

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

Issue No 24 September 2001

Workers show Arsenal the Red Card

500 tenants, residents and workers from N5 and N7 marched with placards and Red Cards to protest against Arsenal's plans. Businesses on the Ashburton Grove Industrial Estate and in Drayton Park funded and built a colourful float which led the March to the Union Chapel on 24th July.

There Councillors heard that Arsenal agents had failed to find alternative sites for between 65-80 businesses. The owner of Model Solutions, a successful model-making company with many overseas customers, said "10 months on and they still haven't found me anything remotely comparable to the space and light in the premises I have here. I spent 3 years looking for this workshop, which shows you how scarce this sort of place is! All my neighbours in Queensland Road feel the same as I do. We are here because it suits us. We are 80 businesses - They are one football company!"

David Harvey, who runs Lawsons, the expanding builders' merchant in Drayton Park, said "I've got a good business here with 30 men, serving the local builders. If I wanted to turn my land into 6 storey flats like Arsenal's plans show for my site, I'd apply to do it myself! - but what would we all do for a job?"

Tenants who do not want the Waste Transfer Station to be moved right next to their housing estate feel desperate about the plans. Angela



Clare, a tenant on the Ringcross Estate said "It is amazing how people try to justify moving this here, literally 40 yards from our homes. They say it will be a new shiny shed! But the compacting machinery will be horrendously noisy. No-one has thought about that. So will 600 trucks a day - they'll be queuing up, belching diesel fumes the way they do now on Ashburton Grove. Can you imagine having to tell your friends that you live beside 'the waste dump?'"

Arsenal's latest plans may go before Islington Council at the end of November. Whatever the Council decides, there could well be a Public Inquiry before the outcome is known. ■

Gillespie Parking Scheme declared illegal

Islington Council have been 'consulting' on proposed changes to the current Gillespie Matchday Parking scheme.

You may have wondered what's happened to the scheme this season. There have been three home games so far and there's been not a single car with a parking ticket, nor traffic warden in sight, despite many illegally or dangerously parked visitors' cars. A Council Officer has confirmed that the existing scheme has been successfully challenged because of poor signage and lack of maintenance; and that it cannot be enforced until the revisions have been approved.

In effect, there is now no Matchday Parking scheme covering the reduced Gillespie Matchday area. The new St Thomas's scheme, north of the stadium, is meant to be enforced, although we have reports that this is not effective either.

So - parking tickets may have been issued wrongly and some people are asking for their money back. You can write to "The Parking Manager" at Islington Council. ■



Highbury House

By Roy Hidson

In 1842, in his History of Islington, Samuel Lewis noted, "It is the opinion of antiquaries, that the Roman garrison of London had a summer camp at Highbury: and from the commanding situation of the place, and other circumstances, it seems highly probable that such was the fact: nor is it unlikely that the moated site of the prior's house and the present mansion was that of the praetorium of the encampment."



The prior, Sir Robert Hales, was the head of the Order of St John at Clerkenwell and the originator of the hated Poll Tax of 1381. The site was also known as Jack Straw's Castle after Wat Tyler's lieutenant. Tradition states that it was from here that Straw marched into London and sacked the monastery and church at Clerkenwell. Hales himself perished when the rebels captured the Tower of London.

By 1781 the house was in the possession of John Dawes, a wealthy stockbroker. Dawes, "Laid out the grounds in a handsome manner, with shrubberies, paddocks, hot-houses and green-houses". On the death of Dawes in 1788 it was purchased by William Devaynes, M.P., a director of the East India Company. Finally, the house was purchased for six thousand guineas by Alexander Aubert who made further alterations to the buildings.

Alexander Aubert was born in Austin Friars in the City of London in 1730, and spent many years on the Continent in preparation for a business career. He returned to England in 1752 where he was taken into partnership by his father. The following year he became a director of the London Assurance Company, subsequently becoming its Governor.

At Highbury, Aubert lived the life of a local squire and was able to indulge his tastes in astronomy and antiquities. His magnificent observatory was furnished with the latest telescopes and also a fine library. He was assisted in its design by his friend, the engineer John Smeaton, designer of the Ed-dystone lighthouse. Being a Tory in politics, he was friendly with the Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, who visited him at Highbury.

