

# HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

[www.highburycommunity.org](http://www.highburycommunity.org)

No 53 September 2007

## Battery hen rescue

By Christine Kaltoft

TODAY I TOOK part in a battery hen rescue. I know this probably conjures up an image of a gang of people with wire cutters, breaking in to release thousands of chickens, but it wasn't like that.

Like many people I've had a growing awareness of where my food has come from, and try to select carefully, but since we got pet chickens, I've taken a special interest in hens and eggs. Knowing how much hens love to flap their wings, run around the garden, scratch, graze and dust-bathe has made me ultra aware of what battery hens miss out on. So when a friend told me she had helped out with a battery hen rescue, I was intrigued. And then I thought: I could do that too!

Today's rescue was my second. The word 'rescue' is rather dramatic, but it is accurate. If the 260 hens we rehomed today hadn't been 'rescued', they would be pies or pet food by now. Instead they are happily scratching round people's gardens, discovering what they have been missing out on.

The rescue was organised by the Battery Hen Welfare Trust, a national voluntary organisation. Jean, the rescue co-ordinator and Sophie, her second-in-command, were the only ones to actually go to the farm. The location of battery hen farms is closely guarded for understandable reasons. They set off early in the morning to meet the



SOPHIE AND JEAN WITH TWO OF THE RESCUED EX-BATTERY HENS

farmer, scoop up his 'spent' (sixteen months old) hens and transport them back to Jean's house.

Nine of us helped with the next task: lifting each hen out of the van, checking her over, clipping her toe nails, and putting her in a pen where she could get food and water after the journey.

Most of the hens had feathers missing and some had vast sore, bald patches, where they had been plucked and pecked by more dominant hens. Their nails needed clipping because they had lived their adult lives in wire cages, unable to touch firm ground or scratch for food: the effect of this was that they could no longer stand properly if they wanted to.

Once we had got a head start on the checking and sorting process, a stream of new owners began to arrive. Some of these people were new to chicken keeping, and some already had a flock. The more experienced keepers were often keen to take on some of the sadder looking hens, so they could nurse

them back to health.

Surprisingly there is actually a massive waiting list of people wanting to adopt ex-battery hens. It's a rewarding process, and there is great satisfaction in seeing feathers re-grow, and birds gain in confidence and spirit.

We ended the day five hours later, tired, dirty and very ready for tea and the homemade cake one volunteer had brought. We were lucky that this batch

of hens was better than some. Today we kept two back as they were so poorly that they needed to be seen by a vet: sometimes it is more.

The reward for me was in knowing that even if these creatures had spent the first half of their lives confined in a space no bigger than the size of this newsletter, they would at least have a better retirement, and that I had played some small part in that.

The farmers, after all, are only keeping the hens in this way because there is still a demand for cheap eggs. Battery hen eggs are also frequently hidden in foods like mayonnaise, pasta, cake, quiche, and ice cream, so it is worth checking the labels. If the eggs are free range, the label will say so. It is the least you can do.

We took a few hens out of cages and helped them to continue living. But as the Battery Hen Welfare Trust says, it is those who stop buying battery hen laid eggs and foods which contain them, who will really end this cruelty. ■

# What next for Queensland Road?

By Roger Wright

ARSENAL FOOTBALL CLUB has now completed the acquisition of all the land in Queensland Road, some of it directly and some as a result of the Compulsory Purchase order served on some businesses there by Islington Council.

The Club already had outline planning permission for the development of the site, granted at the same time as that for the main stadium. However, as time has passed, various aspects have changed and the original scheme no longer suits their purpose. They have been told by the Metropolitan Police that it is extremely unlikely that the underground coach parking that was to be built could ever be used. Also the Club have developed the building in Drayton Park as their administration building, so the office block that was to be built in Queensland Road is no longer required.

As a result, the Club are developing a new scheme, which they expect to submit to the Council in the autumn. On 23rd July, they held a briefing session for Community groups to outline their current thinking. They explained that this was their current thinking and the final application might be somewhat different.

