

Barbara Butchers Birley Tree

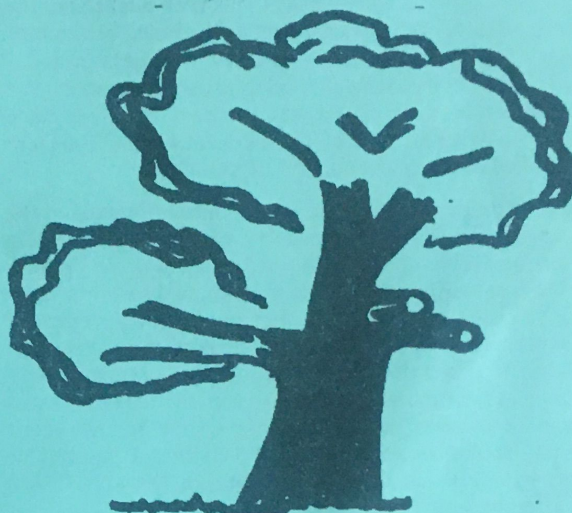
Tree chopped by council secretly at 5am

In the early hours of Friday 24th September, council workers moved in to fell the Birley tree. By the time most people in Hulme were awake, the tree was no more. The felling was carried out in blatant contravention of an undertaking made in court - to consult in advance three named people of the Hulme Alliance. The only contact with the community was made after the event in a letter to the chair of the Hulme Alliance from Barbara McLoughlin, Director of the Partnership. Her justification was that the police advised that this would avoid a large scale protest. The actions of the council may be in contempt of a court ruling, and a local person is looking into this, in case we as residents could take legal action against the council. A local resident said *"This has shown us the true colours of the Partnership - we knew all along that their so-called 'consultation' was just meaningless bollox to make them look good. If the residents said something they disagreed with, we knew they would just ignore use like they always have done. But this just takes the biscuit. They've gone back on so much of what was promised us in the 'regeneration' - I think there's no point even talking to them anymore because they so obviously just want profit. If we want something to change here from now on, we should just go ahead and try and make it happen ourselves - cos there's certainly no point in talking to the council after this."*

Locals Fight Back

We found out at lunchtime that the tree had been cut. I was phoned by the Big Issue. Paul Goddard saw the last bits being carted away.

A group of locals went to the site of the tree and fences fell over. One had been squashed where they felled the tree. More locals appeared, after a short ceremony and a few moments silence, with more locals turning up all the time. We gathered wood chippings and branches and went to the Moss Side & Hulme Partnership offices on the 8th Floor in the big building opposite the swimming pool. After a brief tussle with a security guard and a man in a suit, half of us got up the stairs and arrived out of breath on the 8th floor. One of us rang the buzzer and was allowed through the doors and six of us following closely behind. We demanded to see Barbara McLoughlin who wasn't there, Patrick Ross (a development officer) appeared and other staff flapped around. A wood chip trail was left all the way up the stairs (a hole in the bag) and through the



office. Barbie's office was occupied by around 6 people who turned off her electric heater (left on in an empty office!) and opened windows (far too hot!). We found a folder called 'Birley' in the filing cabinet, which Patrick Ross snatched away from us, and wouldn't let us anywhere near the filing again (what secrets are in there?). The wood chippings fell onto Barbie's desk, and meanwhile, one of the group managed to get to speak to Barbie on the phone. Police turned up and after pushing people around a bit, and filming us, escorted us out of the offices. One of the locals remained to clear up the wood chippings.

Considering what they had just done to the tree, and how they had treated us, the action was very peaceful - the Partnership deserve much more than a few wood chippings for this disgusting, dishonest and sneaky cutting down of the Birley Tree.

Angry local

See over page for a letter to Barbara McLoughlin from a resident

New Phoenix Team

After doing Phoenix for a year, Cath & co have handed on Phoenix to another team of people. July August issue was the first handover issue, and this one has been put together and distributed by the new team. Please write stuff for it, send us announcements of your events, write up events that have happened, send us your thoughts about stuff in Hulme. We print almost everything we receive, and we only alter things people have sent in if we need to cut it down for space.

Open letter to Barbara McLoughlin

On my way to work this morning the landscape had changed. So much was my surprise when I realised what had happened, I had to stop my car on the curb and burst into childish sobs - it was too much to take, I felt like I had lost someone. The beautiful tree that I had seen there for 18 years had gone, quietly, it was 9.15am and no-one was there to see it go. As I made my way to my building in tears, I couldn't exchange my usual cheerful greetings with anyone. Instead the sad news of the Birley Tree grew from office to office from flat to house, all over the estate people rang each other. I then realised how angry I was to cry over an action so trivial as this in the face of the terrible happenings in our world.

