



HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

FROM THE HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Mature Pear Tree Chopped Down In Gillespie Road Against Tree Officers' Advice

There have been recent articles in the *Islington Gazette* and the *Islington Tribune* about the chopping down of a mature pear tree in Gillespie Road, as requested by Highbury West Ward councillors - against council policy and tree officers' advice. Diane Burridge, a committee member of the HCA and a Committee member of the Friends of Gillespie Park, describes her concerns about Councillor Paul Smith's quoted response to local people on this matter:

'I found the response from Councillor Paul Smith (Islington's environment chief) to local residents' anger about the chopping down of a healthy



mature tree on Gillespie Road, quite worrying. He states (*Islington Tribune* 15 March) "We are in tough economic times,

when people are being thrown out of their homes because of the bedroom tax. It's a touch insensitive for people to be wasting scarce public resources with this kind of complaint". Firstly, the waste here is the chopping down of a mature, healthy tree, valued by tree officers at £9,173, not the complaints by local residents. The

tree officers advised the Highbury West Ward councillors - who requested the removal of this tree -



that 19 young trees would need to be planted to equate to the value of this mature tree. A street tree does not belong to the house outside which it grows - it belongs to the public who have paid for it through council taxes. Secondly, councillors should be pleased that local people want to protect trees in their area-participating, active citizens wanting an attractive environment. Residents are always being encouraged to get involved but when we do we are often criticised, as in this instance. Thirdly, studies have shown how important an attractive environment is when people are depressed or stressed. It is during tough times when we need to protect our trees even more - for people who cannot afford to leave their area, do not have cars and do not have gardens, the street environment is important. Fourthly, this tree, chopped down against tree officers' advice, sets a terrible precedent, because it goes against council policy. Does this mean that any fruit tree that someone does not

like (apparently here two residents worried about wasps) can be chopped down if councillors agree - with little consultation and regard to others who may enjoy street trees? There are 5,354 fruit trees in Islington - are they now under threat? Finally, Islington Council emphasises its 'green' policies, and encourages sponsorship of trees. Highbury West Ward councillors, by requesting that this tree be chopped down project confusing messages. What do they say to pupils where the planting of fruit trees is being undertaken in schools, supported by organisations such as Learning through Landscapes and the London Orchard Project? It seems that Councillor Paul Smith, by supporting the Ward councillors' request here, does not support his



own policies on trees, a bit disturbing given his position as the lead for the council on the environment.' Upon going to press we learnt that a formal complaint has been lodged to the

Town Hall by opposition parties. The Committee of the Friends of Gillespie Park support Diane's letter.

DIANE BURRIDGE



The 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, please email hcanews@hotmail.com

The opinions expressed in HCN are not necessarily those of the Highbury Community Association and its committee members.

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Print volunteer required

The HCA needs a print co-ordinator. The role involves coordinating the printing of the HC news (the HCA's newsletter). Practically, this means getting the printing done within a timescale set by the committee. S/he will need to agree a printing date with Highbury Roundhouse, where our printer is kept, ensure sufficient paper is available, co-ordinate the work of the team on the day and deliver the printed copies to the delivery co-ordinator. S/he will need to have access to email and some knowledge or experience of simple IT operations but training can be provided. The newsletter usually has five editions a year. The time commitment is low - just one long morning (usually a Friday) five times a year. Typically this is in February, April, June, September, and November. Additionally, there may be a request to assist with printing the Annual General Meeting's (AGM) posters, for the AGM in late April each year and the occasional *ad hoc* printing of anything else the HCA committee feels is best distributed by hand through letterboxes, rather than by email, to our members. The position is unpaid and there is no obligation to become a member of the HCA committee although membership would be useful. If you're interested we'd love to hear from you. Questions are best emailed to HCAnews@hotmail.com or asked via Twitter at @HighburyCA.