In general, the new scheme is for residential and 'leisure' use, with no 'commercial' uses any more. All the office space has been removed and the proposal is for apartments of various sizes, fitness and entertainment centres and retail units. This is particularly galling to those who opposed the Arsenal plans in 2001-2003 since one of the major objections the community had to the plans was that over 2,000 jobs were to be lost from the Ashburton Grove Industrial site and 83 businesses would have to re-locate or go out of business, if the Stadium and associated developments went ahead. This is indeed what has happened. But we were told it did not matter. Why? Because, Arsenal's PR machine boasted, the Club was going to 'provide a lot of commercial space' [B1], and even more seductively Arsenal's advisors magically converted this proposed commercial space into what they called 'jobs'.

Thus Arsenal's plans were going to create jobs they said, many hundreds of jobs, beside those associated with the Stadium, and this was a very important reason given by Mayor Ken Livingston to support the plans, and was lauded by Islington Councillors and planners as vital to the regeneration of this area. Arsenal's promotional material for this scheme states that it will deliver an estimated 460 jobs as opposed to the 546 jobs estimated to be created by the 2002 scheme but that the "overall regeneration scheme has delivered more jobs than originally anticipated."

The main changes from the existing application are:

- The office block is replaced by an additional residential apartment building
- The tallest apartment building, next to the Moorgate line will be 16 floors instead of 13
- All residential, leisure and retail now, no "commercial space" at all
- Residential development up from 288 to 700 units
- Ground floor of the building backing on to Bryantwood Road now "family accommodation" not retail
- No coach parking – space taken up by:
  - 6 screen cinema – largest is 200 seater
  - Health club
  - Some shops – perhaps including a convenience store

So once again, we see the same pattern repeated, where the Club makes a new application to replace a previously approved scheme with one that is taller and more dense, with none of the promised commercial space, so essential for a genuinely regenerative scheme.

In planning terms, this scheme is again likely to exceed the maximum 'recommended' density for housing. It is much taller than the Islington Tall Buildings policy and the London Plan allow for in this part of the borough. However, we are sure that our ever-inventive Council Planning Department will find reasons why this is acceptable, as they have with every other aspect of the redevelopment. ■

## Your Inner Glow

By Elizabeth Lock

I am glad to introduce my newly formed company, which specializes in all aspects of Holistic Therapy, especially for women. Your Inner Glow, as the name suggests, treats the mind, body and spirit as a whole for a totally holistic experience. In this busy world it is all too easy to forget to take care of our health – our most precious gift. This wonderful therapy is affordable. It is also highly effective in treating a variety of ailments such as stress related muscular tension and insomnia. I offer a free mobile service to Islington residents or a private treatment room is available. Take the time to reconnect and let me help you rediscover your inner glow. 10% off for HC News readers.

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## Cat Napped

Have you seen an Abyssinian cat like Amun anywhere in Islington or nearby boroughs? Amun was taken from his owners in SE London nearly 2 years ago at the end of September 2005 and it is believed was moved to North London in the Autumn of 2006. He is a Sorrel Abyssinian.



They have plaintive trilling meows and are very affectionate and intelligent cats, creating great bonds with their owners.

Amun's owner would love any information you can give as to possible sightings. A reward is offered. Just to know he is safe and cared for would be great.

Ring 020 7359 5731

# Local Artist – Anya Walker

By Alison Carmichael

“Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.” Goethe’s words are displayed on a wall of Anya Walker’s flat in Highbury. As she showed me round her home decorated with her striking oil paintings I felt that, in more ways than one, the quotation was apt. A single mother of two girls, with all the challenges that brings, she has never stopped painting and drawing, despite the limitations of space, money and free time. Now, with her youngest daughter’s move out of London, taking her possessions with her, Anya has an ideal light filled studio at the top of the building. Her paintings can be seen on the Saatchi Online Website, which allows artists to showcase their work for thousands to see, and vote for. Anya is happy to paint to order, for a special occasion or present. See below for contact details.

Much of her paintings are done by request; people ask for something to capture a moment in their lives, or friends see a painting she has done and ask for something similar. “One popular one I did showed a sunset viewed from standing in Aubert Park. That was before Highbury had a huge Emirates Stadium blocking those wonderful sunsets and sky.” Another one I admired was a Seascape, which has



ANYA WALKER

amazing movement and colour bursting out of it, very evocative of a stormy sea.

Anya paints in oils with an impasto style, laying many layers on top of each other. Paintings vary in size from small [about 6” x 8”] to very large, for a landing or hallway. She started using oils after leaving school, attending many evening classes run by the Working Men’s College.

