

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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A FRIEND OF GILLESPIE PARK MOVES ON.....

The Ecology Centre made an ideal backdrop for Ray Busfield's leaving party. Surrounded by photographs of outdoor community projects and nature displays of the flora and fauna found in the Gillespie Nature Reserve, over 50 people gathered to thank Ray and say goodbye to him at the beginning of November.

His early retirement, as Nature Conservation Warden, is bound to leave a big gap in the life of those who knew him well. His dedication and breadth of knowledge was central to the creation of Gillespie Park, a real living, breathing, growing Nature Reserve. It's a much valued community outdoor space. Many of the people at the leaving party, with Ray, and others over 16 years, created the Nature Reserve, which is a precious resource in a Borough with so little open space. So it was indeed a celebration of achievement as well as a farewell.

His decision to leave was not an easy one, as so much of his life was in this corner of Highbury and he knows his knowledge will be missed. Apart from having a 'natural break' in his family life, with a decision to return to his native North West, he says two other factors pushed him into leaving now. *"The introduction of charges to schools for wardens' teaching time is something I disagree with strongly. I do not think it right that the poorer schools/colleges should fall by the wayside just because they cannot afford the Council fees."* To someone who reckons he has taught close to 30,000 children over the past 16 years, the new policy represents a short-sighted and unjust change. Ray believes this will mean children and young adults missing out on environmental education at a time when *"we require wide understanding and action about the links between the way we live and the implications of predicted*

climate change." If you remember that adults and children, who knew little about the soil or 'nature', helped by digging the land, learnt how to grow on seedlings and contributed to the wetlands and pond areas being the success that they are, you can understand his regret that others will miss out in the future. A far better way forward, Ray thinks, would be to seek sponsorship from a sympathetic Islington based company, which supported the aims of the Ecology Centre.



The second major factor, he said, is the impact of Arsenal's development plans on the Park. He says he fought two community campaigns to save the Park in previous years and could not face another battle. Apart from direct land take of Sites of Metropolitan Importance to build the bridges across the railways there are two impacts Ray talks about. One is the loss of the use of the Park on even more days a year if the Stadium plans are approved, which affects the Ecology Centre's ability to plan income generating events. Secondly, there is the physical effect of the disturbance to species and ecology of the land caused by the release of

contaminants, noise, light, dust and debris during construction. And after construction is over *"The park is under threat from the Arsenal's need to use the small access road that passes the Ecology Centre for emergency vehicles. Existing use by railway contractors is already a problem, and now it has to be widened; and I suppose it will have to be brightly lit. Light pollution and disturbance to our wildlife will lead to loss of species and less bio-diversity for our Nature Reserve. The Park is already enormously stressed because of where it is and all the demands made on it. People just don't realise how fine the balance is, and how easily it is upset."*

Although these two big issues have cast a shadow over Ray's feelings about leaving somewhere he enjoyed working and where he was valued as a highly professional, knowledgeable guardian of the Nature Reserve, there was one important achievement he can look back on with satisfaction. This was that the Gillespie Nature Reserve was awarded a Green Flag Award for excellence just weeks before he left. *"It is the icing on the cake after taking the place through its infancy to a point where it has been recognised to be of an international standard by an independent judge."*

The friends he had invited to the leaving party a month ago believe that the Green Flag is flying on the Ecology centre flagpole only because his dedication to the place helped get it there. Ray Busfield is one Friend of Gillespie Park who will be sorely missed. ■

MONDAY 10TH DECEMBER
IN UNION CHAPEL, COMPTON TERRACE
(NR HIGHBURY CORNER).
MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL TO
DETERMINE ARSENAL PLANNING
APPLICATIONS.
STARTS AT 7.20PM. BE THERE BY
7.00PM TO GET A SEAT

Arsenal plans - the next step

It is two years since Arsenal announced their ambition to build themselves a new stadium. Now their plans will be put to Islington Council for a decision on 10th December. By this time some people are impatient for a decision and more are heartily sick of hearing details of a scheme that seems to get bigger and more complicated by the month.

Arsenal directors and many fans just want a new stadium; local businesses and many residents want to be left in peace. Politicians and planners appear to want to remodel much of North Islington in the name of "Regeneration". Will anyone get what they want out of this?

It seems unlikely. Good development schemes, like good ideas, are generally simple and easy to follow. Arsenal's plans are neither. Just to get their stadium, Arsenal is having to build a new Waste Station next to Ringcross Estate, many hundreds of small flats in place of existing businesses and several new roads and bridges; and they are meant to be relocating around 80 businesses, besides putting money into public transport.

