

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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Highbury Heritage: an exciting new community resource, open to all

By JANET GILBERT

There were celebrations of a distinctly British kind in Highbury on July 4 this year, as Christ Church hosted an evening reception to mark the unveiling of Highbury Heritage, the new audiovisual community history and heritage project through which visitors can access videos and slide shows about Highbury’s past and present.

Highbury Heritage was planned and developed as an essential adjunct to the recent extensive spire repair programme part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (see the October 2016 issue of Highbury Community News).

In 2014 a routine inspection revealed that the spire’s original Victorian iron cramps dating from the church’s construction in 1848 had rusted badly, resulting in extensive wind and water damage to the stonework of the spire and putting its stability at risk. Fortunately the eventual repair cost of £350,000 was funded by a generous grant of £206,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a further emergency grant of £27,000 from Cloudesley, local fundraising activities, and volunteer support worth many tens of thousands of pounds.

In one of his last public meetings before his move later in July to a new post at St Paul’s Cathedral, Christ Church vicar Rev Jonathan Brewster welcomed visitors from all over Islington to celebrate the successful completion of Christ Church’s spire



and heritage project. There were lively presentations by Peter Fisher from London Metropolitan University (also a contributor to this newsletter) about the Great Hall at the Holloway Road campus, by Melanie Griffiths on the 500-year-old legacy of Richard Cloudesley in the borough, and by church wardens Michelle Paton and Janet Gilbert on the spire repairs and the development of Highbury Heritage.

Over canapés and drinks, visitors then had the opportunity to view a sample selection of videos on the touchscreen and to browse through a number of documents and artefacts from the church’s own archives.

In a series of short films, narratives supported by old and new images, oral histories and brief memories, Highbury Heritage explores six major themes: Highbury names and places; leisure and entertainment; Highbury people; the legacy of war; schools and

community; and Christ Church Highbury.

A dedicated team of enthusiastic volunteers spent over twelve months interviewing local people, digging through the church’s archives, conducting research at the Islington Local History Centre, London Metropolitan Archives, Arsenal and the Imperial War Museum, talking to local schools and community organisations, identifying relevant images, and finally writing and narrating the stories about different aspects of Highbury’s fascinating history.

The result gives a delightfully eclectic but balanced view of how Highbury’s development through the ages has shaped what it is today. Much of the filming was done by two young filmmakers with strong local connections: Joseph Henshaw, who

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Updates on local planning and roads

By JOHN EGAN

The Old Police Station, Blackstock Road



Sainsbury's have appealed against the council's decision to refuse permission for change of use to retail. The matter will now be decided by a government appointed inspector and thus taken out of the hands of our elected representatives. The final date for submitting objections has now passed and we can only wait for the inspector's decision. Objections previously made to the council will be passed on to the inspector.

Legard Works



The council refused permission for development at this site because of a shortfall in affordable housing provision; the developers said that they could not afford it! We had raised doubts about this development on the grounds of over development and access problems. Once again, the decision will be made by a government appointed inspector.

Drayton Park Width Restrictions



The traffic management order has been signed off but it is expected that Tesco will challenge it. This issue will need to be resolved before the width restrictions are put in place. The council have not found any borough that has managed to force Tesco to change their delivery vehicles by using width restrictions. The lorry ban does not apply when vehicles are being used for access, which is what Tesco will be doing. We can only await developments.



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lives in Highbury and attended both St John's School and Christ Church, and Giacomo Esposito, whose late grandfather Maurice Taylor was the architect and driving force behind the 1980s refurbishment of Christ Church. New videos and other material will continue to be added over the next couple of years.

Highlights of the project include interviews with Highbury Barn traders, a visit to Olden Gardens, an exploration of different areas in Highbury presented by local historian Susan Hahn, and even a short chat with Arsenal's mascot Gunnersaurus!

From September Highbury Heritage will be open to the public on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (term-time only!) from 9.30-11.30am and on Sundays from 12.15 to 1pm. There is no charge. Entry to the church is via the glass doors opposite the clock tower. Group visits can also be arranged by contacting the church office on 020 7354 0741.



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More information revealed about changes to Highbury Fields

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

Details are emerging about the substantial proposed changes to the northeast section of Highbury Fields. Islington Council are remodelling the buildings adjacent to Highbury Grove and providing improvements to the landscaping of the area.

Buildings to be removed include the current children’s services provision (known as the “One o’clock club”), a derelict park keeper’s cottage, the refreshment kiosk and public toilets. Replacement facilities will be created in structure or will be split into two footprints in the same area.