Find me naive, but if no-one starts to care about things, such as a tree, where do we start caring? This tree symbolised the strength and unity of a very large part of the Hulme community, especially the older community, the one that gets involved. It represented the change of mind over our environment for many generations to come. It was the best thing you could have left in Hulme as part of this redevelopment. I am lost for words to express what I feel so strongly.

There is not a day when I find myself having to explain the advantages of working with people, with the community in plans and projects in this area, and especially with people who hold important positions and are just coming to the area. I have to argue the obvious way ahead, the importance of involving people, the need for communication and the respect needed to keep everyone contented. I have even argued your role, your responsibilities and the important tasks you must be facing daily when no one better than you has the whole picture. Though most of the time I felt that I wouldn't do things the way you do, I kept thinking that there must be a reason for your actions.

The cutting down of the Birley Tree has sadden me enormously. While I realise that a new Hulme is emerging I hope that the best of the old can also be preserved. Your actions are more destructive than constructive and in your position I would gather my team and work out a process of regeneration, if not only too late, in which you include people rather than money.

Name and address supplied

Bentley tenants association gets going again

Tenants and Residents on the redbricks have kickstarted their tenants association by asking a company called BCHS to work with us to look at options as to what we can do with our estate, and how we can solve some of our problems. The work that the company is doing with us is being funded by a grant which is available, so we're paying nothing.

At the last meeting which was attended by more than 30 tenants and residents, it was clear that there was a strong community on the estate who want to build a positive future for everyone. The BCHS have produced a draft survey, a version of which will be sent out to all Bentley House residents in the near future.

If other TA's or people in Hulme wanting to set up a TA residents group, want more information about this, they can contact Cae Guests on 226 6979.

People's Kitchen

On Tuesday Sept 22 the Hulme peoples kitchen returned with a special party meal in the green space between Hunmanby and Humberstone Avenue. The kitchen will be back on a weekly basis in the near future. Phone 227 9223 for details

Hulme - the new one-storey car park for office workers

It's true, Hulme is being turned into a gigantic car park. The planning application for Birley Fields has so much car parking on it, it makes you wonder who they think is going to be working in Hulme. For an area with one of the lowest rates of car ownership in the country, and where lots of us could walk to Birley Fields, why does the call centre and other planned developments need so much car parking? Maybe they're planning for lots of workers coming in from outside. Homes for CHange is going to be stranded in a sea of car parks running from Asda to Bonsall St. And whatever happened to the emphasis on mixed use development? (something favoured by residents as making an area safer) This is going to be an industrial / office wasteground which will be dead after 5pm, no-one living there - and will become a no-go area. People from Homes for Change are strongly objecting to the planning proposal, but as we know, they'll be ignored anyway - after all, they only have to live there.

Get rid of our council housing stock? Not us guv, honest.....

The director of housing in Manchester, ?? came to the last meeting of the Hulme Alliance (tenants and residents group in Hulme), to talk about the current housing situation in our area and the city as a whole. To be fair, he seemed to want a genuine partnership between residents and the council, even despite that fact that he spoke in a high falutin jargon that I couldn't understand. He reported that the development of the Tenants Compacts (a partnership thing with the council) was really behind schedule in Manchester, but he'd be willing to see Hulme become a pilot area. However, what did seem a bit fishy was when we asked about whether they had plans to sell off more of the council housing in Hulme to private housing associations. He replied (in a roundabout way) that there weren't any imminent plans to sell off any more housing, but it was a question of what we were trying to achieve. If our problems with the council housing here were related to things like untidiness or crime, then that was different.

But if it was investment that we wanted as residents then there was no chance it could come from the council, and the only way to get big sums of money spent on the council housing round here was to sell it off. So basically, they're admitting that they will let it run down because they've won't spend money on it, until we lose our rag and vote to move to a housing association or something. Getting rid of council housing by the back door. We'll have to keep our eyes on that one.

Beginners Guide to Anarchy

Are you fed up with the way things are in this country? Do you wish you had more control over your life, rather than leaving the bosses and the politicians to make all the decisions? Come and find out about one alternative that may really surprise you when you find out what 'anarchy' really means.

A free course on Thursday evenings 7-9pm at the Ascension Church, Stretford Rd, Hulme. Course starts on the 16th September - come along then, or any other Thursday.

The articles in Phoenix do not necessarily represent the views of the Hulme Alliance