

# HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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## ‘Fair funding for all schools’ launches Highbury campaign

By DIANE BURRIDGE

Over one-third of schools in Islington had financial “challenges” last year. This was the situation discussed at a campaign meeting organised by parents on May 23rd. Mark Owen, Headteacher of Gillespie Primary School for 11 years, stated that: ‘Since starting teaching in the 1980s I have never seen such a threat to education budgets.’

Over 80 parents of children from local schools heard Louise Russell, Parent Governor at Gillespie and Chair of the School’s Finance Committee, explain how last year the school had to lose a Teaching Assistant and bilingual support advisers. Staff were forced to cut back on special education needs support and music teaching, as well as raise funds for the Science Laboratory to continue fully. Many are concerned that there is more to come in the next academic year.

Victoria Smith, Parent Governor at Ambler School, stated that their funding position is not as threatened as the school is growing and is now a two form entry school. The school, however, is greatly concerned about future funding and is already restructuring their day provision, with fees having to be charged – just when there are more children with special needs.

The new National Funding Formula, which averages out school funding, provides no new funding and per pupil funding is reducing, as confirmed by the Public Accounts



Committee. The Government predicts that £3 billion can be freed in the education budget through efficiency savings. Yet, the National Audit Office has stated that schools are facing the biggest cuts for over 20 years.

Cllr Richard Watts, Leader of Islington Council, informed the meeting that the Council can offer limited help due to central Government cuts of £20million per year. In total, the borough has lost 40% of its budget.

This is occurring after a period of remarkable progress for Islington’s schools. Eight years ago, Islington was in the bottom 20 boroughs. It now has the top SATs results in London.

Joanna Yurkey, the initiator of Fair Funding for All Schools, the national parent-led campaign launched in January 2017, reported that the country now has 45 branches/networks. More information about the

initiative can be found here: <http://www.fairfundingforallschools.org/>.

When asked what parents and concerned people could do to help, she suggested going to the hustings during the election campaign to ask candidates what they will do to support fair funding for schools. Additionally, she stressed the importance of asking for the details of the Government’s recent pledge to put £4billion back into schools.

The meeting ended with renewed enthusiasm to press for fair funding, knowing that politicians often listen to parents as voters.

In the meantime, it is worrying that our local schools are making such cutbacks whilst the demand for special needs schooling increases. The Highbury Community Association will be attending relevant meetings as the whole community benefits from a well-funded education service.

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# Vital local issues left undiscussed at Finsbury Park conference

By DIANE BURRIDGE

What to do about the Finsbury Park area? Despite having the busiest tube stop outside Zone 1, the area is facing troubles with no easy solutions. To complicate matters, it is dominated by a Park which is managed by Haringey but covers three boroughs (Islington, Hackney and Haringey).

To look for solutions to improve the area, the Finsbury Park Trust, with their single paid worker and dedicated volunteers, organised a conference on March 25<sup>th</sup> with an impressive line-up of speakers. As well as developers, those speaking included two of the three relevant MPs – Jeremy Corbyn (MP for Islington North) and Catherine West (MP for Hornsey and Wood Green). From the councils, the new Mayor of Hackney, Phil Glanville, and the Leader of Islington, Cllr Richard Watts, spoke.

Cllr Claire Kober, the Leader of Haringey, was absent. Was this due to the animosity that many local residents feel towards Haringey’s hiring out of Finsbury Park to earn as much money as possible?

And yet these tensions were only alluded to throughout the day. Instead platitudes poured forth: ‘our green spaces must be protected’; ‘small businesses should be supported’; ‘developments need to benefit and



Attendees at the Finsbury Park conference

involve local people’; ‘residents’ views must be heard’.

This attitude deprived attendees of a discussion of the area’s pressing problems. To name just a few:

- Despite major objections, Finsbury Park is being hired out more and more for large events. From 5 June to 14 July 2017, there will only be five days when large sections of the park are not sectioned off.

- The development of City North by 2020, which will include two 23 storey towers with 47 ‘affordable homes’ and 308 private ones. The development was approved by Islington Council against their own planning policies of limiting buildings to ten storeys in this area. Most

‘homes’ have been sold off-plan overseas.

- The changes of use from offices/ retail to housing which are threatening local shopping precincts, such as at 169 Blackstock Road (the Hackney side of the road). The start of a domino effect?

- The increase in business taxes which will put them among the highest in London. This is despite Islington Council organising a petition of 15,000 on this matter.

- Police numbers for each ward have been reduced from by as much as half. Mayor Sadiq Khan has promised to keep this level, at least.

Continued on page 3...



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Reassuringly, some examples of effective regeneration were discussed. Paul Cook, Director of Higgins, and the Mayor of Hackney, spoke of the £100 million redevelopment of Kings Crescent Estate, where private sales of new homes will cross-subsidise 'social/affordable' housing.

