

THERE IS A plenty of music going on in Highbury: The London Medical Orchestra, Islington Choral Society, Highbury Young Singers, and Eclectic Voices, Haydn Chamber Orchestra, Songlines, Highbury Chamber Choir, and church choir groups such as that at St Joan of Arc are fairly well known.

But there is another sort the music making which goes on behind closed doors, hidden away from our eyes. It includes the dozens of pop bands in Highbury, practising for their gigs. It includes all those who get together to make music for the fun of it, amateur musicians who meet to play chamber music, wind, and strings, and singers. It goes on, unobserved, an unquantified but vital part of a healthy community.

I regularly play quartets myself, with various groups of people, and regard it as the most enjoyable social activity. But don't think that you have to be an expert player to enjoy doing this. When I first started, with three others (all in our mid-forties), we played "My First Book of String Quartets": a huge struggle for us, but Oh, the pleasure of getting the rhythms together or the harmonies finally in tune. We knew we sounded awful, but we had such fun. The improving string player has a huge and wonderful repertoire of chamber music to look forward to. It wasn't long before we had progressed to early Mozart quartets, manageable but exquisite, then to Beethoven Op 18 no 1, at about a quarter of the proper speed, and so on.

In a world where so many people depend almost totally on electronics for their entertainment, music (like sport) has unfortunately for most people become a spectator activity. I'm convinced that passive entertainment leads to boredom and frustration. Playing music is a tremendously demanding activity which uses both brain and muscles and gives the satisfaction of creation as well as the enjoyment of the end

## The Secret Musical Life of Highbury

By Bronwen Taylor



BACK GARDEN BRASS ENSEMBLE

product. It is hard to convey in words the pleasure of working with friends in this sort of way, producing something which gets better with time and effort.

Some hitherto unseen musical groups revealed themselves at a local Street Party; a family Rock'n Roll band from Battledean Road appeared. Mark and Lucy, with their two children and a couple of friends play Jazz and Blues and dance music together (and will play for parties if anyone asks them (020 7359 1315)).

Also making its public debut was a Brass Ensemble: nine people (some fairly elderly), some of whom are experienced players, but two of whom have been learning for less than 18 months. I have to own up to being a member. We have a laugh and a drink and enormously enjoy practising easy but serious stuff as well as more jolly tunes like "Parade of the Tin Soldiers". We don't kid

ourselves that we sound any good, but we did a useful job of livening up the street party. (Bookings: 020 7226 7240)

In Aberdeen Road there's a group of people who have revived their recorder playing and meet in groups of two, three or four to play together. There's a wealth of good music for recorder ensembles, particularly from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, very satisfying to play, and bearing little resemblance to the stuff some of us remember from school.

If you're inspired by all this but don't know where to start, there is hope. Total beginners can learn most instruments at the City Lit, the Mary Ward Centre or Morley College and then take part in groups, ensembles and orchestras at the college.

*(continued on page 2)*

(continued from page 1)

The wonderful East London Late Starters Orchestra (for strings) hires you an instrument, teaches you from scratch, and has you playing from day one in the orchestra, supported by the more advanced players.

Once you have mastered the basics, you can choose from Highbury Strings and Caesar Cello Group, both at Highbury Roundhouse; the Learning Orchestra or the Chamber Orchestra, in Exmouth Market.

The emphasis in all these groups is on fun and encouragement. No-one will rap you on the knuckles or throw you out if you're not good enough.

Besides enjoying the company, at these groups you can make contact with musicians of about your standard, with whom you can play chamber music. Organising a group in your own home is relaxed, fun and free (apart from the cost of a bottle of wine and the music). Islington Music Shop, off Cross Street, sells a

wide range of chamber music for all combinations of instruments from basic standard upwards.

