



HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

FROM THE HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Meet your neighbours at our AGM



It's already that time of year again - time for the HCA AGM.

This year we are lucky to have as our speaker

the author of the

definitive *A History of Islington*, Mary Cosh. She is currently researching a book on the Greens of Islington. She will tell us about this together with some snippets on Highbury history.

GRAHAM COULT talks below to Mary Cosh about her research methods and how she came to be a writer and to live in Islington....

On historical research Mary says: 'I visualise a subject. I see an ivory castle with no entrance. The major question is how do you find a secret entrance? I find Hoskins' *Local History in England* a good place to start. Then I go to an appropriate library. I find the main sources from which I identify the primary sources. I also go to the Greater London Archive, which is near the Hugh Myddelton School.'

'People's view of history has changed. In the mid 19th century, history would have been the Napoleonic Wars and your hero would have been Wellington. People would say to children "if you don't

behave, Boney will get you!" - Boney being Napoleon Bonaparte. Now of course that's changed, and it will change again.'

But how did Mary become a writer of local history?...

Mary was born in Bristol. She began working for the civil service, but World War II broke out, and she joined the Wrens. 'I was stationed in Alexandria for the last year of the War,' says Mary. 'You had to sail in convoy. It was much calmer coming back than it had been going.'

After the War Mary went up to St Anne's College Oxford where she contributed to *Isis*, the student magazine. She did a vacation job in an Earls Court B&B while the usual housekeeper was away and wrote up her experiences for *The Spectator*. Then *The Times Educational Supplement* gave Mary a freelance job, and so she had made a start on her chosen path.

She first became involved in Islington's history when she worked for the Order of St John of Jerusalem, a charity based in Clerkenwell. She stayed there for 17 years. Mary led historical walks and wrote pieces for the then new Islington History Society as well as running classes in local history. Mary's work on *A History of Islington* stems back to this time.

But she hasn't written only about Islington. Her interest in history led to an invitation from an architect friend, Ian Lindsay, who was working

on the restoration of the town at Inveraray in Scotland, seat of the Dukes of Argyll. The 11th Duke wanted a history of the castle and Mary was invited to help. 'This was virgin research into the castle and

continued on page 2

Come to the HCA AGM and Party!

Saturday 17 April at 7.15pm

Christ Church, 155 Highbury Grove, N5

Wine and food!

★ What has the HCA been doing in the last year? What would you like the HCA to do?

★ Mary Cosh, author of *A History of Islington*, will be our speaker this year

★ Auction and raffle in aid of the Elizabeth House June 2010 Talent Show for local kids

★ Join the party! Wine, food, raffle, stimulating discussion and much more.

Can you bring a dish of food? If so, please ring Beth on 7359 2193 or email hcanews@hotmail.com



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. 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, please email hcanews@hotmail.com or write to PO Box 43396, N5 9AD.

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the town,' says Mary There is an Islington connection. Thomas Milner who worked on Inveraray Castle, was also responsible for the New River Head, and the early restoration of St Mary's Church in Islington. A later project took Mary to Scotland again, to Edinburgh to write a social history of its Golden Age...

However, Islington is where she has chosen to make her home since the late 1950s. Appropriately enough, it was a local history write-up in *The Observer* on the Canonbury Tower that brought her to investigate the area in the first place. It was then that she decided it would be a good place to live, and she hasn't regretted it. Fortunately for us, she continues to devote her research and writing skills to our neighbourhood ...

A History of Islington, Mary Cosh

Historical Publications, to be reprinted in July 2010

<http://www.historicalpublications.co.uk/book%20pops/historyofislington.html>

Local History in England, Hoskins, W. G.

(Harlow: Longman, 1959; 2nd edition 1972; 3rd edition 1984)

AGM charity: Elizabeth House Talent Show

Elizabeth House in Hurlock St off Blackstock Rd works with local kids from five to 18 to help build their skills and confidence outside of school and family - running sessions in cooking through to self defence as well as support classes in English, Maths and Science.

Wlad Duda, director of four years' standing, says what is special about Elizabeth House is that they work with children from as young as five right through to adulthood and they are able to give one-on-one attention that is often hard for schools to provide. He believes 'if you catch them when they are young it is much easier.'

Last year for the first time Elizabeth House ran a Talent Show in June - wanting to give local kids the opportunity to show they are good at something. It was a great success with 10 or so taking part - mostly under 12 years old. 80 people attended the show. Prizes were book tokens to hopefully inspire the kids towards a positive future. The cost to run the talent show this year will be £1600. HCA hopes our members will be able to help. Please come to our AGM and take part in the raffle to raise funds.

