



HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

FROM THE HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Jeremy Corbyn speaks on key local issues

I recently interviewed Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour MP for Islington North, talking to him about issues of importance to our locality. His responses are below (in paraphrase).



Air Quality Testing - Jeremy supports the testing being done by Islington Council, but thinks the process needs to be more intensive; with increased testing on a wider variety of roads, and in relation to specific transport problems, such as vehicle stopping-and-starting in congestion situations (e.g. Archway Roundabout). He pointed out that Islington's levels of pollution are above the national average. Although levels have improved since the introduction of congestion charging, the need remains to reduce road transport and encourage more walking and cycling.

Student Housing - Jeremy emphasised that this has been rather too easy to develop, since it by-passes the Council's social housing obligation and planning law, giving the John Jones site as an example. It is part of the growth of commercial housing, and there is concern about levels of rent being paid by some students. Student housing definitely is a good idea up

to a point, but it should not eclipse social housing.

Network Rail Trees - Jeremy applauds the actions of local residents and councillors in protecting the trees along the Drayton Park sidings. He arranged a debate in Parliament to explain that Network Rail's (NR) actions in removing trees contravened the Wildlife and Countryside Act. There is not justification for removing vegetation which does not impede the functioning of the rail line. He specified that NR have promised to hold public consultation on their trees policy, and he will ensure that they keep to their word.

Step-Free Access at Local Stations - Jeremy regards it as 'nothing less than tragic' that, when the Victoria Line was constructed in the 1960s, no provision was made for the needs of disabled users (even though disability issues were discussed generally at the time). As regards the local stations - Highbury & Islington, Finsbury Park and Archway - only Finsbury Park has step-free access, and even then only for the NR line, not the Underground. So far there has been no progress with step-free access at the other two stations. However, for whatever comfort this may provide, Boris Johnson claims he will 're-visit' the issue in 2016.)

Traffic Problems at Highbury Corner roundabout - Jeremy noted

the roundabout has seen a reduction in through-traffic over the last 15 years, in part due to congestion charging; but the site remains very busy, and the Highbury Place crossing continues to be a potentially danger. Jeremy supports the plan to pedestrianise the west side of the roundabout; this would make the wooded island in the centre accessible to pedestrians. He endorsed moving the Post Office to a site in Highbury Place, as a way of both improving access to the station and controlling the crowds on match days. Finally, Jeremy is pleased to have helped to persuade Transport for London (TfL) to extend the East London line to include Highbury & Islington station.

Free School Meals - Jeremy specified that the Inner London Education Authority used to have provision for free school meals. He supports the Council's present policy of providing free meals for all primary school pupils: ensuring children are receiving a good lunch and having it communally. The policy, endorsed by the Fairness Commission in Islington, began in 2009. Jeremy is among those considering the possibility of secondary schools offering free breakfasts for pupils. He stressed it should always be borne in mind that nutritional sufficiency in childhood benefits people in later life.
TOM RUBENS

PHOTO: ISLINGTON GAZETTE



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

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

HCA refreshes its website



The HCA website is currently undergoing a 'refresh'. The newer version will compliment the newsletter in representing the people who live and work in Highbury, north Holloway and Finsbury Park. It will carry up to date information and the current focuses and

priorities we're campaigning for. It will also detail our previous campaigns and their outcomes, as well as a brief history of how the HCA started, and how members can become more involved, or non-members can join. There will be a place to find previous issues of the newsletters and details of how to contact us if you would like to contribute an article to the newsletter, or have an idea or topic that you would like us to include in forthcoming issues. We have even taken the plunge and joined Twitter! Please follow us on Twitter - we are 'Highbury Community' @HighburyCA. Our Twitter feed will be used to keep all up to date with public consultations, planning applications, in line with our remit of keeping a watching brief on plans for the neighbourhood, as well as providing comment on various activities occurring in the area. The refreshed website will be launched in September. If you are new to Twitter, but keen to stay up to date, here's a quick précis: What is it? Described as a 'microblogging' site, Twitter is an online social network enabling users to send and receive text-message like messages. These 'small bursts of information' are called 'tweets', each 140 characters long. How does it work? Twitter is free to use, requiring a username and password to create an account. Unregistered users can read tweets, but cannot respond. Registered users can 'post' tweets. Users can choose who to 'follow' from the vast number of people already using the site. Choosing to 'follow' someone means that your 'timeline' will show their most recent tweet, every time they tweet. Some prolific users of Twitter include, Stephen Fry, Eddie Izzard and even the 'UK Prime Minister'. History? Twitter was launched in July 2006 and has at least 500 million users in 2012. It is a private company and based in San Francisco (thank you, Wikipedia!) Significance? Twitter was cited as an important factor in the Arab spring, it is increasingly seen as a 'de facto' communication system for breaking news - playing a part in the mountain rescue operation of skiers in the Swiss alps, and it is an urban myth that employers are now asking for CVs via Twitter!