And Voilà... Welcome to the hidden delights of Chamber music; a creative, social, healthy activity. ■

***All the groups mentioned can be found on the internet.***

***For more information or encouragement contact Bronwen Taylor (020 7226 7240).***

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## **An afternoon with Islington's Blue Badge enforcers**

**By James Hood**

FOLLOWING COPIOUS EMAIL correspondence, Islington Council invited representatives of HCA to come and see their fraud enforcement officers in action. Roger Wright and I joined John Taylor before the Everton match on Saturday 18 October, to shadow the work of Charles and Paul, a police colleague. Charles, by reputation an expert in detecting fraudulent Badges, was looking for fakes, and also looking for misuse of Badges by able-bodied fans. Paul was there to impound Badges in case of misuse, and also to assist in case of confrontation.

Islington's technique for establishing misuse is to "catch people at it", and ask whether the driver or any of the passengers is the badge holder. If neither is, the badge can be impounded by the police, the driver prosecuted, and the car immobilised or towed away. We saw obvious difficulties with this approach: of the 50 or so cars showing Blue Badges inspected in 1 1/2 hours, only two had occupants. One of these had an obvious disability.

The driver of the other car told Charles that he had left his disabled mother round the corner. When Charles asked which corner, it turned out to be a corner in Southgate. As the driver was 70, he was cautioned rather than prosecuted.

John Taylor said that part of the problem is the lack of priority given to Blue Badge misuse nationally. He'd like to see a London-wide database of badge holders which includes addresses and phone numbers. It would then be much easier to see quickly whether any of the occupants was the badge-holder, or to simply ring the badge-holder up and asked where they are. Unfortunately Blue Badges haven't been the priority for outer London Councils that they are in Islington, so although a database has long been planned, progress is slow.

We left with a sense of frustration, which the officers we spoke to seemed to share. Islington's effectiveness is limited by police availability and by lack of co-operation from other Councils. One caution is little to show for 1 1/2 hours work. We were therefore pleased to see that on 20 October 2008 the government announced a £50M initiative to combat Blue Badge fraud, which includes £10M towards a national database. For residents living near the Emirates, and for Islington's Blue Badge enforcers, it can't come soon enough. ■

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## **An Oasis on the Holloway Road**

**By Mandy O'Keefe**

I USED TO associate the Highbury end of the Holloway Road with roaring traffic and grime – a road useful to take me to other places, little more.

That has changed since I became acquainted with the inside of the North London Buddhist Centre, the rather quaintly porched building near the Central Library. I first went there because my yoga class had disbanded, and the centre was advertising a yoga and meditation class. To my surprise, at the end of the six week course I was drawn to

attend not a further yoga class, but a 'drop in' Meditation and Buddhism class. Since then I have attended various classes, weekend and day events and even retreats. I have found an exceptionally welcoming and relaxed group of people who have allowed me to explore what is on offer at my own pace and without any undue pressure.

If, at the end of my first six week course, I had been drawn to take my yoga further, I would have been confronted by a wide array of 'Bodywork' Classes, including Hatha

or Iyenga Yoga, Pilates, Quigong and Tai Chi.

Also on offer, but not as yet explored by me, are Complementary Health, or Bodymind sessions. The centre hosts specialists in massage, Reiki, Shiatsu, and Indian Head massage.

We are lucky to have the North London Buddhist Centre in Highbury, and I would recommend anyone to see what it might hold for them. ■

***Drop in classes are on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. You could enter that porch and ring the Buddhist centre bell, ring 020 7700 1177 or consult [www.northlondonbuddhistcentre.com](http://www.northlondonbuddhistcentre.com).***

# Hidden Highbury – St. Saviour’s Church

by Colin Schofield (an Aberdeen Park resident)

*“Solid Italianate houses, for the solid commercial mind.”*

Sir John Betjeman

NESTLING OPPOSITE Highbury Fields on Highbury Grove is the single, rather ornate entrance to Aberdeen Park, an enclosed estate of mixed architectural parentage. At the centre of the Park the imposing Church of St. Saviour’s still stands, cast in a patterned red-brick Neo-Gothic style.