The scheme has got so big, Arsenal was able to claim in its latest Annual Report "This will be one of the largest developments in the UK". This is no exaggeration.

Undoubtedly it is a fantastic opportunity for the Club to break away from the humdrum, unprofitable business of football and become whizzy developers; but opportunity brings risk, and the risk

ought to be plain to see. Arsenal is a football club, not a hardened property developer, but this is a scheme to rival Wembley, the Dome or Canary Wharf in scale and complexity.

In fact it is so big and complicated most people cannot get their minds around it at all; and that includes many who are involved in promoting, assessing or objecting to the scheme.

We have been told of architects who have designed blocks of flats without visiting the site, strategic planners who don't know the height of the stadium, economic advisors who think the local economy depends on the fish-and-chip shops; and objectors who think the Stadium could be built without the Waste Station.

How, then, will Islington Councillors make their decision? Will they read the 885 page Officer's Report and base their decision on a full understanding of the legal framework of Planning Law, a careful assessment of the 27 boxes of drawings and technical studies and a finely drawn judgement of the social and economic implications of this step into the unknown? Or will they follow their instinct, the 'party line' or the advice of the last person to speak in the debate?

Some would say it is not the politician's job to understand the details, but to pursue a vision. The danger of this approach, as we have seen with projects like the Dome, is that ignoring important practical aspects like the realism of the

business plan and of the project management appraisal can lead to disaster.

More fundamentally, signing up to abstract notions such as "regeneration", "inward investment", "raising the profile of the borough" and the rest of the developer's jargon is no substitute for asking hard questions. To name a few of these, we need certainty about whether the housing meets local needs, how quickly 23,000 football fans can cross the Holloway Road on a Thursday evening, how many waste lorries can discharge into the compactors in an hour and whether the project can be built on time and on budget.

Unfortunately too many answers to unglamorous questions like these remain obscure - even to those who have delved deep into the plans.

Even if they like Arsenal's vision of steel, glass and concrete, councillors need first and foremost to satisfy themselves that the reality matches the vision.

We do not think they can at this stage. There are too many loose ends, too much fudge and too little of the right detail. Two years may seem a long time to plan a project, but for one like this it is break-neck speed; and corners have been cut.

If councillors decide it is all a great idea, that is not necessarily the end of the matter either. London's Mayor, the Government or the Courts may well take a hand; and if the Council rejects the plans, Arsenal has a right of appeal.

10th December could be decision day, but it looks like being far from a final judgement. ■

Getting rid of unwanted furniture

Lis Yorke investigates

Hardly a week goes by without someone urging us to declutter our lives by turning out our wardrobes or cupboards, armed with sturdy black bin liners and cardboard boxes. But what do you do with those unwanted pieces of furniture that still have some life in them?

Most charity shops do not accept furniture but the following organisations do - and will collect:

Haringey Mencap (7272 0333) will take furniture in reasonable condition, including mattresses, single kitchen chairs, but no single armchairs. Sofas must have a fire certificate.

The King's Cross Furniture Project (8493 0900 Monday - Thursday, 10 - 12:30, 2 - 3:30) accepts all free standing furniture, including sofas, which must be in good condition. No fire certificate is necessary. Ring them two weeks in advance to arrange collection.

Islington Council's Bulky Rubbish Dept (7527 4894) will take anything else, except bathtubs and cast iron ware. They can collect up to 5 items free of charge. You will need to book in first, with your name, address and a description of the items. Then leave the items



outside at street level and they will be collected on your normal rubbish collection day. ■

A breath of Italian fresh air

Laurence Gerlis samples Highbury's latest Italian eatery

We often refer to the breadth of our experiences when in fact we are prejudiced by the most recent examples. My opinion of Camia, would be very high anyway, but is improved by having recently been crowded into a dark and pretentious French restaurant with unctuous waiters.

In contrast Camia, named after the maitresse, Camilla, is clean, bright and minimalist, where the waitresses are told to dress down so that the menfolk only have eyes for their partners - good business practice if you ask me, and fairly obvious.

The set lunch time and evening menus at £5 for two courses and £6-99 for three are fabulous value as well as being tasty and imaginative, breaking away from traditional Italian formulaic eating, being inspired without taking risks.

Camilla's husband, Francesco Salamaj, also owns Fini in Frith Street in Soho, which has had rave reviews; and they open

shortly in Beauchamp Place. Their philosophy of good taste, value for money and "the client is the star" actually works; and anyone who has been in a restaurant where the staff make you feel like you've spoiled their day by turning up, will appreciate Camia.

The set menu has plenty of pasta/vegetarian choices and the main menu has such novel ideas as deep fried potato and mozzarella as a starter - not as cholesterol filled as it sounds - with a huge choice of fish, meat, pasta and pizza dishes (there is also a take-away menu!).