To set up an account:

Go to www.twitter.com

Fill out the short 'New to Twitter' form on the home page

Click the 'Sign up' button and follow the instructions.

Good luck!

The HCA would like express thanks and give credit to Mr & Mrs Charles Scott for the photograph of Ali Carmichael in June's issue.

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Highbury Timebank and Sunday Café

In spring 2012 a new community hub Sunday café was opened in the Ecology Centre, in Gillespie Park. The cafe is open every Sunday (apart from match days and special events at the Emirates) from 11am - 5pm in summer and 11am - 3:30pm in winter. It is run by local members and sells very reasonably priced home-baked cakes, fresh soups and Fairtrade tea and coffee. The café is part of Highbury Timebank and was set up by Priti Pedersen. The exchange of time and skills within the community is how 'timebanking' works in Highbury. There are time banks all over the world, with over 70 in London (www.timebanking.org). Highbury Timebank has been active in Islington since 2010. I am a 'timebanker', and earning time credits as I write. I have also earned them by forming a cleaning circle with a couple of other members; I have spent my credits, our only currency, doing African Yoga with a wonderful teacher and attending a life coaching session with a true professional. There are many ways to be a 'timebanker' as there are people and there are lots of recipes that work. Please pay us a visit on a Sunday at Gillespie Park - fabulous in all seasons. For more details about timebanking e-mail Priti highburytime@live.co.uk
MARIE-AGNES POTTIER

Tennis and trees in Highbury Fields

It's not cheap to book a tennis court at Highbury Fields, up to £10 per hour; nor is it cheap to keep the courts in good condition - but they have not been adequately maintained and are now so old they are due for replacement. The gathering moss is a hazard for players, as are some areas of tarmac being raised by tree roots. Greenspace is intending to reduce the size of trees around the tennis courts by removing 30 percent of their crowns and to cut back the re-growth annually to keep the leaves to a minimum. There is soon to be a site meeting with the tree officers and representatives of the HCA, the Highbury Fields Association and the tennis players. HCA supports both tennis and trees and sees no reason for a conflict. The council could ensure the tennis courts receive appropriate maintenance and replacement, and uphold the decision that the trees are Highbury Fields' unique feature. When the 'Vision' for Highbury Fields was presented, councillors voted without exception to support the trees as described: "It is recognised and acknowledged that the interlocking network of avenues and groups in its entirety forms a significant heritage asset and the character of the Fields depends on them ... that plane trees, especially in avenues, form a fundamental part of the character of Highbury Fields and therefore should be protected". Tennis courts age and degrade; moss seeks to grow irrespective of the proximity of trees, though shading will clearly encourage it, consequently courts everywhere need regular cleaning to prevent moss or to remove it when it forms. The HCA's position will be to press for proper reinstatement of the tennis courts, a fitting maintenance regime and not to hack away at the arboricultural heritage in an all-advised attempt to preserve courts that are overdue for renewal. The council has taken a lot of income from the game over the years; now is the time to put some back.
ROBIN HULL



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St Joan of Arc's Golden Jubilee 1962 - 2012