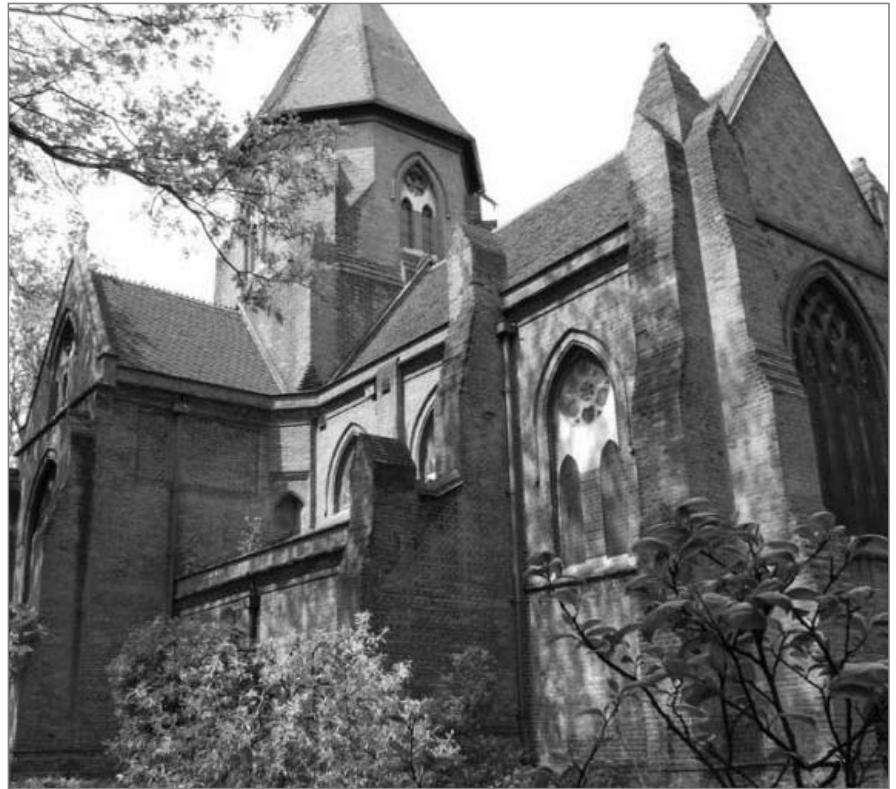
The church was built in 1866, as an Anglican High Church refuge for the burgeoning Islington Christian community. Surrounding it on three sides and leading up to Highbury Grove were large, Italo-Romanesque style houses, serviced on the south side by coach houses running at the bottom end of Aberdeen Mews (now re-named Aberdeen Lane).

It was designed by William White F.S.A. (1825-1900), the son of a clergyman and a pupil of Sir George Gilbert Scott. The church’s complex external architectural detail suggests a generous budget, designed to make a grand statement. Inside there is evidence of mosaics, elaborate tiling, a stencilled chancel and imposing stained glass windows.

St. Saviour’s strongest artistic link is to the poet Sir John Betjeman (1906-1984). His parents married there in 1902. It is believed that the young Betjeman’s religious beliefs were formed in those early days of life in Islington and he returned to this theme in his 1948 poem ‘St. Saviour’s, Aberdeen Park, Highbury, London, N.’ A poem both moving and apposite, despite some literary criticism.

The congregation dwindled and the building eventually closed in 1980. The church fell into disrepair and eventually the main roof was breached. Temporary repairs were carried out, but the combination of disuse and vagaries of weather suggested terminal decline.