With a five year masterplan, 490 new build homes for sale are planned alongside 255 externally refurbished social houses. Hackney has paid Higgins £65 million for the plan (with Higgins putting in £15 million). Higgins employs 27 apprentices (of 500 workers on site each day), as agreed with Hackney, but the target of 25% labour coming from local providers has not been met - only 15% to date.

When issues of skills shortages

were raised, there was honest admission that with skilled (and cheap?) workers easily obtained from across Europe, the incentive to train people is reduced. And to add to this gloom, Cllr Richard Watts stated that: 'The system of Further Education funding is broken.' One example he gave: The UK trains 80,000 care and beauty graduates a year when there are only 16,000 jobs available each year.

Despite these setbacks, numerous massive development are progressing in the area over the next few years. As well as Kings Crescent by 2022 and City North by 2020, Woodberry Down, Manor House, and the Rowans site are all scheduled for major developments soon.

As well as these 'regeneration plans', Cllr Guy Nicholson, lead for planning, business and investment in

Hackney, spoke of increasing volumes of planning applications for hostels, homes for multiple occupation, and conversions from retail to housing in the area.

What can be done to ensure that these plans bring prosperity to the area rather than just lining the pockets of a few developers and foreign investors? Cllr Guy Nicholson suggested the setting up of a common authority (as the five boroughs did for the Olympics). He also reminded the Finsbury Park Trust volunteers, who are now working on a Neighbourhood Plan, that their Plan must be able to withstand challenges from developers and must conform to Local Plans and the London Plan.

Workshops on the day overwhelmingly asked that green spaces be protected and that the Metropolitan Open Land in the area remain in public ownership. Community arts festivals, creative small businesses, craft markets and a large community centre are all needed to ensure the area retains its signature atmosphere.

As Catherine West MP and Jeremy Corbyn MP concluded: "The issue is affordable housing. I am concerned that this need for such housing and our call to protect local green spaces are the two matters the least likely to be considered during this 'regeneration' in the future."

More information about the Finsbury Park Trust can be found on their website: <http://www.finsburyparktrust.co.uk/>



Kings Crescent Estate as seen from Clissold Park, Hackney

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# Highbury Community Association turns 20 with an evening of celebration, activism and fundraising

By SARAH POTTER AND CHARLIE ROBERSON

On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April, the Highbury Community Association was pleased to celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary at our 2017 AGM in Christ Church. We can't think of a better way to recognise this milestone than an evening with our neighbours to discuss the issues in our community and enjoy each other's' company.

The meeting was chaired by veteran Highbury activist Diane Burrige. Approximately 40 members were in attendance to learn about the HCA Committee's activities in 2016-17.

At the meeting, HCA members heard about the various campaigns and projects that have kept the committee occupied in the past year. Talking points included TfL's plans for Highbury Corner, the Sainsbury's development threatening shops on Blackstock Road, and other planning matters across the area.

The biggest topic of the night was the disruption caused by Wireless festival in 2016 and the outlook for the event in 2017. There are many reasons to be concerned about the festival, in particular the disruption it will cause for residents and the issues involving traffic, litter and anti-social behaviour. We have been working with the Friends of Finsbury Park in their opposition to the festival and will continue to provide updates on the subject in the future.

Other topics of discussion included the meetings attended by the Committee and events organised by the HCA, such as our social in January. Keep an eye out for more events like these in future months.

After the treasurer's report and the election of the Association Committee, members were invited to submit



questions and proposals. HCA member Chris Ashby thanked the Committee for its activities this year, and the formal part of the meeting was then brought to an end.

The guest speaker for the evening was Ruth Polling, Blue Badge Guide of the year 2014 and a former Highbury resident. Her talk covered the long and colourful history of Highbury, stretching from the Anglo-Saxon period to the modern age.

Attendees learned how Highbury can be traced back 1000 years to Anglo-Saxon charters before the manor passed to the Knights of St John in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Highbury manor house was destroyed by the rebels in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. It was redeveloped in 1772 by the London stockbroker John Dawes, who built Highbury House.

Denser development with smaller properties occurred

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...Continued from page 4

in the later years of the 19th century, turning the region into the distinct borough that we recognise today. In the 20th century, Emergency Ward 10 was filmed at Highbury Studios, and the Wombles and the Sex Pistols recorded their hits at the Wessex Studios in Highbury New Park.

Also speaking at the meeting was Tony Miller, chair of the Highbury Roundhouse. He reported that the Roundhouse is now financially secure for the foreseeable future after a Heritage Lottery Fund grant and matched funding from Islington Council.

The meeting provided time to reflect on how the HCA has integrated into the community. There are currently 985 members of the Association and we hope to break the 1,000 mark by 2018. The HCA currently has 1,768 followers on Twitter and 157 likes on Facebook. There were 46,204 visits to the website in the last 12 months - a 26% increase on the previous year's visits.

