

Highbury Fields Association

Founded



in 1975

Affiliated to Living Streets - Islington
and the London Forum
www.highburyfieldsassociation.org

Newsletter - September 2011

Chairman's Report

It can be a mug's game, predicting the future. All right to forecast what will happen a hundred years from now – it is safe to assume no one will point out your mistakes – not to you anyway. Over much shorter time spans it is more risky.

A year ago, for example, I stuck my chin out – too far. I forecast that the Post Office would be demolished and rebuilt (better) on the old CAB site. No chance now of that happening. I hoped that funds might be found to patch up the Oasis Café and the Bandstand. There are no funds in sight.

Where else have I been proved wrong? I claimed that Transport for London had withdrawn from the project to end the Highbury Corner gyratory – again from lack of funds. Now I am told that it is on track again, but delayed while the 'base model' is corrected. Then the new traffic modelling will show the effects on surrounding roads and on the gyratory itself. The subsequent consultation is likely to be delayed till 2012 – but is this a prediction we can trust?

A year ago it also had seemed that the football pitches would not be able to be properly refurbished; now, see page 12, the project has been resuscitated – we hope.

But not all the predictions were wrong. The landscaping at the top of Framfield Road did happen. Highbury Fields School is being improved. Highbury Barn Square did get its transformation – not without some teething troubles.

For several years now we and many others have been pressing for the vital new changes needed for the dangerous Madras Place crossing. It will soon be completed.

We welcome the inclusion of the Citizen Advice Bureau in the Municipal Offices at 222 Upper Street, but want to also mention the existence of the Islington Law Centre, at 161 Hornsey Road, N7 6DU 020 7700 2461, helping people on low incomes or on income support.

There has been much debate this year on the Big Society, on Localism and on the possibility for areas to develop Neighbourhood Plans. We would be very interested to hear your views.

Ben Rogers, our speaker at the AGM, is a writer and political analyst, with a particular focus on issues of citizenship, public service reform and the built environment. He is director of the Centre for London, a think tank for the capital.

Martin Jones

AGM

On Monday 17th October 2011

At Christ Church, Highbury Grove, London N5

7.15 for 7.30pm

Guest Speaker: **Ben Rogers**, Director, the Centre for London, will speak on "Is London too big?"



The deep burnt impression made by a flat disposable barbecue

To BBQ or NOT to BBQ? That is the Question!

Until the end of May this year, Council policy was quite clear. Barbecues were not allowed in the parks and open spaces in the borough and, in theory, transgressors ran the risk of having their barbecue extinguished by the Parks Patrol. In practice this was rare and if people did see the "No Barbecues" notices they largely ignored them. The Council admitted that it was difficult to monitor the use of the park and enforce the ban.

The Easter weekend at the end of April had been warm and sunny with hundreds of people on the Fields. Several residents expressed their concern about the huge amount of litter that had been left behind. One reported 21 barbecues 'on the go' of which 7 were raised off the ground but 14 were burning the grass. Another took a video showing a huge cloud of smoke given off by one of them, engulfing others in the park but also unpleasant, smelly and polluting for nearby houses and passers-by.

One of our members resigned, horrified by the 'poor and worsening state of the Fields' and the HFA Committee's apparent lack of concern about litter, although we had reported on the problem in our Minutes of the November and December 2010 meetings and that of January 2011. We do talk to Greenspace about the

problem and have met with the contractor, Enterprise, which does lay on extra staff when warm, sunny weather is forecast.

Another of our members reported that he chose to meet the litter head on. Direct action. He bought himself a "folding grabber-stick which, together with a spare plastic bag, I now take with me whenever I walk through from the clock-tower to the station. Of course, people think I am mad but I feel it helps to remind the picnickers that they are being watched, however infrequently, and judged on their behaviour".