A visionary artist named Patrick



ST SAVIOUR’S CHURCH IN ABERDEEN PARK

Hamilton had worked in Florence in artistic communities and wanted to replicate the experience and common bond that creating alongside other artists invoked. Patrick, with support from his wife Caroline, pursued with both passion and determination his dream of re-creating such an environment in St. Saviour’s, and so was born The Florence Trust, the current occupants of Betjeman’s church. Early enthusiastic support from the Chairman of the Arts Council, English Heritage, The Council for the Care of Churches, as well as the residents of Aberdeen Park and many others, helped to turn the church into a vibrant and creative space for artists of all genre by the early 1990s.

The church now houses up to 12 emerging contemporary artists who have a year’s residency to develop their practice. The Trust offers studio space, access to artistic networks, and individual career support. The artists and their work can be seen either at an Open Studios event in December

of January, and at the end of residency exhibition in July. This is a fitting use for a fine Grade I listed building.

Aberdeen Park itself remains an extraordinary mixture of styles and architectural periods. The Park is now managed by the Aberdeen Park Maintenance Company which is run voluntarily by the individual residents of the Park. A levy from all owners pays for the maintenance of the road, trees, street lighting, footpaths and verges. ■

*Photo courtesy of The Florence Trust website [www.florencetrust.org/](http://www.florencetrust.org/)*

## Hidden Highbury: a note from the editor

*This edition of the Newsletter concentrates on the less visible aspects of Highbury life. The next edition is likely to have a health-related theme: offers of articles or suggestions are welcome. Please contact me at [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com)*

ROB SARGENT HAS opened a bike shop that has made classic bike fans tingle with excitement.

“Classic racing bikes are my particular passion,” he says. “I have quite a few myself, but I try to buy bikes for the shop that are not my size as I find it hard to part with them”.

He sells restored bikes and will do repairs, and next year hopes to start building bikes from scratch. He is pretty dismissive about modern bikes. “I go for steel bikes and avoid mountain bikes – they’re pretty much junk.”

He stays open until 7.30pm so people can drop in after work. Walk in and he’ll ask you “What decade do you want?”. The current star in his shop is a 1970s Colnago Master Italian racing bike – yours for £1,000 fully restored. The average price of an everyday 1960s bike such as a BSA or Triumph at Rob’s shop is around £120, with racers going for £300 to £500. “These bikes are very good value for £500. You can buy a hand built bike that will go for another 50 years. But the carbon bikes people are buying now will not be around in 10 years’ time.”

He is currently rebuilding a bike that made the crossing with the D Day Landings. It belonged to Spud Taylor who has lived in Highbury all his life and used to race before the war. He smuggled his bike on board when he

## On Yer Classic Bike

By Vivien Goldsmith (with thanks to Chris Ashby who brought the shop to our attention)



ROB’S BIKE SHOP

went over to France. Recently his daughter said that he would be delighted if two of his old bikes could be restored.

One fan, Colin, said: “it is possible for steel bikes to be built by a little cottage industry. Quite a lot of what cycling in London needs is to recover some of its former cycling culture, and small independent local shops

are a wonderful thing in this respect. This is not to say that we have to do everything the way it used to be in the good old days (as if) but we can take the best from the past. It is a million miles from Halfords, and all the better for that!” ■

*Sargent & Co, 74 Mountgrove Rod, 07973 617 787  
bobbysaucisse@hotmail.com*

## A Highbury artist

By Angela Sinclair-Loutit

ERIC HEWITSON WALKED up Highbury Hill one September evening this year carrying a portfolio containing some mounted examples of his paintings, and knocked at my door. I found them very pleasing: imaginative, colourful yet gentle.

Born in St. Albans, Eric, now 42, came to live in London in 1993. He studied fine art at the University of South Wales in Swansea. He paints in oil on canvas, water colours or acrylic paint. He has also made drawings in pencil and charcoal, and ‘semi-architectural’ sculptures in resin.

At one time Eric lived on the Isle of Wight. There, sitting on a headland looking east as Turner had done, he painted the dramatic dawn seascapes which had earlier inspired Turner. The loveliness of the light on sea and sky fascinated him too.

