



# HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

FROM THE HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

## Opposition Grows To Possible Highbury Barn Takeover By Supermarket



**T**owards the end of April it leaked out that Punch Taverns had put the Highbury Barn Tavern up for sale.

Then the rumours started flying. It was revealed that Sainsbury's wanted to convert it into a local supermarket. When an article appeared in the Islington Gazette, Sainsbury's backed off, but admitted they were "still looking for opportunities" to find premises in the Barn. At the time of writing, the rumour is that a property company is doing a deal to redevelop the Tavern. They might create a retail outlet, giving outside interests an "opportunity" to move in.

William Willoughby opened The Highbury Barn in 1770 as a place of entertainment and it flourished for more than a century. The present Highbury Barn Tavern was built on the same site in the 1860s and continued the tradition of hospitality. It's fair to say that Highbury has grown up around this landmark building. A pub on this site defines Highbury Barn. We can argue about what sort of pub it should be, but we must keep a pub on the site. Nobody refers to this little stretch of road as Highbury Park - though that's its proper name. We all know it as Highbury Barn.

One of the good things about living in Highbury is the feeling that you are living in a village. At the heart of a village are the village shops. Highbury Barn is mostly composed of owner run, independent shops. We know the owners - and they know us, their customers. We are all part of the

community. If you look through this and back numbers of this newsletter, you'll see that the local shops have placed adverts which have sustained this, our community newsletter.

At a Hustings meeting on May 3rd, representatives of all the parties contesting the local elections, including the leaders of both the Labour Party and the Lib Dems, declared that they would strongly resist any change of use to the Highbury Barn Tavern and that they would all be prepared to "man the barricades".

So any prospective purchaser should be aware that the Highbury Barn Tavern has a special place in the geography, the history and the affections of our community.

We will not take kindly to any developer's attempt to turn Highbury Barn into a carbon copy of every other high street. We will resist that..... most strongly.  
TONY MILLER

### Message From The New Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of HCN, my first as the new editor. It's very important that we have a strong sense of

community - who we are, what we are, why we are, as well as the difference and contribution we want to make as a community. I hope the articles in this issue will continue to help enhance our community and its cohesion.

If you have any topics you would like to see

covered - or if you would like to write something for the next issue (due out at the beginning of September), do get in touch with me by email or post (see details at foot of page).

We had a very successful AGM again this year. We apologise to those who were not able

to gain access once proceedings had started. We are very grateful to our speaker, celebrated local historian Mary Cosh, for her excellent talk on Islington Greens. We would like to thank everyone who attended, participated and contributed.  
GRAHAM COULT



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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# Views From A Pear Tree: Life In Highbury Quadrant

When residents of the Highbury Quadrant estate realised that so many of their neighbours had been living there since it was built in the late 1950s, they wished that their key memories and stories could somehow be collected. Now their dream has become reality. They formed the Highbury Quadrant Oral History group and made a film, titled 'Views from a Pear Tree'. The film weaves the everyday stories of life at Highbury Quadrant together with a history of how the estate came into being.

The project enabled the residents to rediscover their own history and hopefully has inspired a new generation of residents to get involved in local community activities.

As the project coordinator, Ronit Dassa, puts it, "We had such fun putting this film together. It gave us a chance to talk to our neighbours, especially the many older folk who have lived here for over 50 years who told us what their experiences were like. Younger people found it fascinating."

"Making the film got us researching into Islington and London archives" says Ronit, "we found some amazing photographs, news articles and many interesting facts about our estate. For example, we realised that a statue on the estate that

we take for granted is actually a grade II listed work of art." Through work on the film, the group was able to secure renewed interest in the statue -



called The Neighbours - which has led to it being renovated.

The project group also found out a lot about how the Highbury Quadrant estate was designed as model 'modern' social housing by a leading architect, whose aim was "to create a place even the queen would be happy to call home." They learned how the ideas and values of the post-war generation meant that Highbury Quadrant was developed with a real passion for social justice. It included a community hall as well as play facilities for children. The old back gardens on which Highbury Quadrant was built were retained and there are now over 1,000 trees on the estate, with generous spaces between the blocks.

Early tenants formed the Quadrant Community Association (QCA), which has voluntarily organised social events and community services since the 1950's and still does so. Today, there are many ideas for improving Highbury Quadrant; and continuing to celebrate its rich and important history. The interviews that provide the basis of 'Views from a Pear Tree', and the film itself, are all part of this process.

To find out more contact Ronit Dassa on telephone: 07530981012, or email:

HighburyQuadrantLivingHistory@googlemail.com. To purchase 'Views from a pear tree' on DVD (£5 plus £1.50p&p), send a cheque payable to Highbury Quadrant TRA to Birchmore Hall Community Centre, Highbury Quadrant, London N5 2AU.

