


NEWS LETTER



THE ALBANY - SPRING 1994

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Thank goodness Spring is on its way! To all residents who have been unwell during the last few months we wish a speedy return to good health.

KINGSTON POWER STATION

The public were invited to attend a meeting held on 27th January at Kingston College, to discuss arrangements for the demolition of the power station with representatives from the contractors, Brown & Mason Ltd., the owners of the site, Powergen, Officers from the Health & Safety Executive and the Chief Planner from Royal Borough of Kingston.

The meeting got off on a bad footing since the organisers had omitted to provide microphones and consequently two thirds of the audience could not hear what was being said and there were constant pleas "to speak up".

Although 'hostile' may be too strong a word to use, the contractors and Powergen representatives received severe questioning from members of the public obviously concerned about the asbestos risk, the lack of information being made available and the methods intended to dismantle the stacks and transport rubbish

away from the site.

The contractors apologised if anyone thought they were trying to stop the public seeing what was happening but their main concern in sealing the site was one of security and safety. They further confirmed that no decision had yet been made on whether the stacks would be demolished by controlled explosion, or by dismantling equipment. The contractors considered controlled explosion to be the better option but understood residents concerns, particularly those residents living within the 300 yard perimeter who would have to leave their homes for some hours on the day of the explosion. They confirmed that no decision would be taken on the method of demolition until full discussions had taken place and all parties concerned were happy.

In order to allay some of the concerns expressed, the contractors offered to allow a small nominated group of residents to visit the site on a regular basis to be kept advised of current developments. Further public meetings will be held and a video will be provided to show what is involved when a power station stack is dismantled by controlled explosion.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

At our Annual General meeting in January, there were one or two matters raised by members on which they requested clarification:-

Re-roofing contracts

A query was raised as to whether in future re-roofing contracts there was now a cheaper and less inconvenient method of carrying out this work? The matter was referred to the Chartered Building Surveyors responsible for the work. In their comprehensive reply they stated that consideration had to be given to the existing structure, and in the case of The Albany, the present roofs of the three Courts had been finished in mastic asphalt laid over 25mm of fibre board insulation to conserve heat in the flats below. This insulation board had suffered widespread degradation because of water penetration (this could clearly be seen when torn up and deposited in the skips). With the material's collapse and entrapment of rain water it was absolutely necessary to strip the roof covering in its entirety. The insulation was replaced by one with improved thermal transmittance properties. The Polymer modified asphalt used, carried a 15 year manufacturers' warranty. The Building Research Establishment

has estimated a maximum service life of 50-60 years although 30 years should be looked upon as being a realistically achievable period. Other coverings on the market such as polymeric single membrane or high performance felt covering have not as yet established a service life, whilst liquid-applied membranes based on bituminous or synthetic formulations are used mainly in remedial works such as small flat roofs where no thermal insulation board is required. These coverings were not considered suitable for the roofs at The Albany. When York Court is re-roofed the same method will be used. The effectiveness of the recovering must be of major importance, the inconvenience, although regrettable, is of secondary importance and like most work of a major nature is unavoidable.

External cracks in the brickwork

It is anticipated that by the time you receive this Newsletter, details of the work and cost will have been received from the Consulting Engineers and the relevant information posted on each Notice Board.

Extension of Leases

Investigation into this matter is presently in hand and a separate report giving all the pros and cons of so doing will be sent to each shareholder later in the year.

Appointment of New Secretary

With the impending move of Mr & Mrs Cook, Mr Reg Cook has tendered his official resignation from the Board and Mr Gary Gilmour of 21 Brunswick Court has been appointed a Director & Secretary in his stead with effect from 1st February 1994. Mrs Suzanne Gilmour has also offered assistance in providing standard letters for use when dealing with assignments of leases, sub-letting etc. I am sure I speak for us all in offering our best wishes to Sandy and Reg Cook for their move to the South Coast and our thanks to Reg for his services to the company.

Our Janitor - Peter Reeves

Peter has been with us now for nearly six months, during which time we have all seen the improvements he has instigated regarding the cleanliness in our Courts and around the grounds. He has a pleasant manner without

being effusive and is most helpful when his assistance is required. He says he enjoys working for us at The Albany.