The meeting finished at 8:45 and was followed by drinks and nibbles. As is tradition, a raffle and auction was held with numerous gifts from local businesses on offer to be won. A complete list of the businesses that generously provided goods can be found above.

The good cause for the night was the Sotheby Mews Day Centre Minibus Appeal and we are thrilled to say that we raised a total of £570 through donations and the auction. The old minibus currently transports 100 people to Sotheby Mews, a purpose-built facility for older people to socialise and stay active, every week and is in need of replacement. To learn more about the appeal, visit [crowdfunding.justgiving.com/sotheby-mews-minibus](http://crowdfunding.justgiving.com/sotheby-mews-minibus).

Thank you to everyone who came to the meeting and to all of our members from the last 20 years. The evening proved what a wonderful, vibrant community we have Highbury that makes it such a special place. Our thanks also go to the speakers, Ruth Polling and Tony Miller, Christ Church, and all of the businesses who contributed to the auction.



## Help us monitor community issues at the Wireless Festival

Between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of July, Wireless Festival will yet again be held in Finsbury Park. We are expecting large numbers of Highbury residents to be inconvenienced by transport issues, the closure of large sections of the park, noise, anti-social behaviour and litter.

Let us know how the festival is affecting you personally on Twitter by using the hashtag:

### #WirelessDisruption

We will be sharing residents' issues throughout the festival on our Twitter account, @HighburyCA

Do you have a local news story you would like to see in a future edition of Highbury Community News?

Please contact us at [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com)

The **Highbury Community Association (HCA)** represents local residents and businesses on all aspects of living and working in Highbury, Lower Holloway and Finsbury Park.

**Membership is free.** Members receive bi-monthly newsletters like this one. New members will receive the newsletter by email (unless you don't have email). To join or talk to us about anything Highbury-related, visit our website, or email [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com). The HCA can also be contacted on Facebook and Twitter.

The opinions expressed in Highbury Community News are not necessarily those of the HCA.

**Please let us know if you move, so we can keep our membership list up to date.**

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# Review: ‘The Spirit of Meliorist Reform’ and other essays by Tom Rubens

By DIANE BURRIDGE

As a trained scientist, I relished the challenge to review fellow HCA committee member Tom Rubens’s most recent book on the subject of philosophy. Could I become more open - minded about subjects which do not result in concrete conclusions?

Even the title dispirited me: ‘meliorist’? A dictionary was called for. But surprisingly, I only needed to use this for several of the book’s 43 short essays covering 210 pages. For those interested, meliorism is defined as “the belief that the world can be made better by human effort.”

Tom bluntly warns the reader in the preface that he had written the book for: ‘those prepared to eschew banalities and penetrate surfaces’. And so many surfaces are covered, from the political and economic to the philosophical and cultural.

Of interest were Tom’s views of the invalidity of ‘over-general’ sociological headings, such as working class, labour, middle class - as “people do not collectively display the unitary and

homogenous outlook which is attributed to them.” (pages 11, 38)

His thoughts that, “A united political front is needed consisting of representatives of all sections of society which lie outside the economic and political power structure, and which is dedicated to permanent opposition to it”(page 38), I found a bit utopian.

Essays on the importance of the creative mind, and the liberal life style are heart-felt. Tom states that liberal-individualists see the ‘Leftist’ class perspective as “too reductive and exclusionary to serve as an adequate guide to social and cultural understanding.” (page 101)

A wide range of philosophers are discussed in some depth, including: Schopenhauer, Spencer, Sartre, Santayana, Protagoras, Francis Bacon,

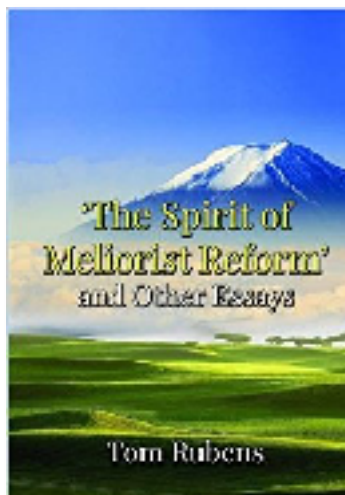
Orwell, Freud, Chomsky, Ibsen, Hardy, Carlyle and Arnold.

Admittedly, some sentences flummoxed me: ‘The general linkage of causation to moral action goes against traditional ethical discourse’ (page 119)? I finished the book, however, with great admiration for Tom’s breadth of knowledge of philosophy, and his deep thoughts about a wide range of matters.

As he concludes: ‘We owe it to ourselves to partake of the food of self knowledge and self realisation every day of every week.’ Reading this book helped me in such an endeavour.

