1949
Mill Hill Preservation Society The Studio, Mote End, Nan Clark's Lane, Mill Hill, London NW7 4HH
tel & fax: 0208 906 0769 e-mail: contact@mhps.org.uk web: www.mhps.org.uk Registered Charity No. 212993

Copthall Open Space Planning over the years

History of Rugby in Mill Hill – Mill Hill RFC founded 1937

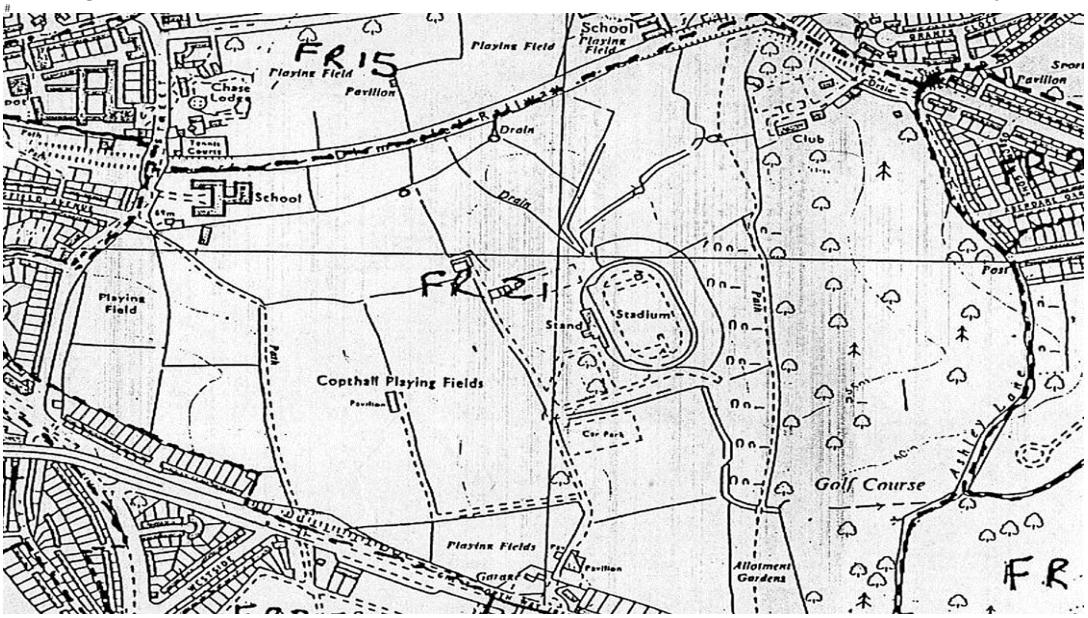
With the amount of green space and open country in and around Mill Hill there would be something wrong if there was no local rugby football team. It all began at the *Adam & Eve* in 1937 when 13 men (between pints) decided Mill Hill needed a rugby football club. There were lots of comings and goings – and a war - before the club settled on a permanent home base. In 1956 the war-time wheat fields of old Copt Hall estate were being developed as a sports complex and the club successfully negotiated for part of the playing fields. The club had to wait 2 years to gain access and spent this time at the William Ellis School. The Mayor of Hendon opened the new facilities. In 1962 there was an application for two 40'-0" floodlight towers – one either end of the clubhouse, **to which MHPS did not object**. In 1963 the number of changing rooms was doubled and a shower area was added.

Copthall Sports Stadium - 1964

The original Copthall Building was pulled down as minuted by the Society 3rd December 1958. The scheme was originally agreed by the Metropolitan Borough of Hendon – as Barnet was not a council at that time**. The track was built in 1964 and hosted the English Schools Championships that year. The complex perhaps achieved its greatest fame when London Crusaders made it their home for 2 seasons of second division rugby league between 1993 and 1994.

There is no record in the MHPS minutes from 1958 to 1964 of there ever being any objection to the stadium. The next 'Copthall' minute was 8th September 1965… "Noise from Copthall Stadium: It was agreed that a letter protesting at the noise from the loudspeakers were audible over most of Mill Hill, should be sent to the Town Hall." At that time there would be no motorway noise as it was not opened till 1967, and other traffic noise would be minimal – so Mill Hill must have been very quiet!

