

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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Air quality – what are the latest findings for Islington?

By GILL SHEPHERD



The impact of the phased application of ULEZ (Ultra-low emission zones) on London as a whole

The latest results of Sadiq Khan's expanded ULEZ were published in early March 2025 (*London-wide Ultra Low Emission Zone One Year Report – London City Hall.pdf*). 11 outer London boroughs now also benefit from falls in Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) and PM 2.5 particulates, in line with Central and Inner London.

The primary aim of ULEZ had been to reduce NO₂ – a toxic gas that exacerbates asthma, impedes lung development, and raises the risk of lung cancer. The biggest reductions in NO₂ levels have been in central London (54%) followed by substantial reductions in Inner

London (29%) and Outer London (24%). Across London as a whole, ULEZ NOx emissions from road transport were estimated to be 36% lower in 2024. The ULEZ expansion has not negatively affected footfall or retail and leisure spending and Londoners have continued to upgrade their vehicles to cleaner models with 96.7% of vehicles driving in London now ULEZ-compliant.

What do Borough level impacts look like?

Where ULEZ achieved its improvements in air quality by focussing on cleaner vehicles, Islington Borough Council (like other councils) has attempted something similar through the management of space – via the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs).

Annual General Meeting



**HIGHBURY
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ASSOCIATION**

We look forward to welcoming you to HCA's AGM to be held at the Ecology Centre, Drayton Park, on Saturday 10th May at 7.15pm for 7.30pm.

Our speaker is Highbury resident Professor Anne Power, Emeritus Professor of Social Policy and Head of Housing and Communities at the London School of Economics. She will mainly speak about her latest book 'Beyond Bricks and Mortar: building homes, communities and neighbourhoods'.

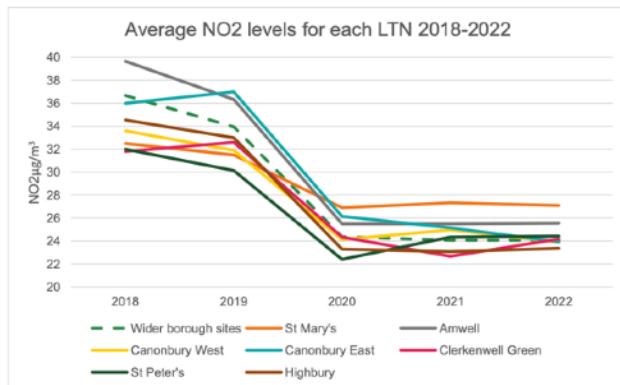
Anne's talk will be followed by our usual social with food and drink.

When LTNs were first mooted, it was believed (based on DfT data), that there had been a 72% increase in minor road traffic in London between 2009 and 2019. For IBC this provided a strong incentive for installing LTNs, the premise being that if this massive increase were diverted away from minor roads, the borough would become 'cleaner, greener, healthier.'

Subsequently (in 2022) data-calculation errors were spotted, and DfT spent a year re-analysing their traffic data. The new results showed,

Air quality - the latest findings..

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Annual average mean NO₂ ratified and bias-adjusted monitoring results 2018-2022 for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (boundary, internal and non-road sites) compared to wider borough sites

instead, a 0% increase in minor road traffic (www.gov.uk/government/statistics/road-traffic-estimates-in-great-britain-2021/minor-road-traffic-estimates-review-technical-report). So, the once urgent ostensible need to divert traffic away from minor roads fell away.

As far as air quality is concerned, the most recent published data from Islington's first seven LTNs, compared with data from non-LTN parts of Islington, showed no meaningful difference between the two. The dotted green line, representing non-LTN parts of Islington, sits in the centre of the LTN data lines (*Islington Air Quality Annual Status Report 2022, Appendix D*).

How about impacts at LTN level?

Local pressure group Keep Islington Moving carried out a detailed review of the council's LTN data. It broadly showed that while air quality improved within LTNs (because there was less traffic inside them), it deteriorated outside them on main roads, where many Islington inhabitants also live, work, and go to school or nursery

(www.keepislingtonmoving.com/data#pollution).

In St Marys ward, for instance, Council data revealed that, over a

year, air pollution on the Essex Road increased by 20%; Upper Street North by over 23%; Canonbury Street North by 39%; and Gaskin Street by 40%.

Impacts of air pollution on children

Poor air quality is of particular concern in the case of children. IBC's excellent School Streets initiative (which

relies on limited timed morning and afternoon road closures in the vicinity of schools), has been implemented almost entirely so far at schools on minor roads. A start has only just been made on the much greater challenge that major roads pose, where many of the borough's schools are located, where timed closures are out of the question, and where so many children walk or wait for buses to get to and from school.

