



# HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

FROM THE HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

## From Hollywood to Highbury - a trip to the Islington museum

**O**n a recent trip to the Islington Museum, tucked away beneath Finsbury Library, I discovered the fascinating



cinematic history of the area in their current exhibition. I had not anticipated

the important role Highbury played in the early British independent film industry. The exhibition *From Hollywood to Highbury*, took me on a tour of the silver screen in Islington through the twentieth century up to the present day. Mixing memorabilia, posters and video footage, this exhibition is both evocative and highly informative. Islington was not only the birthplace of Robert Paul (1869-1943) the 'Father of British Cinema', but was where the first sound-film show was presented, and also housed Britain's first purpose-built cinema. Later, the borough was home to two early film studios. In 1919, Poole Street became the main British base for the US production company, Famous Players-Lasky, later renamed Paramount Pictures. Films like *Woman to Woman* (1923), a hit in both the UK and US, were

shot here and launched the careers of three men who would play major roles in the development of British cinema - Michael Balcon, Victor Savile and Alfred Hitchcock. Highbury Studios opened at 65A Highbury New Park in 1936 and operated as an independent alternative to its prestigious neighbour. Notable films made there include the comedy *Sam Small Leaves Town* (1936) starring June Clyde and Stanley Holloway, and the crime thriller *Law and Disorder* (1940) starring Alistair Sim and Diana Churchill. Photographs bring to life cinema's vibrant social history in the borough as well as its distinctive architectural legacy.

Without the numerous cinemas built



in Islington the local cityscape would look very different today.

Although many of the 40 purpose-built cinemas have now been demolished, some notable ones remain, converted for other uses. For example the Astoria picture house on Seven Sisters Road at Finsbury Park is now a Pentecostal church, while over on Essex road

the impressive Carlton cinema was latterly a bingo hall. Both opened in 1930 and are now Grade II listed buildings of historical importance. Of the early cinemas two still operate; Holloway Odeon, which opened in 1938 as The Gaumont, and Screen on the Green, called The Picture Theatre, built in 1910.

Cinema building in the early days was no mean feat. Cutting-edge designers and architects, like George Coles, ensured state-of-the-art and exotic building design of staggering proportions. Some of the largest picture houses, like the art deco Astoria seated 3,040 people (one of the largest in the world) and the Carlton with its Egyptian-inspired façade seated 2,266. To put their sheer scale into perspective, Vue Islington seats up to 1,753.

There is much more to the exhibition than a short article can do justice to. A visit to the museum will reveal the dynamic past of Islington's cinemas and its legacy in the UK film industry right on our doorstep. I highly recommend the exhibition, for teenagers and upwards. *From Hollywood to Highbury* is open until 23rd August 2013 and entry is free. Islington Museum, 245 St John Street, EC1V 4NB  
LUCY BRADLEY



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](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com)

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

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**Olive Abrahart remembered**

Sadly, Olive Abrahart, a stalwart of Highbury, died recently aged only 69. A long-term resident of Stephens Ink Estate and active member of the community, Olive will be sorely missed by many local people. With her husband Ron, she voluntarily ran a luncheon club at the Stephens Ink Community Centre for nearly 30 years, and annually ran stalls at the Gillespie Park Festival. In the late 1980s, Olive and Ron supported the campaign to save Gillespie Park from development, and were active members of Gillespie Neighbourhood Forum from the outset in 1987. She loved the Stephens Ink Community Centre and worked tirelessly to make it the wonderful resource for the area that it is today. Olive was very self-effacing and never sought public recognition for her achievements or the support that she so willingly gave to many, particularly the elderly people living on Stephens Ink Estate. I feel privileged to have known Olive for many years and, like many local people, am devastated by her passing. Our thoughts go to Ron and Karen her daughter, who together with Olive, worked so hard to make Highbury wonderful. DIANE BURRIDGE

