

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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Plans to pedestrianise Highbury Corner revealed

Public consultation opens on changes to the road layout and bus routes

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

Transport for London (TfL) and Islington Council have unveiled plans to make extensive changes to Highbury Corner, one of London's busiest road junctions.

The most eye-catching proposal is the removal of the western side of the existing roundabout. It would be replaced with two public spaces. One of these, a large square in front of Highbury & Islington Station, is intended to provide extra space for the thousands of commuters who use its Overground, Underground and National Rail links every day.

The roundabout will be replaced with a series of two-way roads with improved pedestrian crossings. The new public space would also have the benefit of connecting the area with Upper Street through the current roundabout's green spaces.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson said, "Highbury Corner heaves with hundreds of thousands of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians every day. It is a challenging area to navigate but the changes we are proposing will be a vast improvement, particularly for the many thousands of passengers who disgorge onto the pavement from the station."

A key focus of the improvements will be making the area more appealing for cyclists, who make up 22% of all of the traffic that passes through Highbury Corner. The new segregated cycle lanes are planned on

the three remaining sides of the roundabout. It is hoped that these will make the area safer and more accessible for cyclists.

Managing Director of Surface Transport at TfL, Leon Daniels, said: "The improvements would help us deliver our aim of eradicating death and serious injury from London's roads and encouraging more people to walk and cycle."

These developments come as part of TfL's £4 billion Road Modernisation Plan. The nearby Highbury Corner bridge, now over 100 years old, will also be replaced as part of the plan.

Work would not start until 2018 at the earliest, after the replacement of Highbury Corner bridge and an examination of the results from the

public consultation.

Councillor Claudia Webbe, Islington Council's executive member for environment and transport, said, "We are looking forward to hearing the public's views on these proposals - including the options for opening up access to the trees and green space - and will work with TfL to get the best out of the area for residents, visitors and all road users."

The plans will be open to members of the public for consultation until March 20th. The HCA encourages residents interested in the plans to attend one of the drop-in sessions listed below and register their views on the consultation website at: consultations.tfl.gov.uk/roads/highbury-corner-roundabout



Public drop-in sessions will be held at Union Chapel, Compton Terrace, N1 2UN:

- Wednesday 24 February, 15:00 - 19:00
- Saturday 27 February, 09:30 - 13:30
- Monday 29 February, 10:00 - 14:00

Artist's impression of the view from Upper Street for one of the proposed options

Tony Travers, one of London's foremost commentators, is our guest speaker at the AGM - Saturday 16 April at 7pm

Calls grow to honour creator of international peace symbol

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament’s logo, recognised worldwide as a symbol for peace and synonymous with the Cold War and the culture of the 1960s, has its origins in a humble office on Blackstock Road.



Gerald Holtom designed the above logo there in 1958 for the first Aldermaston march against nuclear weapons. But despite its global status, there is currently no plaque or marking on the site to commemorate the achievement.

Calls for some kind of tribute began with Ian Jack, a Highbury resident, who wrote an article proposing a plaque in the Guardian. Since his initial article, numerous activists have registered their support for the idea.

The office is now occupied by a law firm (who support the movement). Remarkably, the stationer that on the street level of the building in the 50s - Fish and Cook - can still be found there, although under a different proprietor.

Work to create step-free access at Finsbury Park begins

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

Major construction efforts are underway to create step free access between platform and street in Finsbury Park station. It will be the latest addition to the pool of 117 step-free stations across the capital.

The work began on February 1st and is expected to last until 2019. The results of this effort will be two new lift shafts capable of providing easy access from platform to street. The main staircase for the northbound Piccadilly and Victoria lines will be closed until mid-September 2016 to accommodate the building work. The other three staircases between the National Rail passageway and the Tube platforms will be unaffected.

“Finsbury Park is the fourth busiest Tube station outside Zone 1.”

This improved access is especially pressing as Finsbury Park is the fourth busiest Underground station outside of Zone 1. The number of commuters using the station has increased by 20% since 2010, a trend that looks set to continue.

Other recent and future improvements to the station include improved CCTV, better customer information services, new ticket machines and a doubling of the



Finsbury Park station

capacity of the site’s spiral staircases.