# Swimming at Her Majesty's Pleasure?

Aqua Aerobics, in Holloway Prison's reputedly fantastic pool, is one of the many activities on offer to both male and female members of the Sotheby Mews Day Centre. These joint sessions with prison inmates are very popular. There is plenty more besides to entice over-60s in Highbury to join the Day Centre's 500 members. I asked Jacky Mariner of Islington Age Concern (which has managed the Centre on behalf of Islington Council since 1997) what is special about the Centre. She said 'It's 'lively'.

When I visited on a Monday afternoon floating through the corridors was music from the line dancing class (this very class having recently been featured on BBC's the 'One Show'). On the walls were watercolours and other paintings about to go on display in a new art exhibition. Apart from dancing and art, members may participate in creative writing, bowls, keep-fit, pilates, bingo, use the computers (with broadband access and Skype) and attend a carers' group. They may even have their hair cut! Most classes are free. Members who want to stay for lunch can have a two-course meal for £3.

Each day 50-60 people visit the Centre which is conveniently close to the junction between Blackstock Rd and Sotheby Rd. Members tend to be fairly fit, although there are those who need help - they arrive by Day Centre transport. Some just sign up for one class but others use it like a club. Jacky suggests newcomers might like to come and sit in the garden to get a feel for the Centre before deciding how to join in. The garden is an oasis of peace and quiet with lavender bushes and flowering shrubs as well as now, (with new 'Capital Growth' funding), beds of vegetables - some grown communally and some by individual members. There is even a Smokers' Corner well away from the main garden so that everyone is catered for. The whole Centre is accessible for the disabled, with plenty of parking spaces.

Roy Hidson is a current member and a keen attender of the keep-fit classes. He remembers that in his mother's day the waiting list for the Sotheby Road Day Centre was so long that his mother died still waiting. These days you don't have to go on a waiting list but the activities are as many and varied as they ever used to be. Use it or lose it!

Sotheby Mews Day Centre, Sotheby Mews, N5 2UT,  
Tel: 020 7226 1421

CEINWEN JONES



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## Trustees wanted for local youth charity

Elizabeth House, this year's chosen charity for the HCA AGM, is looking for new trustees. We are a local youth and community centre off the Blackstock Road. We provide training, recreation and education for people aged 5 to 16 in the Highbury area. We also hire our building and facilities to other organisations and individuals with objectives similar to our own. You can read more at our website: [www.elizabeth-house.org](http://www.elizabeth-house.org)

Elizabeth House is owned and run by a charitable trust (Highbury Vale Blackstock Trust). The trustees are all local people, and we are looking to recruit more members for our board of trustees. The trustees' role is to help plan the strategic future of the charity and its work, ensuring accountability to our beneficiaries, to the wider population, and to the Charity Commission.

We need people with commitment and energy who seek a rewarding volunteer role. You'll be joining a team of eight trustees and becoming part of a great community service. We are particularly keen to recruit members of the local community who have skills and experience in one or more of the following areas: finance, business management, human resources, education, and play and youth services. Applications will be welcomed from all sections of the community. For more information please email or call Clare Kinnersley at: [c.kinnersley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:c.kinnersley@hotmail.co.uk) or 07745296039.

## Latest News from the Bryantwood Road Front Line

In accordance with the planning conditions and as promised at previous meetings the developers of the Queensland Road have conducted a consultation with residents of the north side of Bryantwood Road about the boundary wall between the flats and our houses. Plans were previously circulated, a mock-up of the proposed wall has been available for viewing and a meeting was held for residents of Bryantwood Road to communicate views to the council and the developers. The meeting was attended by our 3 ward councillors, LBI planning officers and representatives of the developers. Residents stressed that despite improvements to details the proposed height of the wall is still not satisfactory to ensure adequate security and privacy. The developers responded that they will refine and submit details to the officers, who will report to a future planning committee. Residents will be kept informed of this procedure and demand and expect further improvements to the proposals to allay their fears. Ed Allen, Tel: 020 7607 4772

## Eco House Weekend

Saturday, 12 June 2010 - Sunday, 13 June 2010 10am - 5pm  
Eleven Victorian houses in Islington, Hackney, Camden, and Haringey open their doors to show the best in recent eco-renovation practice. Weekend passes to all houses cost £10 for homeowners, £20 for professionals. Passes cannot be bought at houses. Book online at <http://www.victori.co.uk/default.aspx?page=25510>. If no online access call 07732 628174.

