significantly raised risk of childhood leukaemia with proximity to a high power radio station in Rome.

One study, reported in the European Journal of Cancer Protection, found a "significant dose-response relationship between electric field exposure and incidence [of childhood leukaemia]" having looked at the electric field strengths in the bedrooms of children.

Another study has demonstrated that exposure to mobile phone radiation can generate cytotoxic heat shock proteins; a known carcinogen. Studies are now in progress looking at this topic, but they are all some years from reporting on their findings. I used to be the Director of Technology for the BBC and, as such, had responsibility for all television and radio transmission. A TV transmitter of this power simply would not be built at such a low height in a built up area.

LBI should adopt a more cautious approach on levels of exposure until the risks have been properly evaluated.

1. limit the power to 10 Watts per channel
2. remove planning permission from any base station where the beam of greatest intensity falls on school grounds, hospitals or bedrooms.
3. introduce a planning process for base stations which ensures all health concerns and risks are properly and fully considered.
4. a continued audit of the signal strength from all base stations to ensure a limit of 10 volts/metre.

Philip Langsdale

Appeals Inquiry

Tuesday 25th, Wednesday 26th, and Thursday 27th November 2003 starting at 10.00am in Council Chambers, Town Hall N1.

The appeals are by Hutchison 3G (UK) Ltd, Crown Castle UK Ltd, and Orange PCS Ltd against Enforcement Notices by LBI in respect of:

Without a grant of planning permission, the installation of various equipment attached to a mast structure at roof level on the building and similarly equipment (cabin, mast, antennae and dishes) on the roof on the building.

You are welcome to attend the inquiry and to have your views heard by the Inspector.

Who is Sylvia, where is she?

(but, perhaps, Sylvia is not the person you need to speak to?)

I am sure that all the readers of this Newsletter are concerned about the quality of our environment; many will be 'Islington Eyes', positively encouraged by Islington Council "to help make Islington a nicer borough". My recent experiences indicate the difficulties we are encountering in our attempts to achieve this. One example will suffice.

This month, a builder working in Corsica Street parked his van in one of the two available parking bays for many days, and sometimes all day.

It was clear that he paid a parking fee only when approached by a Traffic Warden. He also frequently occupied the other parking bay with a barrow of bricks; and blocked the pavement with his debris and equipment, forcing pedestrians onto the road. I phoned Parking Enforcement (seven times between June 11th and 20th). A senior officer explained to me that Traffic Wardens' powers are limited: they can "take enforcement only against vehicles" not against bricks! (even though the bricks are occupying, without payment, a parking bay intended for vehicles); nor against builders' equipment blocking a pavement (a car blocking a pavement would be another matter).

I phoned the local Police Neighbourhood Watch Office. Unfortunately, the police "have more serious matters to deal with" and "there are no Police Community

Officers available in the north of the borough" "You might try Highways Enforcement." (I couldn't get through, three times)

On June 17th, I phoned Enviroline and left a message; Lucy called me back - she would contact Highways Enforcement. On June 18th I called again: Sheila this time tells me she would get back to Highways Enforcement, they might ring me! On June 19th I call again (at 10.15am the pavement is totally blocked); Sheila tells me the matter has been referred to Waste Management. (At 5.00pm the pavement is still totally blocked - do I care any longer?)

On June 20th I call again, at 2.45pm (pavement blocked again) and left a message. Clive called me back at 4.45pm: "Waste Management should have called you. Very many apologies." In the event, the builders occupied the site for many, many days without any serious, successful, sustained action being taken against them. Total failure, and a great expense of time and energy.

Later I noticed that the same builder had installed a new garden gate opening, illegally, directly onto the pavement. I phoned Islington Planning Office. "You need to speak to Sylvia; we'll leave a message for her." Next day I visited the Planning Office. "Sylvia? Who is Sylvia? I don't know a Sylvia. What department does she work in? No, you need to speak to Bill." I left a message for Bill on June 25th. Bill didn't phone back. On July 11th I was told by a Very Senior Planning Officer: "Oh, but it's not a Planning Matter. You need to contact (guess what) Highways - Philip, or Daniel, or Brian, or Jim." But how do I know that? I'm just a poor sod in the street!

Jim, actually, came up with the best answer - which I happily pass on to you: "Always phone ENVIROLINE on 7527 5000. They will know which department to refer a problem to; and they will give you a Service Reference Number specifically linked to the problem you are raising." And at least, this will enable you to keep tabs on progress, and maybe (maybe!) achieve a solution.

Who is Sylvia? Who cares; give me Enviro every time! (And I've got her phone number.)