2012 has been a memorable year for Britain: the Olympics, Paralympics and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Highbury also has a golden jubilee of its own - the Catholic community at St Joan of Arc celebrates the 50 year anniversary of their church, which opened in 1962. Highbury's Catholic community dates from 1918, the first parish Mass was offered in the Carmelite chapel and to 1920 with a 'temporary' church in Kelross Road. By the 1950s a new building was needed and work began on a church for 750 people in 1960 with Cardinal Godfrey visiting to bless the foundation stone. A time capsule containing a parish history was buried with the stone. In 1962 the 85 ft tower was completed and the windows installed, with parishioners donating 44 of the stained glass at a cost of £5 each. The church was first used at Easter that year. Fifty years on Father Gerard King said, 'I am delighted to be here in Highbury. Although close to central London, Highbury retains a village charm about it. Everyone says there is a real sense of community here and our parish is very much at the heart of the community, as are the other local churches'. This year, on 23 September, St Joan of Arc celebrates with a special Mass presided over by Archbishop Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, and a party afterwards. However, two more important milestones are imminent: the centenary of the first parish Mass (2018) and the centenary of the opening of the original church (2020). There is still a lot to plan and look forward to! www.stjoanofarcparish.co.uk
MAUREEN HARTIGAN



Present building under construction



Temporary church in Kelross Road

The idea of a classless society

'The idea of a classless society' was the chapter title that grabbed me most at first glance at the latest collection of short essays from long-term Highbury resident and humanist Tom Rubens. As is Tom Rubens' customary style, the book is short - only 160 pages - yet it covers wide-ranging thought-provoking topics and you can follow up individual themes using the references provided. In this most recent book Tom looks at Western thinking and culture since the Renaissance from a neo-Darwinist perspective, hence the title of the book 'Politics and Neo-Darwinism and Other Essays'. Tom has views that he sets out clearly but he presents arguments against himself also. Class is just one of an eclectic range of topics he chooses to explore that also includes World War Two and the atomisation of British society since 1945 for which Tom argues the Welfare State is in part responsible. The topics are political, ethical and philosophical but underlying all is a common theme of the mirror Western culture has held up through the ages to debate on the big human questions. Such a

focus is to be expected given Tom's specialist subject is English literature - he has been a teacher of English for many years. In this book he makes detailed reference to Shakespeare's plays in a number of contexts such as the extent to which economic hardship is portrayed in Shakespeare's plays and Shakespeare's views on political violence and whether it can ever be justified - the latter extending into a discussion of Sartre and World War Two. For those who are going to, or have been to the Almeida's current production of King Lear, please note Tom includes commentary on that play. The book is physically separated into three sections. To my mind, as someone not well versed in philosophy, the first two sections are for the general reader like me, and the last section, being pure philosophy, is for those who already have some knowledge of philosophy. I found the book to be food for thought. I am inspired to read more - finally to attempt to read up on specific philosophers - and philosophy which Tom laments in his book has 'marginal' status in society. Tom's book has made me want to be

one of the philosophically initiated. How to obtain a copy: Politics and Neo-Darwinism and Other Essays RRP = £8.95 But available from www.imprint-academic.com at £7.16

The HCA uses the adverts in this newsletter to fund the printing, paper and postal costs of those members who choose to receive hardcopies through their letter boxes.

The hosting of adverts in the newsletter has the added benefit of encouraging readers, members, and the wider local community to support the local shops and amenities.

Olden Garden Silver Jubilee Highbury's Community Garden

Twenty five years ago, a group of Whistler Street residents fought to have the vacant land, which runs



the length of the street behind a high Victorian wall, made into a garden. Pat Tawn, led the campaign and the two acre plot of overgrown slopes running down to the railway line with a flat piece of land into woodlands, became a focus of hard work by residents and community volunteers. The Olden Garden was developed to contain an orchard, wildlife meadow, woodland and large pond. However, over the years it fell to a few to maintain the beautiful but now overgrown site. In 2006, the wall which hid the Garden collapsed, crushing everything beneath it - was this a sign for change? I like to think so. A committee was formed and set about rescuing the Garden. Luckily, for us, Arsenal football club agreed to donate some profits to the local community, with this help we were able to build the garden house. The structure, which is warm and light, with kitchen facilities, has become a hub for gatherings to celebrate birthdays, to discuss ecological issues, or to hold work 'away days'. We have gained many members

through these bookings. To get work done in the garden we had to appeal to local people to participate in 'workdays' (for which we always provide a cooked meal). We have over 300 keyholders and an increasing number of young families all learning the joys of gardening; and we now have a vegetable plot. The Garden is a place for quiet reflection, a beautiful place to meet friends, and to relax. The Garden is undergoing constant change as the very act of gardening is an ever evolving cycle and we always need keen gardeners. If you would like to join us, we have a workday on 20 October from 10am - 4pm, to plant bulbs in time for spring. We are indebted to our funders, the Big