Eric’s works have been shown in many galleries and exhibitions in London, Leeds and Sydney. In 1997 he exhibited a work entitled ‘Pandemonium’ at the ICA, and in 2000 he won a ‘Flagship Award’ in the Year of the Artist. This year he has exhibited his work in Malta. He has various collections at a number of firms, among them John Lewis, Rolls Royce, Bradford & Bingley, Linklaters and Morgan Stanley. ■

*You can see some of his work at [www.paperandcanvas.blogspot.com](http://www.paperandcanvas.blogspot.com)*

## A new Islington Museum

A NEW ISLINGTON Museum in St John’s Street has opened, giving a fascinating insight into the ancient and not so ancient history of the Borough. Highbury related-highlights include memorabilia of Colonel Alexander Aubert, and a 1930s Highbury kitchen.

The museum also has special exhibitions, and Islington Council archive material. ■

*254 St John Street, London, EC1V 4NB. Open 10-5 daily except for Wednesday and Sunday.*

*020 7527 2837 or see links on the Council’s website.*

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Help Make Highbury a Green Neighbourhood

IN THE JULY *Community News* Anthony Melville wrote about preparing Victorian houses for the low-carbon economy which is rapidly coming upon us. Investing in energy-efficiency measures has been shown to add up to 6% to the value of a house. It has been clearly demonstrated that with insulated walls, floors, roof and windows, Victorian houses can cut their heating bills and carbon emissions by over 60%. Take a look at [www.sustainable-energyacademy.org.uk/](http://www.sustainable-energyacademy.org.uk/) for some examples.

Anthony says that The Energy Savings Trust's Green Neighbourhood scheme is still looking for neighbourhood groups to apply when the scheme launches in January. Currently 35 households have signed up, the deadline has moved to January, and the minimum of 50 looks like being relaxed. If you live in a house built before 1920 and are at all interested in taking measures to cut your heating bills, this could be a good opportunity. The funding may be as much as £20,000 for a house, with 1/4 to 1/2 of the amount being an interest-free loan.

To join the Green Neighbourhood scheme application please contact Antony Melville (preferably by e-mail) [antonymelville@dsl.pipex.org](mailto:antonymelville@dsl.pipex.org) or 7607 1540.

### A new police "office" for Blackstock Road?

THERE ARE RUMOURS in the Finsbury Park area of a new police office in Blackstock Road, providing accommodation for (at least) the Safer Neighbourhoods team, but not acting as a 24 hour police station. This development is in line with the Metropolitan Police's asset management strategy, which

seeks to separate the custody, office accommodation and public reception functions located together in a traditional police station. Further background information, though unfortunately no up-to-date details, can be found at [http://cms.met.police.uk/met/boroughs/islington/02our\\_aims\\_plans\\_and\\_objectives/islington\\_s\\_asset\\_management\\_plan](http://cms.met.police.uk/met/boroughs/islington/02our_aims_plans_and_objectives/islington_s_asset_management_plan).

### Changes to health centres in Islington: a consultation

ISLINGTON PRIMARY CARE Trust (the PCT) is proposing a number of changes to the location of some of its services over the next few years. Finsbury Health Centre is to close, a large new Health Centre is proposed for Hornsey Street N7, and the Northern Health Centre on the former Royal Northern site on Holloway Road is to become a dedicated children's health centre. Further details of the consultation, which ends on 21 December 2008, can be found on the PCT website at [www.islingtonpct.nhs.uk/help-us-to-improve-health-services-in-islington.htm](http://www.islingtonpct.nhs.uk/help-us-to-improve-health-services-in-islington.htm)

### Ecology Centre quiz night sells out

THE ECOLOGY CENTRE was overflowing on Friday 14th November 2008, when residents and supporters of the centre turned up in unexpectedly large numbers to eat chilli, drink wine and exhibit their general knowledge or lack of it. Quizmaster Rev Stephen Coles had to deploy all his preacherly skills to make the questions audible above the hubbub of conversation. Some £600 was raised for next year's Gillespie Park Festival, with "Better Traffic Calming Now" the triumphant winning team. Thanks to Friends of Gillespie Park for organising an enjoyable and social evening.