Amendments to The Albany Handbook

Under Directors & Sub-Committees:

delete Reg Cook 8 Brunswick (546 7191)

insert Gary Gilmour, 21 Brunswick (549 2692)

Under Janitor:

delete Fred Brazier

insert Peter Reeves

FINANCE by Gary Gilmour

Being the "new boy on the block" and since the accounts have so recently been presented at the AGM, I'm afraid that there is little of note to report.

I was relieved to receive a balanced set of books from Reg Cook and, double entry permitting, they should stay that way! I have spent the last two years writing a computerised accounting system so it is refreshing to revert to the traditional manual ledgers - in current parlance "Back to Basics".

I have been initiated into my first Board Meeting and hope that I can make a positive contribution to the continued good management of The Albany.

SECURITY IN THE ALBANY by Edward Russell

Matters of security do not altogether make exciting reading, in fact the immediate thought that comes so often to mind is "Oh! What have I to do next?" Not so here. Within the Albany we should not be too dissatisfied with the trend within our boundaries and if we all maintain the present level of vigilance, it is reasonable to hope that we may continue to enjoy this calm. But of course nothing is more dangerous than complacency and it may therefore be worth reminding ourselves of the security measures that we should maintain and also to mention some of the more recent steps that have been taken within the Albany, and others that are under review. To name a few:

- A closer watch of Contractors is being kept to prevent them from propping open the Entryphone Doors while they are working in one of the flats.

- The increased presence of our Janitor, Peter Reeves, around our grounds with an ever-watchful eye.

- An improved set of 'video cameras' repositioned more strategically in the area of the Carports.

Consideration is being given to the possible effectiveness of the installation of a sensor-activated security light over the pool area. This would automatically light-up for a short period on the approach of anyone at night during the summer months. The cost of such a light would be in the region of £30-£40 and could be installed using our own resources! (Comments from residents would be welcomed).

Security of Flat Keys

There is a possible benefit in a set of house keys being available in an emergency or in the event of lost keys or perhaps becoming locked out. Some three-quarters of residents have deposited a set of keys with the Janitor but some have felt that there was a security risk with keys so held being labelled. This need no longer be a concern for Peter Reeves has devised a highly effective code to identify each key held and no name nor flat number ever appears. Yet one approach to Peter by the resident would produce the keys. A subsidiary to this, a mortice lock is being fitted to the front door of the Janitor's Lodge.

A final reminder - unknown callers unable to obtain a reply on the entryphone should be referred to the Janitor - not let in.

THE SWIMMING POOL by Alan Spong

"Tempus Fugit!" It does not seem possible that six months have passed since my last report on the pool in which I was optimistically hoping for some better weather before it was closed on 27th September. I suppose it could be said the previous three years experience of good summers gave us a sense of false security. There is however a credit side to the dismal picture of weather experience expressed above. The fact that the pool was only open four months, the efficiency of the new cover, and its assiduous use by the Janitor and your pool sub-committee in covering up at night, meant that the gas bill for the pool boiler was the lowest it has been for some years. The cost per flat per day was 4.462 pence.

The present weather is not conducive to thinking about planning for the pool opening, but nevertheless we must, because by late April early May it will be necessary for a number of jobs to be carried out. Firstly the pool needs to be drained, then cleaned after any repairs, and kept clean until the weather (dry sunny day) is right to paint it with two coats of special paint as was done last year. Long range weather forecasting is still a long way from an exact science, and living on an island on the eastern edge of the Atlantic Ocean is not helpful. It is therefore unlikely that we shall hear in good time of a spell of sunny dry days coming along when we want them! Just the same I shall keep my fingers crossed that perhaps this year we shall have the type of summer we desire to enable us to enjoy one of The Albany's best assets.

GARDENING NEWS by Frank Armstrong

Committee Changes

Valete. Thank you Frances Roberts. For about 20 years Frances has been a member of the Gardens Committee. She was, after Mr Gurney retired in 1978, the sole member for 10 years. During this period she acted as Chairman and Secretary as well as being an active member and Treasurer of the Association. Frances has offered to continue helping with the gardens where practical, an offer much appreciated. A similar offer of help has been received from Pam Smith who is also leaving the Committee. Pam has been active in The Albany for many years and is leaving to make room for a new resident of York Court.

Salvete. I am very pleased to welcome two new Gardens Committee members. Aidin Spong of 14 Ulster Court and Lesley Sirrell of 22 York Court, both of whom have given help during last year and have shown an enthusiastic interest in our gardens. Other help is also still required in the gardens, particularly in summer, and offers of dead-heading and watering are especially welcome.