Following the French Revolution, there was much unrest in the country and in 1792, Aubert became "Chairman of a society which had for its express object the suppression of sedition; and, afterwards, at his recommendation, and under his auspices, the inhabitants of Islington formed themselves into a military association towards the defence of the country against her enemies, foreign and domestic". The Loyal Islington Volunteers comprised of a regiment of infantry and one of cavalry and consisted of 300 members, some of whom came from other Parishes or from the City itself. The corps was resplendent in blue jackets with white facings, scarlet cuffs, collar, and epaulettes, and trimmed with silver lace, white kerseymere pantaloons, and short gaiters, helmets and crossbelts. Like most of these bodies the Loyal Islington Volunteers never fired a shot in anger, but proved useful in the absence of a police force. They were marched under arms to Copenhagen Fields to break up a meeting of the London Corresponding Society, but were beaten to it by a detachment of the City Light Horse.

Lieutenant-colonel Aubert had a magnificent portrait painted in full uniform by the American artist Mather Brown. This may now be seen in Islington Libraries. He was also presented with two silver cups for his services. Fortunately, when they came on the market recently they were purchased for the Borough. The larger cup may be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the smaller one at Islington Town Hall. Aubert died in 1805, and was interred in a vault beneath the parish church. ▣

The Light of Postmodernism By Harry Eyres

The moon is a question-mark
with half the question-mark missing.
A warm wind up from the estuary
ruffles the real-looking water
into real-looking brown-grey waves.
Everything here which was what it seemed,
a spice warehouse, a tug-boat,
everything which referred to a working
world, to specific smells,
is now just a groundless allusion:
Cardamom Towers, Cinnamon Towers,
condominia with their Japanese garden
and their balconies where a man has
his feet up on an iron chair
but with his elbow cocked
in mobile phone position
is not really looking
at the thin moon
or the disturbed water
or this place
where meaning has taken a lurch sideways.

BOOKING INTO GILLESPIE ROAD

By Marie-Louise Ek

Jeremy Corbyn kindly expressed his concern to me at the Gillespie Festival about the rife competition small bookshops have to endure from the likes of Waterstones and Amazon. This is, of course, one of my concerns too, however petty such problems seem in the shadow of events in the US.

However, my shop on Gillespie Road does offer customers the delight of browsing through books and poetry not available at major book outlets. This is the charm with small second-hand bookstores and the main reason why I ventured into becoming a book dealer. The response in the area has been very enthusiastic and most encouraging. People seem to be delighted at having a small bookshop at their doorstep.

When I first arrived to London from Sweden about ten years ago now, I fell in love with Highbury. I loved the greenery and the peacefulness, so very much like my home town, Stockholm. I remember thinking just this when struggling up the hill to Highbury Barn on my bike en route to Mile End, where I attended Queen Mary and Westfield College.

I so wanted to live here but could not afford it at the time. After four years of studying history and English, and armed with an MA, I looked around for a suitable place to set my knowledge into practice. I had then lived in Highbury for over two years and I had often wondered how such a literary and relatively wealthy area could lack a decent bookshop.

Then one day a shop around the corner became available and I decided to do something about it. I decorated the shop in a Swedish fashion, very much influenced by Carl Larsson, the famous Swed-

ish artist. Subtle pink walls and a lot of simple pine shelving. I wanted the shop to look warm and inviting, to be a place where people would like to spend their time reading and browsing.

My dream is to have a large history section at the back, which could tease people to come from other areas as well. The shop now has a very large section of modern fiction and poetry but also other sections found in all major bookstores. I have a policy of selling new books and only second-hand books that are in very good condition.

The shopping parade in Gillespie Road which recently only had a couple of open shops, now also features a bookshop and a brand new food store. I strongly believe that this little parade will regain the charm it once had. There is no reason why people in Highbury should have to go to Upper Street to enjoy decent shops, shops that are not only interesting, but also enticing to the eye. ■

Why Highbury?..... Why? When? What now? What next?

HCA interviews Cosimo Arrichiello, author of 'Italian Heartbreak – Life Under Mussolini', published last year, who lives in Queens Drive.