The council has currently allocated over £550,000 for the project although the final cost for the redevelopments will run much higher.

As well as the high expectations of the community, developers will also have to content with three heritage planning considerations. Highbury Fields is within a conservation area and is designated as Metropolitan Open Land while Church Path, close to the proposed site, is listed.

Five architects have been invited to quote on the project: : LBI’s in-house architectural services, Sarah Wigglesworth Architects (<http://www.swarch.co.uk/>) Knox Bhavan (<https://www.knoxbhavan.co.uk/>) Levitate (<http://levitate.uk.com/>) and



Hopkins Architects (<http://www.hopkins.co.uk/>).

The work of the architects will be available for public consultation on **Wednesday 20th and Thursday 21st September** between **11am and 8.30pm** at **Highbury Baptist Church**. These sessions will allow local residents to comment on the ideas on display and vote for the architects’ work that they like the best.

It is important to note that these viewings will not include any finished designs as their purpose is simply to choose an architect. The ideas on display will be concepts and the actual design for the improvements will be subject to extensive consultation, including taking opinions from the Highbury community, in the future.

This is an exciting opportunity for Highbury and we urge any park users and members of the community to put the date in the diary and attend one of these sessions. Highbury Fields is one of our most charming local parks and any changes to it should be made with park users in mind.

More information about the project can be found on the council’s website at <https://www.islington.gov.uk/sports-parks-and-trees/parks-and-green-space/parks-projects/highbury-fields>.

If you have any questions or want to join the mailing list so you can keep up-to-date with this project, please email Highbury Fields Improvement: highburyfieldsimprovement@islington.gov.uk.

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A short history of London Metropolitan University and its relationship with the community



By PETER FISHER

Within the next few years, a phased re-development of London Metropolitan's Holloway Road buildings will create a single campus University entirely located in - and engaged with - the immediate area; much as it was when the Northern Polytechnic Institute, one of London Met's founding institutions, opened its doors in 1896.

The Northern Polytechnic Institute - the familiar red-brick building with the white clock tower on Holloway Road - was founded under a scheme of the Charity Commissioners in 1892. As the prospectus for 1911 tells us: "The Northern Polytechnic Institute was established to provide for the inhabitants of Islington and the neighbouring parts of North London, and especially for the Industrial Classes, the means of acquiring a sound General, Scientific, Technical and Commercial Education at a small cost."

As well as some courses leading to degrees awarded by the University of London, the Polytechnic's day-time provision at the turn of the 20th century was for the children of the local, so-called "Industrial Classes". It took the form of the 'Day School' and accepted boys and girls from the age of 11-17. The aim was to provide a general education and training for specific skills that would enable students to make a living.

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For the boys there was training in the manufacture of furniture and musical instruments, in skills for the building industry (brickwork, carpentry, etc.) and for heavier industry (metal plate work). The girls could follow courses in the traditional skills expected of young women in domestic service – cooking, needlework, laundry – but also millinery and dressmaking to equip them for the rag trade. Commercial courses in Typewriting, Shorthand and Book-keeping were available for both sexes.

From the beginning of the 20th century, the Polytechnic's Great Hall was a well-patronised centre of local entertainment. It was opened on 15th July 1897 by the Lord Mayor of the City of London. The Great Hall offered seating for 1300 and a very fine organ provided by Mr H. A. Tufnell, who was a member of the first Governing Body of the Polytechnic. There were regular programmes of entertainment offered by the Polytechnic's Operatic Society, its Modern Symphony Orchestra and its Repertory Company.

Production standards were high; musicians, singers and actors regularly consisted of professional and semi-professionals rather than students. Local residents readily acquired the 'polyhabit' of attending shows held in the



Great Hall and although membership of these societies was open to all, it was the public rather than the Polytechnic who formed the bulk of the membership.

Such events were popularly supported until the advent of television when audiences began to fall away. But in its heyday performances, particularly those of the Operatic Society, were such a success that in addition to covering their costs significant amounts were raised for charitable causes, including £2,000 for war-time charities during the First World War.

During the First World War, the Great Hall became an approved shelter during Zeppelin bombing raids, accommodating up to 1200 local residents when necessary.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Dr W Gerrard, the head of the Science Department and an officer of the Territorial Army, organised a platoon of the Home Guard from Chemistry and Architecture students. In March 1940 the platoon became a section of the Air Squadron and this led to Dr Gerrard being commissioned to command No 1386 Squadron of the Air Training Corps based in the Polytechnic.

