



HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

FROM THE HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Highbury Roundhouse - Decision or Indecision?

First - a very big thank you to the HCA for choosing the Roundhouse as the beneficiary of the AGM fundraising raffle and auction.

I had hoped to be able to tell you, in this issue, that we were going to spend your very generous donation on pots of paint. It looked more than likely that the council would pay the very meagre sum required to repair and rescue our back building.

But on Monday May 16th, the council made a decision on the future of that back building which houses the main hall, dance studio, Youth Club and IT suite. We were very disappointed to hear that they intended to demolish the building without further discussion.

They had chosen to ignore the advice of our distinguished structural engineers, The Morton Partnership. Brian Morton had demonstrated that the cost of repairing the building was perfectly affordable. He had obtained quotations from contractors for the engineering solution he was proposing. The works could be accomplished for less than £100,000. The council's consultants are advising that it will cost in excess of £340,000 for demolition.

We believe that this decision is not only **unreasonable** but **unlawful**.

Unreasonable: because, on the figures available, it doesn't make financial sense.

To be fair, the Council has expressed a commitment that it will

build a new community centre on the site, and support us in the interim, as we manage our activities (at six other venues) from the house on Ronalds Road. But we have no legally binding agreement to guarantee that we will have a new centre and no indication as to how the council will afford it. Neither is there a timetable for its construction, so the council appears to be offering to fund temporary accommodation indefinitely. How does that add up?

Unlawful: because on March 25th, the Court of Appeal gave a landmark ruling. It determined that all demolitions of any significance, fall within Annex II of the European Environmental Impact Assessment Directive. That sounds a bit impenetrable, but what it means is that Planning Permission is required before any demolition can take place. We have drawn the council's attention to the Court of Appeal's

ruling and they have given assurances that they wish to act within the law.

If the council decides to apply (to itself) for Planning Permission, there will have to be a period of public consultation. Then we might be able to find out how they can possibly justify this baffling decision.

We have no doubt that the hundreds of local people who signed our on-line petition will want their voices to be heard when it comes to a public consultation. You can see their comments - and you can still sign the petition - at www.savehighburyroundhouse.co.uk

So it's not over yet. There is still talking to be done. Your generous donation has not yet been spent. And that decision might not be quite as decisive as it first appeared.

TONY MILLER
Secretary to the Highbury Roundhouse



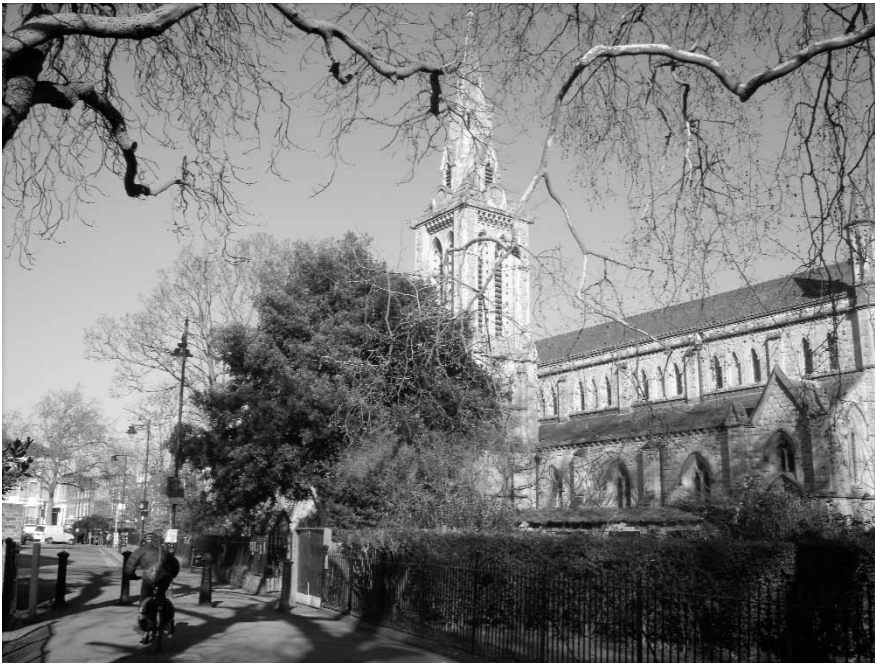
The HCA represents over 900 residents and businesses on all aspects of living and working in Highbury, Lower Holloway and Finsbury Park.