Then, at the end of May, the Council chose to end the ban on barbecues in the parks and open spaces in the borough. "Most people in Islington don't have a garden ... We believe we can trust our residents to use barbecues responsibly and clean up when they leave"

One of our members challenged Catherine West, the Council Leader, in a long exchange of emails, pointing out the potential dangers of abandoned still-hot disposable barbecues. He compared the new decision with the continuing ban on fireworks in parks. She wrote "Lifting the ineffective ban creates an opportunity for us to engage with park users, ensure that they behave responsibly and that no damage is caused to the grass or litter left behind".

It is probably too early to predict the long term effect. The poor August weather has probably deterred further large-scale use of the Fields. Some have predicted disastrous effects – the eventual total ‘browning’ of the grass which is probably, hopefully, not going to happen. There is already some evidence that a lot of the charred areas have not damaged the roots, allowing the grass to recover in the winter. What is less certain is that park users can be encouraged to behave responsibly, remove their litter and safely dispose of their disposable barbecues.

What we can be fairly sure of is that it will be hard to persuade the Council to change their barbecue policy in the short to medium term. Politicians don’t like U-turns!

Martin Jones

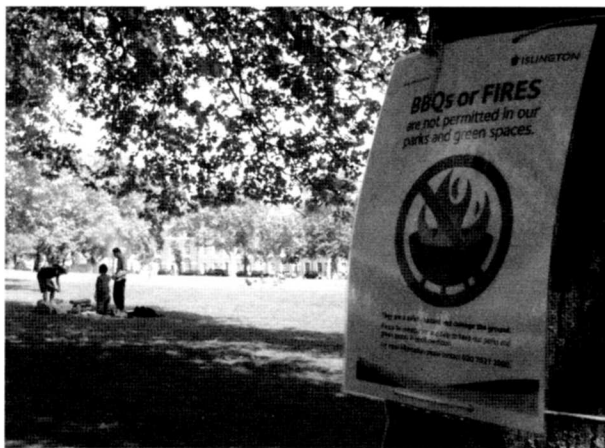
Changes to Park Keepers Hours

Until recently, the park keepers at Highbury Playground have worked from 12 noon till dusk every day. That meant that in summer there was a keeper on site until 9pm when the play area closes. But keepers reported that they regularly have park users ask if they could start earlier to ensure that the park toilet is opened (open only when the park keeper is present). They also said that the usage of the play area greatly drops off from 7pm to 9pm.

Greenspace conducted a survey in June to discover that over the month 270% more people used the park between 10am and 12noon than in the period 7pm to 9pm. They decided to conduct a trial, starting 1st August, for keepers to work from 10am to dusk or 7pm (whichever comes first).

The play area will still stay open for the normal park opening hours. The HFA have welcomed the trial as likely to prove useful but have pointed out that the evening hours of play area opening after 7pm, without keeper supervision, could be dangerous for children. Because of that risk, Greenspace have now asked the Park Patrol to call in regularly in those evening hours.

Martin Jones



No BBQs or Fires. A poster on the Fields before the barbecue ban was lifted. In the background a barbecue is alight!



Burnt grass and an abandoned disposable barbecue – often still too hot to touch.



One of the many piles of litter left on the Fields.

Local Police? Ring 101

If you just want some information from your local police station – then ring **101**

Call **999** only for emergencies.

Everyone for tennis?

1. Well served!

The organiser of the Highbury Fields Tennis leagues tells us why we should all be proud of our tennis achievements.

Is this a golden age of tennis on Highbury Fields? Certainly the courts have never seemed busier, nor the whole facility better used, or the atmosphere more friendly and attractive.

In fact, through the hard work of a number of individuals and organisations, we are lucky enough to have built up a unique tennis resource which has something for everyone.

In every aspect, tennis is booming. Coaches Hitesh Soma and his brother Viren have worked very hard to encourage the next generation of players and now run two squads for 10-11 and 11-17 years olds, with up to 40 players in total. They also have around 80 children playing on a regular weekly basis.

Wendy Proudfoot, who continues to run the very popular and successful annual Highbury Fields Summer Tennis Tournament, has built up a team of ladies doubles and, following its success in LTA leagues, there is now a similar group for men with a doubles team regularly playing local clubs.