Speaking about the plans, David Waboso, London Underground’s Capital Programmes Director, said, “London has one of the most accessible transport networks of any big city around the world, but we must go further – making London’s Tube and rail network accessible to all customers is one of our key priorities. Upgrading Finsbury Park will make it step-free, and journeys through the station will be quicker and more pleasant for customers.”

Widening the availability of step-free access has been a priority of Transport for London in recent years. Approximately 40 more Underground and Overground stations will become step-free over the next decade, bringing the total to half of TfL’s stations by 2018. The yearly total of step-free journeys is expected to grow rapidly in that period, rising to 227 million in 2023 from the current 77 million.

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Change ahead for Highbury Fields trees



Highbury Fields

By GILL SHEPHERD

It has been some while since component items of the 'Vision for Highbury Fields' (originally first drafted in 2007) have been addressed in total, though the Highbury Fields Forum has worked on a range of individual issues in the intervening years. Within the constraints of budget and staff changes, this has been an area where Islington Council has developed very good working arrangements with the local community.

However one component, 'The Development of a Long-Term Tree Strategy' had not been revisited for many years, but it is good to report that some dialogue and a meeting have occurred over recent months.

Highbury Fields has suffered from the planting of too wide and uncoordinated a set of species choices in the past. This is especially obvious in the densely planted area known as the Orchard, near the children's playground and café, and around the swimming pool area where there is even a Sequoia (California Redwood) which will eventually shade out everything else for a large area around it.

This scatter is partly the result of the choices of previous generations of Council employees, but mainly the result of a previous policy of allowing people to plant trees - any trees - in

memory of loved ones.

The plan emerging from the recent consultations is to get back to a more classic planting plan for Highbury Fields. As far as the tall trees which edge the main fields are concerned, the need is for a minimal selection of trees which all grow at similar rates, and may be expected to live to similar ages. A safety net is also needed because of the potential for major disease.

Older residents will remember the devastation caused by Dutch elm disease, which killed off elm trees all over the UK in the 1970s. Plane tree disease is slowly spreading northwards in Europe, and we may yet lose our plane trees in London and the rest of the country. The plan is to continue to replace planes with planes for the time being, and to supplement them with chestnuts (already found on the Fields) and with one other tall species, possibly tulip trees.

Just as there will be no more than three tall tree species, there will eventually only be three or four smaller tree species, including the limes which currently edge the walk down to Highbury Corner. Other species are still being discussed. Existing trees on the fields which do not fit with the strategy will be thinned where there are too many of them, and not replaced when they die. Gradually a simpler and more elegant tree selection will take over.

Anne Frank chestnut tree gifted to Highbury Fields

By GILL SHEPHERD

The community unexpectedly has the opportunity to plant a unique horse chestnut tree on Highbury Fields.

The tree was grown from a cutting taken from the original tree that Anne Frank refers to in her diary. It was all she could see out of the window of the attic room that she and her family hid in for two years in Amsterdam, during World War Two.

The Islington Business Design Centre purchased it a number of years ago and have had it growing in a pot on their forecourt. Sam Morris was the visionary local businessman who saved the old Royal Agricultural Hall from demolition in 1984 and turned it into the highly successful Business Design Centre. While he passed away in 1991, the Morris family continue to be the Centre's majority shareholders, and it is thanks to their generosity that the tree has been donated for planting on Highbury Fields.

Bhupesh Thapa, Central Area Parks Manager for Islington Council has identified a suitable location on Church Path where there are two dead horse chestnuts. These will be removed and the tree planted there.



The original tree in Amsterdam

Inside ‘Light Eye Mind’, Blackstock Road’s artistic powerhouse

By LUCY BRADLEY

The journey of the Light Eye Mind artists’ collective began back in 2013 when a group of young artist friends from Barnet reconvened fresh out of art schools, together with photographer Nigel Norie, and landed a gallery space at 176 Blackstock Road, half way between Highbury Barn and Finsbury Park.

The name of their inaugural show, The Light Salon, is the clue to the gallery’s enigmatic name. Since then the centrepiece of this show, Lucia Number Three, a strobic lamp invented by Austrian doctors, psychologist Engelbert Winkler and neurologist Dirk Proeckl, has transported visitors on ‘a journey into their imagination’, both in the UK and as far as North America.