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.

The opinions expressed in HCN are not necessarily those of the Highbury Community Association and its committee members.

Highbury Community Association AGM, Saturday 2nd April 2011, 7.15 pm

Raffle in aid of the Roundhouse raises £475



◀ Christ Church Highbury, venue for the HCA AGM

"We raised £475 for the Roundhouse and have received their thanks," says Committee member Sarah Potter talking about the Highbury Community Association AGM, Saturday 2nd April 2011. The event was held at Christ Church Highbury.

As ever, it was a lively and convivial evening. Tom Rubens was in the Chair. Tony Miller gave a presentation on the Roundhouse situation. John Egan talked about Community activity and Graham Coult gave a brief talk about the state of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Clock Tower (the one beside Christ Church Highbury) and the terms under which it was originally constructed, as set out in the minutes from the Islington Vestry. The Chair had warned previously *sotto voce* that he had his toolbox with him, people wanted their supper, and if there was any danger of lengthy quotes from the Vestry Minutes in the style of Frank from the *Vicar of Dibley* he had a mallet and he wasn't afraid to use it...

Once the formal part of the proceedings closed, people adjourned for supper - a magni-

ficent spread donated by committee members and members of the community.

After supper, the now traditional raffle was drawn, contributing with the auction to raising a handsome sum. As ever the Association is very grateful to those who so generously donated prizes (and to those who bid for them), to those who bought raffle tickets, and also to the traders of Highbury for their ongoing support of the newsletter through advertising.

The raffle prizes

Bottle of Blackberry Sparkle from Mother Earth

Gift boxed set of wine diary and book on wine from Beth Moir

Glass serving dish from Woodland Hardware

Bottle of whisky from Diane Burridge

Portland on-board travel bag from The Master Cobbler

Perfume leaves from To Be Established

Two bottles of wine from Sarah Potter

Two Moroccan decorative lanterns from Gill Shepherd

A litre bottle of Pernod from David Fenton and Derek Whitehead

A glass candlestick from Gill Shepherd

Two Certificates for Alexander Technique lessons from Vicky Walsh and Mikaela Davies at the Highbury Clinic

Two 2 litre bottles of Coca-Cola from Five Boys Health Food Store

A game puzzle from To Be Established

Bottle of House Wine when accompanying a meal for two at San Daniele del Friuli

A pizza plate from To Be Established

Auction in aid of the Roundhouse

Two West End Theatre Tickets from Encore Travel Ltd

A box of farm produce from Farm Direct

Haircut and blow dry from Barnaby's

A water colour "Weight Watchers", mounted and framed, by local artist Derek Whitehead

Set of 5 Griffin and Sabine Stories from Ceinwen Jones

Massaria

(a tree-disease, not a holiday destination)

Climate change if you believe in it, or a long, hot, dry summer if you don't, affect our lives for better and worse.

It has been a lovely surprise to have hot spring weather like I can never remember, but it takes its toll on nature too. Without rain, farmers' crops don't grow as expected, the soil dries out and destabilises houses. Plants succumb to new pests and diseases.

A new concern is the unusually strong appearance, London-wide, of the disease Massaria. It affects plane trees, living branches may fall unexpectedly. If they are substantial branches you can imagine the problems this can bring.

Massaria, a microfungus, has been known for a long time, at least a hundred years, and it seems to have had a normal, healthy relationship with the planes. It lived on small, weak branches and did the job of killing them off and cleaning up the tree. It still does that, and you may have seen some dead branch litter in recent weeks.

However, it is likely that the Massaria fungus is woken from dormancy by the reduction of water flowing through the bark when a dry spell forces the tree



Are some of our trees under threat from Massaria? Is the grass under threat from barbecues?

to concentrate its scarce water resources on the best and most leafy branches. Perfectly healthy but less productive lower branches, with fewer leaves, that would normally get the water they wanted simply because there was plenty around, might have the tap partially turned off by the tree.

