

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

No 36 November 2003

North London Beds and more

By Alison Carmichael

"I started working as a carpenter when I was 30 and then had a market stall in Covent Garden. It taught me a lot – I was making things cheaply and trying to sell them cheap and couldn't. So I made them good quality, which cost me more, and still offered them cheap. It was then I started outselling all my fellow stallholders! Simple really, and it still works and keeps people coming back and recommending us to their friends."



In the heart of London's historic furniture-making district is Julian Litvinoff's stylish and spacious showroom displaying the beds that made his company, Litvinoff and Fawcett, famous for good quality at genuinely affordable prices. Julian's showroom, in the Hackney Road, is yards from his workshop and warehouse, where every bed is made to order, and where his company also custom makes mattresses. *"I joined up with Mel Fawcett in 1979 who had a workshop and we decided to make beds. I put an advertisement in Time Out, using a picture of an elephant I found, since I had no graphic designer. The advert said 'Jumbo Beds £59' and the phone didn't stop ringing."*

Now Litvinoff and Fawcett has two showrooms, one in Hackney

and one in Camden, in Grays Inn Road. The company employs about a dozen people and can claim to be the last 'bed maker' in Hackney. This is a result of the gentrification that has spread East to Hackney and has accelerated over the last ten years, with every workshop and warehouse, necessary to the industry, being bought by property developers and turned into flats. When asked, Julian could think of only one local craftsman working in wood, who makes doors and mouldings. Indeed, Hackney Council nearly put the company out of business some years ago. Despite Julian offering much more than the freehold of his warehouse was worth, the council sold it to a property company who thought it was twice as big as it really was! *"Whole departments in the council seemed to be set up to 'encourage businesses' and yet simple common sense strategies to keep businesses like mine, (which provide employment), functioning and thriving, seem to be beyond them. I've survived despite the council."*

A Litvinoff and Fawcett bed comes in many styles, from the very basic platform bed, to children's beds and bunk beds, day beds, stacking beds, four poster beds, a bateau-lit and a wonderful medieval style bed, appropriately named 'Abbot'. All can be individually specified, the frame lengthened or shortened, or provided with drawers. Pine Beds, made from Baltic Pine from sustainable sources are finished with coloured stains or clear varnish to order. Some of the beds are available in solid maple, or cherry wood. All the beds take minutes to assemble, unlike much self-assembly furniture. In component form they easily fit into lifts or into flats with difficult access. Unusually for self-assembly furniture, the beds are handmade and built to last, with unique double bolted side rails that do not work loose over time. Most people will have come across beds with screw-fixed mortice and tenon joints or fancy gadgets, which fail, or constantly work free.

This year the company has diversified into selling other pieces of good quality furniture, all with clean lines and an unfussy look. *"My aim is to have a warehouse full of furniture, the sort of furniture you normally can only buy in the designer shops of the West End. I like kilims as you can see, and I sell lighting, mirrors, side tables and also sofa beds that are well-made and not pricey."*

Simplicity of design and structure is Julian's motto; hard to achieve but certainly worth it from the customer's point of view. □

Litvinoff and Fawcett 238 Hackney Road E2 Tel: 7739 3480 (open Sundays 10.30-2.30) and 238 Grays Inn Road WC1 Tel: 7278 5391

Kebabs from Kayseri

Green Lanes is one place you can be guaranteed an excellent shish kebab or kleftico, but closer to home, and up with the best, is Yildiz Restaurant in Blackstock Road, just north of the Gillespie Road junction on the other side.

Mehmet Yildirim, who came here from Kayseri in 1989, runs Yildiz with his daughter, Yasmin, manager Hatice, and part-time help from more of his six children. With a background in

catering in Turkey and over 40 years experience, Mehmet Yildirim chooses only meat and vegetables that pass his stringent examination. *"I check the meat and fish for the right smell and for quality. Meat from young animals is best and looks different from meat from older animals. I send it back if it is no good. I do not buy from any supplier, only the best that passes my tests. We bone all our meat, so we know it is freshly prepared."* His daughter Yasmin adds *"The vegetables are delivered fresh twice a week and our yoghurt is supplied*

(Continued on page 2)

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by a Turkish Cypriot company.”