Sargent and Co bicycle shop

David Braine, local resident and member of HCA, interviewed Rob Sargent of Sargent and Co. in February and discussed 'Re - Cycling'. If any of you have ambled along Mountgrove Road you may have noticed a used bicycle shop at number 74 called Sargent and Co. - with exotic and vintage bikes in the front window. The shop was opened in May 2008 by Rob Sargent, formerly a professional photographer. He decided to open the shop to combine his interest in cycling with a hands-on artisan profession. He chose Mountgrove Road as it was near to where he lived and as he is not dependent on passing trade, he didn't need a high street location. Rob has found a niche by specializing in steel, hand-made, vintage bikes ranging from post-war to 1980s. From the late 1980s, bikes were increasingly mass produced overseas using aluminium, a cheap but short life material unlike steel, which lasts indefinitely if it is looked after. I can verify this as I have a 50 year old steel frame bike which is still going strong. Rob believes aluminium is a poor material for bikes as it doesn't flex and fractures easily, making repairs difficult, whereas vintage steel bikes can be easily repaired and maintained. Rob assembles bikes to order and repairs and services them. His customers vary from mature cyclists wanting a classic bike assembled to their specification, to commuters who require general servicing and repairs of their steel bikes. Rob recently had a visit from Sir Bradley Wiggins, the 2012 Tour de France winner and Olympic Gold medallist verifying how well established he is in the Vintage bike trade. And *Time Out* has awarded Sargent and Co. the accolade of best bike shop for three consecutive years. Rob runs a truly sustainable business as all his frames and accessories have been recycled, often over many years. He tends to get most of his frames online, from a cycle enthusiast who collects vintage bikes and occasionally from members of the public. He doesn't need to advertise very much, other than the *Hackney Citizen* Paper, as most of his business is by word of mouth, but he does have a web site - www.sargentandco.com. Looking to the future, Rob would like to have larger premises as his shop is now filled to capacity, but is happy with his current location. He would like to take on an apprentice cycle mechanic and is hoping to tap into a government training scheme to help fund this position. So next time you think about getting that classic bike you always promised yourself, get down to 74 Mountgrove Road where you'll get expert and friendly service. DAVID BRAINE

'Quick fire' interview

Viktor Lopez is a Hire Department Sound Engineer. He works in theatres across the West End and wider London with his team to ensure theatre productions have professional sound before curtain up. Vik is originally from Galicia in Spain, he's lived around Highbury and Finsbury Park for about 13 years. He says that this was the first area he found upon moving from Spain and loves it, 'it has everything I need and there is a good vibe to it!' Vik has been working as a sound engineer for 11 years and describes working in London's West End, compared with Spain, as 'another league'. Vik explained how being a regular at the local climbing centre, The Castle (Green Lanes), has helped with his job, 'I started going to get rid of my fear of heights (you don't need this fear if you're a sound engineer!) and now I love it there, although I'm still a bit scared of heights!



'Sound engineer' sounds grand and complicated, but what does a sound engineer do?

It is not as glamorous as people think! We crawl through small voids, do wiring, poke cables through holes, hang up speakers, programme the mixing desk, mic-up gorgeous girls... and guys!

What are the best things about your job?

There is no monotony. The range of our job is quite broad and we get to travel a bit; going to different theatre venues and meeting people from different backgrounds. There are also the odd press night tickets and the after-parties!

What are the worst things about your job?

This job has long hours. We sometimes have to travel abroad, but the schedules' so tight there's little or no free time to sight-see.

What would be a 'bad day at the office' for you?

Having to prepare a gig and not having the resources to do it - you can spend hours thinking and trying to find another way to go around the problem. Or when there is last minute design changes at the theatre when your system is already in place and working fine.

Is there a key piece of equipment you can't do your job without? And why?

My multi-tool Leatherman. It gets you out of trouble when you don't have 'the proper tool' with you.

Have you met any interesting famous people while you were at work?

Yes, but I normally only realise who they are after I finish the job! I was very impressed with Mark Rylance's presence when he was the lead in Jerusalem (2010/11) at the Apollo, Shaftsbury Avenue. He really stood out amongst the rest of his colleges.