A major 2024 review surveyed over 20 years' worth of comparative international data on the impact of air pollution on children and adolescents, and summarised it as follows.

There is a substantial impact from urban exposure to traffic-related air pollution (TRAP) on the physical and mental development of children and adolescents. It has adverse cardiovascular, respiratory, and mental health effects which extend into adulthood, affecting academic opportunity - and well-being beyond health. Air pollution negatively affects children's cognitive and respiratory health and learning performance, and increases their susceptibility to disease in adult life, especially COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). (Roche, I. V et al. 2024 'The Health-Related and Learning Performance

Effects of Air Pollution and Other Urban-Related Environmental Factors on School-Age Children and Adolescents – A Scoping Review' Current Environmental Health Reports, 11. 300-316).

Conclusions

While ULEZ has made major contributions to better air quality at a London-wide level, the Islington data seems to show that, locally, pollution levels on main roads have been raised by the redirection to them of traffic from inside LTNs, by the congestion and additional engine idling this causes, and by the additional mileage LTNs add to cross-borough journeys taken by businesses and others for whom vehicle use is essential.

And these levels, we now learn, in turn risk grave long-term negative impacts on our children and adolescents - and indeed on adults too. Premised originally on a DfT data-error, it now looks as if, rather than improving the borough's air quality, LTNs are making it worse. If this is the case, then a fundamental rethink is needed.

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Stoke Newington Early Music Festival

By Charles Palliser



In a concert called *Counting the Hours* an enraptured audience was held spellbound on Thursday 13th March at Stoke Newington's Old Church by a dazzling performance of J. S. Bach's famous *Goldberg Variations*. In fact, what we were treated to was a fascinating exploration of that work in its own context but also placed in other contexts. It was as it were, a series of variations on the *Variations*.

Bach wrote the work for the harpsichord and several of the Variations were beautifully performed on that instrument by Satoko Doi-Luck. However, interspersed with those renditions of the music as the composer would have heard it, were versions for three instruments of that period played by members of the Incantati ensemble: Petra Samhaber-Eckhardt (violin), Rachel Stott, (viola d'amore) and Ibrahim Aziz (viola da gamba).

As Rachel explained during the post-concert Q and A, that way of performing the pieces made it easier to understand the relationship between the three "voices" in the canons in every third Variation.

What is a canon? Suffice it to say that a canon is a musical structure in which two or more "voices" play the same melody not by beginning together but one after the other. You really don't need to understand the ingenuity of its practitioners – Bach above all – to enjoy it.

Very wittily, Rachel had created a narrative in which a German count suffering from insomnia asks the harpsichordist who is thought to be its first performer, Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, to play the work in the hope of sending him to sleep. On that thread were strung not only Bach's *Variations* but works from earlier and later periods introduced by a text narrated, and in some of the added elements sung, by the tenor Daniel Gilchrist. In this fanciful addition, the sleepless aristocrat reviews his past life and contemplates its not-too-distant end, as the hours of the night pass.

And here's the paradox: Although the theme was overcoming insomnia, there was no possibility of the audience not staying alert and engaged in the presence of music-making of this outstanding quality.

The Stoke Newington Early Music Summer Festival, running from 18th June to 4th July has just opened for bookings. Go to the website www.stokenewingtonearlymusic.org.uk for the programme, and to book.

The top ten languages spoken in London after English

By GILL SHEPHERD



The adult learning charity The City Lit conducted research to find out the most common foreign languages spoken across the capital's boroughs.

Britain's colonial history can be seen in the fact that five of the top 10 languages are spoken by South Asians. The other five are closer to home - languages from Europe and from the Middle East.

The full list, in descending order of frequency, is as follows:

Bengali, Polish, Turkish, Gujarati, Punjabi, Urdu, French, Arabic, Tamil, and Portuguese.

It is surprising that neither Italian nor Spanish make the top 10 (as they probably would have done before Brexit).

It's important to remember that this is a London wide average. Speakers of particular languages tend to cluster together, and so in the case of many individual boroughs the list would look different and the order of frequency would be different. For instance, 3 boroughs have Bengali as their second language, and seven boroughs have Polish as theirs. Four boroughs list Turkish as the second most common language after English.