Now entering its third year, Light Eye Mind @ no.176 has evolved into an arts-event space with a regular programme that cuts across visual, installation and conceptual arts, incorporating spoken word, music and themed dinners into the roster.

From Alice Woods’ UK debut solo exhibition, Dead Cat Bounce, which explored the dynamics between cultural and economic decision-making, to multi-sensory show Eat With Your Eyes, and the highly colourful and symbolic yarn paintings and beaded sculptures by the ancient

Wixáritari community from the mountain ranges of the Sierra Madre region in Mexico, as a body of work, their exhibitions are a melting pot of ideas, themes and creative methods. If you have a nose for curiosity and exploration, these are talented curators with energetic minds and a flare for collaboration.

The collective, comprised of Alex, Alice, Dan, Nigel and Tom, are now



“The aim of our shows is to promote culture, wholeness and well-being...”

gearing up to curate their first Performance Festival that will bring performance art and a series of events from poetry, to film and food to Blackstock Road for two months over June and July (they have launched an open call for submissions which closes on 1st March).

When I go down to meet the team I chance on an informal planning meeting, and with a cup of tea, I join

the group round a long trestle table in the gallery space and hear the ideas flowing between the people sitting round it, drawing inspiration from across diverse subjects.

‘The aim of our shows and this space’ they tell me, ‘is to promote culture, wholeness and well-being and also raise the profile of emerging and underrepresented artists, whose work shares a message for the present and a vision for the future.’

Information on forthcoming Light Eye Mind exhibitions can be found on the team’s website, lighteyemind.com

The Highbury Community Association (HCA) represents local 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

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.

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Highbury residents voice alarm at proposed Sainsbury's development

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

Recently we have dedicated a lot of space in this newsletter to the plans to create a Sainsbury's Local in the former Highbury Vale Police Station on Blackstock Road. It is feared that such a store would both blemish one of Highbury's architectural treasures and pose a threat to local businesses.

The HCA is pleased to see that our recent updates (in issues 93 and 94 of this newsletter - available online at highburycommunity.org) have led to a number of emails arriving in our inbox.

Celia, a self-proclaimed Finsbury Parker of 28 years and counting, said, 'In short, we neither need nor want another Sainsbury's Local. Its arrival would affect other local shops enormously, to their detriment.'

Alan Sutton echoed this sentiment, saying, "Blackstock Road has an unequalled variety of independent local shops. They provide a friendly local face to residents. A new supermarket will be anonymous, with different faces on each shift."

The HCA encourages anyone who is similarly troubled by the prospect of another supermarket arriving to continue to support our local, independent businesses that might be threatened when it opens in 2017.

Christ Church given go-ahead for spire repairs

By JOHN GILBERT

Christ Church Highbury is delighted at being awarded a grant of £206,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the repair of the building's landmark spire - with work due to start in February.

The church is responsible for raising the balance of the total project costs of £312,000, including enlisting volunteers whose time can be given in lieu of cash.

The spire, dating back to 1848 when the church was completed, is suffering from disintegrating stonework and failing metal joints. It will be covered by scaffolding for at least six months but the community activities in the church will not be disrupted.

While the repairs are carried out, the Church is developing plans for the community engagement project that helped them meet the criteria for the grant application. Jonathan Brewster, Vicar of Christ Church, explains: 'We really appreciate the overwhelming support from the local community for the Highbury Heritage concept and for the helpful suggestions received during our public meeting and survey last year.'

They are now seeking a team of volunteers to create an audiovisual resource about the Highbury



community, past and present. Volunteers interested in helping should contact office@christchurchhighbury.org

Also welcome are memories, photos/video or documents relevant to one of the Highbury Heritage themes: the architecture and heritage of Christ Church, St John and St Saviour, the legacy of war, leisure and entertainment in Highbury, Highbury names, places and maps, and schools and education in Highbury. When completed, the resource will be accessible to the community through a touchscreen in a Highbury Heritage visitor area in the church.

Further information on the Christ Church spire project and the appeal for donations can be found at: www.christchurchhighbury.com/building/spire-and-heritage/



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'Rebel Footprints' - an historical walk in Islington

By SARAH POTTER

David Rosenberg's "Rebel Footprints: A Guide to Uncovering London's Radical History" (Pluto Press, 2015, £9.99) outlines the stories of a series of radical movements in London, accompanying each of them with a carefully planned and mapped walk of the area of London which was the movement's home.

