

Greedy Gillespie goldfish must go...



Sally Oldfield

HCA talks to SALLY OLDFIELD, Islington Council's Nature Conservation Team Leader, as the toughest time of year approaches for wildlife in our neighbourhood park...

What do you do to keep wildlife alive in winter?

Gillespie Park is a fantastic place for wildlife. Winter is a good time to spot birds in the Park - such as herons, long tailed tits and goldfinches. We leave some meadow areas uncut over winter so birds can eat the seedheads and insects can hibernate in the plant stems. And we maintain lots of habitat piles - piles of logs and branches - for hibernating frogs, toads and hedgehogs. You can do your bit for wildlife in winter, too, in your own back garden if you ask for our information pack....

What threats to wildlife are there apart from the cold weather?

Goldfish...Over the years people have released goldfish into the pond, perhaps thinking that unwanted pets would enjoy the freedom of life 'in the wild'. Unfortunately goldfish are greedy predators of other pondlife and so the biodiversity of the pond is in decline. We see fewer dragonfly these days because the goldfish are eating their larvae. One way to

remove the fish would be to drain the pond entirely. This may seem like a drastic step but it might be the best way. We are looking at other options, too.

Why did you take this job?

I was attracted by the beautiful surroundings. I can sit at my desk and see foxes and sparrowhawks - there can't be many workers in London who can boast that! Before I started here in October 2008 I was at Bristol City Council - with a remit to build up community involvement in nature reserves. I have also worked for two wildlife trusts: in Bristol and Reading. My passion is working in urban locations to increase people's connection with nature and green spaces.



The pond

What links does Gillespie Park have with the community?

We run a successful schools programme, with lots of hands-on activities.

We also have links with the local City and Islington College. This summer we experimented with having a café one Sunday a month - run by the college and staffed by students with learning disabilities. The lovely Organic Café was a real success and we hope to run it again in the New Year, perhaps increasing

the number of days it is open.

Another group of learning disabled students from the college look after some raised beds in Gillespie Park, growing vegetables.

I hope to continue to encourage more people to visit us. We have recently started a pilot project to open the Ecology Centre on Sunday afternoons between 12 and 4 as well as on weekdays.

History of Gillespie Park

Gillespie Park opened to the public in 1983 after the Council leased the land from British Rail. In 1986 BR announced their intention to sell the land for housing, precipitating a campaign by the Friends of Gillespie Park to prevent building on the land and to help Islington Council gain the freehold of the site and secure its future as a nature reserve. The Ecology Centre was built in 1994 and Gillespie Park was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 1996. The Centre and the Reserve are both owned and funded by Islington Council.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT GILLESPIE PARK

- The largest of Islington's three Nature Reserves (the other two are Barnsbury Wood and Parkland Walk)
- 244 plant types
- 94 birds species
- 24 types of butterfly

OPENING HOURS

Ecology Centre: weekdays 10-4; Sundays 12-4

Gillespie Park: 8am to dusk every day except during Arsenal home matches

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Do you want to be more flexible and stronger?
Have better posture?

About to start on Monday mornings in Conewood St, our local Pilates class still has a couple of places.

Interested? Contact Christine on
christine.kaltoft@tiscali.co.uk
or 020 7704 2337



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More information

- Sign up to The Friends of Gillespie Park mailing list to hear about regular talks and events, including the popular annual Gillespie Festival
- Come along on a Thursday to join in fun conservation tasks on one of Islington's three nature reserves. No experience is needed.
- Ask for the Ecology Centre's free information pack on feeding birds in winter and other aspects of wildlife gardening

ecologycentre@islington.gov.uk or tel 020 7527 4374
www.islington.gov.uk/sustainabilitycentres

COMING SOON...

Winter Tree Walk at Parkland Walk on 28 November at 2pm

Planning update: suburbanization of Islington

Action for Children HQ site, 85 Highbury Park

BY ROGER WRIGHT

In summary: the latest proposal for this site is a considerable improvement on other recent developments locally. Unusually it has a good proportion of sizeable family homes. A few concerns remain however. The Council planning brief, agreed at the end of 2008, called for it to be mixed-use, with commercial and employment opportunities. But this proposal is completely residential, contributing further to the suburbanization of Islington. There will be 350 new Highbury residents with perhaps 150 of these being children - requiring extra school places and health provision. Although Islington Council and the Islington Primary Care Trust repeatedly assure us that there is adequate capacity in the local education and health systems, our own experiences make us deeply cynical of this.