Who would be your ideal dinner party guests?

Hmmm... Living ones, I would choose Dave Grohl (lead singer and guitarist with the rock band, The Foo Fighters), Nick Cave (front man with the rock group, The Bad Seeds), Sarah Silverman (comedienne) and Liv Tyler (actress). This would ensure a good cocktail of stories and laughter would be guaranteed!

If you weren't a sound engineer, what would be your dream job?

Working as a writer and reviewer for *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guides*, then I could see the world and get paid for it!

Dissatisfaction At Plans For Whittington NHS Trust

The HCA wrote to Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health to voice opposition to the decision of the Board of the Whittington NHS Trust to propose to sell off £17million of hospital buildings. In the letter, sent to accompany the recent march down Holloway Road, the HCA urged the Secretary of State to abandon these plans. The Whittington Hospital serves the populations of Islington, Camden and Haringey. For many thousands of residents in Highbury, the Whittington is the only viable option for local residents to travel to. The HCA expressed dissatisfaction at the badly thought through proposals; one of which will mean that the numbers of maternity patients will be reduced to 4000. Additionally, wards for the elderly would be closed and there will be no longer be any staff accommodation. The HCA stressed the devastating impact on the provision of acute and other health services for many residents in North London. If you are interested in learning more about what is being done to oppose these proposals or how to become involved, visit Defend the Whittington Hospital Coalition www.dwhc.org.uk

Friends of Gillespie Park AGM

The Friends of Gillespie Park will be holding *their* Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Tuesday 23rd April 2013. They would like to extend an invite to all Highbury Community News readers to attend. The Agm will be held at the Islington Ecology Centre on Drayton Park. The AGM will run from 19:15 - 19:45 with light refreshments afterwards. At 20:00 there will be a talk to the meeting by Jonathan Elphick - 'British and Irish birds and their amazing sounds'. To find out more, email Sue Jandy on sjandy@candi.ac.uk or telephone 020 7704 7245.

Highbury Community Association AGM

The HCA AGM will be held on Saturday 20 April 2013 at Christ Church, Highbury. As a member of the HCA and recipient of the newsletter you are very much invited to attend. The evening starts at 19:15 and is an opportunity to hear what the HCA has been doing in the 2012, a chance to share with us what you would perhaps like us to be doing and to hear from this year's guest speaker - Mr Jez Bond, Artistic Director, Park Theatre, Finsbury Park. Following our success in embarking upon Twitter, we will be tweeting live from the event to keep all our followers up to date with the salient points of discussion. If you would like to lend a hand on the night, or bring along a dish of food, all offers will be gratefully received - please email hcanews@hotmail.com and entitle your email "AGM"

The Ghosts of Riotous Rhythms Return



The Silver Ghosts, a swing ensemble leading a local renaissance in Islington. Drawing on influences ranging from Billie Holliday to Miff Mole, Louis Armstrong to Hoagy Carmichael and good time provocateurs like Louis Jordan and Fletcher Henderson, the group's period partner-dances like Lindy Hop and Charleston are proving popular. Band leader and trumpeter Mark Aguera, ('The Colonel' to those in the know) explains more about the seven piece band: 'The group started just over two years ago when I suggested to my friend Karl ('Caps') he take up the ukulele. We had been inspired by the energy and style of swing dance club nights around London like 'Mouthful O' Jam' at The Salisbury in Harringey and 'The Black Cotton Club' in Chancery Lane. The DJs play nothing but original '78s on period equipment while patrons express their passion for swing jazz, sometimes just through their period garb but mostly on the dance floor with classically energetic partner dances. The band is made up of trumpet, trombone (Tea Bone), clarinet (Lips), ukulele (Caps, Ukulelsley), double bass (Monkey, The Man, Cookie), drums (Bugsy) and with the charming Lucy Lullaby on vocals. The look is considered an important part of our evocation. Some of us know a few period partner-dance moves as well, and sometimes we like to swing out while we're performing! We dress in felt fedoras