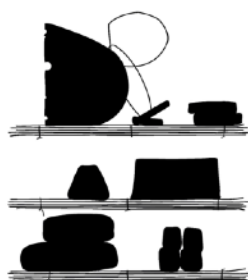
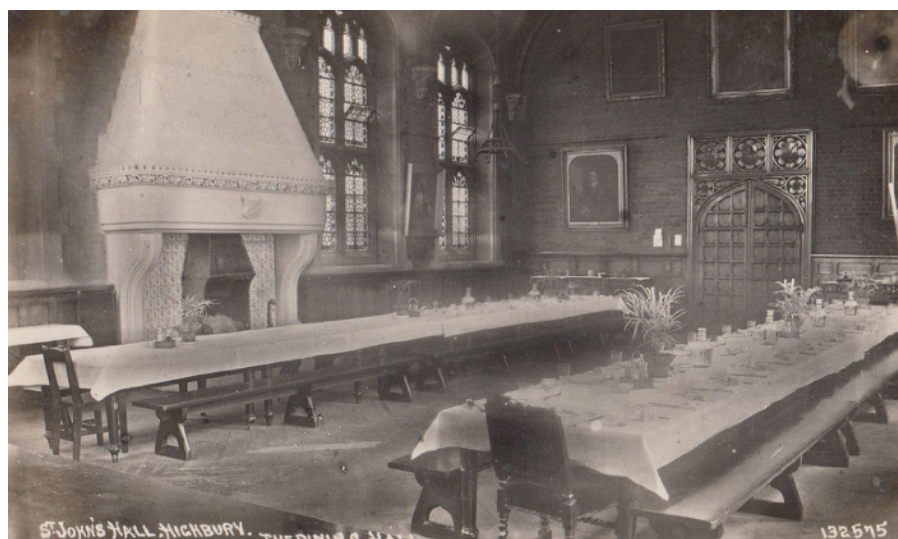
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St John's Hall

By GILL SHEPHERD

St John's Hall (originally Highbury College of Divinity) was built in 1825, and fronted onto Aubert Park. Its imposing entrance opened on to a courtyard with Ionic pillars, and led on to a chapel, residential accommodation, and a grand dining hall. It was a huge building - like having an Oxford College in Highbury, with overtones of the British Museum and Holloway Prison.

It began to rent the northern part of its grounds to Arsenal Football Club from 1913, and survived for well over a century before burning down in 1946. The site was then repurposed for the building of the Aubert Court blocks of flats.



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Some Famous Local Authors

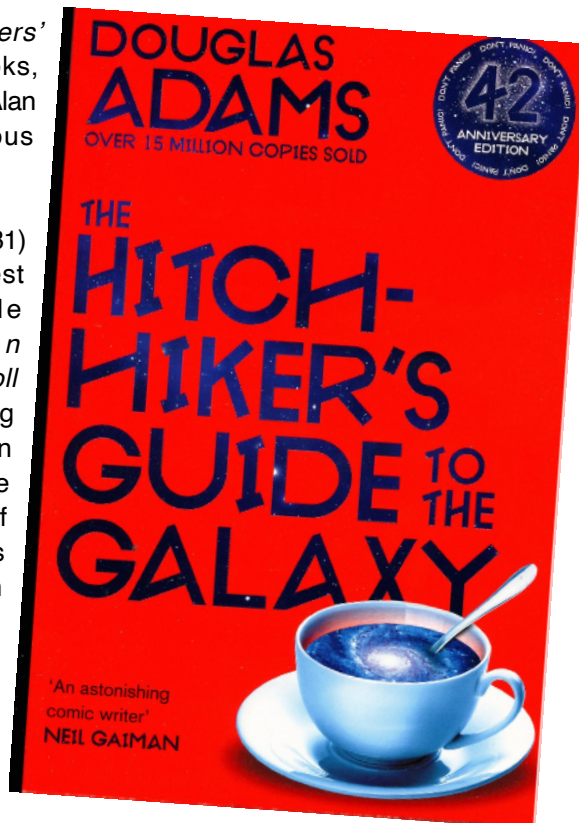
By SARAH POTTER

In their book *Writers' London* (ACC Art Books, 2020) Carrie Kania and Alan Oliver list some famous authors in our area.

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) was one of the earliest English novelists. He wrote *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Flanders* (1722) while living at 95 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16. He was not only a pioneer of journalism in his eyewitness account of the great storm of 1704, but also a secret agent for King William III and spent time in prison. He is buried in Bunhill Fields in Islington as are John Bunyan and William Blake.

Edward Lear (1812-1888) lived at Bowman's Mews, Seven Sisters Road, Holloway, N7. He wrote a book of limericks and *The Owl and the Pussycat*, displaying his gift for language. He was also a fine illustrator and artist, and was the first major bird painter to work from life rather than from dead specimens. He was the youngest of a family of 21 children, and lived with his much older sister, who cared for him. He suffered from poor mental health and epilepsy, of which he was very ashamed.