I wondered how she developed her style, which is not completely abstract, nor totally figurative. “I’ve taught myself to paint better by copying

*the techniques of established painters and then not using their techniques, ie I did this as an exercise.”*

Anya’s flat is decorated with boxes she has made for her children and for herself and friends too. Filled with objects and mementos they have proved popular with her daughter’s friends.

Her paintings have genius, power and magic – see for yourself! ■

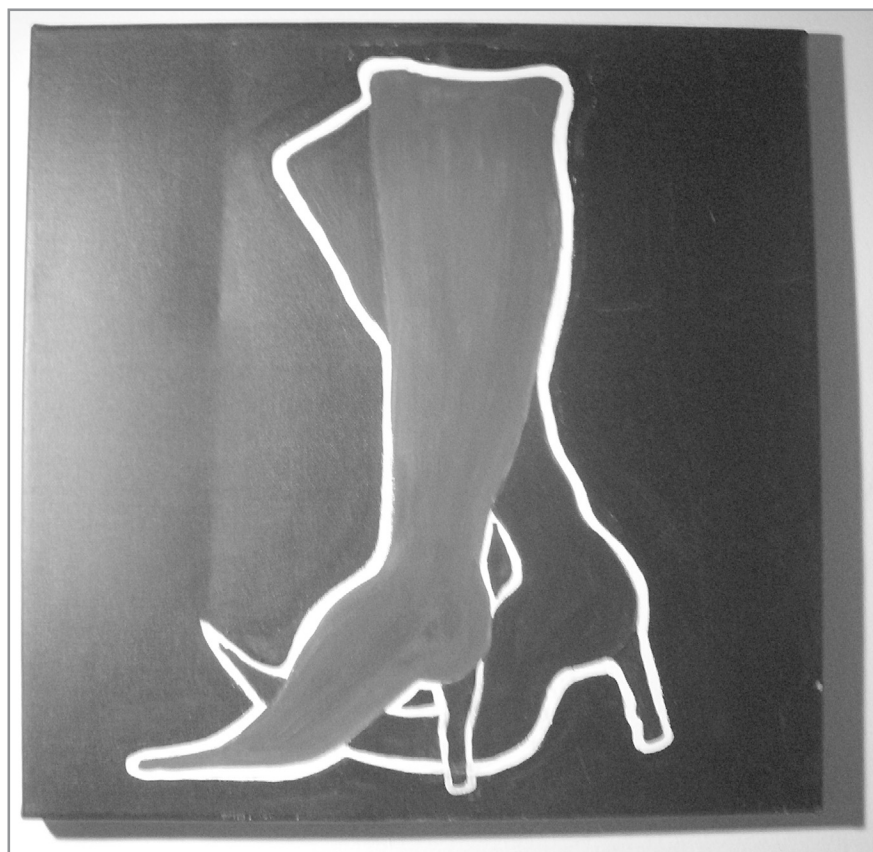
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LILLIES, 51 x 51 x 4CM, OIL ON CANVAS



SYD'S DRESS, 40 x 40CM, OIL ON CANVAS



BOOTS, 40CM x 40CM, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS



# Fin Future By Cathy McBride

FINFUTURE COULD BE best described as a regeneration charity for the residents, businesses and visitors to Finsbury Park Town Centre.

Finsbury Park Town Centre? That may be a new description to you. You may in the past have thought of the area as a few shops around the Rail/underground station, an area that has a large park in it. Finsbury Park Town Centre though, is a complete community with over 600 shops down Blackstock Rd, Stroud Green Rd, Fonthills Rd, Green Lanes and part of Seven Sisters Rd. Despite being divided between 3 London Boroughs – Islington, Haringey and Hackney the area will develop its own branding over the coming year.

With this split over 3 Boroughs the need for an organisation such as FinFuture becomes clear. A single organisation for businesses to go to, one phone number for people to remember, a coordinating group for marketing, events and public relations for the area.

FinFuture is much more than that though. With over 60 languages spoken in the town centre, the translation and interpretation services of Finfuture are often in demand. At the present time all Londoners are aware of how our town centres are perceived in terms of crime and safety – the Safer Town Manager who works at FinFuture therefore has an increasingly important role. In Finsbury Park Town Centre that involves amongst many other roles liaising between 3 Safer Neighbourhood Teams, 3 Community Safety Officers and the Transport Police.

