

# HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

Issue No 27 April 2002

## King Wilkie looks for a new home

Need a good mouser? Or maybe you want to give a cat a home? Look no further than James Wilkie, a large black and white cat waiting this week for someone who will admire his mouse-catching abilities. Named King Wilkie by Scott Carter, one of the three Cattery Assistants at The North London Shelter of the Cats Protection League, based in Junction Road, Archway, he will not have long to wait for a new home. In January this year the Shelter, which is not large by some standards, re-homed 101 cats. On average about 80 a month, or 2-3 a day, are found new homes in North London, making the Shelter the busiest of cat re-homing centres in the area.

The centre has been in Junction Road for about 10 years but looks brand new. Completely refurbished and fitted out in the Charity's colours - strong blues and yellows - eight months ago, it has 15 spacious 'two-storey' cages, a hospital room, and infection control area, all modern and very clean. Scott has worked there since the re-fit and is involved in all the stages of a cat's stay in the Shelter. "Cats are brought to us by owners who are moving away or can't look after their cat any more, either because the owner is ill or because their circumstances have changed. At least it shows they care about finding the cat a

good home, by bringing it to us. Other cats are found as strays and the 'finder' signs the cat over to us. The first few days a cat is put in the hospital room in isolation to make sure it is clear of viruses. We vaccinate, spay and treat the cat as needed. Then he or she is moved to the re-homing area where they always settle down really quickly. It is quite a soothing atmosphere - quiet and spacious."

The Shelter is open 7 days a week from 11am to 3pm. People wanting a cat need not go to a Pet Shop to buy a kitten as there is a great variety of cats looking for a new

home. Some are rare breeds - there was a friendly Persian last week and some tiny Siamese a few weeks ago, but most are domestic 'London breed' - black, huge ginger with amber eyes, tabby, large or small. The advantage of getting an adult cat from a Shelter like this is that its character is known and its health will have been checked out.

The Manager, Katherine Rogers, arranges for a visit to the new home to check that there is enough space, that the cat can have access to a garden or safe outside space and just to assess what expectations the new owners have about looking after a cat. The Shelter expects an appropriate donation from the new owner to help pay for the vets' bills and running costs.



SCOTT WITH FRIENDLY, ONE YEAR OLD 'SAX', WHO LOST AN EYE AS A KITTEN

Cats Protection League North London Shelter, 135 Junction Road, N19. Tel:020 7272 6048 Open 11am - 3pm every day. ■

## HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AGM

### 'A CITY SAFARI' - A video show and talk about our city wildlife

A talk by guest speaker, author and documentary filmmaker Gavin Weightman, will be the focus of this year's AGM and Party. Come to the AGM to hear what the HCA is up to, elect a new Committee and offer your suggestions for further work or activities. This will be followed by the talk - and then wine and food to complete the evening.

Date: Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2002 At: Christ Church, Highbury Grove Time: 7.15 for 7.30pm start

If you want to be involved with HCA News, Quiz Night, Planning or anything else, please join the Committee. Contact Robin Hull, HCA Secretary at 15 Horsell Road, N5 1XL for information, or ring 7359 5731.

# Sky's the limit

By Robin Hull

London's unenviable position as second most polluted capital in Europe, after Athens, is aggravated by noisy, dirty planes, flying lower, more often and more widely over residential areas. This growth in activity over our heads has been apparent in Highbury for two to three years; but it was the week following the September 11th attacks that really brought it home. For that week the skies were clear and noise levels dropped so surprisingly that I had to reassess my earlier assumption that Holloway Road, a block away, was the source of most of the noise in my area.

It became obvious that noise from the sky is more intrusive. There is the strident noise from individual aircraft as they fly directly overhead, and the ever present background noise from planes further away. It all adds significantly to the stress of living in London and diminishes our quality of life.

It seems time to do something about it and to support those who have been battling for years against the worst effects of the extraordinary situation of having airports that require planes to fly directly over the capital. We suffer from both Heathrow and London City airports. Planes now crisscross our area in new, extended paths. North London is now firmly on the flight paths, and aircraft stack up above us in a way they never did before.

There have been an additional 10,000 flights at Heathrow between January 2000 and October 2001; and the airlines want

more, notwithstanding that many flights are grossly under booked.