**Tai Ji Quan at the Ecology Centre - try something new!**

Was your New Year resolution to take more exercise and to join a gym? Have you found it difficult to keep up? What about trying a more gentle form of exercise that progressively adds new movements and is good for both body and mind. I myself have Parkinsons and have found doing Tai Ji Quan very beneficial. We are a small, friendly group all of ages and abilities who meet once a week, with some coming for more than a decade, while others, like myself, are comparative newcomers. Do come along and try out a new mental and physical discipline, and afterwards enjoy



a cup of refreshing green tea. Simply turn up any Wednesday at 6.50pm at the Islington Ecology Centre in Drayton Park, just along from Arsenal station. For more information and cost, contact our instructor, Miltos ([miltos@tjqd.co.uk](mailto:miltos@tjqd.co.uk) or 077 9977 3959). Classes break for the summer in late July and resume Wednesday 11th September. PATRICIA HERERT



**The HCA is now on Facebook!**

Following on from the revamp of the HCA website last year and establishing our Twitter account (@HighburyCA) we have taken the plunge and set up an official Facebook page for the HCA. The purpose of the page is to be a forum for local people to discuss current issues and post interesting events or other news that other residents will find interesting. You can access the Facebook page either by visiting [www.facebook.com/highburycommunity](http://www.facebook.com/highburycommunity) or by clicking on the link on our website, [www.highburycommunity.org](http://www.highburycommunity.org) Take a look today, let us know what you think - and make sure you click on our 'like' button! Happy surfing...



WILL PARKES

# 'Quick fire' interview

Rab and Denise Bennetts of Bennetts Associates, 'Our architectural practice, is around 75-strong so our jobs are a high intensity mix of design, directing projects, running the firm and trying to win new work. Our best known project is the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and current work includes performing arts, several offices, hotels, a police college, a dogs' home (yes, seriously!) and urban planning. We bought our first flat in Highbury New Park in 1978, and moved to Aubert Park in 1984. 'Architecture often includes design or selection of furnishings and decorations, supervision of construction work, and the examination, restoration, or re-modelling of existing buildings;' (www.dictionary.com), but what does an architect do? Designing buildings doesn't begin to describe the complexity of being an architect, although that is the core activity. It also needs organisational skills, patience and a thick skin. What are the best things about your job? There's nothing quite like gazing at a building nearing completion two or three years after the first sketches. It's a thrilling experience.



**What are the worst things about your job?** A project being cancelled or a competition we haven't won. All projects require emotional energy, even the unsuccessful ones.



**What would be a 'bad day at the office' for you?** As above! We still have to pick ourselves up and keep everyone's spirits high for the other projects.

**Is there any particular building you wish you had designed and why?** Locally it would be Arsenal

stadium of course! The atmosphere should be more intense inside; more theatrical, with steeper sides closer to the pitch.

**Which famous architect or architects do you most admire?** There are so many, but from our UK peer group Sir David Chipperfield is producing some beautiful buildings all over the world.

**Who would be your ideal dinner party guests?** Nick Robinson and Clive Anderson, so they could walk home in Highbury after plenty of wine, and, if we could bring him back to life, Alexander Aubert, whose observatory was at Highbury House in the late 18th century.

**If you weren't an architect, what would be your dream job?** Rab - I once fantasised about being an orchestral conductor! Denise - We love good food so maybe I should open a restaurant.

## Zing Zing - a fresh approach to Chinese food

Local Highbury foodie Josh Magidson has just opened his attractive new takeaway on Blackstock Road, selling all our favourite Chinese dishes, freshly cooked with no added chemicals or overpowering sauces. Zing Zing's menu has healthy and vegetarian options, and fish dishes, including sea bass and squid.



Creating new dishes is also part of Josh's plan for making this the best takeaway in the locality. Josh and his team were expecting five orders on their opening night. Fifty came, and have continued coming in increasing numbers. Josh particularly recommends, Sticky Pork Ribs (£5.00), followed by Glazed Sesame Chicken (£6.00) and HCA News can strongly recommend, on the basis of independent tasting, Nasi Goreng (Indonesian egg fried rice with fresh prawns) (£4.00) and Chilli Green Beans (£5.50).