HCA – Why did you decide to move to London?

Cosimo – In 1966 I'd been in Australia for 15 years, and only just earning enough to survive. I worked on the wards in a Commonwealth Hospital and took evening classes at night to learn English and complete my education. I think I felt homesick for European culture and thought I would feel at home here, as it was hard to get a job in Italy. My first home in London was in Notting Hill Gate near Portobello Market, which I loved. I moved up to North London later and have lived in my flat in Queens Drive since 1978.

HCA – When did you start writing your autobiography?

Cosimo - When I was about 73. It took me over six years of writing and studying reference books to check up on dates and other details. My book covers 27 years starting with my childhood as one of eleven children in Secondigliano, a small town on the outskirts of Naples. It is a social history of that time covering the years of Fascist indoctrination, my being called-up to military service and what happened at the fall of Mussolini in July

1943. I was then stranded, in hiding, for nearly two years in Northern Italy after the Italian Army disbanded that September. It follows my return home to the South at the end of the war and ends after my journey in 1947 to be re-united in Indonesia with my father and brothers who had been Japanese prisoners-of-war in Java. I lived there for five years before going to Australia.

HCA - What do you do with your life nowadays?

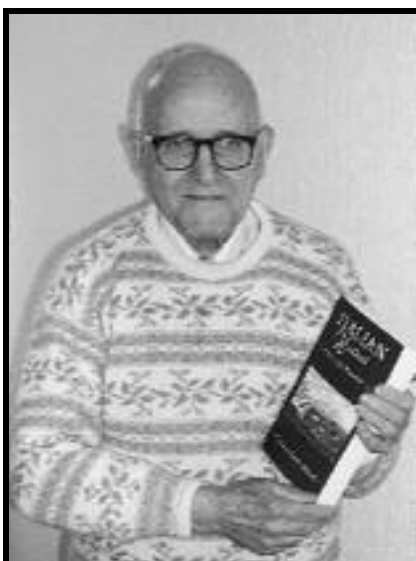
Cosimo - I'm very busy! I shop in Blackstock Road and Dalston Market – where the food is very fresh and good value. I live on my State pension and a small pension from the job I had as an Accounts Clerk, so I don't go to Italy much. I take the bus if it is too far to walk and go to Church on Sundays and lectures on history or literature when I can. I was at the Gillespie Festival a few weeks ago. I like being independent.

HCA – What next?

Cosimo - I'm recovering from being in hospital in the summer. I'd like to write more! Or maybe do some creative work – like water-colour painting.

'Italian Heartbreak – Life Under Mussolini' by Cosimo Arrichiello, Minerva Press, 2000. ISBN 0 75410 769 8 £15.99

(Available from Waterstones) ■



COSIMO WITH HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

During the summer.....



The food tent at the annual Gillespie Festival proved a popular attraction. To judge by the number of councillors on view, anyone might have thought there was an election soon. If they want to be popular, maybe they should provide enough funding to make sure it happens again next year.



The CWU fought a long campaign to stop the Almeida Street Sorting Office being closed. They lost - so now your mail will arrive (eventually) direct from Greenford. Worried about declining standards of postal service? Don't worry, at least you'll have a chance to buy a flat when the Sorting Office has been turned into exclusive, luxury apartments. Can't afford one? Neither can the hundreds of local postal workers who will lose their jobs.

MP Jeremy Corbyn and Mayor Ken Livingstone were seen together 'on the stump' around Finsbury Park before the General Election in June. No prizes for knowing who got elected!



GREENPEACE

Greenpeace is looking for a volunteer for our Finance Unit. We are based in Canonbury Villas, off the Canonbury Road N1.

Work one day per week for 5 hours (10-12:30, 1:30 to 4).

We can reimburse travel expenses and £3 for lunch - we have a vegetarian canteen on-site. Basic admin duties e.g. filing, checking expenses claims etc. Perhaps suit retired person.

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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, 75 Highbury Hill, N5 1SX made out to Highbury Community Association.

Send letters or articles for next issue to HC News, 10 Stavordale Road N5 1NE or email: pg_lg@hotmail.com