

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

Issue No 22 March 2001

UNKNOWN GENIUS OF HIGHBURY FIELDS

By Elizabeth Smith

If you are strolling through Highbury Fields, you might like to reflect on a major scientific figure who lived there from 1789 to 1816. He pioneered the measurement of distances using the angles between three points, he was the first to manufacture rope with an equal torque or strain on each strand, and he made navigation charts of shipping lanes from the the East India routes to the Hebrides. He surveyed and laid out London Dock, and, in the absence of the Prime Minister William Pitt, laid the foundation stone of the East India Dock. He established the standard for the tides in the Thames through a mark at the Hermitage entrance to the London Docks and was a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Director of the East India Company and an Elder Brother of Trinity House.



HUDDART'S TELESCOPE

He was Captain Joseph Huddart, who came from Allonby in Cumberland and made his fortune in the high-risk, high-return trade to and from India and the Far East. He invested some of his money in a fine new house in Highbury Terrace, built in 1789, with an extra room on the top, called the Captain's Cabin. The room had a cupola through which he could observe the stars. He needed this to house his huge telescope, which he designed himself, and which had a focal length of five feet. The cupola is no longer there, but at the last roof repairs to the house, number 12, the evidence of a circular structure, with a diameter about 12 feet, was clearly visible.

A near neighbour of Huddart was the then Astronomer Royal, who lived in the great house of Aubert Park, now demolished; he also had his own large telescope on his roof. As well as looking at the stars, Huddart is said to have been able to identify the ships coming up the Thames from observing their masts. Nowadays, of course, the view is completely obscured by buildings and trees.

He set up a rope works in Limehouse - the rope he made not only yielded a sizeable income, it was widely adopted for use at sea and saved the lives of many sailors.

He had a forge at the bottom of his garden, to manufacture his inventions. At that time, the back gardens of Highbury Terrace were communal, without walls, so this must have been a



CAPTAIN JOSEPH HUDDART, F.R.S.

workshop of great interest to his neighbours. Also admired, though probably less popular with some, was his collection of cats, said to be the finest in England.

The house he lived in still bears some evidence of Huddart's enquiring mind. In the shutters of the windows on the ground floor, in the front, there are little mirrors in the panels. Were these for astronomical observation, to measure the rising of the sun or the moon? It is hard to think what other purpose they might have had. The house is distinguished from others in the terrace by its stone pillars and portico. These, however, are probably additions made after Huddart's time - they do not fit the dimensions of the semi-circular window above the door. This is an error that I think would have infuriated the precise and practical mind

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AGM

Saturday 19th May is the date for this year's meeting and party. You'll be sent an invitation. If you want to be involved with HCA News, Events, Planning, or anything else, contact **Lis Yorke : 7359 6620** , email emyorke@freeuk.com

VERY SORRY! The Highbury Community News team apologises to members who thought they had missed an Issue of HC News. It is just late! Instead of being the intended February Issue this one is now a March/early April one. Next one due out in May 2001.

MAJOR BUILDING PLANNED - BENWELL ROAD & DRAYTON PARK CORNER

Developers have submitted a planning application for 15 flats and 15 live/work units on the site of Apex House, 1 Benwell Road. Case Officer, John McRory, says "Comments from residents are welcome. Officers have not yet made any recommendations." He believed the application will not be heard by the Planning Committee for 2-3 months.

HCA members in Benwell Road and Bryantwood Road say they are extremely alarmed to hear that the plans currently propose a building up to 7 storeys high, which is about 25 metres. (30 metres is the maximum height limit for the Borough). Drayton Park and Benwell Road are residential roads and a building this height would be out of scale with surrounding buildings. Too many flats bringing in too many cars to already congested and polluted streets is feared by some people.

Contact: **John McRory, Case Officer, Development Control,**

ARSENAL MATCH DAY PARKING SCHEME LATEST....

"Fans driving to Matches can still drive around and park their cars in Quadrant Ward residential streets." Hardly news, unfortunately. Arsenal Directors have been negotiating for many months with Council Transport Officers. They have not yet agreed to pay what the Council needs to run a re-vamped scheme, which will then also include the long-awaited new area.

What is wrong?

Pedestrians and cyclists in Quadrant Ward find the corner parking and double parking by car-driving fans hazardous; others can't park near their homes at all as all the legal spaces are occupied by fans' cars. HCA and some Ward Councillors first asked for Quadrant Ward to be part of the Match Day Scheme in 1997. We also supported our shop-keepers' need for permits. Four years and over 100 matches on, nothing has yet changed for either of these cases.

What is proposed?