and buttoned up waistcoats, with the obligatory silver ties and complementarily silver tie clips. And Lucy is ever the glamorous chanter. The Silver Ghosts have performed at the Royal Albert Hall, Florida in Soho and The legendary 100 Club. Currently the band performs regularly at the 'The Canonbury Caper' evening in The Canonbury. It is this that has helped to lead a local revival in swing dancing to live music not seen since the days of Count Basie and Louis Jordan. This evening and the band attract social dancers from miles around to enjoy the juke joint style party atmosphere, reveling in the evocation of



hot, breathless and high-spirited dance gigs of the era of both hedonism and heroism. It seems that despite the changes in culture, economics and technology, The Silver Ghosts are to continue recreating

the authentic ensemble swing jazz sound, which means, thankfully, the reveling ghosts of good times past are here again. The latest review from *Making-Music.com* sums up the energy in the band's performance, 'their musical craft (not to mention showmanship) is nothing less than a 101% convincing, hence the overall result being all rather infectious...what a delightful and dazzling night out on a cold and dreary Tuesday'. The Silver Ghosts perform at the The Canonbury in N1 on the second Tuesday of every month. Find out more online: Web: SilverGhosts.co.uk /Facebook: [facebook.com/SilverGhosts](https://www.facebook.com/SilverGhosts) /Twitter [@TheSilverGhosts](https://twitter.com/TheSilverGhosts)

Calling all budding editors!

The HCA needs you! The current editor of the Highbury Community News (this newsletter) will be moving to pastures new in the summer and so the HCA will require 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 and works closely with the HCA's

newsletter designer to produce about five issues a year filled with local content. Articles are provided by both committee members and wider members of the HCA who have felt the urge to take to their computers and put words down. The readership is just shy of 1000 members. The time commitment to the role of editor is not vast, but being organised is an advantage! If you are interested in taking up the position in August and would like more information from the present editor or to ask any questions please email HCAnews@hotmail.com or get in touch via Twitter - [@HighburyCA](https://twitter.com/HighburyCA).

Gillespie Park on Radio 4!



John McCarthy from BBC Radio 4's *Saturday Live* programme

Prompted by the 'hush' that the snow in January had bought upon London, muting the everyday early morning bustle, Radio 4's *Saturday Live* programme (19 January 2013) featured a segment from John McCarthy who was seeking out 'peaceful places' in London alongside Siobhan Wall, who has written a book called 'Quiet London'. Gillespie Park at the top end where Gillespie Road meets Dayton Park near Arsenal tube was one of the places they visited. It was first on their list and John McCarthy didn't hide his scepticism about finding peace and quiet in a location in the shadow of the Emirates stadium, frequented by 65,000 football fans, where people 'start shouting and supporting their teams.' However, upon visiting he describes the park as a place to 'wander off and lose yourself'. John McCarthy's audio picture for the radio included mentions of the rare orchids, the migratory birds that visit during the year and the urban wildlife like foxes and squirrels. Matthew Loveday, manager of Gillespie Park, was interviewed and provided a short history of the park, explaining that in the 1960s the space was abandoned and that over the following 20 years grass land returned to the site. He also encouraged more people to visit, and said, 'culturally people don't think that their allowed here, but we're now trying to encourage people to come and find solitude and relax'. Matthew also reminded listeners that the park features in Alistair Campbell's autobiography as somewhere he would go as part of his recuperation process from depression.