The Soma brothers and the other dedicated coaches who work on the Fields all year round, ensure high quality tuition is easily available for all. There are many regular social meet ups, (including a Saturday morning 'mix-in' that is open to everyone), and the Highbury Fields singles and doubles leagues go from strength to strength.

Launched with a handful of friends in May 2005, our record entry is 150 people in the Mixed Singles League and 100 in the Mixed Doubles! It has also become the model for a nationwide grassroots network of leagues elsewhere and we now run around 50 from Brighton to Bris-

tol, Glasgow to Gladstone Park and Hastings to Highbury Fields! The leagues are recognised by the Tennis Foundation and registered with the LTA – which means all players are entitled to free British Tennis Membership worth £25.

But, most of all, the tennis courts on Highbury Fields are a place where anyone and everyone is made to feel welcome. Thanks to the stewardship of Dave and his colleagues in the hut, who manage the bookings and maintain the courts on slender resources, we have something very valuable here of which we can all be proud.

Looking to the future, all these committed and regular users hope that, by growing our links with the council, we can help build an even better facility. There is work to be done in improving the courts, drawing on the expertise of the governing body, the LTA, and making sure that the centre continues to be run for the benefit of all its users.

But this is a great time for parks tennis! Come and join us any time!

For more information on the Highbury Fields Tennis League or any of the organisations and coaches mentioned here see:

www.localtennisleagues.com/highburyfields

There is also a contacts page for all the organisations and coaches mentioned here:

www.localtennisleagues.com/highburyfields/contacts

Sally Kinnes

2. Well Played!

On Sunday 19th June, the 2011 Highbury Fields Tennis Tournament, sponsored by Hot-black Desiato, was a great day filled with extremely entertaining tennis – whether watching, supporting or playing. Our beautiful park setting was occasionally bathed in sunshine but mostly scudding cloud and thankfully the rain held off.

The finals produced some amazing rallies,

easily worth of SW19. We enjoyed tennis of a very good standard, played in a very happy enjoyable spirit – the lovely chilled white wine and ice cold beer all contributed to a splendid finale. This year we had a few new winners which bodes well for future years.

Thanks again to Nicky Manby who is the queen of admin. And also to helpers on the day: Joy Grover, Jenny James, Alexander el-Nemer, Kate Matthews, Caroline Griffiths, Bella & Jesse-Mae Branch, who all helped to make the day such a success.

The winners were:

Men's singles: Cristian Winder. Runner-up Daniel Brachfeld

Mixed doubles: Kalsang Youdon and Robbie. R/u Melanie Howard and Julian Frame

Ladies singles: Joy Grover drew with Susannah Oxley!

9 and under singles: Sammy Winder. R/u Thomas Vimpany

12 and under singles: Billy Sutton-Mattocks. R/u Jack Matthews

Family Doubles: John and Sasha Markland. R/u Scott and Jack Matthews

Junior Doubles: Sasha Markland and Ed Adonis. R/u Ivan and Jonathan Bennett

Ladies Doubles: Milly Ayliffe and Julie McKenzie. R/u Melissa Hardinge and Marianne Hewitt

A cheque for £350 was sent to Macmillan Cancer Care from the proceeds of the tournament.

Wendy Proudfoot



The landscaped area which replaces the ugly Glendale depot at the top of Framfield Road.

Air Pollution – the Aphekomp Project

More than half of the primary schools in the borough are within 150 yards of busy main roads carrying 10,000 or more vehicles a day, responsible for high levels of pollution and, a new study claims, for up to 30% of all new cases of asthma in children.

60 scientists working for the Aphekomp project are making an in-depth health impact assessment of air pollution in 25 cities (including only London in the UK) in 12 European countries. The World Health Organisation's air quality guideline for long-term exposure to very fine airborne particles, known as PM2.5, is exceeded by all but one (Stockholm) of those 25 cities. The scientists calculate that this pollution causes 19,000 deaths annually in those cities, of which 15,000 are from cardiovascular diseases, with hundreds of those deaths each year in Islington.