The book begins with a chapter on the early 19th century working class movements for the franchise which culminated in the People's Charter. In London, Clerkenwell in the south of Islington was the scene of many of the mass meetings of this movement. It was there that many of those hailed by Rosenberg as 'trailblazers for democracy' lived and worked. The historical detail of the chapter comes alive as it is traced out in the walk which starts and ends at Finsbury Town Hall, on the number 19 bus route.

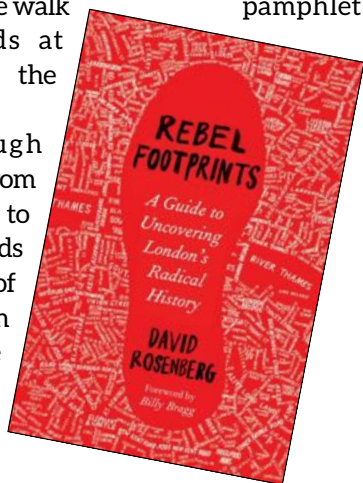
As you walk through Exmouth Street Market from the Town Hall, you come to Spafield Street. Spa Fields were the site of a series of meetings of thousands in 1816 organised by the Spenceans, a movement for equality and universal suffrage.

A little further on is

Coldbath Square, where another open space, Coldbath Fields, was the scene of a gathering organised by the National Union of the Working Classes in 1833 in support of adult male suffrage and against low pay.

This organisation was succeeded by the London Working Men's Association in 1837, which drew up the People's Charter. The six political and economic principles of the Charter inspired mass national movements in 1839, 1842 and 1848, the year of revolution in Europe.

As the walk continues through Clerkenwell, you pass down Greville Street where William Lovett, the main author of the Charter, had his coffee house. The prominent Chartist John Cleave had his print shop nearby on Snow Hill, and contributed a pamphlet



'Rights of Women' to the movement.

The walk continues to Clerkenwell Green, which is one of London's three free speech locations, together with Speakers' Corner and Trafalgar Square. The Green was where Chartists from the City and East London gathered to protest, until the movement was suppressed in 1848. Nevertheless, there is still a May Day march to Trafalgar Square from the Green each year.

Clerkenwell was also known in the early 19th century as the site of some of the worst slums in London, and had the capital's highest murder rate. It also had Italian, Irish and Jewish minorities. On the walk you can see where Dickens located Fagin's den on Saffron Hill.

The walk takes about an hour, and makes a very good outing, with good hot coffee available in Exmouth Street Market, close to the finishing line.

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‘Beautiful’ new independent bookshop and cafe opens on Highbury Park

By CHARLIE ROBERSON

While Highbury is well stocked with unique shops it has lacked a distinctive bookseller for some time. This changed last December with the opening of Ink@84, an independent bookshop with big plans for the future.

Located at 84 Highbury Park, Ink@84 is the creation of Tessa Shaw and Betsy Tobin. The pair took time to answer a few questions for this newsletter. The former is an established artist and journalist while the latter is an author with more than 20 years of experience in the industry. Their two skillsets informed the creation of their shop; speaking to HCA, they said “we believe that both books and bookshops should be beautiful. Our shop reflects this.”

Their commitment to beauty is certainly on display. The store boasts a wide range of titles, from established classics to new releases. Particularly eye catching are the gorgeous array of non-fiction hardbacks and the colourful selection of children’s titles. Also on offer are a variety of gifts and merchandise that is sure to appeal to booklovers of all ages.

It is this “careful curation & personal attention” that the proprietors identify as the feature that

distinguishes them from the online outlets and chain stores that sell the majority of Britain’s books. “Our customers appreciate the fact that we are bringing them only the best of what’s on offer.”



This attention to detail extends to the layout and design of the shop itself. With its unobstructed views of the books on display and suitably subtle decor, browsing Ink@84’s stock is a delight. The till also doubles as a café, allowing you to enjoy a coffee (originating from Shoreditch micro-roastery NUDE) with your browsing.

Starting a new business is never easy, but the two founders have had their efforts met with positive reaction so far. “The response from locals has been hugely enthusiastic, and we’re very grateful,” they say.

