

# HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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## All change at Finsbury Park: a mixed blessing?



Finsbury Park station and transport interchange

By DIANE BURRIDGE

As reported in the last Community News (Feb 2015), Finsbury Park is undergoing massive changes: from the recently completed Park Theatre and John Jones Arts Centre, to the planned City North twin towers, which will contain 475 bedrooms for University of the Arts students. This £220 million City North development will include a further 355 new homes, a cinema, fitness club, and retail spaces for shops and cafes. The station will get step free access, a new Wells Terrace ticket office and Thameslink services by 2019.

At a conference in February 2015, organised by the Finsbury Park Trust, 200 people came together to discuss the developments, wanting to improve and protect their area. While some may welcome rapid growth, it was also clear that management is needed to ensure that London retains its parks, heritage and human scale - reasons why the City is so popular in the first place.



John Jones Arts Centre

**Surely, except for the twin towers, these are all positive developments? And so, why were many of the participants expressing concerns?**

First, tentative plans by Rowans Bowling Alley to develop their site from three floors to about 11 floors, taking some of the parkland, were queried. How can Haringey Council consider losing any precious parkland? Once you start nibbling away at parkland, what next?

Second, the closure of the Wells Terrace entrance to the station, due to take place from April 2015 to October 2017, has been

indefinitely postponed. When Wells Terrace finally closes, this is likely to cause much disruption, as people navigate through the bus stations, and along Stroud Green Road to get to the other entrances on Seven Sisters Road and Station Place.

What happens on Arsenal match days and when 30,000 people come to events at the Park - now that Haringey Council is allowing 15 days of events each year (trebling the previously-agreed allocation), and given that the station is the fourth busiest outside zone one?

Other concerns centred on the two 21-storey towers for student accommodation, approved by Islington Council in 2010, despite its own planning policy stating that no more than 10 storeys are allowed outside the central zone. Section 4.3.2 of the Draft Finsbury Park Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document states that tall buildings in this area are no longer supported under current policy. But hasn't the precedent been set, people queried?

There was also discussion about what councils can do regarding derelict buildings - which at present is little. Councillor Richard Greening, Chair of the three boroughs' Finsbury Park Regeneration Board, called for powers of compulsory purchase of derelict property, such as for the abandoned George Robey Pub on Seven Sisters Road, now a massive eye sore in the area.

Encouragingly, participants urged that a cross-borough Neighbourhood Forum and a Finsbury Park Station Users' Group be set up. The Users' Group has already met several times as a sub-group of the Finsbury Park Trust, and the HCA is an active member of this. Anyone interested in being a member, please contact [dianeburridge@btinternet.com](mailto:dianeburridge@btinternet.com)

## Farewell and thank you to Lorie Karlin

The HCA committee and editor would like to thank Lorie Karlin for her wonderful work designing and laying out the newsletter.

Combining her professionalism and creativity, she has been responsible for the publication's attractive and lively layout since 2009, and we are sorry to see her go.

Lorie produced Islington Council's leaflets, booklets and flyers for many years

before retiring and going freelance, so we could not have had a more experienced and professional person offering her services to the HCA.

She also served on the Committee of the HCA for some years as well as producing the newsletter for us. We wish her all the best for the future.

In her place, we welcome Will Parkes, HCA committee member with responsibility for the website and social media.

## Calling all budding editors!

The current editor of HCA News is moving on in the summer and so we need a new editor. Could this be you? Do you have an eye for an interesting story or interview; are you motivated to make the community the best that it can be? Then you may be ideally suited to the job!

It is an unpaid, voluntary role producing five issues a year filled with local content. Articles are provided by both committee members and other HCA members who have felt the urge to take to their laptops and typewriters.

The readership is around 1000 members. The time commitment to the role of editor is not vast, but being organised is an advantage! This is



fantastic opportunity for anybody with writing or editorial ambitions to gain journalism and editorial experience, and build essential skills to add to your CV.

If you are interested in taking up the position and would like to hear more from the present editor Lucy, or to ask any questions please email [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com) or get in touch via Twitter - @HighburyCA

## HCA visit to new Arsenal Sports Centre



Arsenal in the Community are offering HCA members a free tour of the new Sports Centre in Queensland Road. We hope to arrange for an

evening in May. If you would like to join the visit, please email [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com).

The first 20 people to express an interest will be included, and family and friends are also welcome.

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# HCA annual general meeting round up

By TOM RUBENS

The Highbury Community Association held its 2015 Annual General Meeting and Party on Saturday, 18 April, at Christ Church. The Chair, David Fenton, began the meeting by welcoming members and reporting on the main local developments in which HCA has been actively involved.

These included: participation in the work of the Finsbury Park Regeneration Project and the Finsbury Park Trust; consideration of the local impact of events in Finsbury Park, especially the concerts; keeping track of further developments in connection with the Arsenal Project to build a student block of flats; engagement with the Highbury West Partnership, and with issues connected with the repair of the Christ Church spire, the new 263 bus route, and the enforcement of the 20-mile per hour speed limit.