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### A Very Special Night Out

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2009  
7.30 to 11.30pm

### A Not Strictly

## Viennese Evening

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Forget Vienna, forget the Dorchester...right here at the Highbury Roundhouse, transformed into a glittering ballroom, you can waltz, polka or dance whichever way you wish (or simply listen) to the sumptuous strains of Strauss and Suppé (and various less Viennese surprises) from a full symphony orchestra.

Tickets £38 a head (including dinner) in advance only, from Highbury Roundhouse, 71 Ronalds Road, N5 1XB  
[admin@highbury-roundhouse.org.uk](mailto:admin@highbury-roundhouse.org.uk) 020 7359 5916  
(Evenings: 020 7226 7240)

Learn the Viennese Waltz and Polka: optional Preparatory Dance Classes £7 per head, information on booking

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Highbury Barn Market opens on 13 December

RUN BY THE Highbury Barn Traders Association, this new market will be open every non-match Saturday from 10-4, from 13 December 2008 onwards. There will be seven stalls, selling cheese, fresh fish, organic bread, Italian olive oil, Italian dry goods, barbecued sausages, and possibly fruit juices. The traders have long wanted to hold a market on the site, and the Council has finally given its consent for the market to go ahead.

### All back copies of HCA News now available on our new look website

AFTER AN EIGHTEEN month hiatus and various technical hitches the new website is now up and running and growing rapidly in content. We have been able to upload all back copies of the Newsletter to the site, and plan to carry regularly updated information about local events and issues, as well as an online forum for residents to chat about Highbury Matters. Many thanks to Trevor Wilson and Gill Shepherd for all their hard work getting it going again. [www.highburycommunity.org](http://www.highburycommunity.org)

## DIARY

### Till 2 January 2008 – Designer Jewellers Group Exhibition

Barbican Level G: The Designer Jewellers Group's free exhibition of the best in creative contemporary jewellery, 12 pm – 8.30 pm daily (except Bank Holidays).

### 13 December 2008 – Highbury Barn Market

10 am – 4 pm at Highbury Barn: first day of the new market.

### 13 December 2008 – Highbury Barn Plastic Bag-Free Day

Cloth bags will be given away in shops at the Barn, or don't forget to take your own. (Information by Nicolette Jones)

## RECENT PLANNING NOTES

By Roger Wright

### Queensland Road

The Council received another planning application from Arsenal Football Club to demolish and redevelop Queensland Road. A Sports Centre is included and there are no longer plans for a Cinema. However, the proposed development is higher and at a greater density than earlier proposals. There is now more affordable housing, but this is segregated rather than integrated across the development (as required by the Council). HCA has submitted an Objection which you can read on our website.

### Highbury Corner

The Council has finally obtained information from Transport for London (TfL) on the public consultation held on the proposals to "reconfigure" Highbury Corner. As expected, the results showed almost everyone to be in favour of removing the one way system and reinstating "normal" junctions. TfL now say that they have no funds to proceed.

### Sobell Centre

The Council has now approved its own proposals to proceed with the demolition and redevelopment of the Sobell Centre site. We are waiting for them to consult on a "Planning Brief" which would define the options open to a developer. (This is required for a "major development" of this scale). We wonder whether any developer would be interested given the current economic situation.



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**HCA** Highbury Community Association  
The HCA represents 780 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, HCA, PO Box 43396, N5 9AD, made out to 'Highbury Community Association'. Send letters or articles for next issue to [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com) or Highbury Community Association, PO Box 43396, London N5 9AD. Visit [www.highburycommunity.org](http://www.highburycommunity.org)  
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