Council Officers propose to make major changes to how the Scheme works - when the new agreement is finally in place. Spaces currently for 'visitors' will be turned into yellow line 'no parking areas' or designated for cars with residents' permits displayed. Residents have told Officers there are not enough spaces for permitted residents to park, so they are responding to information received. HCA believes this might be true in some areas but not all. Visitors/shopkeepers/tradesmen still need to be able to park near homes and shops during Match Day controlled hours.

A welcome new Council rule is that after 6 months the revised Scheme will be up for Review - so comments from residents and businesses will be useful to help Officers make recommendations for permanent arrangements.

Have you a comment? Send to **HCA, c/o 83 Highbury Hill, N5** or email **robert.scott@hemscott.net** 

ARSENAL - WHERE ARE WE AT NOW?

- The Council says it consulted you about the 3 sites between November and January 2001. Did you get their leaflet? Many say they did not. See back page.
- Arsenal is redrawing all 7 applications and says it intends to submit new ones in May 2001. The Stadium design or the siting will have to be changed in order to make emergency evacuation safer. There are no dates for a Committee meeting yet and the Council will have to consult the public on the new plans.
- British Transport Police, London Underground, community groups and individuals criticised the Arsenal's assessment of transport & safety for the 60,000 seat multi-use stadium in Ashburton Grove. The net loss of jobs and businesses to Islington is a serious concern. Arsenal are not offering Lough Road site for Ashburton Grove businesses. Claims AFC makes for new job creation do NOT stand up to careful analysis and have been thoroughly criticised.
- HCA objected strongly to the current plans for the Highbury Stadium site. There are too many flats for the area. Parking for 535 cars will mean more car journeys here. The open space is not for the public. The design of the affordable housing behind the North Block is mean and dark, as is that behind the South Block. Homes in Highbury Hill would be overlooked by new windows. The new buildings replacing the South and North Stands are 6/7 storeys high - out of scale with nearby homes, and unsympathetic to the Art Deco East and West Stands.
- Arsenal has bought the MetroColor site in Gillespie Road recently.
- Lough Road Community Association was formed in November to fight Arsenal's plans for the 8 acre Lough Road site. LoRCA objects to the plans to move North London's Waste Station here and to 12 storey high blocks. Traffic affects this area very badly already.
- HCA is one of 14 community and special interest groups opposed to Arsenal's plans and is part of Islington Stadium Communities Alliance, (ISCA). HCA represents members in Drayton Park, Benwell Road, Bryantwood Road, St Thomas's Road, Gillespie Road, Highbury Fields, Horsell Road, Harvist Estate,

PLAY ON

By David Hilliard

Generations of local kids have enjoyed the fun and facilities of holiday play schemes, after-school clubs and youth clubs held at Elizabeth House Community Centre on Hurlock Street.

The building fell into disuse in the '80s, until a group of local people formed the Highbury Vale Blackstock Trust and organised its renovation and reopening in the early '90s.

Once again Elizabeth House became a thriving hub of the community, used by kids' clubs, youth clubs and other community groups. However the building was still somewhat tatty and some rooms remained out of use. In Autumn 2000 the building closed and, with the help of money from the National Lottery, English Partnerships and many charities, work began on refurbishing it to a high standard, to realise its full potential and bring all of its space into use.

The kids' clubs have, meanwhile, been

successfully relocated on a temporary basis at Gillespie School, thanks to the Governors and to Headteacher, Jake Herbst; so local kids still enjoy fun and games in a safe, secure environment, whilst the youth club runs from The Chestnuts at Highbury Barn.

Refurbishment works are due to be completed this summer, when a much improved Elizabeth House will once again be home to its existing users.

During the day it will have a new role as a life-long learning centre, and it will also be available for community groups and private hire. □

THINK OF A NAME - COMPETITION

The Trustees of Elizabeth House are looking for a new name for the centre to mark the re-opening of the building this summer.

They say the ideal name would be simple, snappy and modern; and it would help people connect the centre

with the area and with its function, which is for education and community use.

HCA invites your suggestions, which we will pass on to the trustees. We are offering £5 for the best idea - and £20, if it gets chosen.

All the family can take part. So, send a postcard to **HCA Competition, c/o 83 Highbury Hill, N5 1SX** by 30th April, with your name and address and ~~the names you think would be best.~~ □

HCA COMMITTEE

Our treasurer, Mark Duffill, is resigning shortly - so we need someone who is able to take his place. If you would be interested in doing this, or in getting more involved by joining the committee, please speak to Robert Scott on **7359 5731**.