The Accounts were accepted, and the Management Committee re-elected.

Our keynote speaker, Andrew Nielson, of the Howard League for Penal Reform, gave an illuminating account of the League's history and work since its creation in 1921, which included leading on the successful campaign to abolish capital punishment. He also presented a range of eye-



The HCA AGM took place at Christ Church, Highbury

opening, (and sometimes alarming), details about the current state of the penal system in England and Wales. The League regards the current prison population of 85,000 as unnecessarily high; the figure is higher than in other European

countries. It also opposes the privatisation of both prisons and the Probation Service, and criticises the steep deterioration in prison conditions largely resulting from the Government's budget cuts. As regards our local prison, Pentonville, Andrew indicated that there have been staff cuts of 42%, and that drug-taking and violence are widespread. Such was the impact of the information he provided that, later in the evening, the 40-odd members attending the meeting raised £300 from a raffle and auction, to be donated to the League for furtherance of its work.

*Continued on page 4*

Thanks to the local businesses who contributed prizes for the raffle and auction, which raised over £300 for the Howard League for Penal Reform:

The Master Cobbler; Woodland Hardware; To Be Established; Kobkun Thai Therapy; Five Boys' Health Store; Seasons and Blossoms; Gathering Moss; Sunday Café, Gillespie Park; San Daniele del Fruili; Arsenal in the Community; Holisitc Hair and Beauty; Prawn on the Lawn; Park Theatre; Meek and Wild; and Derek Whitehead.

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# Out and about in Highbury...

**15 - 23 May** Xhibit 2015 at John Jones Project Space, N4. The annual exhibition showcases current students of University of the Arts London. Expect diversity: there are no themes or constraints, and students studying in any discipline can enter. This year participants include photographers, painters, printmakers, sculptors, special designers, and more. Free.



**17 May** The Big Swish is a clothes swap. If you have clothes (in good condition, no socks or underwear), accessories or shoes that you don't wear, but you think someone else might love, you can exchange them for tokens to get something you like. Castle Climbing Centre, Green Lanes, N4. Free, 11:30-3:30pm.



**18 May** Transition Highbury's Green on the Screen presents the award-winning documentary 'Into The Gyre', which follows a pioneering expedition to study plastic pollution in the North Atlantic Ocean. \*Free. Nanna's Café and Pantry, 176 St Paul's Road. Doors open 6:30pm, film starts at 7pm.  
\* Donations to cover screening rights welcome.



**29 May** Deadline for entries. Islington in Bloom is the local horticultural competition run by Islington Gardeners and Islington Council.



**29 May – 13 June** Holloway Arts Festival. The theme is Spirit of the Sixties and building on the success of last year's vibrant programme, the 2015 events line up includes art exhibitions, picnics and tea parties, film screenings, book readings, art workshops, songwriter competition, carnival parade... and more. Mostly free. For details visit their website [hollowayartsfestival.co.uk](http://hollowayartsfestival.co.uk)



**13 & 14 June** Open Garden Squares Weekend. 224 hidden and little-known gardens to the public across London, including local gems: Arvon Road Allotment Group, Highbury Stadium Square, Olden Community Garden, & Pooles Park Primary School. Weekend tickets cost £10 in advance and cover entry to all participating gardens. For details visit [opensquares.org](http://opensquares.org)

**30 June** Highbury East Ward Partnership meeting, everyone in the local community is welcome to attend. 7-9pm. Highbury Crescent Suite, 71 Ronald's Road, N5 1XA.

## HCA AGM round up

*Continued from page 3*

As well as Andrew, we had two other invited speakers: Tony Miller and Simon Prothero. Tony updated us on the re-building of the Roundhouse Community Centre in Ronald's Road, and on other developments connected with the Centre. Simon informed us of the repair work on the spire at Christ Church; and on the plan to establish a Heritage Centre which will reflect the history of the general Highbury community.

Issues raised in the Question and Discussion session included:

1) Air quality: it was pointed out that despite an Air Quality Report from Islington Council in Spring 2014 and continued recording of pollution levels, it is not clear how the Council is seeking to reduce them.

2) Bus congestion by the Clocktower in Highbury Grove: it was agreed to request that bus services which terminate at this site continue to Finsbury Park.

3) Conversion of commercial properties into private housing: owing to the recent relaxation of planning laws, this process can by-pass the obligation to gain planning permission, and reduces the opportunity to create social housing. It was agreed that the HCA will monitor the situation.

4) Traffic restrictions along Drayton Park: it was agreed that these restrictions, to reduce traffic levels, should be re-introduced.

  
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# Protecting nature in city communities

By SARAH POTTER

David Goode's fascinating and admirable book on *Nature in Towns and Cities* (Collins, 2014) charts the development of the new and significant national movement which emerged to conserve urban habitats for nature from the 1980s.

