

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

www.highburycommunity.org

No 46 March 2006

Robert L I Scott: July 1946 to January 2006

By Alison Carmichael

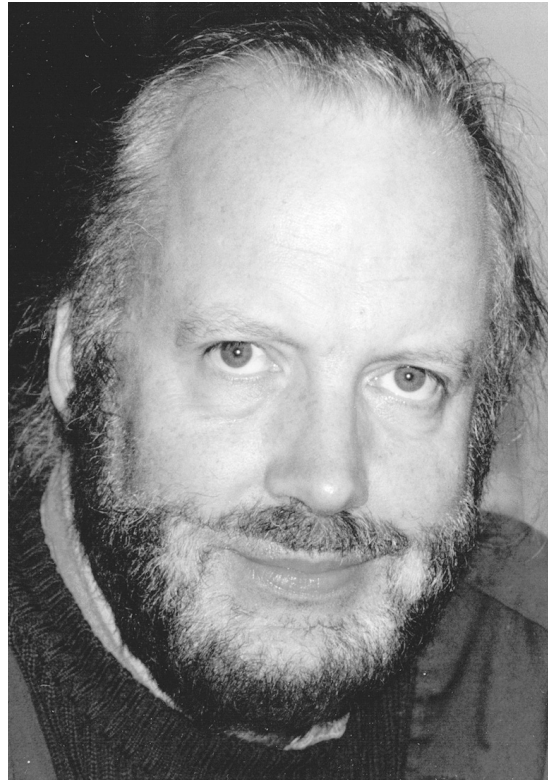
ROBERT SCOTT, who died in January this year, was a founding member of the Highbury Community Association. He and I were Co-Editors of the Highbury Community News, and had been since its first Issue dated July 28th 1997. The committee thought HCA members who were not at the funeral would like to read this, which contains extracts from eulogies spoken by friends at the church service.

Robert's funeral procession, of close to 300 people, walking down Highbury Hill behind Thomas Cribb's 'Victorian' Glass Carriage Hearse, drawn by two beautiful black Dutch Friesian horses, celebrated his love of Highbury, of its people, and his love for Highbury Hill, where he came to live when in his mid-twenties, 34 years ago. He often told me he loved the eclectic social mix of its residents, the curving sweep of the road, the large trees and the history and architecture of the houses.

Robert was a builder with a passion for period style and detailing and is very likely the only person to have restored from semi or total dereliction, three of the large 1860 houses in Highbury Hill, as well as advising owners on the details of many others in the road over the years.

His friend and building colleague, Amara Procter, remembers "I first met Robert in '70/'71 when he had fallen in love with the huge rooms, period detail and vast garden of his house in Highbury Hill. Together with a friend he bought it, enormous, dilapidated, full of rot, with pigeons in the roof. We battled with planning and building regulations, ancient drains, bulging walls, learning about old ways of doing things, finding out about conservation techniques, a very new concept then. Back then the coal merchant on Drayton Park still delivered by horse and cart, and the knife grinder would arrive on his bicycle, turn it upside down, replace the back wheel with a grindstone and, pedalling like mad with one foot, very efficiently sharpen all our knives. Highbury Hill was very run down: peeling paint, droopy cornices and shaggy gardens were universal."

A couple of years later, in the mid-seventies, Robert's sense of justice and his tendency to side with the Davids of



ROBERT SCOTT – 2002

this world rather than the Goliaths, saw the start of his involvement in local community politics, which continued until his sudden final illness in the summer of 2005. He joined with another Highbury Hill resident, Jaime Graham, to try to help elderly home-owners whose semi-derelict houses were being block compulsorily purchased by Islington Council, then under Margaret Hodge's leadership, to provide council housing. Jaime Graham writes, "I imagine few people are aware of the many thousands of hours he fought in an often lonely battle for other people's rights and the preservation of



FUNERAL CARRIAGE BY CHRIST CHURCH,
27TH JANUARY 2006

the Highbury Hill he loved so well. He spoke in the Town Hall for the old and sick about to be forcibly moved from their homes. He tried to get one CPO put into the next phase so a dying elderly lady would not be moved, but failed." This experience does explain why Robert was so passionately against CPO as a means to planning ends or social housing gains. He and Jaime also pushed for the Council to plant the trees now in the lower part of Highbury Hill and along the Gillespie Road end of Drayton Park.