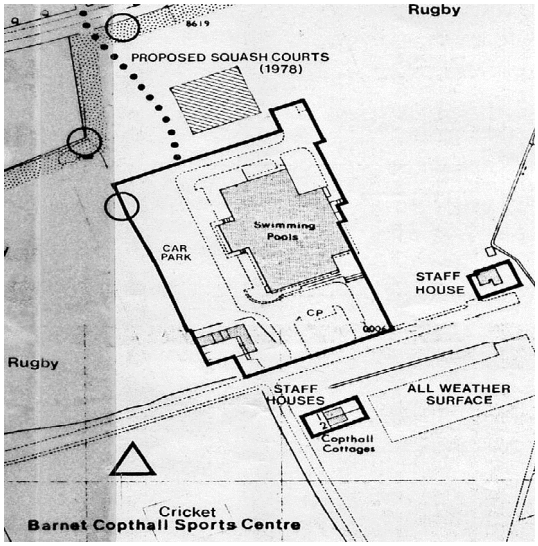
(**NB: The LBB was formed under the Local Government Act 1963 [enacted 1965] when the boroughs of Hendon, Barnet Town, East Barnet, Friern Barnet & Finchley were joined together.)



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Hasmonean Girls School – 1975
From the minutes of the Winter meeting 18th January 1967 it is noted: "The Hasmonean G. S: It was decided that a further letter was needed. The proposed development was on Green Belt land, but was otherwise acceptable."
It was noted in minutes of 21st June and 25th July 1967 that MHPS were encouraging alternatives sites to be sought by Hasmoneans. A site off Bunns Lane was supported by the Society. The Notes of 4th October 1967 state that the Copthall Playing Field site had been selected for the Hasmonean G. S. The Minutes of 4th December state that "A letter from the Ministry saying that the Borough Council had asked the Minister to decide the matter was read." Minutes of 16th October 1968: "Hasmonean School Inquiry: Mr Parry had found the plans consisted of an exchange of two 5 acre sites within Copthall Playing Fields. It was considered unreasonable and hazardous to expect a school to be built with access onto the Great North Road. It was decided by the sub-committee that **as the Council were not opposing this proposed building the Society should not be represented at the Inquiry.** The Committee approved this decision." Minutes of 17th April 1969: "Inspectors decision dated 10th April received approving the building in Page Street." On 14th August 1983 MHPS noted in a letter – "we believe that permission was granted for the original school (Hasmonean Grammar School) on condition that the school would not be enlarged".

Copthall Swimming Pool – 1978 (we think)
Minutes of MHPS meeting 4th November 1970: Concerning the proposal to spend £1.25m on swimming facilities it was agreed that greater amenity could be achieved by providing more smaller pools where needed in the borough together with heating the water of open air pools such as Daws lane for the same money. The chairman is to write to The Hendon Times. Minutes of meeting 9th December 1970: The secretary had a letter published in the Hendon Times concerning the misuse of public funds on a swimming pool in so remote an area." Minutes of meeting 17th October 1972: "Mill Hill Swimming Pool - Daws Lane: The Society to write to Town Clerk supporting a plan for this development in preference to the Copthall plan." There were other references to the Daws Lane site in meetings 3rd November and 1st December 1980, 5th January & 2nd February 1981 **but nothing on the swimming pool complex as built.**



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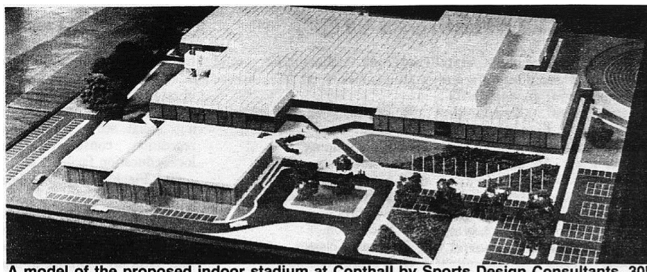
Covered Sports Arena – 1985

The covered sports arena was proposed as the National Indoor Sports Centre with seating for 5,000 people and car parking for 1,922 cars – located between the Copthall Swimming Pools complex and the existing Stadium. It was about 9 times the size of the swimming pool complex.

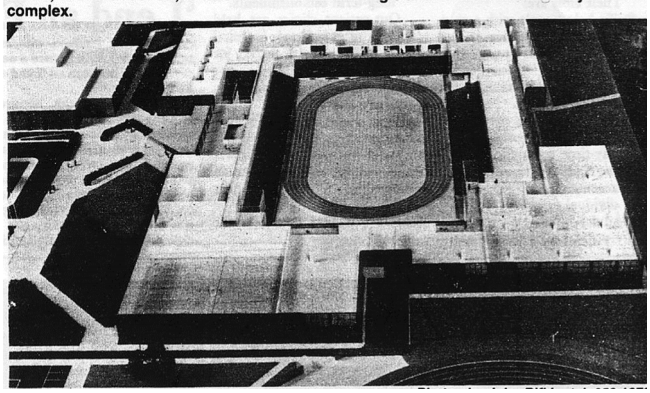
MHPS with other groups* objected on the following grounds:

1. It would destroy the whole of the northern end of Sunny Hill Park to provide an underpass for the arena traffic.
2. Cause massive traffic congestion at Fiveways Corner (since improved), Page Street, Pursley Road, Bunns Lane and surrounding roads.
3. No benefit to the local area – and the chance of pop concerts etc feared.
4. The scheme was on green belt - and generally a detrimental impact on Mill Hill.
5. The scheme not supported by National Sports Council who favoured docklands.

