

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

Issue No 16 January 2000

Just what is QMMAC?

Queensland Multi-Media Arts Centre is a new, non-profit, voluntary organisation, with a difference. Operating out of Council premises in Queensland Road, and fully functional since July 1999, it is a multimedia arts and educational complex, offering a wide variety of courses and classes for all members of the community from the age of eight upwards. It aims to include minority groups, the socially excluded and the disabled.

The Centre was started in 1998 with a grant of £100,000 from Islington Council and was initially managed by the Council's Regeneration Unit. When the Centre's director and only paid employee, Dorrie Valery, was appointed last May the buildings were still derelict, flooded and unusable. Since then Dorrie has recruited over ninety individual and corporate volunteers who have contributed more than £105,000 in labour, goods and money; and with their help she has turned the warehouses into a fully functioning community centre. Work on a sound technology training unit, a dance area, an art room and a large exhibition space is well advanced; and there are architects' plans for a cafeteria.

In the weeks before Christmas, QMMAC was used by Capital Radio as a warehouse, storing toys for *Share a Capital Christmas*. 134,000 of London's needy children benefited from these gifts.

Every week, Dorrie, a one woman whirlwind of energy and inspiration, seems to hatch up a new project; and every week, with the help of her volunteers and the Centre's users, another project comes on stream.

In spite of the meteoric success of QMMAC, the Labour Council

hatched a plan that would have closed the project down only months after it became fully operational. In December it was proposed to cut all the Centre's funding on the grounds that the uncertainty created by Arsenal's interest in Ashburton Grove made it unviable; and a demand for a full year's rent of £40,000, which was to have been waived during repair works, was issued by LBI.

Luckily, this proposal never got to committee owing to the bye-election at which political control changed hands.

However, the danger is not over. The Lib-Dems have made it clear they intend to cut the voluntary sector severely in the Autumn as part of their cost reduction plans, but at least they are going about the matter in an orderly fashion and have appointed the Joseph Rowntree Trust as independent consultants to advise where the cuts should fall.

This gives a breathing space to start generating income and to raise funds from other sources. Also the uncertainty posed by the Arsenal's plans has been removed following intense lobbying by the HCA and others. This lobbying resulted in a requirement in the draft Ashburton Grove Planning Brief, obliging the developer to retain or relocate QMMAC in an appropriate building, if Arsenal continues with its proposal and the site eventually becomes a multi-use entertainment complex.

The Arts Centre has an open-door policy and welcomes all users and volunteers. To find out what is going on or what you can do to help, turn up at **26-38 Queensland Road** any weekday, or ring **619 0459** for details of courses and training offered.

Find out about it. You will be amazed! ■

ARSENAL REVEALS ITS PLANS - OR DOES IT?

On 16th November Ashburton Grove became the latest in a long line of Arsenal's "preferred options" for expansion. This time for a 60,000 seater stadium and 'other' uses. But the Club admits it is still interested in King's Cross and another unnamed site.

On 22nd December, 40 local people met Ken Friar, Arsenal's Managing Director, and the Club's new team of consultants. Unsurprisingly most of those present were opposed to the idea of a super-stadium, as the HCA always has been. The Club's representatives seemed genuinely bemused at the strength of feeling from so many groups - they must have believed their own propaganda about the opposition to the Highbury expansion being based solely on the loss of homes.

Friar made it clear that expanding Highbury is no longer a serious option, and that the site will be sold for other uses, if the Ashburton Grove scheme is approved. Cllr Nigel Mason voiced widely held community views when he vetoed the idea of a dense residential development on the Highbury site.

The Council has prepared a draft planning brief for Ashburton Grove, which was passed for consultation on 11th January. There will be a separate one for Highbury, due out before 15th February.

Highbury Councillor, Maureen Leigh, has come out strongly against the relocation plan. As a community politician with her ear close to the ground, she knows the extent of the opposition, which is much wider than on the last occasion. At least 10 separate groups oppose the super-stadium complex.

