

## The wrong type of tree?

By Jim Smith



HOW TO DO IT: (LEFT) KINGSWAY WHEN IT HAD JUST BEEN PLANTED WITH PLANE TREES IN 1951  
(RIGHT) KINGSWAY NOW IN 2009.

*Photos courtesy of the Forestry Commission*

WITH CLIMATE CHANGE expected to really start biting in the 2050s to 2080s, trees were an obvious topic for this year's HCA AGM in April. Our speaker, Forestry Commission's Jim Smith, stimulated lively discussion on the value of trees.

Audience member and Highbury resident Hannah Loizos from CABA (Commission for Architecture in the Built Environment) revealed that in February CABA Space revalued Highbury Fields – traditionally listed on Islington Council's books at £1 – at £53 million.

'They have to be the right trees', says Jim Smith, Manager of the London Tree and Woodland Framework since 2006. 'The Forestry Commission's motto is 'Right Place, Right Tree.' What we need is tree canopy – provided by large scale trees – that

will help us cool the city down – through shade and through water evaporating off their leaves... Although we're planting more trees than we ever did the scale and stature of those trees is a lot smaller – we're seeing more 'designer trees.' We're planting tree species of a longevity that won't impact on climate change, trees that will probably only live for 40 or 50 years at most.'

'As an example, less than three years ago developers planted the wrong type of tree near Kings Cross on Transport for London land in Pentonville Road. Large scale canopy trees which could have been pruned and managed were instead replaced with maintenance-free trees incapable of developing shade. They are not going to cool the pavement. They are not going to provide shade for people to walk under.

### Policy change

'In the past trees were not mentioned in policy documents at all but recently this has begun to change, for example in the Greater London Authority (GLA)'s *Planning for a better London* (July 2008). In national policy documents, too, it is being made clear for the first time that trees are an essential element in combating climate change.'

'So we have these policy documents and we also have the strongest legal protection of trees in the world. So what's the problem? It's not the policy. It's the implementation.'

### Putting a price tag on trees

'One way of persuading local authorities and the 'hard-to-reach' group of designers and architects to take trees more seriously is to put a

*(continued on page 2)*

(continued from page 1)

monetary value on them. As a borough tree officer I used to think that was a bad thing to do because my cynical opinion was that if you said that tree's worth £20,000 the developer would say here you go – here's £20,000 and I'll cut it down. I've changed my view in the last few years because I think if we as professionals do not value our trees, no-one else will.'

'The London Tree Officers' Association now has a system for valuing trees. And some boroughs have found that their street trees are valued at hundreds of millions of pounds. This monetary approach is for the first time creating parity between other infrastructure elements – like road and rail – and trees.'

### What you can do

'The Forestry Commission together with the GLA is working on guidance for London borough tree strategies. At the start only 10 out of the 31 boroughs had tree strategies. So there is some way to go, but the good news is that Islington was one of the councils which did already have a tree strategy.'

'You are the people who can persuade your local authority to make better choices. Islington has one of the best tree strategies in London and is attempting to manage existing trees



HOW NOT TO DO IT: THE WRONG TYPE OF TREE IN PENTONVILLE ROAD

Photo courtesy of the Forestry Commission

rather than seeking to remove and replace them, but there is still room for the public to have an influence – as shown in Pentonville Road. ■

### For more information:

[www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7CTDTK](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7CTDTK) for the London Tree and Woodland Framework

[www.highburycommunity.org](http://www.highburycommunity.org) for HCA's joint work with the Highbury Fields Association campaigning for the trees in Highbury Fields

[www.cabe.org.uk/publications/making-the-invisible-visible](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/making-the-invisible-visible) for details on the revaluation of Highbury Fields.

## Turning an inner city playground into a green oasis

By Gill Shepherd

AT THIS YEAR'S AGM we raised £370 towards the greening of Drayton Park Primary School's playground. Gill Shepherd, one of the school's Governors, talks below about how the money will be spent.

The school is already active in encouraging gardening and environmental awareness in the children. It has a micro farm growing vegetables and strawberries, a wormery, and a tiny greenhouse. And across the railway line in the Olden Garden (see page 4) pupils have their own vegetable-growing area. But the playground is need of attention.

When Barratt's built a new block of flats right up against the infants'

playground, the children were suddenly badly overlooked and overshadowed. Barratt's were persuaded to put up a very high wire fence to provide some potential privacy but the effect is bald and Colditz-like at the moment. This is an especial pity because the playground has been newly refurbished with attractive small-scale pieces of wooden equipment for climbing, swinging, balancing and hiding.