Specific projects to add to the Town Centre becoming a safer town are things such as Alert Boxes – specifically designed for small, independent retailers to allow them to warn each other of anti social behaviour or shoplifting.

FinFuture is also keen to see the physical environment of Finsbury Park Town Centre improved. This may be by accessing money to improve shopfronts or by reporting graffiti to the teams that can remove it. Reducing waste from businesses and to tidy up the streets generally is an important objective of our StreetScene Management Team



The work done by FinFuture is directed by information we receive from the community of Finsbury Park Town Centre, either through the membership of FinFuture or through our survey work or visits to businesses by such people as our Business Liaison Officer.

Through a project sponsored by the London Development Agency – Town Centres for City Growth – all the services at FinFuture have been expanded to ensure that businesses receive training and support wherever possible allowing them to succeed in a difficult environment. The success of these businesses ensures a more local and better quality service to the people who live in the area. A successful Town Centre is a Greener, Safer, Cleaner place for everyone and isn't that what everyone wants? ■

*For more information on Finsbury Park Town Centre or FinFuture contact Cathy MacBride, Town Centre Manager on 020 7272 0492 or [cathy.macbride@finfuture.co.uk](mailto:cathy.macbride@finfuture.co.uk)*

*FinFuture is a community – led regeneration company. Charity registration No 1105638. It is based at FinSpace, 225-229 Seven Sisters Rd. Finsbury Park London. N4 2DA*

## Roast lamb with potato, onion and tomato gratin

This dish comes from Bistro Cooking, by Patricia Wells. It is easy to prepare, tasty, and forgiving of variations in oven temperature and cooking time, as well as easily scaled up or down for more or fewer people. It is the kind of dish that can sit happily for half an hour or so, and is in fact better eaten warm rather than piping hot. Don't be alarmed by the quantity of lamb or cost: it works just as well with shoulder or (for two) half shoulder of lamb, which is how we usually cook it. The cooking times will need to be adjusted slightly for smaller cuts.

1 leg of lamb, bone in (6-7 lbs)  
**2 lbs baking potatoes** peeled and sliced very thin  
**2 large onions** very thinly sliced  
**5 medium tomatoes** (approx 1 lb), cored and sliced  
**2/3 cup (160 ml) dry white wine**

**1/3 cup (80 ml) extra-virgin olive oil**  
**6 cloves of garlic**, one split the remainder chopped  
**Salt and pepper**  
**1 tbsp fresh thyme** (dried works just as well but less is needed)  
Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F).

Rub the bottom of a large porcelain gratin dish, (or roasting tin) about 16 inches by 10 inches, with a split garlic clove. Arrange the potatoes in a layer on the bottom, and sprinkle generously with salt, pepper and a third of the chopped garlic and a third of the thyme. Lay the sliced onions on top, and season in the same way as the potatoes; finish with a layer of tomatoes, seasoned in the same way.

Pour over the white wine, and then the olive oil.

Trim any thick portions of fat from the outside of the lamb, and season well with salt and pepper. Set the lamb on a cake rack or oven rack directly over the vegetables, so that its cooking juices drip onto them. If you don't have a rack just plonk the meat on top of the vegetables.

Roast for 45-55 minutes (shoulder), 1 hour and 15 minutes (smallish leg cooked rare), 1 hour 45 minutes (large leg well done). Turn the meat every fifteen minutes or so, and baste with liquid from the dish underneath.

The meat will look done, and the vegetables may show distinct signs of charring. All will smell delicious. Remove from the oven and leave to rest for at least 15 minutes and preferably longer, before eating.

*Thanks to James Hood for this recipe.*

# Highbury Front Gardens

By Adam Caplin

UNUSUAL PLANT COMBINATIONS are often considered horticultural genius, particularly if found in the traditional setting of a great garden. The old fashioned pink rose poking its flowers through variegated privet, if seen at Great Dixter, might have people gawking at the daring brilliance of the late Christopher Lloyd. However, in the setting between Arsenal tube station and Aubert Park, it is simply a happenstance.

The streets in the area are horticulturally quite rewarding, surprising considering the backdrop of real life that our front gardens have to cope with, both visually and practically. I like the setting: an old Bourbon rose seems all the more admirable when viewed against a 'You Shop, We Drop' driver arguing with a passive aggressive traffic warden.