One of the best dishes on the menu is Iskender Kebab. A moist dish of kofte kebab served on a bed of home-made bread with yoghurt, special Halep tomato sauce and butter, it costs £4.70 as a take away.

Mehmet Yildirim lists the ingredients of his homemade Halep sauce: tomatoes, mushrooms, onions, aubergines, mint and other herbs. Fish Shish combines the flavour of the charcoal burner with chopped pieces of cod, lemon and onion served with salad. Salads that accompany the kebabs tend to be chopped finely, with tomato, onion and oregano. Pastry dishes appear of course - vegetarian Zubeyde Hanim Boregi is described as 'pastry filled with spinach, mushroom, feta cheese, cooked in the oven and served with

salad.' Not all dishes come with a tomato flavour – Ali Nazik is lamb or chicken cooked on the grill, served with special garlic yoghurt sauce and rice.

Starters include Ispanak Tarator, which shows off the creaminess of the yoghurt to best advantage and is strong on raw garlic. Pilaki (cold haricot beans in olive oil) is mild and Yildiz's homemade Tabule is a light dish with the addition of lemon juice. Every customer is greeted with an aperitif of very good black olives and sharp pickled peppers. Yildiz has a drinks licence, offering wines and, of course, Efes beer. Aryan yoghurt drink always tastes fresh, mild and creamy. There's a Christmas menu of 3 courses plus hot drink for £15.95 per person. ■

Yildiz Restaurant, 163 Blackstock Road, N4. Tel: 7354 3899



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Road closed?

Are road closures the only way to deal with speeding traffic? In October residents of Benwell and Bryantwood Roads received a Council consultation leaflet that surprisingly contained a variety of options none of which included traffic calming measures, requested at a previous public council meeting. Road closures were offered to 'prevent all vehicular through traffic' and width restriction options were offered to reduce the number of large vehicles in the road. An HCA member in Benwell Road writes "At the East Area committee meeting of 19th June over twenty local residents voiced their concerns over the way Bryantwood Road closure proposals had been developed without proper public consultation. There is extensive local concern over the prospect of a road closure in Bryantwood Road."

Some Bryantwood Road

residents want their road closed to traffic, citing the speeding traffic as a serious problem and road closures as the only solution. Other residents are appalled at the proposal as the solution. Mrs Uzo Adimora spoke at the meeting, asking for speed humps. "Ambulances will take longer to reach us if our road is closed." HCA believes consultation offering road closure as an option must involve soundings over a much wider area. Closure of Bryantwood Road would have major implications for all traffic travelling south along Drayton Park, needing to access the Hornsey Road.

The Council does not normally support road closures, which inevitably benefit one local street at the expense of others, as Cllr Adrian Pulham told the June meeting. ■

Contact Zahed Jaweed, Traffic & Transportation Tel: 7527 2016

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Belfiore Lodge

By Roy Hidson

Leigh Road, formerly known as Highbury Park South, is a curious mixture of architectural styles ranging from Victorian to Post-War Council flats. No 29, dates from the 1840s and now stands sadly empty with boarded windows. The turreted building still has its Victorian bell pushes on the front gateposts, which are inscribed with the name *Belfiore Lodge*.



29 LEIGH ROAD TODAY, AWAITING CONVERSION TO 9 FLATS. FORMERLY KNOWN AS BELFIORE LODGE AND AS

At the turn of the twentieth century this was the home of Joseph Lincoln Henson, a prosperous businessman in the meat trade, with headquarters at Smithfield. As befitted a man in his position, *Belfiore Lodge* had a domestic staff that included a cook and a coachman. Henson was a regular worshipper at the old Highbury Quadrant Congregational Church, now demolished. It was hoped that his eldest son Leslie Lincoln Henson would follow his father into the family business. However, Leslie Henson, as he is better known, had his heart set on a show-business career. His nursery was in the turret room, and he performed his own small plays there, recruiting the cook and coachmen as his fellow actors.