Zing Zing Highbury and Islington, 142 Blackstock Road, N4 2DX, 020 7226 6664, 17.30-23.00 every day. [www.zing-zing.co.uk](http://www.zing-zing.co.uk)

SARAH POTTER

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[highburytime@live.co.uk](mailto:highburytime@live.co.uk)

## **Juniper Dining - a review**

Juniper Dining is a family run restaurant which opened about three years ago and prides itself on its classic cuisine and pleasant ambience. Although regulars tried to keep this local gem a secret, word has got out and booking is now essential. The menu is seasonal and supplemented with daily specials. Where possible, ingredients are sourced locally. There is a good choice of four or five of dishes for each course and caters well for vegetarians. The smoked salmon hash brown makes a delicious starter, and their lemon tart for dessert is a personal favourite! A set menu is available all evening on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and from 5-7pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturday (orders must be placed by 7pm). For Sunday lunch a choice of roast meats is available, accompanied by crispy roast potatoes and a generous portion of vegetables. Although the wine list is short, there is a sufficiently good selection that should satisfy a wine buff's discerning palate!

Juniper Dining, 100 Highbury Park, N5 2XE, 020 7288 8716,  
[www.juniperdining.co.uk](http://www.juniperdining.co.uk)

DAVID FENTON

## **Street Life - a new online tool for connecting the real community**

Street Life is an online a community social network where members can participate in conversations about things all things local. People can use it in many different ways to connect with their neighbours and other community members. There are currently about 800 people signed up in Islington and the forums are active with a diverse range of topics up for discussion. Any kind of conversation can be started; for example you may be looking for some advice about a local school or for a recommendation for a near-by hairdresser or a good cleaner. You could write a post asking people to keep an eye out for your lost pet, or as a way of finding an event, starting a local community projector, or even to find a new home for a piece of furniture. HCA committee member, Priti Pedersen, has been using it to promote the cafe and events at the Ecology Centre in Gillespie Park. It's also a good way to support local businesses, not only by writing customer reviews, businesses can have their own page where they can talk about what they have to offer. Whether you are a seasoned Highbury dweller or a newcomer to the area, it's a great way of finding people with similar interests who live locally. Although Streetlife is an online community, it's really about connecting with others in the 'real world' neighbourhood.

It is easy to sign up at [www.streetlife.com](http://www.streetlife.com) and to start getting (more) connected.

## **Gillespie Park becomes a Fields in Trust site**

Gillespie Park recently became a Fields in Trust site as part of the Queen's diamond jubilee celebrations. The designation means that the whole park is protected in perpetuity, which is a great legal precedent for such a well loved open space. As part of the scheme, The Friends of Gillespie Park, along with staff at the Ecology Centre, secured £10,000 funding to improve natural play facilities in the park. Differing from traditional play features such as slides and swings, natural play features encourage exploration and engagement of children in their natural world, so something as simple as a fallen log or a steep slope can become part of their natural playground. We have been busy designing and installing a range of eye catching and innovative features within the park, both in the woodland play space and in the kick-about area near the St Thomas Road entrance. All these features will be installed over the coming months, and will make a great improvement to the park.