Lottery, the Cripplegate Foundation, the NewLon Trust and Arsenal, and also the Area East Committee of Islington Council; many thanks to our local councillors Terry Stacy, John Gilbert and Julie Horton, who are consistent champions of the Olden Garden.
ANNA SULLIVAN

Football sculpture in Highbury Fields

Some of you may have been wondering about the footballer sculpture in Highbury Fields, appearing to stand guard next to the

football and netball courts? The sculpture was created by Shane Green as part of Islington's sports day celebrations on Highbury Fields on July 26, part of the Torch Relay Day. The sculpture is part of Shane Green's London Olympics Chainsaw Sculpture Trail in 10 London parks. The sculptures would relate to an



Olympic sport taking place that day - for Islington it was football. The sculpture was created from wood which came from a tree that previously stood in Highbury Fields. There will be a small plaque for the sculpture, to be unveiled at a later date. Shane Green explains, 'Over a year ago I remember Sir Sebastian Coe saying that these Olympic Games in our country were an opportunity for us as a nation to show everyone else 'what we can do' so I am responding to that.'

HANNAH BRISTOW

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Happy Birthday HCA!



The Highbury clock tower was erected in 1897 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the reign of Queen Victoria.

This month, Highbury Community Association (HCA) is fifteen years old: quite an achievement for such an organisation, many of which founder and die long before reaching such a grand age. The meeting which led to the formation of HCA took place in October 1997, as a response to Arsenal's original intention of expanding the old stadium by knocking down houses in Highbury Hill. That plan was abandoned in 1999, and the new stadium opened in 2006. Even though this was the trigger for the creation of the HCA, keeping a watching brief on plans for the neighbourhood, emanating from Islington Council as much as from Arsenal plc, remains part of HCA's remit. We have focussed on much else, too. We are members of the London Forum, which is concerned with devolved planning (or the lack of it) in London and participate in meetings. We report on both London-wide and local urban tree policy planning and on local plans for transition to the generation of lower carbon emissions. The newsletter has also tried to give a picture of Highbury's diversity and history. The newsletter regularly publishes interviews with those who live or work here: novelists, shopkeepers, therapists,

journalists, school heads and others. We live in an area which spans the grandeur of the Georgian houses around Highbury Fields, past Highbury Barn - once a huge entertainment area with cream teas, dancing, bowling, and high-wire trapeze artists - to Finsbury Park, much poorer in the past than it is today. We have tried to reflect some of this mix in the historical articles published from time to time - such as one about Alexander Aubert the astronomer, who set up an observatory in the clear air of Highbury at Highbury House in the eighteenth century (where Eton House flats in Leigh Road are now) and who has given his name to several roads in the area. Every newsletter since the first, fifteen years ago will be available on the website, which is now being revamped for a far more active role in future, so these articles will not be lost. We know that one of the roles people want from the HCA is a socially focused one; through organising events where newcomers to the area can meet others. The AGM is always well-attended and people enjoy the social evening afterwards. The money raised from the raffle and auction at this event goes to a different local good cause each year. From time to time

the HCA organises or takes part in Quiz Nights and other social events over a glass of wine at the Ecology Centre, in Gillespie Park. Highbury is an area of rapid turnover these days, and events where people can meet one another are very popular. In the past we have had social events planners who co-opt helpers and organise events, but we have lacked such a person for a while. If anyone out there feels like taking on this role, we would love to hear from them! If you would like to be more actively involved in the life of the HCA, or would like to write for the newsletter, please get in touch by emailing HCAnews@hotmail.com
GILL SHEPHERD

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