When asked why they chose Highbury as the site of Ink@84, they

replied, “Islington hasn’t had a general independent bookseller in more than a decade so we wanted to remedy.

We were the only community in North or East London that wasn’t supporting one. The southern half of the borough is well served by Waterstones at the Angel, so it made sense to site our shop in Highbury, where we’ve lived in the community for 25 years.”

Not content to stop after their current progress, Betsy and Tessa have envisioned a lively future for Ink@84:

“We are launching our bar with extended evening hours on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays until 8 pm soon! Expect craft beers, a nice glass of wine, and artisan G&Ts. We also have an ambitious plan to do events and workshops in the evenings, as well as events for children on Saturday mornings.”

Residents looking to find out more about Ink@84 can sign up to their newsletter on their website, www.ink84bookshop.co.uk. They can also be found on Twitter and Instagram under Ink@84Books.

Of course there’s no better way to support an exciting local business than by spending time and money with them. If you fancy adding a few things to your reading list, now is the ideal time!



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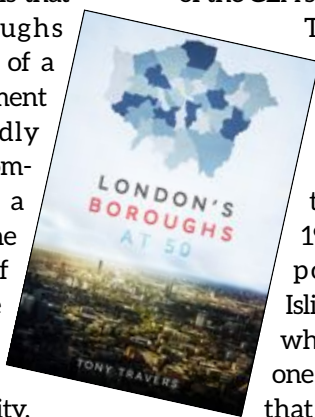
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‘London’s boroughs at 50’ sheds light on Islington history

By SARAH POTTER

Tony Travers, well known for his scholarly work on London and local government, has recently published a major book “London’s Boroughs at 50” (Biteback Publishing, 2015), charting the establishment of London’s present councils in 1965 and their progress since. One of the main points made in his book is that the thirty-two boroughs created in 1965 are part of a pattern of city government which is markedly decentralised and bottom-heavy. This is not only a departure from the centralised nature of much government in the UK, but is also, apparently, “highly unusual” in the modern city.



In this book, the longevity of London’s councils is put down to their record of good governance by national standards. In the early years, they adapted to economic and demographic decline, and recently to rapid growth combined with a sharp decline in resources. While he considers that the size of the thirty-two boroughs was correctly judged in the reforms of 1965, Travers advocates greater fiscal autonomy for both the boroughs and the Greater London Authority than is provided for in the

current structure.

The second main point emerging from this study is that the thirty-two boroughs have developed their own local political culture, leadership and characteristics, which are all described individually and in some depth. Their power is based on the fact that as a group, they are responsible for expenditure more than twice the size of the GLA’s.

Travers’ deftly drawn portrait of Islington shows how the borough of Finsbury with, its radical and socialist tradition, was joined in 1965 to the very densely populated borough of Islington, making a borough which is now paradoxically one of the most deprived but that scores highly on the prosperity index.

Travers describes how the early Labour leadership in Islington was in fact moderate, notwithstanding its radical legacy. The council policy in the 1970s of buying Georgian and Victorian terraced slum housing for renovation on a massive scale seems radical today, he suggests, but at the time it was becoming clear that it was a safer policy than building costly modernist towers and blocks with dystopic social effects.


Travers is in no doubt that the

building of new housing is now the greatest challenge faced by the London boroughs. Since their revenue is tied to the number of new houses they complete, “development is now an incentive-driven generator of resources for London councils”. In the author’s view, there are recurrent features in public housing policy in London in the same way as in most other aspects of the capital’s government. In the case of housing, these features were identified by Lord Silk in in that key year of 1965:

“We have been slowly moving towards establishing two communities: the community who are benefiting from the affluent society and who are better housed and better off in every way, and the other community, the poor section, who are living on terms of insecurity and poverty and who are having to spend a disproportionate amount of their income in paying rent for wholly inadequate accommodation.”

Travers’ book is a valuable and highly readable guide to the conditions and pressures that have shaped London in this past half century.

The HCA is thrilled to confirm that Tony Travers will be the guest speaker at our Annual General Meeting. He regularly comments on planning, local government and transport issues in London and is Director of the Greater London Group at the London School of Economics. While ‘London’s Boroughs at 50’ is his most recent publication, he is the author of numerous books and articles.



The AGM is on Saturday 16th April at 7pm at Christ Church, Highbury Grove. We hope to see you there!

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