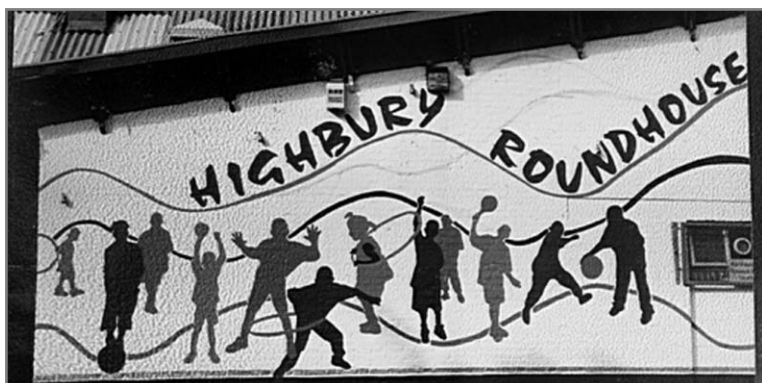
Thanks to the HCA we will be able to, first, plant some creepers to give quick cover along this high wire mesh fence – Virginia creeper, Wisteria, clematis and the like – and to give a safe enclosed feel to the

playground. Then our plan is to soften the playground edges further by planting trees and large shrubs in some currently rather forlorn-looking raised beds. The selection will mainly be made on the basis of hardiness, attractiveness, and no prickles!

The children will help with the planting, watering and aftercare. I'm sure we shall choose one or two Buddleia so that we have butterflies in the playground. We'll look for other species that, in the same way, lead on to nature-based activities. We will take pictures of progress, for the children themselves, and for future readers of *HCA News*. ■

# Roundhouse roots

By Andrew Berthier



HIGHBURY ROUNDHOUSE MURAL CREATED BY 11-21 YEAR OLDS IN NATIONAL LOTTERY-FUNDED ART WORKSHOPS IN 1997

*Photo courtesy of Montaj Designs who led the workshops*

In April Highbury Roundhouse agreed to house free of charge the HCA printer which had become homeless. This is part of a long Roundhouse tradition of supporting all parts of the community. Andrew Berthier, Director, talks below about the Roundhouse's roots.

The Highbury Roundhouse was born out of the 'roundhouse' that is now the playground keeper's hut at the bottom of Highbury Fields – in the early 1970's youngsters would hang out there. The late Major Bay Hodgson (who died in 2004), a resident of Highbury Fields, along with others in the neighbourhood, had the foresight not just simply to want to move them on, but instead to do something for them. He somehow managed to obtain permission from the GLC to use the current premises at 71 Ronalds Road as a youth club and so, in 1974, the Highbury Roundhouse was born. Over the years Bay together with other local residents developed the organisation into a community centre, which now provides a huge range of services – from Early Years groups to clubs for older people. We also welcome other organisations – from a Hungarian Children and Parents Group to a Tibetan community group.

Bay Hodgson was a giant of a man, not just in frame but in character and strength of purpose. He retired from the management committee in October 2001 but for us he has never left. The Roundhouse is managed by a committee of local people who give up their spare time to steer the centre. We employ up to 30 people in many different roles; some of our services are delivered off-site as we manage After School Clubs for local schools.

In recent times, as well as fundraising for the centre, we have raised money for other good causes. In 2007 we collected over £2000 for the Whittington Hospital's 'building for babies' appeal. In 2008 we raised funds for Survival International's campaign to return Kalahari Bushmen to their Botswana homeland.

Our list of activities is long and we are always keen to recruit local people to our management committee. If any residents have suggestions around community activities or projects they would like us to consider please do get in touch. The best way is to write to me at our office address: 71 Ronalds Road, N5 1XB. ■

*For more information see [www.highbury-roundhouse.org.uk](http://www.highbury-roundhouse.org.uk)*

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# COMPLEMENTARY HEALTH:

## Shiatsu Ali Carmichael speaks to Stephen van der Meer

### What is Shiatsu?

It's a potent holistic healing therapy. The word means 'finger pressure.' It is similar to acupuncture in that it treats the body's energy points but without the needles. I use Chinese amma massage, too, meaning my client's muscles are manipulated and then I apply pressure along the energy points. The client wears loose clothing and lies on a couch.

### Why have Shiatsu?

It is an excellent treatment for injuries; it can also prevent a back or muscle strain or pain from progressing. It treats headaches, digestive problems, sciatica, IBS and more. I also use it to treat emotional issues. It corrects the effects of stress on our bodies. A head, neck and shoulders Shiatsu session is wonderful for this! I think people should invest in their health, and take time to give themselves a treat; our bodies are precious and we need to look after ourselves. People often go into deep relaxation very quickly – which I take as a sign that my treatment is having a good effect. Usually they sleep very well the night following the session and feel full of energy the next day.