Londoners want air quality to improve: a 2010 survey showed that their highest environment priority was reducing traffic pollution, which is responsible for 80% of air pollution. The Mayor of London's new Air Quality Strategy lays out how he expects the boroughs to use the planning process to reduce emissions. The strategy requires new developments to be "air quality neutral" through the adoption of best practice in the management and mitigation of emissions.

Visit: www.aphekomp.org

Maryse Jones

An Unwelcome Anniversary

Anniversaries are strange occasions. Some are a cause for celebration. Some evoke sad memories. Some leave you flummoxed, wondering how so much could have happened without you noticing that a year has gone by. This last is the prevailing feeling I have about Highbury Roundhouse.

A year ago, on August 16th to be precise, the District Surveyor arrived on our doorstep and declared that the building to the rear of the site, adjacent to Whistler Street and the Olden Gardens, was unsafe. He closed the so-called 'Bottleworks' building and issued a Dangerous Structure Notice. The Council was given seven days to repair the building or demolish it.

It's still standing – just. Though, as you read this, the bulldozers might be revving up.

In the past twelve months, life at the Roundhouse has been dominated by the struggle for survival. We have managed to find temporary accommodation for nearly all of the activities that we either manage or host, although they are now scattered over six different sites. In some instances we have been able to expand our services. The Roundhouse took over management of the Sotheby Mews Day Centre to save it from closure and our pensioners clubs have been able to join the activities on offer there. We run after-school clubs in three primary schools with others queuing up to use our expertise. We continue to operate from our offices in the house at 71, Ronalds Road and several of our groups continue to use the meeting rooms in the house.

The battle for the Bottleworks has continued unabated. Our structural engineers challenged the need for demolition. We were not surprised that the Council were reluctant to undertake repairs. For as long as we can remember the Council has been reluctant to undertake repairs. More than a decade of neglect is bound to take its toll.

Just before Christmas we engaged the services

of the Morton Partnership, one of the most eminent firms of structural engineers in the country. Brian Morton was asked to produce a scheme that would save the Bottleworks. The elected Councillors gave the exercise their blessing. Morton came up with a plan to stabilise the building and give it another sixty years of life. Moreover he showed that this was a much cheaper option than demolition. However in May, and we still don't know why, the Council decided they preferred to knock it down.

At the end of June there was a public meeting where the Council tried to explain their decision to a sceptical and vociferous audience of local residents. Some positive things have emerged. The Council is now committed to the provision of a new community centre on the site and also to giving Highbury Roundhouse a lease on the new building.

You'll appreciate that these are merely 'tip of the iceberg' moments. In between there have been endless meetings, press reports, complaints and the odd enforced change of council personnel. As I write this, I have just returned from a gruelling two hour session with the Council's legal department hammering out the terms of the lease. (These things require stamina. We have been seeking a formal lease for.....more than twelve years.)

There has been much speculation about the Council's plans for the remainder of the site once the provision of a new community centre has been secured. For the moment it remains just that – speculation. Current thinking is that they may not be in a position to consider a scheme for building housing until next year, possibly not until July.

It is to be hoped that plans to create a new Highbury Roundhouse will be well underway by then. So I hope I shall not be reporting a Second Anniversary of Uncertainty.

*Tony Miller;
Secretary to the Highbury Roundhouse*



Unveiling of the replacement plaque for painter Walter Sickert at 1 Highbury Place by the painter's nephew Mr Lessore; with Jeremy Corbyn MP.; Councillors Foxsmith, Stacy, Gilbert and Debono and Martin Jones of HFA.

Danger: Elms at Risk

When this Association was formed in 1975, the spur was the imminent threat that 32 of the magnificent elms, interspersed with the London Planes in the avenues around the Fields, were to be felled, because they were considered to be dangerous. In the HFA June 1975 Newsletter they reported on the reasons why the trees should be considered healthy and should be saved.