### Do you have a garage or shed you do not need?

Local bike project urgently needs free space to store and maybe repair recycled bikes. This is a non-profit, non-funded venture that has been going for years. The space currently used will

soon not be available any longer, because it is needed for something else. Please help. A free recycled bike can be offered in return. Contact Priti Norfall Pedersen Tel: 020 7226 323, email: [highburytime@live.co.uk](mailto:highburytime@live.co.uk); or Paul Standeven: [paul.hello@virgin.net](mailto:paul.hello@virgin.net)

## Highbury Artist At Tate Modern



Highbury resident Katie Cooper was invited with her colleagues to exhibit in the Turbine Hall during the tenth anniversary celebrations of Tate Modern.

Katie is a member of a group of modern artists who went to Art School together. They run a not-for-profit art exhibition space called Auto Italia, located in Peckham, with premises generously provided by a sponsor.

The Tate Gallery curators visited Auto Italia, and invited the group to exhibit during the tenth anniversary celebrations. Katie says:

"We're quite a young group - most exhibitors at Tate Modern are already well established, so it is quite an achievement for Auto Italia to be given a space. We have been running an email group encouraging people to meet up at the exhibition."

The ceiling for the stand, which was suspended from the roof of the Turbine Room, was taken from the Peckham Gallery. Exhibits from the Gallery, which can be created in all types of media including performance art, featured a multi-media library fretted from wood, John Hill's light box (displaying a different poster each day) and various other items of Modern Art.

## N5 memoir on being a reluctant Green

He helps by making me laugh every day' is what Nicola says of her other half Pete on their wedding day at the end of his memoir *There's a Hippo in my Cistern*. With this book Pete makes us want to laugh, too. It starts in 1993 with Pete in his bachelor's flat in Elephant and Castle, a football-loving, lager-drinking 'lad'. Then he meets Nicola of Highbury, a committed 'eco-bunny.' And so begins Pete's journey from unreconstructed macho male to deep Green activist and N5 resident with many misadventures and rebellions along the way.

Early in their relationship Pete follows Nicola to the Solomon Islands where she is working on a planet-saving project. Three weeks' holiday is quite enough for him: 'Being hunted by mosquitoes and sea snakes has left me desiring nothing more than the iffy cigarette sellers and gridlocked sprawl of the snake-free Holloway Road...I need my urban space, my consumer durables and an open pub.' Yet by the end of the book Pete is happily ensconced in an N5 garden protecting his and Nicola's breakfast-egg-laying chickens from foxes - a far cry from his takeaway-pizza-eating days of old.

The chickens are bought from Freightliners Farm to which they return on a B&B basis when Nicola and Pete go on holiday. The references to Freightliners Farm and other local landmarks make it fun reading for a

Highbury resident. I could just imagine Pete arriving on Nicola's ancient bike at Highbury Fields' recycling bins with their old newspapers. It is such a local issues book that Nicola and Pete even manage to have the common Highbury problem of subsidence not once but TWICE. The vicar from St Thomas' Church makes a couple of cameo appearances as does the Ecology Centre in Drayton Park, where the Green wedding is finally held.

Since 1993 it has become easier and more socially acceptable to be Green. The hippo of the title (a water-saving device for the loo not a beast in Africa) is no longer needed by the end of the book. In Nicola's and Pete's third Highbury abode they have a new loo of the type that saves water automatically and is now sold everywhere.

But this book is very relevant to today, especially for those who wince at the prospect of having to turn the heating down and put on an extra jumper. Pete's hilarious way of describing his resistance to such changes and his eventual acceptance of them could make a few more unlikely converts to the Green cause. But it's also highly entertaining for Highbury residents who just want to read about some of the places and characters in our local neighbourhood and have a good chuckle.

*There's a Hippo in My Cistern: One Man's Misadventures on the Eco-Frontline* - By Pete May. Published by Collins in paperback June 2008

Available on Amazon, or contact Pete direct for a discounted copy - [pete.may@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:pete.may@blueyonder.co.uk) or 0771 558 7338. CEINWEN JONES

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## Highbury Fields Events: Council Officers Please Note

In the last Newsletter, HCA questioned the proposal by Islington council's Events officers to host an "In the Night Garden" production on Highbury Fields, fencing off half the main field for a whole month. The application for the event was withdrawn and booking is now open for the show at its new, more suitable location in the grounds of The O2. Our concerns were the commercialisation of the Fields and the need we see to keep the Fields open and accessible for people making their own entertainment. The pictures here, taken 22nd-23rd May, show some of the hundreds of people who came from Angel, Archway, Holloway, Finsbury Park and, indeed, all over Islington and beyond, to enjoy the park in a host of ways be it picnic, barbecue, birthday celebration, bat and ball, and as singles or couples or groups

of a dozen or more. When asked, they all said they liked the overall friendliness of the park. They were packing out the Fields from Highbury Corner up to the top of the park.