With up to 22,000 extra fans at matches; other events, hotels, conference suites and retail in action seven days a week, it is clear most people who currently suffer match-day disruption will be no better off, and thousands living and working North and West of the new site will be worse off. ■

Read all the details in our
special edition

Cars, Pollution and Illness

By Dr Laurence Gerlis

If you move to London from the countryside, your first winter is usually ruined by upper respiratory infections.

Most Londoners suffer from low grade chronic sinusitis, as evidenced by the number of people one sees with morning catarrh and a persistent irritating cough. Listening to radio and TV programmes will attest to the sounds of the presenter clearing his or her throat, and most of this is due to the high level of pollution we suffer in inner city London. As a physician, I find I often have to apologise to overseas patients for the levels of pollution in London and the effect it has on the nose, throat, sinuses and chest. Smokers, of course, suffer more from these symptoms because of the combined effects of atmospheric pollution and cigarettes.

I reassure people that by their second or third winter their sinuses would adjust to the London air. More seriously, the incidence of asthma has increased in adults and children and much of this is allergy and pollution related. It is known that allergens such as pollen will stick to particles of pollution and become suspended in the atmosphere where they cause reactions in the bronchial tissues causing spasm and wheeze - the classic symptoms of asthma. Respiratory physicians agree that asthma incidence and prevalence is rising and that some of this is due to pollution. I have often recommended to people that the only chance they have of recovery is to move out of London.

Since the Clean Air Act has reduced smoke from coal, the main culprit in causing pollution is the car exhaust. Living in Highbury we are close to the A1, Seven Sisters and Camden roads, all of which are main commuter routes. In addition,

our proximity to the City and the West End makes Highbury an ideal spot to which a car can be brought, the rest of the journey being by public transport. In Stavordale Road, a typical small residential road, it is difficult to park before 5 pm because of daytime parking by out-of-towners. The increasing affluence of Highbury also brings more cars per dwelling. We are close to copying the situation in West Hampstead where commuter parking makes my job of visiting patients virtually impossible.

My fears were exacerbated recently when I noticed the strange phenomenon of queues of cars entering a new block of flats in Highbury at 7.30 am. The most likely reason for this is that residents have found parking spaces in the street and have rented out their covered parking areas, entirely negating the usual justification for on-site parking in residential developments, which is to keep residents' cars off the streets. Even "limited provision of general parking" as specified in the draft Planning Brief for the Ashburton Grove area, is likely to lead to such entrepreneurial sub-letting, not only for Arsenal match days but all the time for commuters. Since new businesses such as hotels will also have parking spaces allocated, it is not difficult to imagine a system which will simply bring more cars into the area seven days a week. I know of local residents and even disabled-car-space owners who sub-let for car parking on match days.

We do not have sufficient greenery on Highbury Fields to clean the air polluted by traffic. Highbury and Islington are unhealthy places to live because of traffic pollution. While central Government can address transport policy in general, we have a responsibility locally to discourage car use and encourage the use of public transport. Highbury should not become a car park, and super-stadia do not belong in the inner-city. ■

ROUGH JUSTICE FOR DRIVERS

By Daniel Michelson

The planned Zone E controlled parking extension reported in the last issue is just another example of the Council's haphazard, ill-conceived, zero-tolerance policy towards car parking in the borough.

We have been informed by the Highbury Fields Association that this extension will be the only part of Zone E that will have a visitor's parking vouchers scheme. What about the rest of Zone E? It will now be practically impossible to get any repair men, for example, to call round to my home during business hours, as they will have nowhere to leave their vehicles.

There is a single yellow line outside my house in Highbury Crescent where I sometimes leave my car for a few minutes to bring goods through my front door before parking in a resident's bay. I have been told by a parking attendant that this is now not allowed, and an "instant" parking ticket will be issued, which can only be appealed against if documentary proof of loading can be produced - this is obviously impossible where one's private belongings are concerned.