For more information see www.elizabeth-house.org

And for a history of Elizabeth House see *HC News* issue 26 February 2002 at www.highburycommunity.org

New editor

This is my last of six issues as Editor. We have a temporary Editor for the next issue but beyond that is uncertain. To help keep *HC News* going, any contributions of articles would be very welcome, for example: if you'd like to review a book by a local author (see p3). Or if you'd be happy to interview a local organisation (of your own choosing or suggested by the Committee), then please do get in touch. Email HCAnews@hotmail.com

Thank you in anticipation! Ceinwen Jones

Talk by local crime writer

If you like reading about crime you might be interested in Fieldway Crescent Library's monthly reading group on Monday 19 April (6pm). Islington resident and herself a member of the group, Joan Lock will be talking on the challenges of writing about crime - fact and fiction. A former nurse and policewoman, Joan is author of 11 non-fiction crime books. She has also written a modern crime novel and an historical detective fiction series. Following Joan's talk the reading group will discuss crime writing in general, having each chosen a crime novel or factual book to read beforehand. If you'd like to come and join in, just turn up (or for more info email clara.stpaul@islington.gov.uk).

Agatha Christie at home

This is the first of what we hope will be a series of write-ups of books by local authors. If you would like to review a book by a Highbury writer please email hcanews@hotmail.com

BY GRAHAM COULT

In her latest book, local resident Hilary Macaskill looks at a famous author from a new angle - through her homes. Agatha Christie's name and work is familiar to all but most of us know little about her life and personality.

In this lavish coffee-table book, Hilary introduces us to Agatha's personality through homes she rented, purchased, decorated, and furnished. There are many surprises, including Agatha Christie as astute businesswoman, skilled in property negotiations; Agatha Christie as accomplished interior designer, skilled in the creation of atmosphere through the use of colour, texture, light, works of art, and other objects; Agatha Christie as chemist, and Agatha Christie as archaeologist.



One of the homes Agatha owned was in the 1934 Modernist block in Hampstead, Lawn Rd Flats, designed by architect Wells Coates. The building was a rendezvous for artists such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, and many architects and designers such as Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer from the Bauhaus movement lived here, as did Diana Rowntree *The Guardian's* first architecture correspondent. This apartment contrasts very sharply with homes Agatha owned in Torquay, which also feature prominently in the book.

The book is a visual feast taking the reader to beautiful houses and settings - accompanied by a liberal sprinkling of analysis and fascinating snippets of information. It offers an itinerary for holidays and outings which, while relaxing and refreshing, also promises stimulation and opportunities for learning and growth - without ever needing to leave these islands...

Hilary Macaskill has established a niche for herself with intelligent, discerning travel writing on sometimes unusual subjects. Her previous book co-authored with Molly Wood, *Downhill All The Way: Walking With Donkeys On The Stevenson Trail* recounts their adventures following in the footsteps of Robert Louis Stevenson in France. It is a well-written, fun and enjoyable read with lots of insights into culture and cuisine, and includes some recipes.

Both books are published by Frances Lincoln:
www.franceslincoln.com

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Businesses we love: Alternative Time Out guide to Highbury

Below is the second instalment of **NICOLETTE JONES'** compilation of neighbours' recommended local shops...

Part 2: FOOD AND DRINK

● Fresh Fish & Halal Meat Market

(between Finsbury Park Station & Stroud Green Rd, opposite Tesco's)

- Fresh fish bought daily at Billingsgate; knowledgeable Afghani proprietor. (Seb)
- An enticing and intriguing range of fish, all very fresh. (Nick)
- Usually good quality, very clean and good value with a knowledgeable owner. (Adam)

● Sunrise Food Stop, 258 Seven Sisters Rd (opposite station)

• Open long hours. Nice people who've managed to keep open despite Tesco's. They deserve to be supported. (Natalie)

● Happening Bagel Bakery, 284A Seven Sisters Rd (opposite Finsbury Park entrance)

• Nicest bagels in the world (Laura). And chollah bread (Becca).
• Bagels are delicious and great value, my family think they are better than Brick Lane. (Jane)

● LIDL (towards Finsbury Park entrance)

• Incredible prices and friendly staff; get your tinned tomatoes/beans, good quality fruit and veg, high fruit content jams, usually has

German cookies (Lebkuchen, Stohlen); also surreal things to keep you entertained (horseblanket? . . . radio-controlled yacht?) Take a shopping trolley as they have a pay-for-bags policy. Some interesting frozen food (we had a lobster for £4.50!) and virgin olive oil at a price which can't be beaten. (Caroline)

• **Al Bahia Halal Butchers** 5 Blackstock Rd (next door to Fish and Cook)
Great for lamb - also large blocks of dates (harissa) - friendly and helpful (Caroline)

• **Finsbury Superstore,** 29 Blackstock Rd
• Cheaper and more interesting than a big supermarket (Jacqueline)

• Takeaways are heavenly (Becca)

● Arsenal Food and Wine (aka Ozzy's corner shop)

90 Blackstock Rd
• Ozzy's friendly family business is open long hours, 7 days a week. He will order anything you ask for that he can get hold of, and besides basic groceries, he stocks fair trade and organic products and gluten-free muesli. Good range of ice cream. (Nicolette)

• On Nicola's Couldn't-Do-Without list.