And there is a lot of good horticulture. Keep a date in the diary round wisteria time, where I doubt that there is a garden in England that can boast as many extraordinary specimens in such a small area. Highbury Hill and Hamilton Park are particularly fruitful. Northolme Road has a magnificent eucalyptus with wisteria climbing it, as though a new tree existed, silver grey leaves with masses of pendulous flowers. And our wisterias are subtly different, there are those that are slightly purple in bud, some have longer racemes, opening all at once, others short and stubby and showy all at once. Hydrangea time is also spectacular, and challenges the perception about a plant that has often been crucified by horticultural snobs (like me). The lovely white Annabel sits near the entrance to the old west stand, while the copious rain has done wonders for the glorious lace-caps and mop-heads. Gillespie Road has my favourite fuchsia, the delicate white magellanica alba across the road from the fish and chip shop.

Even the scents of the area can be surprising. Check the many jasmines and honeysuckles on the railings of Highbury Hill and Lucerne Road and some of the highly perfumed roses that rather generously stretch out beyond the boundaries. Wine buffs can define extraordinary depth from the bouquet of wine, leading to tedious back label drivel and yet we tend to sniff roses in such a shallow way. Roses are just as magnificent.

Walking around with an enthusiasm for the 'genius of the place' is a refreshing thing to do, though fooling yourself that all is lovely is romantic baloney. Part of the problem is that, at times, things that irritate us like the Arsenal lorries and un-scooped dog poop can create an inappropriate mood for appreciating the roses. And some of the front gardens look like installations to show many different plastic containers on cracked concrete.

But the roses really are wonderful and I guess it's worth giving yourself a moment to breathe them in. ■

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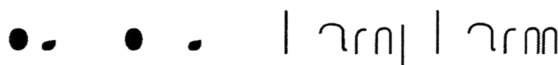
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# Little Sardegna: a welcome new arrival on Blackstock Road

By James Hood

Blackstock Road and Highbury Park have a growing reputation as a place to eat well and cheaply. The arrival of Little Sardegna in July 2007 will enhance this reputation. The small Sardinian and Spanish menu is well cooked, and served in generous portions by friendly and attentive staff who show no trace of pushiness. The restaurant has a pleasant neighbourhood bistro atmosphere, and prices are very reasonable. On a Friday night in early August it was full and prospective customers were being turned away. It was obvious why they were coming, and Little Sardegna is strongly recommended for a good local meal.

The dining room is small, with wooden tables and chairs. The back of the room opens onto the kitchen, and the front window opens up completely on warm evenings (such as the night we visited), with two small tables out on the street. The décor is decidedly rustic rather than chic, adding to the relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.

On arrival we were offered olives and crisp Sardinian flatbread. The service passed the tap-water test: a jug arrived complete with lemon slices and ice without further prompting.

Three of us selected a plate of vegetable antipasti, and a plate of meat and cheese antipasti to share. We were glad we only selected two starters, as the plates were substantial, and were accompanied by exceptionally good home-baked bread. Courgettes, a variety of mushrooms and capers came lightly pickled with salad and olives, and the non-vegetarian plate brought a selection of dried meat and salami, with a similar salad. All was well put together and tasty. Alternatives included calamari or chorizo: this was the Spanish end of the menu.

For mains Little Sardegna offers a small range of pasta with home cooked sauce and blackboard specials: again mostly pasta. We were told that the chef was perfecting his pizzas, which would soon be on the menu. We had pasta arrabiata, lasagne and a "special" pasta with broccoli and pancetta. All sauces were home-made, and well flavoured, though the special had little broccoli and was slightly dry.

Sadly we didn't have room for dessert: those on offer included tiramisu, ice creams, crema catalana and cheese with quince paste.

We selected a house white (Trebiano) from a small and unusual wine list. This was perfectly acceptable: refreshing and fruity and a good match for the weather and the food. A final nice touch was a gratis shot of Sardinian Mirto liqueur.

An unhurried meal for three with one bottle of wine cost £42 including service. Good value, we thought, and we will return. ■

**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, c/o 83 Highbury Hill, N5 1SX, made out to 'Highbury Community Association'. Send letters or articles for next issue to [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com) or **HCA News, 83 Highbury Hill, N5 1SX**. Visit [www.highburycommunity.org](http://www.highburycommunity.org)  
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