The detail: At least half will be four-storey terraced houses with the remainder being one- and two-bedroom flats. The existing building fronting Highbury Park, Loxford House, will be retained and converted into flats with a nursery on part of the ground floor. The mature trees that surround the site will also be kept as will the gates, railings etc. At the back of the site, where the land drops away, the development will be five storeys and nearer the front, behind Loxford House, it will be four. Overall the development will not be any taller than the existing buildings. At least 35% of the development will be for social and shared ownership, the rest for private sale. The development will be car free except for disabled and car pool rental vehicles.

Action for Children expect to make a planning application later this year or early next year.

Stress-free present buying

BY GRAHAM COULT

I've lost track of how often I've saved time and stress by buying presents in 'To Be Established' at the Barn (and had very happy and impressed recipients). I went along to talk to the team...

Founded by Highbury Hill resident Michelle Lovell in 1996, it took just ten months from seeing the need for a good card shop in Highbury to her opening for Hallowe'en - ten months of market research, attending exhibitions and meeting suppliers. The shop's name arose when filling in an exhibition registration form - a name had not been decided so Michelle wrote 'to be established.'



Intensive is the word to describe the work of running the shop. All those involved - Michelle, Annie Lovstav and Michelle's daughter Sarah Giorgiou who works part time - are passionately committed and work long hours. It is not unusual for Michelle's husband to be unable to get into bed because there are too many catalogues and magazines taking up his space.

The original lines for the shop were cards and gift wrap. Michelle began stocking presents for Valentine's day, then Easter...and gradually the gift side grew. The range is impressively extensive for so small a retail space - books, scented candles, fine leather goods, bags, mirrors, vases, the popular Jellycat soft toys, baby booties, helium balloons, games and puzzles, calendars and diaries, and between November and April plants. A huge variety of cards, too, of course, including at this time of year charity Christmas cards.

Michelle's daughter Katie Jane Giorgiou is a jewellery designer featured in magazines. She specialises in Swarovski crystals and her work is central to the shop's jewellery range.

'Unusual' and 'exclusive' are watchwords for Michelle when selecting. 'When I look at magazines, if I see two or three items advertised that we have stocked before, then I know I am still on the ball,' says Michelle. 'We need the stock to turn over quickly and not hang around so that there is a constantly changing range for our customers.'

To Be Established: 020 7354 1223

CHARITY CORNER

Sports charity

A Highbury charity is helping an aspiring 10-year-old gymnast from Holloway work towards her dream. The Joanna Brown Trust together with SportIslington have awarded Aasha Kimpton £2,000 to help



cover her training expenses.

The Joanna Brown Trust is a registered charity set up in memory of 30-year-old Joanna Brown, a sports enthusiast from Highbury who tragically died last summer in a trekking accident in Siberia. Helen Hagan, a trustee of The Joanna Brown Trust and a local resident, says: 'Our aim is to encourage and enhance involvement in sport at all levels.' For more information go to www.thejoannabrowntrust.org

Shoes for Rwanda

Have you any unwanted shoes you are tired of or bought in haste and have never worn? If so, many people in Highbury and other parts of Islington are donating shoes to send to Rwanda - for Rwandans who are rebuilding their country after the 1994 genocide. To give shoes, please ring 07941 386 443 or email alica@blueyonder.co.uk

Breast cancer aftercare

Having been treated for breast cancer, Michelle Lovell of To Be Established expresses enormous gratitude to her 'three girls' - her two daughters and Annie - for their support but believes there must be more aftercare once the intensive phase of breast cancer treatment is over. Michelle is setting up a 'walk and talk' support group with another breast cancer survivor, Christine. The idea is to chat about experiences of living with breast cancer while having a stroll in the park. On 31 October, as a fundraising effort, To Be Established sold strawberry sticks dipped in chocolate made by Michelle's daughter and cup cakes baked by a family friend and held a raffle - collecting £505.25.

For more information contact Christine 07939 147 242 or Michelle 07770 477 359

Going barefoot

BY GRAHAM COULT

Cinzia Sarigu of Highbury Grove is an ambassador for Barefoot Books, a business founded by two working mothers in Highbury in 1993. One of the founders moved to Bath and the other to the USA so now it has become international.

The Barefoot books ethos is about encouraging children to be responsible citizens in the future: 'exploring other cultures, our planet, ourselves. It's making time for make-believe and letting imaginations run wild and free'.

I asked Cinzia how she got involved. 'The business specifically targets mothers like me who are looking after young children and who need flexibility in their work.'

'It is a franchise model. You have a commitment to sell only Barefoot Books, produce good displays, love the books and believe in them.'