By March '76 the Committee had to acknowledge the existence of Dutch Elm Disease; mourned the loss of the first 32 elms and were now fighting to save a further 61 trees accused of "instability". The elms were being injected with fungicide. 52% of 'English Elms' in the country were dead or dying; about 25% of 'Wych Elms'; but they were able to report that only 13% of 'smooth-leaved elms' (Huntingdon elms) – the variety of most of the elms on the Fields were affected – perhaps ours could be saved.



A desperate attempt in 1975 by members of the newly formed Highbury Fields Association to save the 32 elms that had been condemned.

By 1977 most of the elms on the Fields had gone and the HFA were joining with local schools and the Parks department in a programme of planting new trees.

Martin Jones



The bandstand that stood in the line of young planes in what is now Queen's Walk ca.1885.

A Place of Recreation

It was the best of years; it was the worst of years. Best for rats and other vermin and for the careless multitudes who like a barbecue as much as the next man, but are less endeared to the idea of clearing up afterwards. Worst for the grass on the Fields, and for those who would like to enjoy it at its best.

Sadly, this was an issue over which the Council, having lost the battle in real terms decided to throw in the towel and take the easy way out. Maintaining a viable open space in good condition for all to enjoy was being a "spoilsport" (according to one councillor in the local paper). Next year's sport, which the Council will be loath to spoil, will be shying empty beer bottles at the wall. We're sure the culprits (sorry, participants) will clear up afterwards. But don't take your shoes off, toddlers.

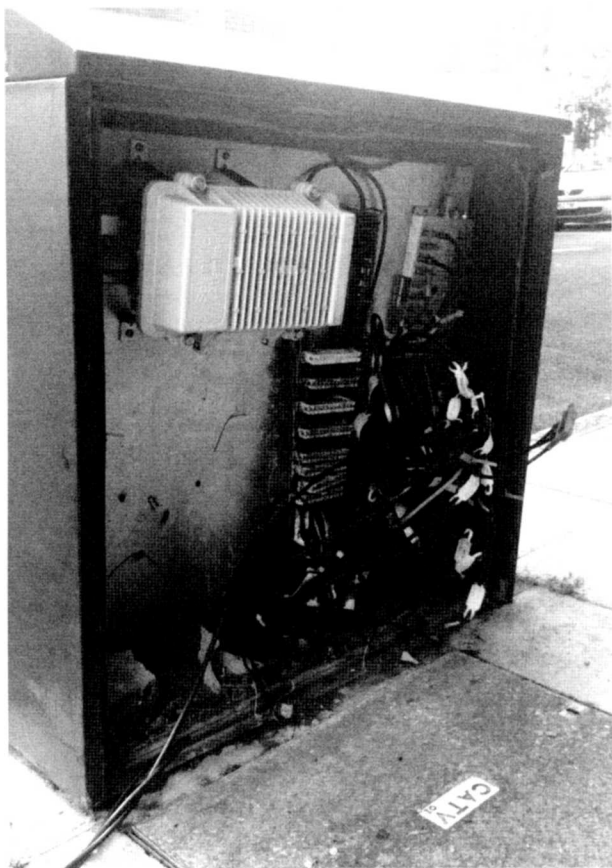
It was a middling year for the fun fair, a somewhat low key event, whose unambitious rides seemed calculated to thrill only smaller children or those of a mildly excitable tempera-



Tina's Icecream van, powered by an electricity cable provided to avoid airborne pollution.

ment. However the Punch and Judy show was a corker, traditional in the best sense and minimally afflicted by PC considerations. I particularly enjoyed the bit about counting the sausages.

It was a good year for ice cream, and for that fixture on the Fields without which no trip to the sunny playground is complete: Tina's Ices. Tina knows everyone, and keeps a weather eye on the little ones, including escapees from the errant care of distracted mums and nans and



BT junction box minus steel door.

nannies. And her ices are better than those of rival vendors.