Teaching continued at the Polytechnic all through the war. Teams of volunteer staff took shifts as fire-watchers on the roof of the building. A bomb fell on the Polytechnic itself in March 1944, and although it did not explode it caused a complete shut-down for a week. A second bomb, however, fell on houses in Benwell Road behind the Polytechnic causing considerable damage and loss of life.

London Met has always had strong links with the local community. A large proportion of students come from the local area and school children visit regularly. The new Masterplan – One Campus, One Community – seeks to open up the campus and make the public life of the University more visible.

At the heart of the plan, in addition to improved routes into the University, is a re-imagined courtyard: a semi-public space which will contribute to the local surroundings and provide a much improved sense of accessibility and openness to the benefit of everyone.

The Highbury Community Association (HCA)

represents local residents and businesses on all aspects of living and working in Highbury, Lower Holloway and Finsbury Park.

Membership is free. Members receive bi-monthly newsletters like this one. New members will receive the newsletter by email (unless you don't have email). To join or talk to us about anything Highbury-related, visit our website, or email hcanews@hotmail.com. The HCA can also be contacted on Facebook and Twitter.

The opinions expressed in Highbury Community News are not necessarily those of the HCA.

Please let us know if you move, so we can keep our membership list up to date.

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The Highbury Community Association's response to the Mayor's Transport Strategy

By DIANE BURRIDGE

On June 21st, Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, published a draft of his first Mayor's Transport Strategy since being elected in 2016.

Building on the commitments made in his manifesto, the document sets out his policies and proposals to reshape transport in London over the next 25 years.

The Highbury Community Association committee's draft comments on the strategy are listed on the right hand side of this page, alongside each of the strategy's three aims.

We have focused, where possible, on the local area for examples to be as specific relevant as possible.

If you would like to add further points to our response, please contact me at dianeburridge@btinternet.com, by 25 September.

The deadline for public consultation is October 2nd 2017.

If you wish to respond yourself directly, please see: tfl.gov.uk/mayors-transport-strategy

TRANSPORT STRATEGY AIMS HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION RESPONSE

Aim 1: Healthy Streets and Healthy People

London's streets will be healthy and more Londoners will travel actively	This is difficult when crossings are blocked by traffic, and there seems to be no penalties for such actions. For example, often during rush hours, the pedestrian crossings from St Thomas' Road/Rock Street across to Finsbury Park station is blocked by drivers. 20mph zones need to be enforced and there need to be more pedestrian crossings.
London's transport system will be safe and secure	This is welcomed - please have more staff at Finsbury Park station and Drayton Park. TfL officers at Arsenal station are wonderful, and it is comforting that they are there.
London's streets will be used more efficiently & have less traffic on them	Yes please, especially along Gillespie Road and Drayton Park which are used as rat runs for traffic going north along Holloway Road to Seven Sisters Road.
London's streets will be clean and green	This is welcomed, given the filthy state of many streets, for example, along Seven Sisters Road near Blackstock Road. The footpaths are rarely washed and full of grease and dirt, where it is easy to slide and fall. There needs to be a lot more greening on the streets and around stations.

Aim 2: A Good Public Transport Experience

More people will travel on an expanded public transport network	This is happening, which is welcomed but not when the Tube stations have to close due to overcrowding, as happens often at Finsbury Park and Highbury & Islington stations. More control of passenger flow and direction of walking is needed for ease of movement.
Public transport will be affordable and accessible to all	For many people the Tube is too expensive to use. The transport system is not accessible in many areas due to the lack of lifts and toilets, which have vanished from many stations due to cuts and vandalism.
Journeys by public transport will be pleasant, fast and reliable	Journeys are fast and usually reliable (except the Piccadilly line which has deteriorated the last six months). Many journeys cannot be pleasant due to overcrowding and the heat in summer.

Aim 3: New Homes and Jobs

Sustainable travel will be the best option in new developments	Agreed.
Transport investment will unlock the delivery of new homes and jobs	Please ensure that where this happens, social housing and public facilities are provided. City North at Finsbury Park will include two 23 storey towers with only 47 'affordable' homes and 308 private ones, and with no public play areas or toilets.

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Highbury West panel meeting

By SUE JANDY

At the recent Highbury West panel meeting residents heard about traffic issues in Drayton Park and Gillespie Road, the fall-out from the Wireless Festival in Finsbury Park, and updates following the Finsbury Park terrorist attack and the Grenfell Tower disaster.

The creation of a new width restriction in Drayton Park has been signed-off by the council and officers reported that work could be starting on it very soon. Paul Taylor - LBI Transport Engineering Manager - reported that he expected a legal challenge from Tesco.

Andy Hull, Councillor for Highbury West, reported that cameras had been installed in Gillespie Road to monitor the level of traffic. The monitoring has now ended and a summary of the findings are expected to be available soon.