... with apologies to Shakespeare. (All the Christian names above have been altered to spare the guilty)

Paul Williams

Living Streets -Highbury

Living Streets, to which the HFA is affiliated, aims to make streets and public spaces safe, secure and pleasant to walk in. The Islington branch is involved in a number of local campaigns and two current ones in Highbury demonstrate the uphill struggle but occasional success.



Nearing completion

First, the good news on the entrance to Highbury & Islington station. A year ago we launched a campaign to improve the station access, made the connections with Railtrack (owner of the land) persuaded them it was a worth-while enterprise to support (they gave both their permission and some funding) then put them in contact with Camden & Islington Groundwork who prepared the designs and obtained the rest of the funding.

As I write the works are not quite finished but already you can see how much more practical - no more potholes - and attractive it will be. This local improvement resulted from a real partnership but none of this would have been achieved without Islington Living Streets setting the ball rolling.

Now, some bad news. Anyone who walks between Highbury Barn and Christ Church will be aware of the changes at the Leigh Road, Highbury Hill, Highbury Park, Highbury Grove junction. The Council, in order to improve the zebra crossing at Highbury Park, decided to close the Leigh Road exit to Highbury Grove, construct a large piazza and make pedestrians walking to the Church/Barn cross a road with no central reservations and cope with traffic coming from four directions. But there are hundreds of people crossing

this road each day, among whom on schooldays are children attending any one of the six local Primary schools or the two Secondary schools and the motorists swing round both Highbury Grove and Highbury Hill at great speed.

In February, just before the works were completed we arranged a site meeting with the traffic engineers at 8.30am so they could see what it was like in the school/work rush hour. They agreed that it was mayhem but thought that it would be better when the works were complete and motorists were used to the new layout. We met again in March when the children were going home from school; it was better but not much. What we asked for were signs on Highbury Hill and Highbury Grove (warning of pedestrians crossing) and preferably a zebra crossing, but failing that a central reservation so that pedestrians have only to negotiate two streams of traffic not four.

We were told that there could not be a zebra crossing as it would be too close to the junction and that there was not enough space in the narrowed road for a central reservation. We suggested that the piazza be reduced to widen the road. It soon became clear that there was no budget available to fund this; we asked for provision to be made in next year's budget. The current position after much lobbying of officers and of Cllr. Terry Stacy is that a speed table will be build at the crossing point in the summer holidays.

We remain unconvinced that this will deal with what is - every day - a very dangerous crossing for the young, the old and the mobility-impaired. The irony of this is that the HFA - who have supported us in all our meetings with and lobbying of the Council - was consulted about this proposed new layout some three years ago and warned then of all the problems and dangers which are now so apparent.

What I think we need to do is to monitor the situation after the speed table is constructed and to report any dangerous situations to the Council. If people let me know of any problems I will happily take them up - as I am sure will Martin.

Anyone wanting to know more about Living Streets can contact me on 7359 0609.

Christine Mabey

Kings Cross - the Railway Lands

As we all know, Kings Cross is an area much in need of revitalization. It is to be hoped that the creation of a new urban quarter on the redundant railway lands to the north of the railway station will result in a significant improvement in the overall character and appearance of the area. For this to be achieved, the developers will have to deploy immense skill in bringing together good design, imagination and practicality.

As a member of the Kings Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee, I know that we have a very exciting if somewhat daunting task ahead of us. The developers, Argent St George, are hoping to get outline planning permission in the near future. The danger may be that with such a huge scheme (some 35 hectares - about five times Highbury Fields) in front of them, Camden Council will accept the proposals as a package without scrutinizing the complex issues or challenging the developers' assessment in detail.

The retention and refurbishment of the existing historical buildings, and their integration into the new development, will be of great importance. The Great Northern Hotel is a case in point. It belongs to Railtrack. If the present hideous extension in front of Kings Cross station is to be demolished then a new concourse and ticket office must be created. A vast space will be required, and the temptation will be to demolish the Great Northern Hotel. I wonder whether the ground floor of the hotel could not be incorporated into the new concourse, thus avoiding the necessity of demolishing the whole hotel. This is also the view of the Victorian Society.

Another important factor is the creation of a high quality and well-managed public realm with new streets, new civic spaces and good transport links. This will also involve protecting the Regents Canal corridor, and preventing the scale and height of the new buildings from dominating their surroundings. The possibilities to create a fascinating, people-friendly and elegant new quarter for London are there. Every effort must be made to ensure that this is achieved.

Jeannie Burnett

Calabria Road Conservation Area Design Policy Guidelines

This new Conservation Area No. 38 came into force earlier this summer and these guidelines indicate what the normal response would be to planning applications for houses in the area.