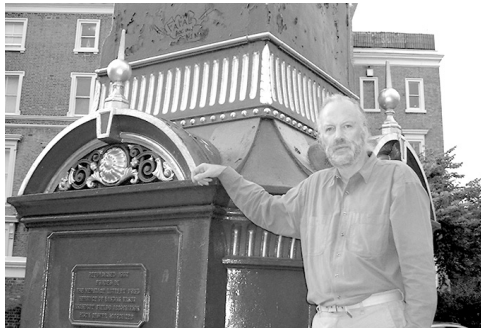
In May 1997, Gill Shepherd remembered Robert's involvement in local politics in the 1970s and asked for help. Islington Council was 3 weeks away from passing a Planning Brief proposing Compulsory Purchase on 29 houses behind the West Stand, on behalf of AFC, who wanted to expand Highbury Stadium from 38,500 seats to 48,000 seats. She asked Robert to Chair an emergency public meeting in Aubert Court's Community Centre. Over 100 angry and frightened residents met that night and vowed to fight the Planning Brief, and the Highbury Community Association was founded.

Revd Stephen Coles, who led the service at St Thomas's Church, Monsell Road for Robert's funeral, was on the inaugural HCA committee too, bringing much experience in dealing with Arsenal planning applications, having led the North Stand battle in 1991-92. It was decided HCA should not be a single issue group, so the HC News covered, from Issue No 1 onwards, anything of local interest. Robert was the committee member who wrote nearly all the letters on planning and conservation matters and was the HCA representative addressing Councillors at planning meetings. He never needed a microphone since his public speaking voice, like his stature, was a big one.

Robert was one of those men who, as well as being immensely practical in all the building trades, was a man with a fine intellect who loved the written and spoken word and derived great pleasure from conversation. Theatre, and reading poetry and fiction were his favourite forms of entertainment. His writing style was very distinctive and often ascerbic

(continued on page 2)

Robert Scott (continued from page 1)



CAMPAIGN TO RE-PAINT CLOCKTOWER, 2004



RENOVATION OF 85 HIGHBURY HILL, MAY 2005

and witty, especially when the objection was to a planning report which seemed determined to obscure the truth.

Tony Miller, a fellow campaigner during the Ashburton Grove Stadium campaign from 1999 – 2002 says “*Highbury is one of London’s villages and Robert was one of its most prominent and respected citizens. He was one of the most intelligent and articulate men that I have had the good fortune to know, always courteous, always considerate, always caring. Robert wouldn’t like to hear me say that. He’d be deeply embarrassed but he would also feel obliged, very tactfully, to point out my grammatical errors and that, strictly speaking, one cannot be a ‘citizen’ of a ‘village’.*”

Nicky Spice, a Highbury friend of some 20 years standing remembers his voice, “*When Robert fell ill, I hadn’t seen him in a while, and during the months in hospital when he could not receive visitors I brought him to mind not only by visualising him but by calling up his voice, for it was a very distinctive and expressive voice for me, very expressive of Robert and his nature: his kindness, his sense of humour and fun (that utterly Robert-like laugh that would break out of him so infectiously), his diffidence and melancholy, and not least his characteristic grumpiness which somehow guaranteed his complete seriousness as a person, his integrity and the down-to-earth reality of him. To hear Robert’s voice was always to know again what integrity and trustworthiness were. In this sense, I think Robert, though he was only six years older, was something of a steady and benign parent for me, as well as a much loved neighbour and friend whose loss I have not yet begun to fathom.*”

Robert would have been very surprised – but delighted too – to know that 300 people would come to see him off. He would also have been very pleased that the procession stopped the traffic for 30 minutes in Highbury Hill as police turned all cars away. My thanks to all who helped make the day a memorable one. ■

HCA annual party and AGM

Saturday 22 April
at 7.15pm

Christ Church, Highbury Grove

Speaker – Hermione Harris:
‘Witchcraft, possession, and exorcism?’
– The popular image of African churches in North London.’

Raffle in aid of Child Line
Party, food, wine – all members and their families welcome!

Members expect your invitation shortly!

Help run the HCA

The HCA committee needs new members. HCA has existed for nearly 10 years. What makes the HCA work are the committee members and the support of all the members. Would you like to join the HCA Committee? Are you interested in some aspect of your environment or community that you think HCA ought to address? The Committee meets 5 times a year in someone’s home. There is usually a glass of wine to help the meeting along. Committee members are appointed each year at the AGM. **If you are interested in finding out more please email or ring the Treasurer, Arjan van der Waal, Tel: 7226 0063, Email: hcanews@hotmail.com**

Highbury Writers:

Nigel Slater

By Mark Mason



Nigel Slater is one of the most highly regarded of British food writers. Pictures of the functional kitchen and luxuriant garden of his Highbury Park home regularly appear in his books, and are used to illustrate the award-winning cookery column he has written for the “Observer” over the past 12 years.