The Spirit of Meliorist Reform can be found for £8.99 from bookshops or directly on line at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com).

Tom Rubens is a member of the Highbury Community Association Committee



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## Islington excels at community gardening

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

Green-fingered Highbury residents will be pleased that Islington has been selected to compete in the Royal Horticultural Society's 'Britain in Bloom', the nationwide community gardening campaign.

Also competing are the London boroughs of Ealing, Hillingdon, Richmond and Tower Hamlets, as well as dozens of other towns and villages across the country.

This exciting opportunity to showcase Islington’s natural beauty comes after the area won Borough of the Year at 'London in Bloom' for two

years in a row.

We would encourage all Highbury residents to get involved wherever possible to ensure Highbury looks as green and well-kept while the competition is going on. Even if you do not have a garden or any visible green space, you can still get involved by helping out at community gardens or simply watering tree pits in the area.

The winner of 'Britain in Bloom' will be announced later in the year. You can find out more about the competition and the Royal Horticultural Society on their website: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/>.

# Highbury volunteer praised by charity for missing people and their families

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

South West London based charity Missing People, which runs the only national helpline dedicated to supporting missing people and their families, celebrated National Volunteers' Week by recognising some of their most dedicated volunteers.

Jonathan Houghton, 33, from Highbury, was singled out for particular praise. He has been volunteering with the charity since 2009 and has now contributed over 1,800 hours of his time.

He said: "I first got involved because I was looking to gain some office experience and improve my communication skills. Now, 8 years later, I'm still here volunteering four

hours every week on the helpline, taking calls and responding to texts and emails from people affected by missing, either because they're away from home themselves or they have a loved one who is."

Last year, Missing People helped over 3,500 children and adults, as well as more than 3,000 families who were missing loved one.

The charity recently launched an initiative called 'Project 42', aiming to secure a volunteer for every shift on the weekly helpline rota.

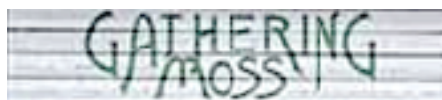
For more information, visit their website: [www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk)

The HCA applauds Jonathon for his efforts and for the hard work of everyone at Missing People.



Jonathan receiving an award from Missing People charity CEO Jo Youle

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## It's all change at Raymond's at the Barn



By SARAH POTTER

Regular shoppers at Highbury Barn will have noticed that Raymond's the newsagents has just been completely refurbished for the first time in over 70 years. Gayatri Patel, the friendly, efficient and outgoing person behind the counter at the shop for the last ten years, says that the business premises remained largely untouched not just by her family but also the two previous owners for various reasons.

It is also the end of an era for the family business which has kept the shop going successfully for over thirty years. Gayatri, also known as 'G' to many of her customers, explained to us that her father Raj, after his successful kidney transplant, now needs some more medical treatment.

With G's brother Samir working in the City and her sister Ghita married and living elsewhere, running the shop as a family concern by working the very long hours required and dealing with the paperwork as well is no longer possible for the Patel family.

Raj Patel came here from Gujarat in western India where he was running his own watch mender's business, a service he then offered at Raymond's, giving the proceeds to charity. From the 1990s, he lived above the shop with his wife Nila, a teacher of Sanskrit and Gujarati in India, and their children. The two girls and their brother were all educated locally at Gillespie Primary School, and then at Highbury Fields School and Holloway Boys. G, who went on to study at Birmingham University, still rem-

embers delivering newspapers at the age of 11. She greatly values the business and life skills she has gained from serving the community in Highbury from behind the counter in the shop. She also experienced the village atmosphere of living in Highbury as she grew up, and has always wanted to give back to the community in her work at Raymond's. She recalls how her humorous and well-remembered father showed her how he ran such a people-based business, and that giving back was the magic that was and is the heart and soul of Highbury as she knows it. She has played a full part in the Highbury Traders' group which works to preserve the Barn and its range of businesses, and she and her father have given generously to the night shelter for homeless people at Christ Church.

G has noticed new residents arriving in Highbury without the same commitment to the area, the losses among the older residents, and the increasing congestion and pollution at the Barn. Like other Islington traders, she sees the sharp rise in business rates this year as a real threat. The bonus for Raymond's in Highbury is that newspaper sales, especially of quality papers like The Guardian, are still strong, and quality and service bring local customers in, as of course does good food.

Raymond's will in future be managed by the person now in charge of the newsagents on the other side of the road, another but unrelated Mr. Patel who is keen to look after the needs of the community in his own way. He is planning to introduce new products and services, and would appreciate feedback or ideas from the local members who will carry on visiting the store. The Patel family will still be around in Highbury, and intend to remain part of the community. G hopes to explore holistic health as her next step, once she has had a break. Recognition of their service and our sincere thanks are due to the Patel family of Highbury Barn.