The houses involved are: all of Calabria Road east of Corsica Street; Gallia Road; Fergus Road; Liberia Road; the east side of Corsica Street to the north of Calabria Road and Nos. 8 to 22 in Baalbec Road.

The main guidelines are as follows:

38.6 Planning permission for development of non-residential uses that are likely to harm the residential character ... will not be granted.

38.8 The Council wishes to retain all the pre-1939 buildings in the area.

38.10 New buildings should conform to the height, scale and proportions of the existing buildings.

38.12 For extensions and refurbishment, the Council will normally require traditional materials

38.13/14 Consent will not normally be given to remove or alter original sash windows or original front doors or for the painting, rendering or cladding of original external brickwork.

Roof Policies

38.17 In Calabria Road, Gallia Road, Fergus Road and Corsica Street: New windows will not normally be allowed on front or side roof slopes. Alterations to rear roofs will be allowed including projecting dormers under specific conditions concerning size, position, materials
In Liberia Road: No dormers on front slopes; one flush roof light per house may be allowed; rear dormers under special conditions.

All Properties: No removal of chimney stacks or pots; Retain patterned tiles and slates.

38.19 Normally no side extensions

38.21 No rear extensions above single storey

38.25 to 38.32 A list of features that must not be altered: retain recessed front doors; not cover over front basement areas; no dustbin or meter enclosures; no change to front boundary walls; no front area hardstandings; retain tiled front areas

This is only a very brief summary of the new Design Policy Guidelines for this area. I recommend getting a leaflet from the Planning Dept. at 222 Upper Street and/or consulting one of the planning officers there before any works.

Maryse Jones

A Moment of Uncertainty

As the new football season starts and the fans troop expectantly along Highbury Place to the much loved old stadium, the prevailing mood is - Uncertainty.

Arsene Wenger has spent a frustrating summer trying to purchase a new star line-up. He has secured a replacement for David Seaman at an economical £1.5m but this is not, perhaps, the team make-over that he had hoped for. The pundits are agreed - Arsene's budget has been drained by the escalating expenses of the new stadium.

But will that stadium ever see the light of day? Currently all work has stopped. At Lough Road, the replacement waste station, vital to the stadium plan, is but a shell. At Ashburton Grove, the bulldozers have fallen silent, their demolition done. The money has run out. The Club is now knocking on the doors of the banks trying to raise funding to resurrect the scheme. The while, Deloitte and Touche are laying bare the sorry financial state of football. Throughout the two years in which these plans have been promulgated, processed and protested, HFA has sought to safeguard the Fields and the surrounding areas from the uncontrolled invasion of 60,000 fans, friend or foe.

Two Islington residents are taking the Council to the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that their right to enjoy their homes has been infringed. In February, a Public Inquiry was held into the Council's Compulsory Purchase Order of businesses on the Ashburton Grove site. It was vigorously contested, not least by Biorex, the nation's main manufacturer of Hydrocortisone. Biorex have nowhere else to go. The nation's eczema sufferers hold their breath. The Inspector's report is currently with the Secretary of State. Watch this space!

The fortunes of this, the biggest speculative development North London has ever seen, fluctuate no less dramatically than those of the Club on the pitch. One week - all systems go, then it's the Slough of Despond.

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle states that, "The more precisely the position is determined, the less precisely the momentum is known".

Too true, Werner

Tony Miller



Wall illegally demolished at 'House at Risk'

Highbury Fields Tennis Tournament 2003

The tournament took place on Sunday 22 June from 9am until 6pm, despite heavy rain for the first two hours! About 75 players took part, with a particularly pleasing turnout of under 15s, playing both in Family Doubles and Junior Doubles. Among those who participated, there was a general feeling that the format allowed for more tennis for everyone, not just the "pros", and the occasion was a very happy one, with many people bringing a picnic and making a day's outing of the event.

Nicky Manby (HFA member)

Wendy Proudfoot (Tennis coach)

HIGHBURY FIELDS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

As at 9th September 2002

Martin Jones, *Chairman*

Anita de Lotbiniere,

Membership Secretary

Maryse Jones, *Treasurer*

David Boniface

Jeannie Burnett

Victoria Ellington

Muriel Feder

Bay Hodgson

Carrick James

Ian Kelly

Randal Keynes

David Knight

Liz Lydiate

Robin Mabey

Paul Magrath

Nicky Manby

Tony Miller

Jennifer Purchase

Paul Williams

Nicholas Witter

Ginny Worsley

Jean Engel (*Co-opted*)

Nominations for new members (proposed and seconded by members of the HFA) should be made to Martin Jones -see above by Friday 19th September. Appointments to the Committee will take place at the AGM - 22nd September.