An Events Policy for Highbury Fields is being produced by council officers: we urge the council to keep Highbury Fields as free as possible for such open public use and to support small scale, one-day events, open to all, that involve the diverse communities in Islington. Commercial events can be costly to attend and, by their size and duration, displace informal use, particularly in the summer months. Highbury Fields is a small area even if it is Islington's largest park. Set in the centre of the borough, it is ideally placed for all residents to use as they choose - and the population of the borough is growing. A



Highbury Fields is heavily used by residents from all over Islington and beyond. It is already very crowded and is too small to become a 'venue'.

sprinkling of events would be welcome but Highbury Fields is too small to become a "venue".

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### Cinquecento

A week's notice needs to be given for weekday evenings, two weeks for weekends; not unusual perhaps for an establishment run by a TV chef - but at Archway !? Such is Cinquecento, aka 500 Italian Restaurant, and you can Google its reviews at leisure. Fourteen tables for two, pushed together for foursomes, all wines available by the glass, a dozen or so at £2.30-£4.50 per glass of the smaller kind of which I tried a couple, supporting a smallish menu of home cooking; and it's in that that lay the reason, I suspect, for the feeding frenzy that obviously has hit Archway. I'm writing this just after a lunch I turned up late for so as to be sure to get in. Well satisfied I would be if my own home cooking could live up to this day-by-day. I ate the Italian equivalent of a whole smorgasbord as an antipasto - fish, fowl, cured meats, leaves and cheese, a dish, or rather plank, advised as appropriate for two, sharing - and a starter-sized tagliatelli with wild garlic pesto and air dried eggs of some fish who's name I have now forgotten. Utterly delicious. Room left only for espresso and an eyeing-up of the puddings being consumed by others, leaving them for another day. £25. 500 Italian Restaurant, 782 Holloway Road, N19 3JH. 020 7272 3406. [www.500restaurant.co.uk](http://www.500restaurant.co.uk) . ROBIN HULL

### Local eateries

Having a new kitchen installed means that for several days you have the chance to eat at some of the many local restaurants or cafés. We had evening meals at the following:

**IL BACIO**  
178-184 Blackstock  
Road, N5 1HA  
020 7226 3339

The restaurant is simply furnished but functional with the kitchen in full view; there is also a Television which shows sporting events but seems to be on all the time. I hear it is very busy on match days. Downstairs is a private function room.

It is run by Sardinians and there appeared to be little pandering to the UK/Italian diluted versions of the dishes. They specialise in Pizzas - more than twenty varieties - thin and crisp. As it was our first visit we shared a simple tomato and mozzarella pizza which was delicious. Derek had the Spaghetti Vongole which was spaghettoni, with a delicious light tomato

sauce and a good portion of clams. I had a Sardinian special with sausage, chilli, pasta and a delicious tomato sauce. We had a bottle of house wine which was cool and crisp. There were several nice touches including a bowl of olives placed on the table as we sat down and a small glass of Amaretto to accompany our coffee. Good value so we shall return.

They have another branch in Stoke Newington.

**STRINGRAY**  
36 Highbury Park N5  
020 7354 9309

We had eaten here before but not for some years. Nothing had changed and the food is very good value. The pasta dishes and the Pizzas are excellent and the portions are large. The house wine is reasonably priced. The staff are helpful and the surroundings pleasant.

**SAN DANIELE DEL  
FRIULI**  
72 Highbury Park N5  
020 7226 1609

We eat here frequently and the food is always good and sometimes exceptional. I reviewed the restaurant in June

2005 and the high standard has been maintained. The menu caters for all tastes and all prices. Pizzas and pastas are prepared while you eat one of the many starters. Meat and fish dishes all have a hint of Italy.

On the night that Arsenal were playing at home searching for a restaurant that was not overflowing with customers proved impossible. However there were not too many people in.

**THE KEBAB CORNER  
HOUSE**  
4 Highbury Park

We ordered fish and chips and a soft drink to "eat in". There were three tables to the rear and we seemed to receive special treatment - no plastic cutlery but proper knives and forks. The fish and the chips were excellent and the total cost only £8.40 for the two meals!

Finally having the new kitchen also meant new floor covering. On the recommendation in an earlier HC News we went to Sultan Flooring, 146 Blackstock Road. Excellent service and prompt delivery and fitting.  
DAVID FENTON