People with cars in Islington are now fair game for any kind of rough justice meted out by the Council. Parking

ticket appeals are no longer dealt with properly or are sometimes totally ignored. Wrongful issuing of parking tickets is not properly investigated, and the motorist is assumed to be lying unless he can prove otherwise.

Islington Council have now said officially that they are "anti-car" and intend, amongst other things, to introduce a 20 mph limit in Holloway Road, charges for workplace parking and road user charges. They claim "this is what residents want". I would like to see evidence of this.

This is one resident, albeit concerned about traffic jams, the environment and pollution, who thinks that the Council are going totally over the top in these matters and have got their priorities wrong. ■

Organic Korean Cuisine in Islington

By Elizabeth Dudley

Listed in the Good Food Guide, the excellent Korean restaurant, Bu-San, is just by Highbury & Islington tube station. It is named after the Korean port of Bu-San, famous for its wide variety of seafood and Japanese influenced cuisine.

Bu-San's proprietors, Young Hyung Lee and his wife, Kim, are adamant that only the very best fresh food is used. That is why they grow almost all the vegetables they use on a series of organic allotments in Finchley.

The Lees' organic farming is a direct result of their attitude to healthy food. Says Young Hyung, "The taste of organic vegetables is very different....all our customers say they can taste the difference....it is very heavy work, sometimes satisfying, sometimes not. Both Kim and I have been involved in farming from an early age. We both grew up in small towns and are both children of farmers. Kim's father has a big fish farm." Korean food is very much home cooking; it is a mixture of both spicy and non-spicy food using a lot of fish. Koreans like lots of side dishes and starters. At Bu-San, the food is never oily as no fat is used in preparing dishes.

Mr and Mrs Lee came to England in 1976. Young Hyung was working as a chef in some of Korea's grandest hotels when a friend asked him to consider a job for a Korean chef in London. The young couple took the plunge and emigrated from one side of the world to the other. Lee worked initially in the West End and then as a chef at the Hilton Hotel but, after a dozen years of working up to an eighteen hour day for someone else, he and Kim decided to set up on their own.

They bought 43 Holloway Road, but the building was in desperate need of repair - including a new roof. Lee recalls, "It was hard at the beginning and the restaurant was tiny. Debbie was about two years old at the time. I remember it was very cold. Kim made all the curtains. It took at least six months to build up into a profitable business. We were working very long days - up at dawn and through until the early hours of the morning. "

Bu-San opened in August 1988 and enjoyed such success that three years later the Lees bought the solicitor's office next door and doubled the size of the restaurant.

A typical night at Bu-San will see a collective mix of those who live and work in Islington. "We have lots of lawyers, artists, journalists, designers, local people and visitors to Islington eating here. The artists, Gilbert and George, have been eating here for ten years. We have people travelling from outside the borough to eat at Bu-San and we often find visitors to Britain who ate here on a previous visit have made a special effort to come and eat here again when they return. We have customers from France, Germany and Switzerland who return time after time and who tell their friends about us. "

Some of the most popular dishes on the menu are *Jo Ge Sal Bokum* (fried scallops with a spicy sauce served in a shell), *Ka Ji Chorim* (deep fried aubergine with special soy sauce), *Si Gum Chy Bokum* (fried spinach with butter in a garlic sauce), *Dak Bulgogi* (sizzling chicken with a chilli sauce and *Dol Sot B. Bim Bap* - a special sizzling rice dish with egg, seaweed and vegetables. And anyone who has eaten at Bu-San cannot fail to mention the spectacular fruit and vegetable sculptures. These are food-as-art for special occasions, if ordered in advance, as they take time to prepare. Kim says of her husband, " he makes stunning flowers, birds and islands from vegetables, water melons, rhubarb. . . he is excellent. "