Leslie received a good education and attempts were made to interest him in the meat business. He joined an amateur group and appeared in *Aladdin* at the Wortley Hall, Finsbury Park, where *Park Gates House* now stands. Realising that Leslie had no interest in the business the family sent him to a stage school. Among his fellow students was Robertson Hare, who was also destined to become a celebrated actor and comedian.

Leslie made his first professional appearance in 1910 with the *Tatlers* Concert Party at Penarth. In 1914 he went to America, and in 1915 was given a successful screen test. Like

most professionals at the time he was not interested in the pictures, commenting, "Quite frankly I don't think this moving-picture craze will last any longer than roller-skating."

By now World War I had broken out and Leslie returned home to enlist in the Royal Flying Corps. He travelled on the liner *Megantic*, which, only a few years before, had carried Dr. Crippen. Successfully dodging German submarines the *Megantic* safely docked in England. During his war service, Leslie performed in many troop concerts.

The inter-war years were Leslie Henson's heyday as an actor and comedian; and he even branched out into management. He performed in pantomime and even changed his mind about the cinema, making a number of pictures including *A Warm Corner*, shot at *Gainsborough Studios*. He toured the world with many musical shows. In 1921 he appeared in *The Co-optimists* with a cast including Jack Buchanan, Stanley Holloway, and Fay Compton. In 1928 he appeared in the musical *Funny Face* with Fred and Adele Astaire.

One of Leslie's discoveries was the performer named Richard Hearne, who went on to become the celebrated children's entertainer, *Mr. Pastry*. In 1935, the critic James Agate wrote, "To-night in this beautiful Gaiety Theatre Leslie Henson comes of age. But only in so far as the Gaiety is concerned. Terrestrially speaking he was born some years earlier. Did Papa Henson, pacing that anxious drawing room, say to the puckered morsel of humanity when it was first presented to him, "It's a boy" No. The Comic Spirit, speaking without authority on behalf of Sir James Barrie has whispered me that Papa Henson's delighted, incredulous words were: "It's a buffoon".

The Second World War saw Leslie touring the world entertaining troops. The post-war years saw him appearing in a number of musicals and plays. Leslie Henson died in 1957, but his son, Nicky Henson, continues the theatrical tradition. ■



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Dates to remember!

Highbury Chamber Choir

Concert - Monteverdi, Bach, Carver

6 December at 8pm Wine and refreshments

£5 entry, £3 concessions.

St Thomas's Church, St Thomas's Rd N5 Tel: 7354 1129

Council CPZ consultation

Gillespie & Quadrant residents' permanent parking schemes

Drop-in centres (places to be decided) on **Saturday**

6 December and Tuesday 9 December

New leaflet drop and lamp-post notices to be posted

Extended Deadline for replies 15 December

Transport Dept, 222 Upper St. N1

CPZ Inquiries ring Andrew Bourke (LBI) on 7527 2657

Exhibition

Award-winning local artist, Marie Fitzpatrick

Sunday 7 December 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Gathering Moss, 193 Blackstock Rd N5

"Wales: Dead or Alive?"