• Hugely friendly corner shop (Caroline)

● Arsenal Wine

144 Blackstock Rd
• Will bulk purchase beer for you, give you a bit of a deal on it and call you when it's ready to collect. (George)

● White Bros Greengrocers,

150 Blackstock Rd (between Gillespie and Chatterton Rds)

• Very good service, good quality and excellent prices (Adam)

• I see more of my neighbours here than anywhere else; a good place to bend the councillors' ears; down to earth, market stall (Ian)

• Have bought lovely, lasting plants here for borders and window boxes (Nicolette)
• Tim is very friendly and happy to give you a good price on larger quantities (eg trays of cherries when in season). And where else would you go for a Christmas tree? (George)

● Wallers 2 Grocers and General Store

187 Blackstock Rd (near corner with Mountgrove Rd)

• Always brilliant offers on ends-of-line and consumables near sell-by date. (George)

• Manager goes out of his way to hunt for bargains, and enjoys passing the savings on to customers. Good meeting place for long-term residents who pre-date Islington's gentrification era (Ian)

● Butchers

183 Blackstock Rd
• Will always give you a suggestion if your mind goes blank and, specifically, always very good lamb (George).

• Lovely free-range chickens at a good price (Teresa)

• On first name terms with all their customers; they make time for a chat (Ian)
• His Toulouse sausages and sirloin steaks are great (Henry)

● Highbury Vintners

71 Highbury Park
• Makes shopping for our wine interesting and fun! (Jacqueline)

• Interesting range, friendly people (Nick)
• Amazing service, great advice and they deliver (Jane)

● FiveBoys Natural Food Store,

17 Highbury Park
• Crammed with everything you ever

wanted, and many things you hadn't even known you wanted. (Maya)

• Good gluten-free range (Nicolette)
• Huge range of interesting foods you won't find elsewhere - herbs, spices, teas, coffees (Nick)
• Great for baby food, organic food and most kitchen cupboard essentials (and as cheap as, if not cheaper than, a supermarket) (Liz)
• They have almost everything and offer help and advice on all sorts of health and cookery issues. (Jane)

And slightly further afield...

● MAH Bros

144-158 Tollington Park
Amazing cash and carry, very good for giant boxes of washing powder, large quantities of pepper corns... you can save a fortune here (Caroline)

Jane sent in a PS to Part 1 in the January HC News

GIFTS AND HOME

• **Riley Upholstery,** 233 Blackstock Rd
Neil is incredibly helpful and does a beautiful job. He restored and re-covered my friend's granny's sofa and the transformation and quality of the work is fantastic.

● Bennet and Brown,

84 Mountgrove Rd
www.bennetandbrown.co.uk
Furniture restoration and interesting things to buy. Dominic Bennet will help you find things and deliver. They have a great selection of antique and vintage furniture, mirrors, lights, children's toys, etc.

News in Brief

Highbury Square now open

Finally the public can walk through Highbury Square, the gated community that has been built on the site of the former Arsenal stadium. Cutting through Highbury Square will save at least 10 minutes for residents walking between Avenell Rd and Highbury Hill (Arsenal tube end). The path was a condition set by the Council to avoid the private housing development becoming isolated from the rest of the neighbourhood.



When the Editor decided to take a peek at the new path the Avenell Rd gate was locked. But the porter (found behind the big black doors to the right of the gate) was very happy to buzz me in. The Highbury Hill gate was wide open.

Save Whittington A&E petition

There is still much to be done in the campaign to save the Whittington A&E. To sign the petition, drop into one of the shops in the Barn: the petition is in Godfrey butchers, Woodland Hardware, and at the pharmacy. A public

meeting was about to be held (22 March) as *HC News* went to print. To find the latest news go to <http://dwhc.org.uk/>

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Planning update

Rubber-stamping of BBC event?