* Local Groups joining forces included MHPS, Copthall Area Residents Association, Finchley Society, Longfield Avenue Residents Association, the Manor Hall Association and the Hale Association.



A model of the proposed indoor stadium at Copthall by Sports Design Consultants, 30 James Street, Covent Garden WC2. The picture above shows the complex with the roof or the present Copthall Swimming Pools being in the bottom left hand corner. The pictur below, with the roof off, is taken from a different angle and shows the inside layout of th complex.



The scheme went to public enquiry, to be decided by the Environment Secretary, and the decision was against the proposal and the scheme died.

Metro Golf Course – unknown date

MHPS Chair noted 11 July 2003; **"Metro Golf Centre** began at Copthall as a modest 9-hole golf course and club house, where it was acceptable as a compatible development in the Green Belt in that it would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and encourage local sporting facilities". Recently proposals to add a crèche facility were turned down. (see driving range image on the following page)

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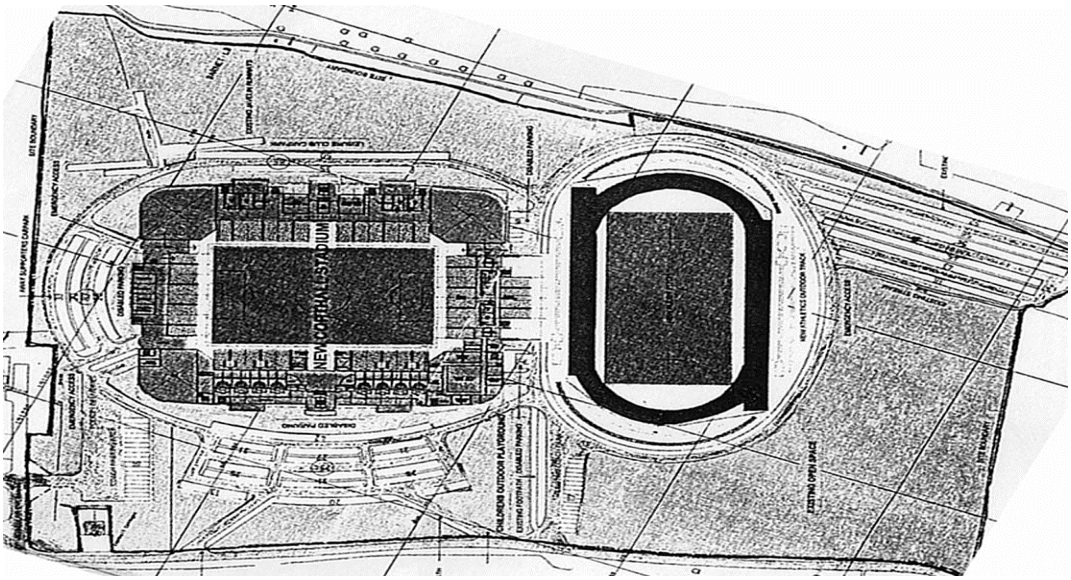


Power League Football – 1998

Planning application made September/November 1996 (W01752J) for the creation of synthetic football pitches, flood lighting, club house, and parking for 170 cars off Pursley Road. **The Society objected in June 1997**; greenbelt land; access road; floodlights; volume of noise; shortage of sports fields. Planners recommended refusal. Council passed scheme 26th March 1998. The facility opened October 1998. Power League then applied for variations to the planning conditions – generally opening times, floodlight times and bar times. **The Society objected to these changes** and this matter went to appeal and the appeal decision was generally against the changes.

Barnet Football Stadium – proposed 1997

May 1997: Barnet FC submits plans for £14 m - 10,000-seater stadium at Copthall on the site of the athletics stadium. Originally the scheme was submitted for 20,000-seater stadium. **After objections by many local groups including MHPS** the scheme was reduced in size, although the protests continued. Sept 1997: Barnet Council gives plans a green light after 3 hour debate. July 1998: planning enquiry held after outcry at council's decision. June 1999: Environment Secretary John Prescott overrules council and blocks stadium. December 2000; High Court judges say this action may have contravened European Human Rights Act.



JL / jl / Feb 2011/ End