Nigel chose to live in Highbury because he wanted to live close to a decent row of shops and to live in a Georgian terrace. Shops like Frank Godfrey the butcher and La Fromagerie at Highbury Barn, together with the health food shop, general store and proper ironmongers mean that he can do most of his daily shopping without having to travel or resort to the supermarkets. The easy walk to Islington farmers market and Steve Hatt, the fishmongers in Essex Road, were a big influence too.

Nigel’s enthusiasm, humour and joy in cooking really good food comes out in his numerous cookery books, where recipes are carefully and thoughtfully described. The classics are *Real Fast Food* (1992), *Real Cooking* (1997) and *Appetite* (2000). *Real Fast Food* was included among Waitrose Food Illustrated Magazines ‘top ten most useful cookery books’. *Appetite*, which won the Andre Simon award for Cookbook of the Year in 2000, is about

breaking the rules, experimenting with recipes and satisfying your appetite. He says – “I want to encourage you to take in the spirit of my recipes, but then to deviate according to your ingredients and your feelings”. For example, the ingredients for ‘a creamy, calming pasta dish’ are garlic, olive oil, thyme, pasta and double cream; but then he suggests adding some pancetta, or sausage and thyme, or mustard and parmesan, or mushrooms, or ricotta cheese and herbs, or a few chopped anchovies...

There has been tremendous critical acclaim for his autobiography *Toast* – the story of a boy’s hunger, published in 2003. This is story of a childhood remembered through food, both funny and moving, and a great evocation of the tastes and smells of daily life in sixties’ England. *Toast* won biography of the year at the British Book Awards, and was also awarded the Glenfiddich Trophy. He has received numerous other media awards, including Cookery Writer of Year, and Food Broadcaster of the Year in 1999 for his Channel 4 television series *Nigel Slater’s Real Food*.

Nigel is a big advocate of eating food in season, what he describes as “the right food at the right time”, whether bought, or grown in the garden. In his latest book *Kitchen Diaries*, published last year Nigel describes, day by day, month by month, what he buys from the local shops and markets, how he cooks it and then how it is eaten. It contains over 300 recipes that he describes as “Fast food, slow food, big eats, little eats, quick pasta suppers, family roasts and even Christmas lunch. It is simply my stuff, what I cook and eat, every day”. The magic for Highbury residents is that as well as recipes, this book is a diary that captures Nigel Slater’s experience of living in the area, and shows us how we can be more adventurous in using the huge range of good food we can buy locally. ■

Arsenal's Signs and Coaches

By Roger Wright

On 24th January, the Council's Corporate Services Committee met to consider a planning application from Arsenal Football Club (AFC) for illuminated advertising it wants to erect on the outside of the new stadium. You can see how it will look at www.Arsenal.com.

There will be eight large advertisements: four for Arsenal Football Club and four for Emirates Airlines. The signs will be 6 metres high and between 5 and 8 metres wide. There will also be eight smaller signs reading "Emirates Stadium." There were many submissions from individuals, and various groups, including the HCA. These objected to the light and visual pollution from the signs and the energy wastage from the proposal to allow 24 hour illumination. HCA sought to limit the operating hours.

However, AFC representatives explained that the signs would be illuminated from inside by red 'LED' lights, which they said were very efficient; and they would reduce lighting levels at night. National Rail submitted a report saying that too much red light might distract their train drivers emerging from the tunnels and wanted trials carried out before they would agree to the proposal. People wondered what might happen if Arsenal's colours were green instead of red!

In the end, the committee approved the application, subject to Council Officers agreeing a suitable 'level of illumination' with AFC. Councillors gave no direction to the officers on what might be 'acceptable', so we believe this 'agreement' is meaningless and will make no difference. You can see the 'Emirates Stadium' signs being erected already. It is worth pointing out that minimising light pollution and seeking to increase the energy efficiency of developments are Council policies in the Islington Unitary Development Plan.

On March 9th, the same committee met to consider AFC's Coach Parking proposals. This was a much livelier meeting with much 'comment' from the public. AFC had revised the proposal after many complaints and comments from all manner of organisations and individuals in Highbury. They had exhibited the original proposals at the Sobell Centre, which had provoked a lot of 'heated'

exchanges. An umbrella group, SNAG (Stadium Neighbours Action Group), has been set up to co-ordinate action on the issue.