Earlier in the year HCA joined HACAN ClearSkies, the pressure group that had its most publicised success in achieving a European Court ruling against night flights and in favour of residents around Heathrow who wanted to sleep at night. Even in Highbury there are members who are prevented from sleeping after 6.00 am as a swathe of aircraft fly in.

Last week the UK government was given leave to take the European Court decision to appeal and HACAN ClearSkies do not expect a judgement for about a year. More immediately HACAN ClearSkies wish to gather all-party support amongst MPs, GLA members and local authorities to achieve its two main goals: a ban on night flights, and a cap on the total number of flights.

If you are concerned about this issue, please write to Jeremy Corbyn MP at the House of Commons, SW1A 0AA, and to GLA member Meg Hillier at Romney House, 43 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3PY, pointing out that this relatively new problem for Islington is one that needs to be brought under control.

Please let the HCA have a copy of your letter, and of any responses you get. We need to pass on to HACAN what the politicians say they will do about aircraft noise.

View HACAN ClearSkies at [www.hacan.org.uk](http://www.hacan.org.uk)

Any comments, please, to [robinhull@macunlimited.net](mailto:robinhull@macunlimited.net) ■

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## HFA Hosts Highbury Hustings

With local elections looming on 2nd May, over 70 people attended a hustings arranged by Highbury Fields Association for the new three-member ward of Highbury East.

Boundary changes make the outcome in this ward more than usually uncertain; and successful candidates will find a changed system of local government in the Town Hall.

Instead of a departmental structure governed by committees, there will be a small executive body taking all the decisions, whilst most members are consigned to what is optimistically termed a "scrutiny" function. Nobody has explained how this will work in practice.

Advocates of the new system claim it will streamline decision making and allow ward councillors, freed from having to defend Council decisions, to represent their constituents better.



LEFT TO RIGHT: CHRIS ASHBY (GREEN), THERESA DE BONO (LAB), MARTIN JONES (CHAIR), TRISTAN RUDGARD (CON), LAURA WILLOUGHBY (LIB-DEM)

Critics predict a small clique of party bosses taking orders from Whitehall, slavishly following bad advice of Council Officers and the dictates of greedy developers, whilst pretending to take important decisions on behalf of "the people".

Cynics say this would be doing no more than bringing the rules of local politics into line with long-standing reality. ■

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## Government steps on Council's toes

Government Office for London has blocked approval of Islington's new Unitary Development Plan. That is the document setting out the Council's land use policies for the next five years.

The objection was over the number of homes to be built. After long wrangles over the numbers, the Council had promised to deliver 9,000 units over fifteen years. The government now wants 11,000. Whatever the figure, the chances are it will be exceeded, as developers regularly get away with schemes far more dense than necessary to meet the targets.

However, as the Council points out, we shall shortly run out of offices and factories to redevelop. At that point, either we stop, or we start to knock down all the two and three storey terraces in favour of tower blocks.

What nobody really knows is whether predictions for the growth in households are realistic. The assumption is that more and more people will live on their own and do so in the South-East. If most of the new homes are tiny, London flats and there is no policy to build family homes and move jobs to provincial cities to relieve overcrowding, we may have little choice - and the predictions will be self-fulfilling. ■

## What a night! By Lis Yorke

Over thirty experts on a variety of topics converged on the Ecology Centre on March 16<sup>th</sup> for HCA's first quiz night.

The teams thoroughly enjoyed eavesdropping, lip-reading, broadcasting false answers and generally conspiring against each other to gain the advantage.

During a much needed half-time break and opportunity to replenish glasses, the quiz mistress mused



whether a class of thirty teenagers were in fact easier to manage.

There were inevitably good-natured disputes over answers to the occasional ambiguous questions and protests when the correct spelling of names was insisted upon but, as always in such circumstances, the quiz mistress had the final say (and an opportunity to have some fun and get her own back on querulous contestants.) The winning team were roundly applauded.

One question remained unanswered: When is the next quiz going to be? ▣

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

*HCA interviews The Revd John Littlewood, Vicar for the last 11 years of Christ Church, Highbury.*

### HCA – Why did you choose to move to Christ Church?

**John** – I'd spent 13 years in Peterborough, while the town doubled in size during the Thatcher years; and our Parish was a large and very busy one. I wanted to move on, but I never thought I'd come to London – being a Yorkshireman! It was meeting the parishioners which changed my mind. They were wonderful – a young guy with a punk haircut, a retired lady Missionary and every kind in between – a really disparate and interesting set of people, and yet all getting on together and with a great love for their community. I thought 'Wow! Wouldn't it be quite fascinating to come and work with them!'