Last year I wrote about graffiti. To be precise, about Banksy and the quasi-Banksy works which had appeared on BT junction boxes in streets around the Fields. But even if you take the view that a bit of “unofficial street decoration” actually constitutes criminal damage to the back of these junction boxes, it’s as nothing compared to what’s happened to the front, where the metal doors on many of these junction boxes have been ripped off. Literally. It’s for the metal, apparently. Metal prices are at an all-time high, not just investor’s gold but humble iron too. And, when you can find it on the street, steel’s a steal.

Ah well. Nothing’s perfect. Life goes on. The Fields remain at the centre of our lives: or to put it another way, we live our lives around the Fields.

Paul Magrath

Hon. Secretary Wanted for HFA

Sadly, Pamela Welson, who has served us efficiently and ably as our Hon. Secretary for several years has resigned because of pressure from other commitments.

Is anyone out there willing to join our Committee in her place? We are a friendly group of people; we meet only seven times a year and it does give you a say in what we discuss and decide.

If you would be interested to discuss the possibility, please ring Martin Jones on 020 7226 2145,



A view of the upper level of Olden Garden.

The Olden Garden

Discover this oasis of nature opposite the Arsenal stadium. Behind a hundred foot Victorian brick wall in Whistler Street lies a community garden of two acres. There are flowerbeds, vegetables, an orchard, meadow and woodland. Membership is open to Islington residents. If interested contact:

Anna Sullivan – 0207 226 6821

Teresa Ahearne – 0207 354 1099

Jill McKeown – 0207 226 0222

Jill McKeown

Area Parks Manager calling:

1. Long grass meadows: Highbury Fields has a number of established long grass meadows that play a significant role in improving the biodiversity of the Fields and supporting a range of insect and plant life.

Long grass meadows increase the amount of plants that provide food and habitat for native insects, birds and small mammals such as bats.

Other benefits include:

- Improving residents' enjoyment of wildlife and bringing children closer to nature.
- Increasing residents' sense of emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

As the long grass areas become more established over time, wild flowers will be able to seed and the variety of colour and plant life will increase. To help speed up this process we are looking at options to seed the long grass areas with additional wildflowers to increase their diversity.

2. Controlling the litter levels is one of the biggest challenges the Council faces in Highbury Fields. To deal with the litter generated during high usage periods, (like public holidays and hot summer days), Enterprise (the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contractor), have a dedicated litter picker working from 8.00am to 8.00pm. The litter picker is supported by the park keepers and a mobile litter team which assists with early morning clear-ups and litter bin emptying throughout the day.

Ioachim (pictured) is the static litter picker in his first year working in Highbury Fields and has already received praise for his hard work and friendly manner. Please help make Ioachim's job a bit easier by putting your litter in the bins provided.

Julian Evans



Ioachim (pronounced Kim) the static litter picker for Highbury Fields.

[If you would like any more information about either long grass meadows or the services provided, please contact: the Area Parks Manager, Julian Evans at: julian.evans@islington.gov.uk]



The construction of the Highbury Corner roundabout soon after World War II. Left of centre: Barclays Bank. Right of centre: Andrews store, now Marie Curie.



The large paddling pool close to the southern end of Highbury Fields, now replaced by the 'Mound'.

Goldfinches, Leaping Squirrels and the Jay Massacre

Our 41st year in Baalbec Road has witnessed amazing happenings in our midget garden backing onto the Fields.

Last year I recorded here occasional visits by goldfinches. This year these beautiful birds have often been daily visitors, possibly attracted by our new niger seed feeder. On some days we have seen goldfinches, greenfinches and chaffinches all at the same time.

In past years, our bird feeders have mainly been used by birds, and squirrels have been unable to reach them. This year certain fan-tailed squirrels have become extremely athletic. We have squirrel-proof feeders, designed so that a cover falls over the food if the squirrel jumps on the feeder. This year squirrels have been making amazing leaps from branches and from the ground to jump onto the bottom of the feeders and consume the contents.