We will very much miss the presence of Peter and Cynthia Francis when they move to Dorset. Both were keen gardeners and were original members of the newly formed Gardens Committee in 1988. We shall miss particularly the many hours Peter spent in the Spring pruning our hydrangeas and later dead-heading some of our thousand roses. Thank you both for your interest and help over recent years and best wishes in your new home.

"SO FAIR AND SWEET". A comment was made at the Annual General Meeting suggesting that more scent would be welcomed in our gardens. Your Committee had given much thought to this and in 1988 the Sunken Garden was completely renewed and old roses replaced with a bed of Fragrant Delight, listed in catalogues as "very fragrant" and "if you like strong fragrance then Fragrant Delight is undoubtedly the rose for you". When most of the Service Road border was replanted two groups of Sarcococca "fragrant flowers in winter" as well as Mahonia, Lavender and Skimmia were introduced. Elsewhere in the garden we have Choisya, Prunus, Robinia pseudacacia, Eleagnus, Jasmine and Viburnum all of which are listed under scented flowers, as well as hyacinths and our many other roses. Regretfully we do not know of any means to stop the winds around our three blocks which blow away any scents we may have arranged.

SMALL HERBS HAVE GRACE. In the last issue I advised that we have available a herb that "boiled in water and honie and drunken, is good against the cough and shortness of the breath. The oyle that is Chimically drawn out is used in pills for the head and stomach. It is also used for toothach." THYME.

Today we suggest "It is much commended of some, if the juice thereof be drunke with wine, to helpe those that are bruised by some fall, or other accident." (John Parkinson [not Hugh] 1629). We have many of these plants thanks to the efforts of an earlier gardens committee. Answer to follow.

NATURE NOTES by Brenda Lewis

Many of us get great joy watching our river birds, and are beginning to feel confident that this reach of the Thames must be much cleaner now. Teddington Lock recorded an adult salmon last year and tagged it, hoping it will join the five hundred salmon now returning to the Thames to spawn. Certainly local fishermen are looking forward to a good catch come this summer. With herons and cormorants enjoying fishing too, it is a healthy sign that they now nest down by the Thames Young Mariners House past Teddington Lock, and come up river opposite The Albany to catch their food. Our family of cormorants are back again, now increased with the new members of their family to over a dozen. This year one always dominates the buoy, while the others mostly use the islet downstream of Steven's Eyot. The culling of some Canada geese has certainly been evident in the reduction of long strings of hundreds making

their way up river, as well as in the increase this year of coots competing for food.

River walks for nature lovers are excellent right below our condominium. Walking towards Teddington Lock along the towpath in the spring, make for Thames Young Mariners House and look around the trees for nesting herons and cormorants; or in the summer, once out of the nest by June or July, the young ones standing around on the old barges, stretching their wings and flying from barge to barge. In the other direction, take a Spring or Summer walk along the towpath towards Kingston Bridge, cross it almost to the end, where on the left you will find a small roadway leading down to a quiet haven of the river. There you can see a few well-kept houseboats whose owners compete with one another in making the most attractive gardens along their waterfront. These are certainly, in Michelin terms, "worth a detour". And if you are lucky, you may again watch the handsome pair of great crested grebes who make their nest in a lifebelt tethered to one of the houseboats. Both birds incubate the eggs and tend the chicks, which leave soon after hatching. They then may be seen carried on the back of one parent while the other brings food. The chicks begin to dive for their own food at 6 weeks and a month later are completely independent.

GENTLE REMINDER!

Residents of Brunswick Court were inconvenienced by the Rubbish Chute having to be closed for over two hours recently while a baking tray which caused a blockage had to be removed. Such items should not be put in the chutes. REMEMBER, WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Congratulations to Mr & Mrs Roy Solomon, 20 Brunswick Court, on the birth of their son Nicolas, a brother to Daniel.

Deaths: Mrs Rachel Spyer - 29 Ulster.

SOTHEBY'S - FREE VALUATION

Sotheby's valuers are giving their services free on Friday, 18th March, from 10.30 am to 3.30 pm, at Sacred Heart Parish Hall, Edge Hill, Wimbledon. They will give advice and valuations on items such as jewellery, furniture, clocks etc. The Valuation Day is in aid of the Save the Children Appeal. An entrance fee of £3.00 per person will be charged which also covers valuation of two items.