Exhibition of image and poetry

11 Nov – 6 Dec Mon – Sat 1-6pm. Entry free.

Euroart Gallery, Unit 22F @ N17 Studios

784/788 High Road, Tottenham, N17 0DA

Mob: 07802 502136

Islamic Experience

Exhibition

1 - 5 December Open to schools

6 - 7 December 10am - 4pm Open to public

Muslim Welfare House, 233 Seven Sisters Road, N4

Tel: 7263 3071 Email: info@mwht.org.uk

Survey of Junction Safety

Give your comments to community volunteers

Junction of Highbury Hill and Highbury Grove

Tuesday 2nd December from 8.30am

Or phone Christine Mabey on 7359 0609

Or email cmabey@blueyonder.co.uk

Highbury Roundhouse Christmas Party

Turkey dinner, dancing and entertainment

12 December 2pm - 7pm

Open to those 55 and older

Tickets from Caroline Reilly, tel. 7359 5916

A new autumn coat

By Beatrice Sayers

The big grey junction box at the corner of our street was receiving more attacks by graffiti vandals every week. Most of the roads nearby appeared to have the boxes.

I guessed who maintained them, because I'd once seen a chap in a Telewest jacket poking at the wires inside. Eventually the exterior became such an eyesore – a permanent piece of vertical litter – that I decided to try to get Telewest to do something about it.

I dialled a number from the Phone Book and left a message on the inevitable ansafone, quoting the box's letter and five digits – still just legible – that identify it, and suggested that the graffiti be removed.

The very next afternoon a Telewest van pulled up. Two men in overalls jumped out and painted the box its pristine dark grey. Before they left, they put a sticker on it that gave a freephone number to report damage or defacement.

I went over to thank them just before they drove off. Not at all, they said, and offered me an apology for not having done the job that morning; it had been raining heavily, not painting weather.

Over the next few weeks I rang Telewest's number three more times about three other boxes in nearby roads. Each time the boxes were newly painted within a day or two.

I've no idea what the company's service is like to its cable customers (I'm not one of them). But at least, having installed these metal cabinets on the footpath, the company seems to be responsible enough to stop them becoming any more unsightly than they are already. ☐

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N7 crime wave

Dorrie Valery, Director of Queensland Multi Media Arts Centre in Queensland Road, wrote to residents and businesses in properties backing onto the community centre, alerting them to recent breakins at QMMAC. "Please tell me after-hours or anytime, if you see anything suspicious.. Our centre is fully alarmed and we respond immediately, but we need to work together."

In May QMMAC lost valuable monitors and office equipment. All the doors were smashed. Since QMMAC is 'not-for-profit' and many of the goods have been donated, it is hard to put things right again. The Arts Centre provides courses and activities for all and specializes in training and supporting asylum seekers.

Recently, businesses in Queensland Road have been targeted by children wearing hooded jackets and riding bicycles, who

gain entry to cars and premises and steal handbags, mobile phones etc. "We need the Police to patrol around here. Everyone should be on the look out for these gangs and watch their own belongings. Our excellent receptionist has resigned because of them, after a year of working here. We might have to get a Security Officer. Meantime I've been forced to close the doors and reduce the 'open door policy' we had before." ■

Ring Dorrie Valery Mob:07957 644414

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

HCA talks to Charlie Sarnes of CRS Engineering at Highbury Barn, about his work in his electrical supplies and repairs shop and about the supportive spirit of the Barn shopping parade.

HCA – Why do you like working here?

Charlie – I am my own boss. I was a Lift Engineer before I came to take over from my father, before his retirement in 1990. I use my electrical and mechanical skills to offer a repair service fixing customers' vacuum cleaners. I like the 'banter' with the customers and I am on first-name terms with many of them. And, very important to me, and I'm sure to the other shopkeepers here, is that we shopkeepers all help each other. I've fixed wiring problems and repaired specialist machinery for neighbouring shops. Jimmy, from Master Cobbler, sorted out my locks for me. We all talk to each other regularly. I think that the atmosphere is good for the customers too! My father had a rule 'Serve people how you would like to be served yourself'. One of the major differences between a local shop and a 'chain' or high-street shop, is that you get to know the local shopkeeper. It's not just a selling service, I give advice about what to buy, whether it is worth repairing something, if something is no longer manufactured, or where people can get specialist parts I might not stock.

HCA – When did this business move here?