But whatever the reasons behind it, Massaria has been attacking living branches in recent years and it has come to the point where safety concerns have been raised. Consequently, local authorities have a potentially big bill to face because plane trees will need to be inspected. The disease is almost impossible to see from the ground because it is a tiny fungal growth that sits on the top side of the branch.

There is a much longer article on this problem on HCA's website, www.highburycity.org, with a few photographs to show some aspects of the appearance of the disease and its effects.

In the coming weeks the tree officers in Islington will be making a survey of plane trees in the borough to assess the present scale of the problem. They will then develop a plan to manage the trees under threat. There's no likelihood that trees will need to be felled - cutting off an infected branch and disposing of it without inadvertently spreading the fungal spores is what's necessary - and helping the trees with more water will be tested to establish whether that is a potential method of reducing the incidence of the disease.

Volunteers will probably be needed to help with some of the tasks, but more of that in the next Newsletter.

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What is your favourite building or man-made place in Highbury?

When the link line was put in from Finsbury Park station to the North London Railway (Richmond to Poplar, the India Docks and Broad Street) one of the bi-products was a sort of wooded dell which when viewed from many angles gives the impression that you are in the country.

There are many beautiful views in Highbury - attractive buildings and man-made spots.

What is your favourite building or man-made place in Highbury? Send us your own views in an article (maximum 500 words), and if possible (although it is not a requirement) a high resolution jpg image. Tell us why it is your favourite, and something of its history/development. We will put all the entries in the editor's top hat, and the one pulled out will be published in the next issue of the Newsletter - the author will receive a £20.00 prize. Deadline is 1st August 2011, send your entries to hcanews@hotmail.com, or to the P.O. Box.



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*Michelle and her colleagues offer all customers
a very warm welcome.*

Noye's Fludde

Highbury Young Singers push the boat out with a fantastic show



Some performances are more than performances, they are experiences. The latter very much describes the show put on by Highbury Young Singers (HYS) on 25th and 26th May in the St Joan of Arc Church on Highbury Park.

It was an appropriate venue not just because of the biblical theme, but also because the structure of the building suggests Noah's Ark. It also has plenty of space and very good acoustics.

It was a visual experience with a lot of movement, as well as being a musically accomplished and enjoyable one. Children flowed around the building carrying models of the various animals which went into the Ark (I didn't count whether they went two by two).

There were some excellent performances and the talent of the HYS members is obvious. The brass section added majesty and magnificence to a show which was accomplished on the part of all involved - cast, musicians and the production team.

Speaking to HCA News after the first performance, Scott Stroman, the conductor, told of how the production came about. Matthew Tucker (who plays the trumpet) wanted to hold a performance of Noye's Fludde in the St Joan of Arc church (he is a member of the congregation there). Scott was also enthusiastic and as he says: "you say you are going to do it, then you get people interested."

"There are one or two professional singers," adds Scott, "taking the role of Noye, Mrs Noye and God, but mostly the performers are from HYS and local schools."

Music First was also involved. The concept behind Music First is a music education programme to create transformation in deprived areas. Highbury Grove School is the hub for the initiative, and the headteacher is described as amazing, a great support!

Noye's Fludde was composed by Benjamin Britten in 1957 specifically as a community opera. Living mostly in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, he is thought to have composed it in response to the devastating floods which afflicted the East Coast in 1953. The story is from the Old Testament of the Bible, but the text used by Benjamin Britten comes from a 15th Century Chester Miracle Play.

Cast

The Voice of God - Ian Kelly
Noye - Denver Smith
Mrs Noye - Catharine Rogers
Sem - Benedict Butcher
Mrs Sem - Isabelle Poole
Ham - Rhys Ronan
Mrs Ham - Tess Lloyd
Jaffett - David Protheroe
Mrs Jaffett - Alice Robinson
The Raven - Beth Azzopardi
The Dove - Molly Welford
Gossips: Eleanor Butcher, Anna Cagnoni, Rosanna Grimes, Tamara Hawkins, Honey Lloyd, Neela Omö, Jessica Shaw, Lucy Shaw, Elise Paton, Sadie Poole, Francesca Tokatlian.