There are many ways to ruin a good evening out and most restaurants manage this by over cooking and over flavouring the food and especially by the boredom of the staff. Camia's ownership is young, fresh and dynamic and it shows, from the simple snack of chopped tomatoes and Italian bread to the lightest cheesecake dessert ever. You have nothing to lose by trying it except your addiction to more "sophisticated" (i.e. pretentious) establishments.

CAMIA, 100 Highbury Park N5 2XE 020 7226 1451 ■

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

HCA interviews Lewis Huseyin, owner of 'Woodland Hardware' in the Highbury Barn shopping parade.

HCA – Why should people 'Try Woodland first'?

Lewis – I really liked that quote when I read it in one of those 'guides' to Highbury! Well – I suppose it is because we have everything in the hardware line the big DIY stores have - and much more, because we are always bringing in new goods to sell. My sister and I like to keep people interested. We try out new lines and find we can add new things to our stock if they are popular. And contrary to what some people think, local shops often sell goods at very competitive prices. Our Halogen light bulbs are £3.50 each compared to £5 that the big stores charge. No travelling either if you live locally!

HCA – When did your business open up shop here?

Lewis – Nearly 20 years ago. I've been running it for 5 years with my sister and two part-time workers. Our hours are 9.30 to 5.30 Monday to Saturday but I work on Sundays going to wholesalers all over London to buy in stock for the shop. So it is 7 days a week.

HCA – What do you like about Highbury and your shop?

Lewis - It's the diversity of our

customers! No two days are the same. It is never boring. You hardly ever get a long gap between one person walking out and another one or two walking in. I like talking to people too. Usually I can help them solve a problem with their home or garden. The other thing I like is that all of us shop-keepers here in Highbury Park know each other. We drop in to buy things if we need them and chat to one another. It has a very supportive feel about it. I was very surprised to find out from a customer who was visiting London from somewhere in the country that people in rural areas do not have the sort of shops we have here. He said that all the small local shops like ours had been driven out and that everyone just had to drive to the big 'Super Stores.'



LEWIS DISPLAYS A FEW OF HIS GOODS

HCA – What is the best seller at the moment?

Lewis - 'Silent Roar'! It is a synthetic Lions Dung which is meant to discourage cats from using any flowerbed sprinkled with it. The quote on the box says "Even the bravest pussies retreat when they realise a big strong lion has been there first." I'm going to have to stock more as it is selling fast!

HCA – What next?

Lewis – I'm quite happy here. No plans to change.

*Woodland Hardware, 20 Highbury Park.
Tel: 7354 5029* ■

Poems by Charles Farrell

Suffer my pain

Suffer my pain within Your vein,
upside your brain
and out again,
like Abel and Cain
We all will Die
You know your reasons
and so do I...



Playback

I look at life as I do a cassette.
I have only one regret,
not finding the time to stop and rewind
to correct the mistakes of a youthful mind.
I record and replay, to find my escape,
nearing the end of a lifelong tape.

Charles, who lives in Hackney, is currently studying at Queensland Multi-Media Arts Centre. He is keen to get his poetry and design to a wider audience; and takes a down-to-earth attitude to it. - "I'd like to find someone out there to help me make something out of my ability to create and ability to tell it like it is." He can be contacted on 07958 566883

Parking

The Gillespie matchday parking scheme is still out of action, causing great confusion. Towaway trucks have been dumping vehicles in vacant spaces instead of taking them to the Pound.

The Council says there will be no regular CPZ for the southern part of the Gillespie zone, as the majority of those who replied to the consultation were against it.

Aircraft noise

HCA has been receiving complaints about increased aircraft noise, especially early in the morning and at night. The authorities have denied this has anything to do with changed flight paths following 11th September.

The committee is thinking of affiliating HCA to HACAN, the environmental lobby based on Heathrow that campaigns for stricter controls on aircraft movements. If you have any views or would like to take up this issue, please write or email HC News.

Recycle your computer

Islington Green Party say they are looking for computers and can pay reasonable prices for low-end Pentium machines, with or without monitors. Don't chuck it or store it, recycle it and get some cash too! Contact Chris Ashby on 7607 5093.

GATHERING MOSS

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2 COURSES FOR £5, 3 COURSES FOR £6.99
IF YOU COME BEFORE 8PM

SUNDAY

LUNCH 1-5PM 4 COURSES FOR £7.99

ANDREWS

DRY CLEANERS

6 Highbury Park

020 7226 2105

Highbury Community Association

The HCA represents 730 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, N 5 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