Charlie – My father bought this place in 1970, having moved from running his business in Mountgrove Road. It was a sweet shop called The Chocolate Box, which many of your readers will remember! I used to pass it every day on the bus coming home from Highbury Grove School, which incidentally, was run by the famous Rhodes Boyson in those days. The shelves were made to fit the big sweet jars and I still use them to display electrical goods and parts. We stock light bulbs of all sizes and types, kettles, irons, hoovers, microwaves, ducting, cabling, heaters... all chosen by me for value in quality and price.



CHARLIE DISPLAYS A FEW CLEANERS

HCA – What is your main concern now?

Charlie - Our big problem is the very sudden drop in customers at the Barn. It can't be coincidence that it started when the Council contracted traffic wardens in February this year to start ticketing cars parked illegally on the yellow lines in the main road. Some of the yellow line restrictions are necessary; but they were installed - and the timing of the restrictions increased - without our being consulted about where we might need loading bays, or where cars really do not obstruct traffic flows, and where they do, i.e. when parked in the middle of the parade. This morning the wardens were out in force at 9.30am – on a Saturday morning, when there was very little traffic and no problems were being caused! The whole Barn emptied of customers. It's not good to see people vanish, on what is usually our best day for trade. We badly need short-term parking bays here, as soon as possible. It especially affects my customers, trying to bring vacuum cleaners here for repair. What people don't realise is that the proportion of car-driving customers here is significant enough to the smaller businesses to make the difference between a reasonable turnover and being forced to stop trading. It will be the customers who walk and like to shop locally who will suffer if the small shops close down.

HCA – What next?

Charlie - I'm waiting to see how the business goes, as I am just about keeping afloat as it is. I do wonder why the Council thinks all businesses, whether large or small, are making money? We have to pay for rubbish clearance on top of several thousand pounds in business rates, which go to central government. The Business parking permit I will need will be over £500 a year too. Still, things are always changing here and I hope that things pick up. ■

CRS Engineering, 21a/b Highbury Park Tel: 7359 2041

LETTERS ON DEALING WITH KNOTWEED

Dear Sirs,

Francis Radice, in the last issue of Highbury Community News, described the great difficulty in controlling Japanese Knotweed. When I purchased my garden flat in Highbury, it was February and I had no idea what was going to appear in my garden come spring.

I soon became extremely familiar with Japanese Knotweed. I spent a lot of time digging up the roots and spraying with Tumbleweed, all to very limited effect. However, at the bottom of the garden I planted three different eucalyptus trees, all of which are now a considerable height. All the Japanese Knotweed at the end of the garden has disappeared, being quite unable to compete with the eucalyptus. However, the Japanese Knotweed still comes up through the lawn.

There are at least 1,000 different kinds of eucalyptus, many of which do well in this country. The number of eucalyptus that flourish across Highbury might suggest that a solution to Japanese Knotweed is to plant eucalyptus. It is a lot more attractive and a lot less dangerous than the Cane Toads.

Dorothy Rowe *Highbury Grove, N5*

Dear HCA,

I was responsible for helping Network Rail develop guidance for the removal of Japanese Knotweed, which is both extremely difficult to eradicate and subject to quite a lot of legislation.

Did you know:

- It is a statutory offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to allow it to grow.
- It is a statutory offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990/ Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994, to dispose of the plant incorrectly once cut or removed from the ground, in which state it constitutes controlled waste.
- Any landowner who allows the plant to escape onto neighbouring land is also open to civil liability for private nuisance, negligence or trespass.
- Development could be impeded pending removal, as the plant can force its way through concrete and tarmac to depths of over 4m and cannot simply be covered over?

Japanese Knotweed is a REAL problem. Islington Council might take a bit more interest.

Vicky Kemp *Loop Environmental Networks Ltd, Benwell Road, N7.*

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Highbury Community Association

The HCA represents 750 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, 83 Highbury Hill N5 1SX or email hcanews@hotmail.com

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