Conductor - Scott Stroman
Director - Justin Butcher
Producer - Matthew Tucker
Chorus Master - Sarah Wilkinson
Puppet Master - Garry Rutter
Set Design - Matthew Lloyd

Songs of the Spirit: Eclectic Voices 20th Anniversary event 18 June

Eclectic Voices will celebrate its 20th anniversary on 18th June with a special concert at the Union Chapel on Upper Street.

It will showcase Scott Stroman's 1997 composition a jazz song-cycle called *Songs of the Spirit* as well as the London premiere of his new work *Jazz Psalms* which was commissioned for the 2010 Three Choirs Festival held at Gloucester Cathedral.

There will be some great jazz players, and HYS will also be performing.

To find out more, and for booking details go to the Eclectic Voices website: www.eclecticvoices.org.uk

Text by Graham Coult.

Images by Hannah Barton



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New plaque commemorates 630th anniversary of destruction of Highbury Manor in Peasant's Revolt

By the time you read this, a new plaque will have



been unveiled on the wall of Highbury Barn commemorating the anniversary of the destruction in June 1381 of Robert Hales' manor house in Highbury. He was the Prior of the Order of St John of Jerusalem (headquarters in Clerkenwell), and also the Chancellor who introduced the Poll Tax, against which the peasants revolted.

John of Gaunt's Palace of the Savoy was destroyed (he was blamed for political difficulties and the Poll Tax too).

We will have a report on the ceremony to unveil the plaque, and more on the history, in the next issue. The Katherine Swynford Society is organising a walk from the Wells at Clerkenwell, to St Etheldreda's Church (last remnant of Bishop of Ely's Palace) and the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

There is no charge for the tour, but we will each have to pay our entrance fees at the venues. For further information contact Graham Coult: grahamcoult@yahoo.com

The Queen Victoria Jubilee Clock Tower

Last refurbished in 1997 for its centenary, the clock tower which graces the top of Highbury Hill is starting to look shabby again with peeling paint and the clock faces leaving something to be desired.

Highbury Community Association has asked the Council about repairing it, but the Council is pleading lack of funds, and is hoping that the community will be able to find the funding in order to make repairs.

A look at the clock base reveals that it was presented to the Islington Vestry (predecessor of the Borough of Islington) by a Mr Alfred Hutchinson in celebration of the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria's ascension to the Throne.

This suggested that it might be possible that Mr Hutchinson had made provision for the maintenance of the clock, as well as its construction.

I went down to the Local History Library (well worth a visit) where the

manager Mark Aston was very helpful and got out the relevant minutes of the Islington Vestry (see image). This revealed that there were provisions for the maintenance of the clock, and its winding, but that the Council was responsible for the lighting.

Local resident Sally Davis set out to establish when the donor died and whether he left provision for the clock in any will he might have made. Sally summarises what she found below:

"Once the clock was built, Mr Hutchinson agreed to pay its maintenance expenses and, in a letter of 18 Feb 1898 he stated that the payments should continue after his death, the money coming from his estate."



"Alfred Hutchinson died on 14 Nov 1911. It's not clear from the minutes of the Council exactly what order this happened in, but LBI discovered that although Hutchinson had made a Will, there was no provision in it for

continued maintenance of the clock. LBI wrote to the solicitors acting for Hutchinson's executors reminding them of the agreement Hutchinson had made with the Vestry."

"Minutes of Council Proceedings 1 April 1912 to March 1913 show that an agreement was reached between the Council and Hutchinson's executors. Minutes p.211, of the meeting of 19 July 1912: councillors were told that the Council had "agreed with the Executors of the late Mr Alfred Hutchinson to take over and maintain the Clock Tower at Highbury Fields, on payment of a sum of £100 by the latter toward its upkeep." The £100 required from Hutchinson's had been received by 5 July 1912. The Council Finance Committee authorised it to be paid into the General Rate account and in future "to charge the cost of maintenance of the Clock Tower to the General Rate."

"It's pretty clear, then: there is no special fund for the maintenance of the clock. It's a pity, but there it is," says Sally.

Does anybody have any suggestions on how the necessary money for repairs can be found?

Vestry Minutes scan courtesy of Islington Local History Centre