MATTHEW LOVEDAY

# Annual General Meeting round up

The HCA held its AGM on Saturday 20 April 2013 at Christ church, Highbury Grove, with Roger Wright chairing the meeting. We now have 965 members and the aim is to reach 1,000 the chair urged members to recommend membership to others. The chair thanked Robin Hull for his committed and effective work on the committee on Highbury Fields matters, and welcomed the presence of Highbury West Councillor Richard Greening and Green Party representatives. Diana BurrIDGE thanked the Chair Roger Wright for his very considerable contribution on planning, membership and drafting HCA submissions. Those present at the AGM were also encouraged to sign the *Save the Whittington Hospital* campaign petition. A campaign representative reminded everyone of the Day of Action (took place on 24th April), and thanked the HCA for its support. The keynote presentation this year was from Miranda Bertram, Executive Director of the Park Theatre. Miranda told the story of Park Theatre's development and explained that the new building in Clifton Terrace will have 200 seats and a rehearsal space with 85 -100 seats, a café and bar open all day, offices and flats for sale. The theatre's educational work will be aimed at both children and adults, and take place on Saturdays, mornings, evenings and at a summer school. The programme will include classics, new plays, musicals, a Christmas pantomime and celebrity evenings. Miranda urged the meeting to volunteer for roles such as ushering or helping out with the extracurricular activities. During questions, it emerged that average ticket prices will be £19, and £16 for concessions. In response to a question on the population of Highbury, the Chair undertook to publish the figures (approximately 11,500 households) in the HC News, and added that it is one of the most diverse parts of the UK, with no one dominant group. Population is increasing, yet workplaces are being lost - for example the National Children's Home and the London Metropolitan University building. Local businesses are losing custom as a result. The HCA therefore opposes planning applications affecting jobs. John Egan underlined the Committee's opposition to Arsenal FC's application to increase the number of concerts at the Emirates stadium and asked for support. It was pointed out that the wear caused on Highbury Fields by the 'line of desire' path has increased and the chair undertook to work with the Highbury Fields Association on possible solutions.

Visit the HCA website

(<http://www.highburycommunity.org/highbury-community-news.html>) for 'Thank you's' to all the people who donated prizes for the raffle and auction.

SARAH POTTER/HANNAH BRISTOW

## U3A Gets Going in Islington

A new branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A) is being set up in Islington. The plan is to launch in Autumn 2013 with a range of interest groups, and monthly meetings. To register your interest, please visit the website

<http://www.islingtonu3a.org.uk> (currently under construction) or contact the chair of the Islington U3A steering committee, Anne Weyman on [anne.weyman@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:anne.weyman@blueyonder.co.uk) Look out for more detail in the next issue of HC News!



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# Festival of many facets

The 11th annual Holloway Arts Festival took place from 1st - 8th June, at a range of venues in the Holloway area. It catered to many tastes, and put on events for a host of different media, including music, dance, painting, literature



and film. For example, in literature, there was an interview with award-winning playwright, novelist and poet Deborah Levy, plus a cabaret with performance-poet John Hegley. In music, it staged the finals of a singer songwriter competition, judged by a panel of industry experts; and, as the Festival's final event, a rock, pop and vox party in Whittington Park. The event I attended was one celebrating the life

and work of (now deceased) film director Derek Jarman. Held at the Old Fire Station in Mayton St., N7, it had, as one might expect, a distinct atmosphere of sexual openness, given that Derek's homosexuality was overt in both his lifestyle and movies.

Addressing the audience (female as well as male) was Peter Tatchell, the long-time campaigner for gay rights. He had first met Derek in the 1980s, and subsequently worked with him on many occasions, as well as assisting him in the making of the film *Edward II*. He described Derek as displaying a "sense of Englishness"



(being liberal and humanitarian, and attached to the arts and crafts tradition); but also as an exponent of "queer politics" (wanting to transform society, and not merely seeking the assimilation of gays into the existing social order). Part of Derek's politics, he added, was an attempt to remove the social stigma attached to having

Aids, the disease from which Derek died (in 1994). Derek helped to change the public attitude to Aids-infected people from one of hostility to that of understanding, education and disease

prevention. The evening also featured the screening of two films. One was a brief documentary, with Derek commenting on a variety of topics: the policies of the Thatcher government in the 1980s; gardening; art; his family background. The other was a full-length feature film directed by Derek in 1987, called *The Last of England*. This was highly experimental in both structure and camera-work, and contained some explicit homosexual material. All in all, the event was stimulatingly unconventional, and one hopes that the unorthodox in general will continue to be part of the Holloway Festivals.

TOM RUBENS