Formal nominations for next year's committee, signed by 3 existing members, should be submitted to **HCA Treasurer, 132 Highbury Hill, N5**

FIT FOR LIFE

By Diana Graham

Fitness was never my forte! At school I would do anything to avoid PT and hockey. Nor did the idea of keeping fit ever occur at drama school or working in the professional theatre. The only people I knew who were fit, were dancers.

Things changed a bit when my son was born and, as a result of long walks and cycling all over London with a child seat full of child, I was fitter. But I never thought about it until years later when my small son had gone off in a green beret to join the Royal Marines and his Sergeant 'was his mother now'! Like Othello, my occupation had gone and unlike Jean Brodie, I was no longer in my prime. Lurking at the bottom of the slippery slope was a Zimmer frame.

Now living in North Norfolk, it was time for a change in lifestyle so I joined

the local gym where, with the patient encouragement of Stuart the (ex-Royal Marine) instructor, I became a born-again keep fitter.

This led to an exercise tutor's course and, assisted by my trusty moped



'Whiffler', I was soon teaching the elderly, the fit and the not so fit. More classes came in necessitating an urgent upgrade to my lovely motorbike, 'Jet'.

Wishing to gain more qualifications, I

got in touch with 'Body Control Pilates', bought one of their books and, like St. Paul on the road to Damascus, was totally converted. Enrolling on a tutor training course at their Covent Garden HQ was a natural next step.

Developed by Joseph Pilates (and for years known only to dancers and teachers) most of the exercises strengthen the core postural muscles that stabilise the body, so that, with improved postural alignment and release of tension, you can build strength on a firm foundation.

The course is fascinating and involves an enormous amount of work, both practical and theory, plus many hours of supervised teaching and examinations. My frequent trips to London will take some planning around my classes in Norfolk, but it is certainly the way I want my unexpected new career to go.

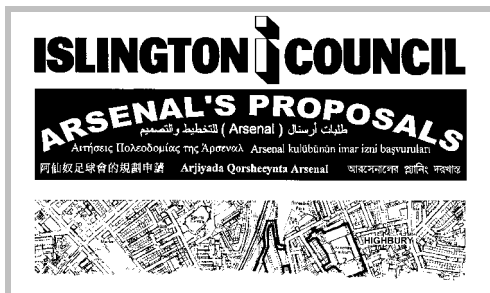
Di Graham Fitness 01328 851970.

Body Control Pilates Website is at

DID THE COUNCIL CONSULT YOU?

Islington Council claims it put out 45,000 12 page leaflets with a heading like the one below, all over North Islington before Christmas - to tell people about Arsenal's seven planning applications; and to ask for comments. If you are reading this, you almost certainly live in a household that should have had a copy in November or December and would have known about the Council Public Meetings.

People who commented on the planning briefs last year got copies through the post. But Islington Stadium



Communities Alliance has received complaints from all over N5 and N7 that various streets and blocks of flats have never been leafleted. If you have not seen it, ISCA would like to know, to find out how widespread the problem is and to make sure the job is done better next time. You can write to ISCA at **PO Box 19045, London N7 7WS**, email isca_2000@hotmail.com, or leave a message/fax on **020 7619 0171**. Make sure you let them know your address and just say you did not get a copy.

The leaflet is probably the best brief summary of what is involved in Arsenal's plans - and contains lots of information you won't get from the newspapers.

Get a copy from the Planning Dept. by ringing **020 7527 2229**. It's **not** too late to register your comments with the Council. Arsenal is revising all 7 applications at the moment, so the sooner you do write to the Council, the more chance you have of influencing what happens.

SILVER BIRCH TREES CUT DOWN ON RAILWAY LAND

Between the railway lines behind Drayton Park some mature Silver Birches and many young trees were felled last week by Balfour Beatty, Railtrack's new contractor. The trees are on Railtrack land but were admired by residents in Drayton Park and walkers in the Gillespie Nature Reserve. They were home to foxes, many birds and wildlife. Anna Banks said "I had such a shock when I saw the trunks lying on the ground - the trees were beautiful and the land is listed as a Site of Metropolitan Importance."

It is particularly surprising since Railtrack is a partner in the London linesides Biodiversity Action Plan. They own most of the undisturbed land in London. They produced a leaflet to inform the travelling public of the wildlife they are likely to see along the capital's railways. So why did this happen? You can write to: **Toby Meadows, Environment Manager, Suite 1, Floor 1, General Offices, Waterloo Station, SE1 8SW**.

Send letters and articles for next issue to:
HC News, 10 Stavordale Road, N5 1NE

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Highbury Community Association

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