An early and important victory for this movement was the opening of the Parkland Walk in 1982 along a disused railway line between Finsbury Park and Alexandra Palace, which was secured when a local association campaigned for the site's value to nature conservation and overrode plans for housing.

In 1983, an even more significant Inquiry took place into the Gunnersbury Triangle, a site on the overground line to Richmond, which passes through Highbury. The case for retaining the site as a nature reserve was argued at a Public Inquiry by local people in opposition to plans for warehouses.

This was the first time that the importance of nature for the community and education was recognised in the planning process. Many urban habitats for nature are of much more significance for their value to the community than for the rarity of the species found there, so this was a turning point.

Under the current London Plan, areas lacking access within one kilometre to a high quality wildlife site are referred to as Areas of Deficiency in Access to

Nature, with maps available to assist planners to take remedial action. The bridge constructed over the railway line to extend people's access to Gillespie Park in Highbury is cited by Goode as an example of such remedial action.

Gillespie Park was one of the pioneering new nature reserves developed as a result of the urban nature conservation movement of the 1980s.

David Goode also provides fascinating documentation of urban habitats which are survivors from the past rather than recently preserved or created. London is particularly well provided with historic woodlands, a third of which date from 1600, and are thus deemed ancient.

Highgate Woods are part of the Bishop of London's very extensive Hornsey Park, dating from the thirteenth century, and survived as coppiced woodland providing London with timber. It was preserved by community action in the nineteenth century.

Species which either colonise or have their main home in towns and cities are discussed here, not only the familiar gulls, parakeets and geese, but also the colonising peregrine falcons and sparrow hawks, and the black redstarts and swifts, which are wholly urban. Swift numbers have recently started to decline, and swift bricks are now incorporated into buildings to encourage them to nest



The Parkland Walk runs between Finsbury Park and Alexandra Palace

under the eaves of modern structures. These bricks were included in the new blocks of flats at the Emirates Stadium in Highbury.

In spite of all these developments, Goode warns that the National Planning Policy Framework of 2012 could make it difficult for local authorities to protect

sites of local importance only, and that Biodiversity Offsets could be difficult to implement in towns and cities. Development in East London is also absorbing brownfield sites which are ecologically valuable. Communities will need to play their part in preserving urban nature in the future.

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### HCA seeks treasurer

John Egan, who has been our treasurer since 2010, has told the committee that he wishes to stand down at the end of 2015, although he is happy to stay on the committee.



The HCA will be looking to fill this role and would like to hear from any member who is interested in taking on this responsibility, which requires knowledge of basic book-keeping and how to use simple spread sheets.

If you are interested, or you would like to discuss it further, contact John by email: [egan17a@virginmedia.com](mailto:egan17a@virginmedia.com)

## Education in Highbury - back to the beginning...

By SARAH POTTER

The origins of public education in Highbury can be traced back to the Highbury Vale schools, founded by a committee of benevolent women who in 1834 raised over £300 to build a combined schoolroom and chapel.

The school opened in 1836 with 102 children, just off what was then Blackstock Lane, named after the blackthorn growing on both sides, and sometimes known as Gypsy Lane, after the local encampment.

The school bordered on a small dairy farm called Cream Hill, at the end of what is now Conewood Road. Jacqueline Hall's *The History of the Highbury Vale Schools 1834-1939*, a short pamphlet, records that in 1841 the population of Highbury Vale was 1624, living in 271 houses, forming a separate and populous settlement.

When Christ Church in Highbury was built in 1848, the boys' and girls' schools in Highbury Vale seem to have been attached to it, and then rebuilt in 1864, which is



the year the present school takes to be its founding date.

The first of the new local board schools in the area, providing a non-denominational public education, was established in Gillespie Road in 1879, followed by the Jack Ashley school in 1887, and the Ambler Road School in 1898. This expansion reflected rapid population growth in what had been an unbuild-up area stretching to Finsbury Park.

By the end of the nineteenth century, children from St John's were using facilities at the local board schools for practical classes, but numbers at the school had been affected by the abolition of fees at board schools in 1891. St John's provided free education for boys and girls from 1905, in an era when it was common for children to be kept away from school in winter because they had no boots.

At this time, St John's was known for drawing and swimming, but a high point was reached in the interwar period, according to Jacqueline Hall, when the head of the infants' school, Miss May Allen, was a recognised expert and

The Highbury Community Association (HCA) represents over 900 residents and businesses on all aspects of living and working in Highbury, Lower Holloway and Finsbury Park.

Membership is free. Members receive bi-monthly newsletters like this one. New members will receive the newsletter by email (unless you don't have email).

To join or talk to us about anything Highbury-related, visit our website, or email [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com)

The HCA can also be contacted on Facebook and Twitter.

The opinions expressed in Highbury Community News are not necessarily those of the HCA and/or its committee members.

**Please let us know if you move, so we can keep our membership list up to date.**



lecturer in the Montessori and Dalton methods, and the infant school became a showcase for its teaching.

Thanks are due to the London Metropolitan Archives for access to this information.