### How do you treat people?

I can feel under the skin, through their clothing, what is going on with a client's body. Energy points are stimulated which allows the body's natural healing

process to start working. I start from the head working down the person's back, focusing on areas of pain or tension. The sessions are an hour or an hour and half. I can visit people at home as I bring my own couch. I offer 15 minutes free to new clients.

### Why Highbury?

I used to live in Elwood Street and loved living in Highbury. I offer sessions at the Healthy Living Centre in St Paul's Road and in another clinic in N1. I have clients I visit in their homes in Highbury.

### Background

Stephen trained in Japan with top doctors and Shiatsu practitioners. So he offers a different experience of Shiatsu than that normally offered by other UK practitioners. Shiatsu in Japan is a vital part of people's normal everyday 'maintenance' care for themselves, as well being used as a treatment for many conditions. Stephen is UK certified and insured. ■

### For more information

[www.shiatsutherapy.me.uk](http://www.shiatsutherapy.me.uk)

Stephen van der Meer tel 07517 200781 email [stephen.vandermeer@gmail.com](mailto:stephen.vandermeer@gmail.com)

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Drayton Park Ticket Office Saved

Members of HCA protested to First Capital Connect and alerted local councillors to the threat of closure of Drayton Park Station ticket office.

At a meeting with Highbury East councillor John Gilbert on 25 March, the train operator agreed to abandon their plans and will keep the ticket office open but for reduced hours: 6am-10am on weekdays. First Capital Connect confirmed they would investigate converting part of the inside of the station into a shop/cafe which would be open during normal trading hours and where travellers could also buy a full range of rail tickets. If this proves feasible the shop could be open by the end of this year.

The reprieve for the ticket office is one of a series of improvements at Drayton Park promised by First Capital Connect. Others

include running more six-carriage trains to relieve overcrowding from later in 2009, a face-lift for the station building and improved access to the platform.

### Islington in Bloom

This year – due to past success in London in Bloom – Islington will for the first time represent the whole of London in Britain in Bloom, the UK's longest-running community gardening competition.

The Britain in Bloom judges will come to Islington during the first two weeks in August. On judging day they will be marking everything they see from the time they arrive. All residents are encouraged to take part no matter how small a space they have to grow plants. It could be sowing wildflower seeds around a tree in the street or making a window box however tiny. Islington is also entering London in Bloom again in

2009. The judges will be coming to the borough at the end of July.

*To find out more about Islington in Bloom and/or download an entry form, go to [www.islington.gov.uk/inbloom](http://www.islington.gov.uk/inbloom) or pick up an entry form from the library. Every entrant will receive a £5 garden centre gift voucher.*

### Mayor's Civic Award for Olden Garden

Volunteers at the Olden Community Garden Project – featured in *HCA News No 57* July 2008 – were given formal recognition in March. They received a civic award from the Mayor of Islington for what they have done to revive two acres of open space off Whistler Street in Highbury. During the past year alone they have raised over £45,000 towards improvements to the garden, including a new pond and paving.

# A high-scoring community campaign

By Ian Shacklock, local campaigner

BUDDING FOOTBALLERS IN Highbury were able to breathe a sigh of relief in March when the new Arsenal sports centre was granted planning permission from Islington Council.

After four years of campaigning by Islington residents, Arsenal has committed to provide two good-sized indoor pitches for community use 40 hours a week. This surprised many sceptics and it should serve as an inspiration for anybody who is contemplating other campaigns in the interests of their neighbourhood.

## Getting our sports centre back

When the stadium plans looked secure, Arsenal sent shock waves through Highbury and surrounding areas by airbrushing out of their plans the sports centre they had promised...a multiplex cinema emerged in its place. What a mismatch! A world class stadium with a cinema as its closest satellite! This was a totally unnatural decision for a football business and my best guess is that it was driven not by Arsenal but by independent committees of regeneration specialists. An unfortunate result of outsourcing.

In 2005 local campaigners worked hard to reverse this decision but Arsenal and the Council dug their heels in...fortunately by February

2008 the landscape had altered. Faces had changed both at Arsenal PLC and at the Council and more and more members of the public were criticising Arsenal's relationship with the community. Meanwhile the Club's match day revenues had at long last been boosted.

## People power

A group of Highbury residents started a people's petition that attracted 3,000 signatures and raised general awareness of the issue. We supplemented the petition with bulletins, online forums, letters to the press, public questions in the Council Chamber and private letters of appeal to the Club.

## Club changes direction

In late September 2008 Arsenal finally announced plans for a new sports centre, presenting it as a perfect hub for their expanding community programme. They said their change of heart was driven by popular demand.