Despite the success of the restaurant, the Lees have no plans to extend it further. They are keen to ensure that Bu-San remains a quality operation with good, fresh food and customers who are comfortable and enjoy the time spent there. They would like their customers to continue to want to come back and to recommend the restaurant to their friends. Which, undoubtedly, they do. ■

Bu-San Korean Restaurant,

43 Holloway Road, N7 8JP Tel: 0171 607 8264

Developer plants trees

Durkan New Homes Ltd generously agreed to a request from Drayton Park Neighbourhood Forum for £300 to fund the planting of 3 silver birch trees outside their recently completed building at 100 Drayton Park.

Managing Director, Danny Durkan said "It is our policy to become involved in the communities where we build new homes and we look forward to seeing

the trees flourish in the years to come."

The Council undertook the planting and will maintain the trees.

The trees were to have been planted in Drayton Park opposite the front of the block of flats. But, at the last moment they were moved around the corner, when it was realised that they would be in danger from the bulldozers if Arsenal's plan to move the stadium across the railway goes ahead.

The Council has said it wants to see the

Drayton Park sidings totally redeveloped three or four storeys high, to take some of the businesses currently in Ashburton Grove; and there is talk of one or more access roads from Drayton Park bridging the railway to allow fans and emergency vehicles to reach the new stadium.

The Neighbourhood Forum also received £200 from the Gunners Fund and this has been used to plant further trees in the area. ■

Letters from.....

Rachel Stott - Gillespie Road

I am a professional musician and relatively new to Highbury.

Last May I was walking down Upper Street when I noticed a new cafe/restaurant called *Art to Zen*. Intrigued, I looked to see if the word "art" was a mere idle boast. It was not. Here was a cafe and art gallery combined, right on the high street.

Now, to my mind that meant one thing was missing - music. A few cups of coffee later I had discussed this point with the proprietor and chef (both also artists) and we had decided to try out a series of "Dinner Concerts" in the gallery.

The music has been very varied, from renaissance to baroque, classical, romantic, ragtime, you name it! Even a piece by Highbury Hill composer, Sarah Collins, has been featured.

Concerts are held on the first Monday of every month and tickets, which include a delicious 3 course meal, cost £15.

On 7th February we shall be playing French baroque music and on 6th March we have a programme of music evoking scenes from rural England and Ireland.

* *Art to Zen*: 27 Upper St., Islington, London N1. Tel/fax: 020 7226 5300. Full details of performers and programmes from Rachel - Tel: 020 7704 0147 - advance booking advisable.

from.....

Lotte Bredt - Conewood Street

Could the HCA find out what is happening with increased numbers of abandoned or crushed cars that are littering the roadsides of Highbury? Whose responsibility are they? Whom should I contact?

* *If the car is parked dangerously, contact the police; otherwise, provided it is untaxed, ring the Council's Abandoned Vehicle Officer on 527 4814. We don't know why the problem is getting worse, except near the borough boundary, where it seems people exploit the bureaucratic process of issuing notices, by moving the vehicles from one borough to the next and back again, to avoid being towed away.*

& from.....

Martin Ryan - St Thomas's Road

It was great to receive your newsletter. I have recently moved from Islington to Highbury and received the newsletter addressed to the previous owners. I would like to receive my own copy in future.....

* *Thanks, Martin. We are currently updating our membership lists. If anyone out there is reading someone else's copy, please ring Anna on 226 7261 or email alicar@bigfoot.com. We also need help with revising the lists. If you can spare a few hours for this, or would like to help in other ways, please get in touch.*

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or email: pauline.gerlis@talk21.com
by 18.02.00

Highbury Community Association

The HCA represents residents and businesses, on all aspects of living and working in Highbury, Stoke Newington and Finsbury Park. Run by volunteers it relies on donations. Send cheques to HCA Treasurer, 132 Highbury Hill, N5 made out to Highbury Community Association.