A production company making a programme in conjunction with BBC Worldwide, the commercial arm of the BBC, has approached the Council for use of half the main field on Highbury Fields from 9 August to 8 September, for an event 'In the Night Garden Live' aimed at 2-4 year-olds and their parents. It has the potential to attract up to 2,500 people a day from across London and beyond. The event uses up the whole of the annual allocation of 28 days for all major events on Highbury Fields and therefore excludes the possibility of other major events that would attract a wider cross-section of the local community.

The Highbury Fields Management Group (HFMG), of which HCA is part, was given just three days at the beginning of March to comment on the proposal. HCA along with other community groups on HFMG have objected to this apparent rubber-stamping exercise and listed a number of problems. But we have declined to support or oppose the event at this stage because of the unrealistic timescale, which precludes discussion with those in our community who would be most affected.

Secret Garden at NCH Action for Children

NCH Action for Children have withdrawn the application for their Highbury Park site for yet further revisions. A

plant species audit has found some unusual plants in the Secret Garden but nothing special enough to enable the site to be listed.

News from Queensland Rd front line

BY ED ALLEN
OF BRYANTWOOD ROAD RESIDENTS

In February we had a public meeting about the temporary fence arrangements between the Queensland Rd construction site and the gardens of Bryantwood Rd. The Olden Garden hut was overflowing with 20 plus Bryantwood Rd residents, councillors Theresa deBono and Katie Dawson, council officers and representatives of the developers. Residents voiced their worries about the security, privacy and aesthetics of the proposed temporary fence, the amount of garden being claimed, dangers to their children, the length of time of occupation, and damage to plants and trees. The meeting was successful in so far as the developers agreed to make improvements to the fence, later erecting in Queensland Rd a mock-up of the improved version for comment. They also said they would try to reduce the period of disruption to local residents. Another key point the developers agreed to was to consult residents on the nature of the permanent wall. But shocking and distressing for us was to learn that the developers do not plan to offer any compensation for taking over our gardens. The East Area Planning Committee will reconsider the matter of the temporary fence on 30 March.

Address label space

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Diary

■ **Tuesday 6 April, 7.30pm**
**Film *Money as Debt* by Paul
Grignon**

Birchmore Community Hall,
Highbury Quadrant Estate
Entrance £2/Under 18s free

Transition Highbury are now
showing films on the first Tuesday
of every month at the Birchmore
Hall. *Money as Debt* explains
simply using animation the
undemocratic nature of the global
banking system.

<http://transitionhighbury.ning.com/>

■ **Saturday 17 April, evening**
HCA AGM: local history (see p3)
Christ Church, Highbury Grove

■ **Monday 19 April, 6pm**
**Talk by Joan Lock, Islington
crime writer** (see p3)
Central Library, Fieldway
Crescent

■ **Sunday 16 May,**
12 noon to 3pm
Green Day and Organic Cafe
Ecology Centre, Drayton Park

Jumble sale, craft and book fair,
plant sale and bicycle main-
tenance workshops. Organised by
City and Islington College.

Admission free

To book a stall contact:
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■ **Sunday 6 June, 1-4pm**
Green Day and Organic Cafe
Annual Plant Sale from 2pm
Ecology Centre, Drayton Park

Policing Highbury

HCA committee member,
DIANE BURRIDGE,
regularly attends Highbury
West Safer Neighbourhood
team meetings (open to
the public) and reports
below on the February
meeting at Elizabeth
House.

Crime rates

First the good news: crime
rates have fallen in the
area. Overall the fall was
2% in the 10 months to
February 2010 - perhaps helped by the weather! But levels of different types

of crime can vary as a result of local changes. For example, theft and
handling stolen goods rates had increased during the same period in part
due to new shops opening leading to more shoplifting.

New police presence on Blackstock Rd

Building works for the new office for the two Safer Neighbourhood Teams -
Highbury West and Brownswood Ward (in Hackney) - at the corner of Ambler
and Blackstock Roads have been completed, with the teams ready to move
in. The disappointing news is that this move will now be delayed for some
months, as particular electric cables for the computers have still to be
installed.

Other news

Each Islington Council Area Committee area is to have a neighbourhood
officer. These officers are keen to work with residents and the police to
focus on preventing anti-social behaviour. For example, they have funded
additional patrols, a business watch in Blackstock Road, and design advice
to prevent crime.

Recently Highbury West Team organised a talk for 55 women at the mosque
in Finsbury Park on drug awareness. A future talk has been requested on
preventing extremism.

Some of the Team are organising a 24-hour relay around the Arsenal
Football Club on 19/20 June, to raise funds for the Great Ormond St Hospital
- hoping to involve local youths among others. If you'd like to participate (for
one circuit or more), contact Police Community Officer Andrew Goodwin on
0207 421 0635 or email HighburyWest.SNT@met.police.uk