'Barefoot Books provide you with a website, all you have to do is customise it. When books are sold through the website, the parent company takes the payment, and you as an ambassador receive a commission. If you sell personally, you buy the stock from the parent



Cinzia and her son, Elfo, aged 6, in front of a Barefoot-Books-style wall mural in their home

company and handle the money yourself.'

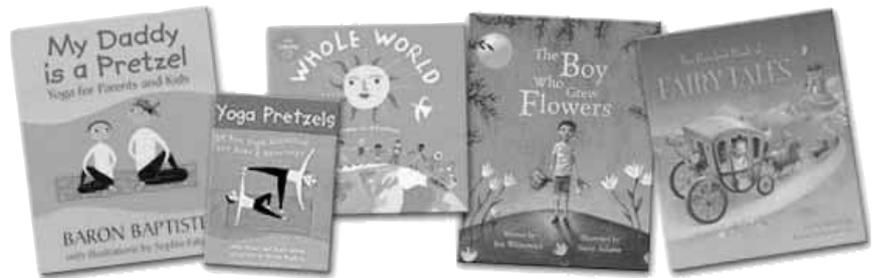
'I started by driving to events all over London. When my car broke down, I also saw it as an opportunity, and I began to concentrate on Highbury. I have a trolley, and I take the books on the trolley to wherever

there is a local market or community event. I prefer to work through personal contacts, so the website brings in a relatively small proportion of my sales, though I am working to develop that.

There are no sales targets. It is very family-friendly and flexible.'

I asked Cinzia if she has a favourite book. 'Yes - *What is This?* - a book about growing. A little girl finds a sunflower seed, plants it and looks after it. When the plant is grown she harvests the seeds, takes them to school and all her schoolmates then grow sunflowers as well. It is a very beautiful book, and also very simple. I really like the environmental titles, but they also publish classics and beautifully illustrated multicultural books. The books are about friendship, community, celebrating our respect for the environment and for diversity.

For more info www.cinziabarefootbooks.com or call Cinzia on 07519 576 962 to find out when her next local event is or when to visit her at home.



Reader's letter: Quill St

Dear HCA

Regarding the letter in *HC News* No 63 about Stephens Ink and Quill St - when the houses in Quill St were being built my daughter, Rhiannon, then a pupil at Drayton Park School, was doing a project on buildings. The school took her class on visits to the building site to see modern construction methods and learn about building technology. Part of the project was a competition to name the new street. Because of the links with the old ink factory Rhiannon suggested the name Quill St. Her idea was chosen as the winning entry. She was told that when the building work was completed there would be a party and a prize, plus a write up in the local paper for her. No sign of a prize, write up or party ever materialised. When Gillespie Neighbourhood Forum chose the name for Quill St, it was Rhiannon's idea.

VALERIE M CROWLEY

Christmas Diary

19 Nov to 05 Jan Designer Jewellers Group

Barbican Centre: daily from 12noon to 8.30pm
Jewellery for sale will include Christine Kaltoft's work (HCA Treasurer). Special offer to HCA members: email christine.kaltoft@tiscali.co.uk for an invite to the private view on Monday 30 November - the invite entitles you to a 10% discount on any jewellery you buy.

1-19 December (Tuesdays to Saturdays)

Hen and Chickens festive season

Lady Julia (7pm, Sat Mat 3.30pm £12) an adaptation of Miss Julie, Strindberg's play set on New Year's Eve and **The Night Before Christmas** (9.30pm £12), a yuletide satire definitely NOT suitable for children. See www.henandchickens.com

Wednesday 16 December Over-60s xmas party

Sotheby Mews Day Centre: 11.30 for 12 noon
Includes lunch and a live band. Entry fee is £5.
Tel: 020 7226 1421

Highbury history: 1940s and 1950s

**Diane Burridge talks to her long-term neighbour
DAVID PROFIT**

Sheep being herded along Caledonian Road from King's Cross to Caledonian Park, trams bisecting the area, many factories manufacturing goods, all night shunting of trains in what is now Gillespie Park and major shows at the Finsbury Park Empire. And only 60 years ago!

David Profit, resident of Avenell Rd since 1956 and near Essex Rd since 1936, remembers so much of this activity. 'I saw Max Miller, Gerthie Gitana, Abbott and Costello and Issy Bonne - just by popping down to the Finsbury Park Empire - where Vaudeville Court now stands. The Empire was one of the most famous venues in London, and Finsbury Park also had two cinemas. It was a major entertainment area.'