The revised proposals were to use the Sobell Centre car park and part of Ashburton Grove for primary coach parking, with Hornsey Street and Drayton Park as "overflow if required". Although slightly reducing the impact on the community compared to the earlier proposals, many people wanted to know why the coaches couldn't be parked under the new stadium, as was approved in the original stadium application.

AFC said this was no longer possible for two reasons: (1) they haven't built all the buildings where the coaches were to be parked. They admitted they had built some of the space, but it could not be used because (2) the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) have changed their minds about the safety of parking 40 coaches under the Stadium. When asked about the 600 cars that will be parked under the Stadium, AFC said that was quite all right. Asked why they could ensure the safety of the stadium from 600 cars but not from 40 coaches, they had no answer. The MPS has made much of needing to ensure the safety of the "iconic stadium", but don't seem to think that ensuring the safety of local residents, their homes and local businesses matters as much – so parking the coaches in our streets is fine. Who do they think pays their wages?

As predicted, the committee approved the application; attaching the condition that the approval was temporary and should be reviewed after one year. The Corporate Services Committee has four members only, three Lib-Dems and one Labour – the only member opposing it.

HCA remains very concerned about the safety issues raised by the MPS, not only for the community but for the fans too: why is it safe to have 600 cars under the stadium? Can the Police search them all and vet all the occupants before every match? We don't think so! If it's not safe to park coaches under the stadium, why is it safe to park them outside our homes and shops? You might write to your councillors and MP; and the Mayor and your GLA representatives, who oversee Policing in London, and ask them. ■

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LETTER

Dear HCA,

I have decided, following my husband, Robert Scott's death, that I need to resign from the HCA Committee and also from Editing the HC Newsletter, at least for some months.

The HCNews needs an Editor to solicit articles, compose editorial and plan the next Issue. The Committee produced a very fine Issue before Christmas, without any hitches, but this Issue has been harder, and taken longer, in its production. I used to do the majority of the recruiting of authors and a lot of the writing. Robert and I shared the Editorial pieces and Robert did the design work.

The adverts are under control at the moment as Arjan van der Waal has spent a lot of time on collecting them. Trevor Wilson is laying out the News so it is simply the Editor that is missing! Any takers? Be warned, if there is not one forthcoming, it is possible that there may not be another HC News in July or even in September.

Apart from that, I'd like to say thank you to everyone who has sent condolences and messages of support to me.

Yours, Alison Carmichael

EDITORIAL NOTE: If you are interested in taking on the role of Editor, please contact Arjan van der Waal, Tel: 7226 0063 or Email: hcanews@hotmail.com

Conservation Area Controls Passed

People living in the Highbury Fields Conservation Area received a letter and colour brochure in March spelling out the building works now needing planning permission. The Direction came into force on 27th January. Permission is required for:

- Alterations to/or demolition of front boundary walls
- Hardstanding in front gardens
- Alterations to elevations fronting the street, and to external doors
- Alterations to roofs
- Alterations or removal of chimneys
- Installation of satellite dishes fronting the street
- Construction of porches and side extensions
- Painting of previously unpainted brickwork fronting the street

The area extends roughly from the Fields down Highbury Hill to Aubert Park, and roads leading to Highbury Park. The Council Officer for Conservation, Alec Forshaw said "The Direction has been made in response to the threat of alterations and building works which can be harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area." HCA welcomes these controls which mean permission may still be given for reasonable proposals, or for those which will improve the appearance of the area, but do mean that a level of scrutiny will be required; and changes which detract from the harmonious appearance of the area should not be permitted. ■

Quadrant and Gillespie to get 'short' controlled parking hours

During a lively, sometimes heated, meeting on 23rd March, members of the community presented a range of views to the Council East Area Committee. Our Councillors then rejected the Officers' advice for both schemes. They voted for Quadrant to have a CPZ that will run from 10am to 2pm Monday to Friday only. There will be no restrictions on Saturdays. They also voted to change the existing Gillespie scheme to match. The Matchday restrictions will remain unchanged. ■

Policing: Have Your Say

As we go to press Highbury West Ward Safer Neighbourhoods Team held their first public meeting on Wednesday 29th March at Elizabeth House, Hurlock Street. PC Swadkins says "It is a chance for locals to bring up any issue that concerns them. We are interested in anything from dog fouling to robberies." The Team leafleted the council estates as well as local streets about the meeting. If you couldn't go and want to know the prominent issues, contact the Safer Neighbourhoods Team: Tel 020 7421 0635, or email N1-HighburyWest@met.police.uk ■

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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, 79 Highbury Hill, N5 1SX made out to "Highbury Community Association". Send letters or articles for next issue to:

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