The most recent and nowadays perhaps best-known local author is Douglas Adams (1952-2001), who wrote *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* in 1978 while sharing a flat in Kingsdown Road, Holloway, N7 and who then moved to Upper Street and finally Duncan Terrace. At the heart of



the book is the answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe and Everything, which the computer Deep Thought reveals 'with infinite majesty and calm,' to be 42, having worked on the problem for seven and a half million years (Pan Books, 2020).

Local readers will enjoy the Islington references in the book. For example, the barman at Arthur Dent's local pub asks his friend Ford Prefect whether he is going to watch the Arsenal match that afternoon. In the second book in the series, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*, an intergalactic pop-star is introduced called Hotblack Desiato, a name borrowed of course from our local estate agent in Highbury Barn.

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The Rejection of the Archway Campus Scheme

By GILL SHEPHERD



The Archway Campus is located at the bottom of Highgate Hill. It was built as a workhouse infirmary in the late 19th century, and later became a medical teaching campus for Middlesex University and University College London. The site is known as the Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area.

The proposal had included residential development with 178 units (91 affordable) but both a tenure split and the lack of family sized homes in the proposal failed to meet local requirements. There was also a proposal for student accommodation in a 27 storey tower which not only breached local height restrictions but included no student affordability measures.

Historic England objected to demolition of and alterations to heritage buildings on the site. Over 450 public objections were received focusing mainly on the excessive height of the tower, insufficient family housing, and lack of community engagement. The proposal failed on multiple fronts including inadequate compliance with affordable housing policies; breaches of local height restrictions; and inadequate environmental sustainability measures. The proposal will now go to the GLA for further comment, but the current view is that, given that the scheme is contrary to multiple policies, the applicant would be unlikely to win.

Emirates stadium expansion plans?

By GILL SHEPHERD



The word on the street is that Arsenal is looking into ways of expanding the Emirates stadium in a bid to keep pace with its Premier league rivals.

When Arsenal moved to the Emirates in 2006, it had the second

largest Premier League stadium in the country. But it is now only fifth in the pecking order - at a time when Manchester United is planning a dazzling £2 billion Super Stadium to take the place of Old Trafford.

Adding another 20,000 seats by building upwards would apparently involve taking off the roof and installing a larger one afterwards. Both costs, and the amount of time that such modifications would take, weigh heavily in the club's calculations.

Stadium expansion would not only require the go-ahead from Islington Council, but Transport for London might well impose demands on the club to ensure that the additional number of supporters could get there and away without too much difficulty. Responses from the local community would also be important.

Last time around, there were active discussions with the club about investing in Holloway Road tube station but these never went anywhere. It is crazy that on match days both Holloway Road station and Drayton Park overground station are closed and it is to be hoped, if expansion plans go ahead, that investment in these two stations would be a compulsory part of the deal.

Such improvements would contribute greatly to a positive welcome from the local community to the proposed expansion, which would, after all, increase by an enormous 33% the number of visitors coming to the club on match days.



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Arsenal Ward Partnership Meeting, 22nd February

By JOANNA SARGENT



The most recent joint ward partnership meeting was held at Muslim Welfare House, 233 Seven Sisters Road, N4 2DA on Saturday 22nd February from 11am-1pm. The focus was on community safety and policing and was a joint meeting between Arsenal and Finsbury Park wards.

The meeting was introduced by Cllrs Ibrahim (Arsenal) and O'Sullivan (Finsbury Park) with Cllr Weekes (Mildmay), Executive Member for Community Safety. He explained that Finsbury Park Ward is Islington's highest priority ward.

Jack Robinson, Met Police Superintendent, gave an overview of community safety concerns and policing for the area. He said that the police had made over 600 drug supply and use arrests. The Plimsoll pub had been identified as a drugs hotspot. He explained that his current team comprises around 10 police and six Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

The team have secured additional funds which will be invested in additional police hours in the area and in more CCTV cameras at the

top of St Thomas's Road and in Rock Street. He reported reductions in knife crime and burglary, but increases in robbery, especially of mobile phones, and in thefts from cars.

Jack Robinson stressed that it was very important for the public to report everything dangerous or illegal encountered: the more reports there are, the more resources are likely to be allocated to the police in the area in the future. Members of the public discussed the difficulties of doing this and ask whether a Petty Crime App could be devised via which everyone could report more readily.

There was also intensive debate about the need to ensure that both Finsbury Park and Gillespie Park were locked at night, not least because of the risk that they will be used for drug dealing.

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Sunday 8th June 2025 - 2 to 6pm

Olden Garden Music Day

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