

The Chamberlain Highbury Trust

This new charity was formed in 2015 to restore the house and grounds of the Highbury estate. Our vision is to open up the estate to the public and overseas visitors for:

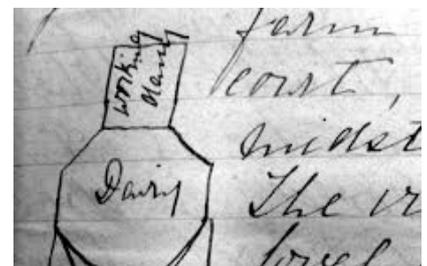
- Learning about Highbury's history and heritage
- Learning about citizenship and debating the future of Birmingham
- Enjoying and getting involved in all that the estate has to offer in terms of the arts, heritage and environment.

Highbury was built in 1879–80 for the prominent statesman Joseph Chamberlain, who lived here until his death in 1914. The mansion was named after the London suburb where he had spent his boyhood and was designed by the Birmingham architect John Henry Chamberlain, not a family connection, who in partnership with John Martin also designed the School of Art, the Reference Library and the Board Schools in Birmingham.

The style of the house is termed 'Venetian Gothic', plants and animals provide the decorative motifs throughout featured in stained glass, ornamental brasswork, tilework, stone carving and decorative wooden fittings.

The grounds of thirty acres were laid out to a design by Edward Milner, a Surrey landscape architect who had also designed the grounds of Southbourne, Chamberlain's previous home in Edgbaston. From a broad terrace on the garden front curving paths led through the pleasure grounds to a circuit path that ran round the perimeter and lead to ponds, a lake, a fern garden and garden buildings. To these were added an Italian Garden, A Dutch Garden and an Elizabethan Garden. The parkland in the centre was used for a hobby farm. Highbury was notable for its range of glasshouses.

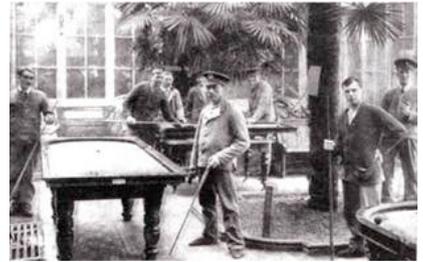
Highbury was inherited by Austen Chamberlain, Joseph's eldest son, and in 1915 the house was lent to the War Office as a hospital treating orthopaedic



cases. It initially provided 150 beds but as the War intensified these were increased to 240 beds, with the conservatory and many of the glasshouses being adapted as wards. Treatment of disabled soldiers continued after the war, many of the glasshouses being replaced by wooden buildings in 1922 to provide wards, operating theatres and treatment rooms.



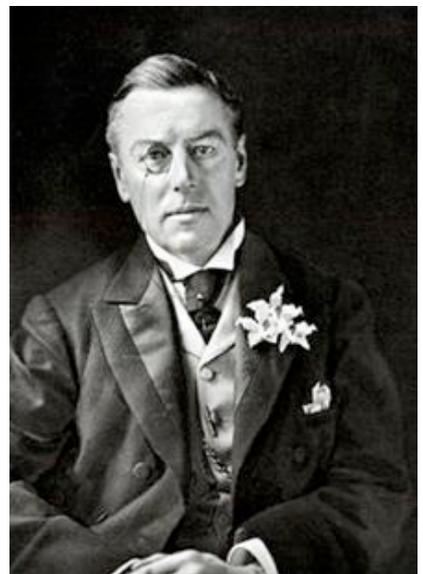
In 1919 Austen Chamberlain set up the Highbury Trust to whom he presented the house. The Trustees in turn gave it to the City when the hospital closed in 1932, together with the original grounds of 30 acres purchased from Austen by public subscription. The house then became a home for the elderly. In 1934 Joseph Chamberlain's library was opened as a Memorial Museum to commemorate his achievements in local and national politics. In 1940 the conservatory, fernery and the wooden range were demolished and replaced by a brick range called Chamberlain House.



The home for the elderly closed in 1984 and the City undertook a major refurbishment of the mansion to use it for civic entertaining and private hire.



In December 2015 the Chamberlain Highbury Trust was set up to take over Highbury and its original grounds and is currently seeking funds for restoration and new uses in line with its gift 'for the benefit of the citizens of Birmingham'.



Chamberlain House, used for many years as offices by Social Services, is now used by Uffculme School; the Highbury kitchen garden is cultivated by the Four Seasons project and the site of the old model farm is managed by the Highbury Orchard Community CIC.