I have tried putting feeders at the top of a greasy pole, and suspended on a washing line. But the squirrels have made 4 foot leaps onto the feeders, climbed up the greasy pole or scrambled across the washing line. The latest RSPB catalogue has got another squirrel-proof design and the Olden Garden have just purchased another type – let's hope one of them works.

In March a huge, colourful bird appeared and attacked visiting great tits and blue tits. It caught one of these and carried it away to a neighbouring roof and proceeded to peck at it. From the bird book it appeared to be a jay, although jays are supposed to be vegetarian. This one certainly was not!

Carrick James

Police Link



The local police officers and police community support officers:

(Left to right) PCSO Dan Ingram; PCSO Jayne Onslow; Sergeant Rob Leslie; PC Emily Horsford; PCSO Faheem Malik.

Sign up to a messaging system for police news.

Islington Police have launched an innovative community messaging service to provide the public with news and information from their local police. Called *Neighbourhood Link*, it is a free service that enables local residents, businesses and those who work in the borough to regularly receive information from the police. Those signing up will receive emails about crime and safety in the areas they sign up to.

And, through *Neighbourhood Link*, Safer Neighbourhoods teams will keep recipients updated with local police activity, crime prevention advice and what they are doing to address community concerns and make our borough one of the safest in London.

In order to register, you will need to provide us with your contact details. Visit: www.neighbourhoodlink.met.police.uk and follow instructions.

The information provided will only be used by the Metropolitan Police Service: it will not be passed on to other organisations.

Susannah Taw, Media and Communications Manager, Islington Police.

Pitch Improvements

The surface of the football pitches was patched up recently but remains in a poor state. But now Greenspace have announced a project to improve that sports area.

It would involve replacing the fencing, creating a 5-a-side pitch, improving the quality of the remaining tarmac playing surface and replacing the floodlights.

The existing playing area would be split; the western third turned into an artificial turf 5-a-side football pitch and the remaining space resurfaced with tarmac and marked out for netball and basketball. The height of the fencing along the northern boundary would be increased to help prevent balls escaping from the playing area. The new floodlights would be better targeted at the playing area and would include measures to reduce light pollution. The overall size of the sports area would not change.

The space would be available for hire, with priority initially given to schools, existing users and sport development organisers. There would also be times when either all or part of the space could not be booked and would be available on a first-come, first-served basis for free. The draft timetable would allow free use during the week from 5.00pm to 9.00pm (from 4.00pm on Fridays) and from 1.00pm at the weekends.

There is a planning application P111903 and, if the application is approved, it is hoped the refurbishment can start on-site in 2012.

Goodbye to the Cherry Tree

At the eastern end of the football pitches, leaning against the fence, a large cherry tree is to be felled. To the layman it looks healthy, but it is apparently not safe for it to remain there. In its place will be planted five trees: two Tulip trees; two Great White Cherries and a Dove tree (also known as the 'handkerchief' tree).



Photovoltaic and solar thermal panels at the back (east facing) of a Highbury Place house.

HIGBURY FIELDS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Martin Jones, *Chairman*

David Boniface,

Vice Chairman

Anita de Lotbinière,

Membership Secretary

Maryse Jones,

Treasurer

Secretary (Vacant)

Jeannie Burnett

Victoria Ellington

Carrick James

Ian Kelly

Robin Mabey

Jennifer Purchase

Caroline Russell

Pamela Welson

Paul Williams

Nicholas Witter

Ginny Worsley

Paul Magrath

Legal Consultant

Tony Miller

Web Consultant

Nominations for new members (proposed and seconded by members of the HFA) should be made to Martin Jones by Friday 14th October. Appointments to the Committee will take place at the AGM on Monday 17th October.

Please advise the Membership Secretary if you wish to receive Minutes by email.

Members of the Association are welcome to raise and discuss any particular concerns they may have. We like to hear your views. Please telephone Martin Jones or via our website: www.highburyfieldsassociation.org

Do join the HFA, and keep in touch with developments in our area.

Editors: Martin & Maryse Jones