During the Wireless Festival in Finsbury Park, Islington Noise Patrol received a large number of complaints. Noise levels appeared to be higher than in previous years. This was exacerbated by an additional event being held at the Emirates on the Saturday afternoon which was also extremely loud - although that event finished at 6:00 p.m.

In addition to the noise from the Wireless Festival, some residents reported that they saw open drug dealing, people urinating (and in some cases defecating) in their gardens as well as littering and traffic congestion, especially in Gillespie Road at the end of each day. It was suggested that if the Festival takes place next year Gillespie Road should be closed (as it is on match days). The Ward Councillors agreed to look into this.

Councillors explained that, whilst they would make the complaints it had received known to Haringey Council, they couldn't prevent the event from taking place. However, The Friends of Finsbury Park had been given leave to appeal to the Court to prevent the festival taking place again next year (their application to shut down the

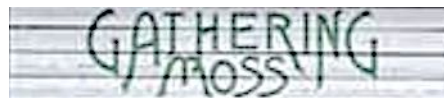
event last year failed).

Following the terrorist attack in Finsbury Park, Cllr. Hull reported that some of the injured people live in Islington and some are still in hospital. The Council has given support to victims in a variety of ways, including free travel cards for individuals visiting family members in hospital, offering counselling, and providing financial support to help those suddenly being unable to work.

Cllr. Hull also reported that following the attack the mosque had received hate mail and some Muslim women had been subjected to abuse. Police had stepped up patrols around the mosque.

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, Cllr. Diarmaid Ward reported that safety checks had been carried out across the Borough on all council and Housing Association properties. Letters have also been sent to all private landlords reminding them of their responsibilities. Cladding has been tested at the Harvist and Brunswick Estates and found to be safe. Some ACM cladding had been found at Braithwaite House and has now been removed.

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Alicia Markova - great British dancer born in Wilberforce Road

By SARAH POTTER

Campaigners against the demolition of Victorian houses in Wilberforce Road, an intact nineteenth century street just off the Blackstock Road (pictured bottom right), have just discovered that one of the threatened homes was the birthplace in 1910 of Alicia Markova.

Markova (pictured centre) was a great British dancer, teacher, choreographer and director. Her life and work deserve to be well known and celebrated, especially in the place of her birth, since she played an essential part in the development of dance in Britain.

Lilian Alicia Marks was the eldest daughter of Arthur Marks, a mining engineer, and Eileen Marks. The theatrical influence in the family came from the children's great grandfather, whose Islington business supplied the colourful, shiny trimmings required by theatrical costumiers.

When Alicia was eight, her mother took her to see a specialist about her weak left knee. He advised that Alicia had knock knees and flat feet, and recommended dancing classes. Alicia's mother loved going to the ballet, and enrolled her in a leading ballet school. Her grace, technique and stage presence proved to be outstanding from the first.

In 1924, Alicia's father lost everything in an unsound invention



scheme, and died shortly after. Alicia was taken on in a quite exceptional way at the age of 14 as a member of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, and her one concern became to dedicate herself to a career in dance, in order to support her mother and sisters.

The Ballets Russes was the only international dance company of the time, which Diaghilev made outstanding by attracting great twentieth century choreographers such as Massine and Fokine, who worked with contemporary designers such as Bakst and Picasso and composers such as Stravinsky and Satie. Markova grew up as a dancer in an atmosphere of ferment and innovation, and was later able to keep

this dance legacy alive for succeeding generations.

Just when Markova had been rewarded for her hard work in the Ballets Russes with ballerina status, Diaghilev died suddenly in 1929 and the Ballets Russes closed. Back at home on the breadline in England, she danced at Marie Rambert's Ballet Club in a tiny church hall from 1931.

Her great opportunity came suddenly in 1932, when Lilian Baylis, managing both the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells theatres, decided to attract a much wider audience to the ballet in London. Markova's performances at Sadler's Wells were at once supremely successful in achieving this.

From 1933 to 1935, she danced in The Nutcracker, Swan Lake and Giselle at Sadler's Wells, drawing on her international experience and connections to enhance balletic standards in the UK. These productions starring Markova established British ballet in London and made the Vic-Wells Ballet famous. She was also able to achieve some financial stability for her family.

The Islington Local History Centre holds the Sadler's Wells Theatre archives, so the correspondence and press cuttings are available locally for this key period in dance. The Vic-Wells Ballet later became the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden. Markova continued dancing until 1963, and then had a long career in teaching, choreography and directing. She died in 2004.