'And there were so many factories nearby - Stephens Ink in Gillespie Rd, the Express Dairy and Western's Laundry in Drayton Park, and Cossors Radio Factory at Highbury Barn. I remember the workers streaming out of the factory gates at the end of the shifts.'

David, a long-time member of Highbury Community Association, has always loved the area - even when in the 1950s trains shunted in and out of train sheds and sidings - where Gillespie Park now is. 'You got used to the noise even though it was very clear day and night - and there was always a fair amount of dust.'

But David was used to noise and dust, having been buried under a house for five hours during the war - when a doodle bug (flying bomb) landed on a house near Essex Rd on 21 June 1944. He couldn't speak for 10 days whilst he coughed up dust. And he remembers with sadness so many deaths from the bombings, including 30-40 people killed in Queensbury St (now Bentham Court) and the many killed at Highbury Corner where a remembrance plaque is now positioned.

And so the noise and dust from the shunting of trains and from the local factories in Highbury were quite minor to David after his war experiences. As well, his sister worked on the artillery guns (Ack-Ack guns) at the top of Finsbury Park - where the athletics track is now, with the area targeted for bombing.

One main change since the 1940s is how people used to move around. David's great love is trams, and when he and his wife and young son moved to Avenell Rd in 1956, there was one car in the whole of the street, and children did then play in the street.

David worked as a conductor on the trams and trolley buses from 1948 to 1954 and it was a sad day when he worked on the last tram ride in all of London - the No 35 tram - on 6 April 1952.

Although sheep are no longer herded outside our houses and trams no longer trundle along our streets, David still loves living here, and has been active in many community activities. And we are lucky that we have HCA members with such a rich knowledge of Highbury, for all of us to feel part of the on-going history of the area.

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www.highburycommunity.org

The HCA represents over 900 residents and businesses on all aspects of living and working in Highbury, Lower Holloway and Finsbury Park.

Membership is free. To sign up or talk to us about anything Highbury-related please write to PO Box 43396, N5 9AD or email hcanews@hotmail.com

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News in Brief

★ Highbury in Bloom

As *HC News* was on the printing press last issue it was announced that Islington had won London in Bloom 2009. Since then individual awards have been handed out. The Highbury stars were Ambler and Plimsoll Roads and Quill St Allotments. Top prize for Best Allotment Plot in Islington went to Plot 12 Quill St Allotments while the residents of Ambler and Plimsoll Roads dominated the 'Best Street or Part of Street' category.

Although pipped at the post by Ockendon Road for first prize, Ambler and Plimsoll Roads came second and third respectively for Best Street or Part of Street as well

as winning the rest of the awards in this group. Well done to everyone involved and for making our neighbourhood more beautiful.

★ New Highbury business

In September Horsell Rd resident, Robert Barker, set up a new business whose aim is to provide a one-stop shop for fresh produce from small food producers within 100 miles of London. Mr Barker has fifteen participating suppliers so far. Highbury residents can order produce online any time up until 1pm on a Thursday. The order is brought to Mr Barker's little depot next to Highbury Fields very early on a Saturday morning. Customers can then either come and collect from the depot or pay £3.95 to have it home delivered. For more information see www.farm-direct.com

★ Cutting your energy costs without cost

A tip the Editor was glad to pick up at Transition Highbury's 'Greener Future' event advertised in the last issue of *HC News* is how to save energy cheaply and simply, using radiator reflective panels. The Council's Green Living Centre on Upper Street is offering four free per household to those who ask. Apparently only half a radiator's heat comes out of the front into the room, with the other half disappearing through the back. But put a radiator reflective panel behind the radiator and the amount of front-loaded heat increases to 95%.

Which telephone box will be next?

You might or might not remember from an earlier *HC News* (No 61) an image of a girl's face painted on a telephone box in Liberia Rd. The Editor has since discovered this girl is known as Lola and - being stencilled - is in many other locations, too. As is Bob, around the corner in Calabria Rd close to the junction with Baalbec Rd. Bob's picture is signed by the artist of both - Grafters, known for his stencilled faces. Grafters was one of 30 street artists invited by Banksy to appear at the Cans



Festival of graffiti in a Waterloo tunnel in May 2008. Bob, whose image is also known as 'Forgotten more than most,' appeared at the Cans Festival - this was after his arrival in Calabria Rd which according to Grafters's own Flickr site was 1 April 2008 - or was he joking?

For more see

- <http://www.canned-goods.co.uk/graffiti-pictures/the-cans-festival/4/grafter/164>
- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/grafter>

★ **COMING SOON...** in the next issue, *HC News* interviews Mark Lyminster, Theatre Manager of the Hen and Chickens