HANNAH BRISTOW

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Stands Alone - Photographic, audio and video exploration of the community at Highbury Square, built on the former Arsenal football stadium, by photographer Simone Novotny

Geffrye, Museum of the Home, Kingsland Road, E2 8EA
Tuesday 16 April -
Monday 26 August 2013
Admission £5/£3 conc.
Free entry to children 16 years old or under.
<http://www.eyesofchanage.com/standsalone/>

The Estoricks, Dealing to Collect - to mark centenary of renowned art collector Estorick Gallery of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square, London N1 2AN
Wednesday 17 April -
Sunday 16 June

Wed - Sat 11- 6pm, Sun 12 - 5pm.
Admission £5, £3.50 conc.
http://www.estorickcollection.com/exhibitions/forthcoming_exhibition.php

Highbury Community Association AGM - Come and join the party! Wine, food, raffle and much more
Christ Church, Highbury Grove, N5
Saturday 20th April at 7:15pm
<http://www.highburycommunity.org/>

Friends of Gillespie Park AGM - with a talk from Jonathan Elphick
Islington Ecology Centre, Drayton Park, N5
Tuesday 23rd April 2013
Starts at 19:15
<http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/docu>

ments/Environment/Pdf/ISL_Ecology_A5_hires.pdf

Olden Garden - open as part of 'Open Garden Squares Weekend'
Opp 22 Whistler Street, London N5 1NH
Saturday 8 June 2013 2-5 pm
<http://www.opensquare.s.org/list.php>

Olden Garden - open as part of the 'National Garden Scheme'
Opp 22 Whistler Street, London N5 1NH
Sunday 9 June 2013 2-6 pm
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<http://www.ngs.org.uk/gardens/gardenfinder/garden.aspx?search=type:advanced-dr:999-nm:Olden+Garden&id=25054>

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Highbury Memories



I was born in 1947 and lived in Calabria Road until joining the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1969 but my parents remained at their address until they retired to Devon in 1975. It always amazes me on the few occasions I return to walk around the area how some things have changed completely but others have altered so little. As children we played in the streets with very little traffic apart from the Daimler ambulances that tore down Calabria Road on a call-out with their bells ringing! The ambulance station was in Calabria Road. There was a 'Doctor Who' type police box in Highbury Grove that used to flash blue if they wanted the local policeman to telephone the station. The one aspect that remains unaltered are the

houses in Calabria Road and how good they still look - solidly built in the 1800s! We grew up without central heating and a solid fuel 'boiler' that heated the water. My mum did her shopping 'up the barn' (now Highbury Barn). The milk was delivered by the milkman with a horse and cart and later, an electric hand cart. A road sweeper would sweep the street regularly with a hard brush and load the rubbish in his cart. In Calabria Road there were several shops: Mrs Nicholls ran a newsagent's, there was a greengrocers, a café and an off Licence which is now a shop. There was also a barbers shop and a general store. I can remember Highbury Corner with traffic lights but no roundabout and a bomb site where the roundabout is now and us children playing fearlessly among the rubble. The big magnet for the children of the area was of course the 'Fields' (Highbury Fields) and the playground with a sand pit and a very tall slide. It also had a full time supervisor to

keep the children in check and the fields themselves were patrolled by Park Keepers in brown uniforms. I recall the London smogs walking to school holding in a line holding on to the jacket of the child in front because visibility was poor. I attended Drayton Park primary school and there wasn't a boat in the playground in my day. As children in the holidays we used to go to the Arsenal ground and wait for the players to come out after training and try to get autographs - we wait outside Arsenal tube station sometimes as players went to the ground by the tube then. The old open air swimming baths in Highbury Fields were used in summer days and my father used to take me early on a morning (apparently it was free then!). I remember the water was icy cold! There was a paddling pool next to the baths for the younger children, which was used extensively. Opposite the swimming baths there was a sweetshop owned by a man

called 'Sam'. He would initial the glass bottles of drink when selling them and would only refund a deposit if it had his signature on it. He used to look after our pocket money when we went swimming and return it when we came out in case it got stolen. In later years when I came home on leave I always stopped to buy Mum some chocolates from him. My grandmother lived in Gillespie Road and remembered the days where sheep roamed on the fields that became Highbury Stadium. She used to look after spectators bicycles on match days and get a penny a throw for it! She worked in Stephens ink factory that was opposite her house in Gillespie Road and there used to be a laundry next to her house. My late grandfather worked on the railway between Finsbury Park and Moorgate as a driver and his name is on the war memorial plaque within Baker Street tube station.

PETER HALES