But our celebrations of this major milestone were cut short when the detailed drawings were put on display. The indoor pitches seemed tiny in comparison with the previous facility at Highbury and they were arranged in an awkward L-shape, around an internal fire escape. We lobbied the architects and wrote to

the Council. This led to a revised design being unveiled. The new pitch layout was a vast improvement. The altered plans also included spectator terraces and changing rooms.

## Free promotion

Arsenal announced the sports centre would be free – or subsidized – for 40 hours a week – a massive improvement on the 17 hours that had been agreed previously. On 3 March this promise became a formal condition of the planning permission for the new site. Finally, the sports centre is here to stay.

The public may never discover the extent to which our local campaign influenced the Club's decision to resurrect the sports centre, or the point in time when the directors of Arsenal decided in favour of it. But one thing is certain: the campaign has saved the Club a lot of time and effort in marketing; now there is no doubt whatsoever about the popular demand for this facility. ■

*For a longer version of this article see [www.thefootballnetwork.net/main/s378/st142056.htm](http://www.thefootballnetwork.net/main/s378/st142056.htm)*

*The views expressed in this article and other articles in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Highbury Community Association. We plan to publish an alternative perspective on the above in the July newsletter.*

## NEWS IN BRIEF

continued

### Moving of Post Office in front of Highbury & Islington Station

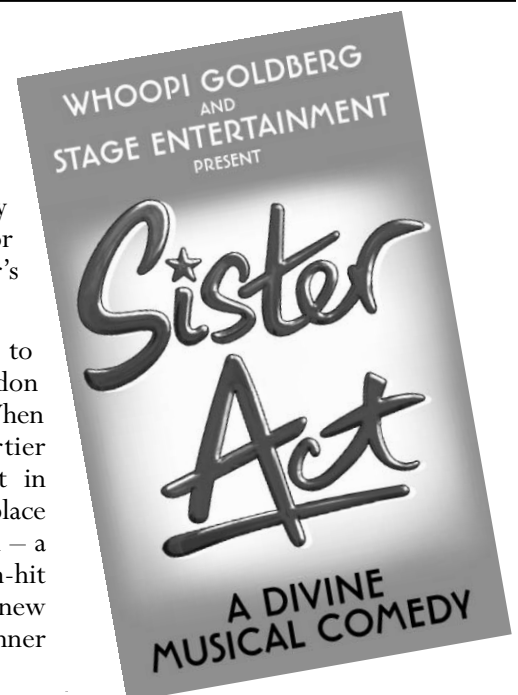
The council has decided what to do about the post office in front of Highbury & Islington Station – to knock it down and leave the space where it is now as an open space, and to rebuild the post office on the opposite side of the road in the area that is now behind hoardings.

Work should start at the end of this year or the beginning of next year.

## For a bit of light relief...

SEE TICKETS ticket agency kindly donated a pair of tickets for *Sister Act* to the raffle for this year's AGM good cause.

*Sister Act* is a musical comedy set to raise the roof at the London Palladium from 7 May 2009. When disco diva Deloris Van Cartier witnesses a murder, she is put in protective custody in the one place cops are sure she won't be found – a convent! Based on the smash-hit movie, *Sister Act* features a brand new score by eight-time Oscar winner Alan Menken.



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Just put 'HCA News by email' in the subject line and email hcanews@hotmail.com with your name and address. Thank you.

## DIARY

### Islington gardens open for charity

#### 31 May – Islington Gardens Group 1, N1

Four gardens including Barnsbury Wood, the borough's only site of mature woodland

#### 7 June – Islington Gardens Group 2, N1

Three gardens including one that has featured in books and magazines and on TV

#### 21 June – Amwell Gardens Group, EC1

Five South Islington gardens

*For more details, go to [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk) and click on the garden finder.*

#### End May: deadline for entries for Islington in Bloom

See page 4.

#### Bike Week in Islington 13-21 June

This year Bike Week in Islington will include the annual cyclists' breakfast at the Angel, a commuters' cool-down event at Highbury Corner, a bring-your-own cyclists' picnic on Highbury Fields, two Dr Bike clinics and a sports and cycling festival at the Emirates Stadium as well as organised bike rides.

*For more information and timings go to [www.icag.org.uk](http://www.icag.org.uk) and click on Events or contact Alison Dines on 020 7226 7012 or [alisondines@clara.co.uk](mailto:alisondines@clara.co.uk)*

### Graffiti art that has been in Liberia Road since October 2008

Does anyone know who did it? Banksy? Blec Le Rat? A Highbury resident? Any thoughts to [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com)



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