### HCA – When did you train for the Ministry?

**John** – I was in my early 30s when I went to Ridley Hall, Cambridge to study Theology. For 10 years before that I was a Chartered Surveyor in an agricultural practice based in York. We ran cattle auctions, visited farms – real mud and gum boot country. Once when I was trying to stop some cattle, a flock of sheep charged at me from the back and knocked me over. The cattle were very careful and stepped neatly over me! All quite different from my life as a Vicar.

### HCA – What makes up your working day now?

**John** – I have a fantastic job. It's always

varied. Meeting people outside of the life of the Church when they are in crisis of some kind, is one part of it. The Vicarage is pretty prominent as a building and in its position on the main road, and so is the Church, so my doorbell rings regularly with people wanting to talk. Even though the Church has been marginalised nowadays, it is interesting that some people, unconnected to Christ Church, still see the Church as a source of help. Then there are the 'Hatches, Matches and Dispatches' to conduct! And work involved in all the groups and courses the Clergy and our volunteers run. I tend to find that even if I plan my day carefully, by the evening I have dealt with other matters and maybe done none of the work I'd intended. Although I live on my own, my job involves spending all my time with other people and as I said earlier, the people here are a wonderful mixture.



JOHN AT HOME IN THE VICARAGE

### HCA – What's next in your life?

**John** - It's retirement in October! I could stay on another five years but I've decided to go back to York. I'm going to see if the Bishop – as it's York that means the Archbishop - wants some work from me. I thought I'd volunteer 20-25 weeks a year. And I want to write a book, maybe a novel, but definitely a book on the theme of 'From where, nowadays, do we get our ethics?' We are a generation that depends on 'feelings' as a guide and I don't think this is going to work any more. I'd like to explore that. So I'm looking forward to the next stage of my life!

*Christ Church is running a Golden Jubilee Street Party on June 2<sup>nd</sup> by the Clock Tower. Main Morning Service is at 11am every Sunday. ▣*

## *A Letter from...*

**Gillian Young**

I am writing with a question for your readers about my pet robin. As a fledgling it used to eat out of my hand. When I hear it call, I call back and it comes to me for food. We converse and nod heads - I am learning 'robin'!

At present a great deal of building is going on. The mate sits in the tree keeping an eye out for danger, cats, etc. My friend carries leaves as large as itself to a green shrub in the next garden. "Ah", I said to myself, "That is where the nest is going to be"; but two days ago when I was outside, the robin hopped into a gap between the bits on the kitchen window sill. "What's it doing there?", I thought.

When I looked again, I saw a nest fully built on the window sill. Today the nest was occupied while I was washing up. The robin was fully aware of my presence and looked at me while I was talking to it. It shows a remarkable level of trust in me. My question is: "How unusual is this behaviour?"

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## **HCA needs volunteers**

Getting this newsletter together takes a lot of effort from many people - so many thanks to the regular band of folders, envelope stuffers and deliverers. As we grow the task gets bigger, so we need more people to help. It's not a big commitment and delivering is good exercise! Phone **7359 5731** if you would like to help - or write!

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## **Recycle your old computer!**

Impecunious reflexologist and author has done the computer course and now needs a computer to use at home! If you have a retired Windows 95 machine taking up space, why not pass it on to a deserving home? Please ring Nikki: Tel: **7359 2350**

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## **Shopkeeper attacked - Did you see anything?**

You may have seen in the local papers about the recent serious assault on Peter Thorogood, the owner of *Sounds To Go* music shop, on the corner of Holloway Road with Drayton Park.

Peter and his wife have been HCA members for several years and Peter is someone who always speaks up for others and cares about the area and about his fellow traders. He is 'stable' in hospital and his wife is keeping the shop open, with help from her family.

Mrs Thorogood said, "The till that was stolen is very heavy - someone must have seen something, maybe as the till was taken outside. We didn't have enough coverage about this because the Queen Mum's death took up all the local air time."

The police need to hear from anyone who was in the Holloway Road near *Sounds To Go* at about 3.30pm on Good Friday. Ring Holloway CID **020 8345 1529**.

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# **ANDREWS**

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### *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, 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

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