

Albany Voices

The Albany residents' newsletter

The Albany — Autumn/Winter 1999

An Albany Master Plan?

Previous editions of our newsletter have discussed new challenges for The Albany — upgrading of the three courts and security systems. "Albany Voices" understands the Board is considering a scheme where both issues are incorporated, hence our reference to a Master Plan.

So far the following has taken place. An architect was given a brief about the Board's ideas last September. He presented detailed illustrated plans to the Board at a recent Board Meeting and the Directors gave their initial reactions to his work. The architect will return with an adjusted plan in January, and when the Board is satisfied, he (the architect) will present the plan to residents well before the next AGM, where the final decision will be taken.

An early estimate of the cost is approximately £250,000. However, "Albany Voices" believes the Master Plan can, if the AGM agrees, be carried out in stages and paid for through our normal service charges.

The importance of the above means all residents must come to the AGM to vote, and if they are unable, to ensure their view, for or against, is counted through a proxy vote.

Value of Albany Flats

Bentalls



Estate Office

**An assessment by Mr
Fisher, Manager Bentalls
Estate Office**

As the discussion about upgrading The Albany is gathering pace, "Albany Voices" invited the Manager of the Bentalls Estate Office, Mr. David Fisher, to share his opinion about the value of our flats and the impact the recent developments in our neighbourhood could have on our property.

As we approach a new Millennium, I would like to take this opportunity to look at the values within the development during the 1990s and what you as

shareholders should be considering to ensure continued growth.

Having marketed thirty apartments within the development since 1991 our statistics show that prices have risen by an average of 85% in the last eight years. To ensure continued growth at such high levels The Albany will have to compete with the ever growing number of new riverside developments currently under construction or in planning.

Today's purchasers are spoilt for choice and without further investment in improving and upgrading the development, The Albany may become less desirable as it begins to look dated in comparison with the competition.

The apartments built today provide the latest in comfort and specification as well as a high degree of security, a factor that is becoming more and more important to prospective purchasers. With this in mind I would like to suggest the following to The Albany's residents.

Security: Installation of entry gates and a new video entry phone system.

Internal communal areas: Upgrading of all internal communal areas including lifts.

Carrying out the above suggestions would have two effects. Firstly it would secure your long term investment and secondly it would improve the marketability of the development. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to discuss these recommendations or any matter arising from them. Our phone number is 546 3003 / e-mail: estate.office@bentalls.co.uk. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and best wishes for the new Millennium.

EDITOR RETIRES

After reading all the kind comments about "Albany Voices", (see page 4) I feel ashamed to let you all down now, but you must have noticed that, apart from breaking my arms some three years ago, I have this year broken my right leg while trying to cope with my broken left leg!

So life is full enough and I find thinking about, worrying about and quite often writing for "Albany Voices" just too much for me. Surely, there's someone out there who could take this on?

It has been a lot of fun and a year ago I thought nothing of it, just a little job I could manage easily — like falling off a log — until I fell once too often and I am back at the beginning, learning to walk! This limb breaking lark began trying to sail my grandson's parachute kite. It nearly took me off my feet though I didn't break any bones then, but after it has been downhill ever since. The picture of me on the balcony was taken two-three years before flying the kite, and I am so camera-shy that this is the only recent one I could find.



Brenda Lewis, our retiring Editor

The Great River Race

By Alan Spong

This particular event started 12 years ago and has become the London marathon on the river. This year there were 241 crews consisting of all types of traditional craft from numerous countries including Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Holland and France. The traditional style boats are powered by a minimum of four oars or paddles to larger vessels of over 20 persons.



London's greatest river event

The race starts between Marble Hill and Ham House and ends after 22 miles opposite the Naval College at Greenwich. Each boat must be coxed and, in keeping with the Watermen's ancient traditions as the taxi drivers of the Thames, must carry a passenger.

The optimum speed of all craft is calculated by computer, with no account being taken of the potential abilities of the crews. Boats leave the start line on a pursuit handicap basis — the slowest first — and are calculated to cross the finish line together if all crews put in identical performances. Thus it is the crew that extracts the most out of its boat, regardless of type, which emerges as winner.

The overall winners receive the Challenge Trophy of the *Company of Watermen & Lightermen of the River Thames* — a mounted Waterman's badge issued to William Savage of Gravesend in 1803. Next year's race will take place on Saturday 23. September. The start begins at 10.40am and lasts for one hour and 30 minutes. Don't miss it.

Food for Thought

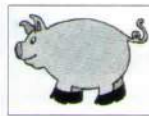
The Albany is a richly multicultural community. Apart from the UK, residents are drawn here from Continental Europe, Scandinavia, the Former Soviet Union, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Far East, the Americas and Australia.

The many cultures represented in The Albany reflect not only this country's history, but also the rapid development of international trade over recent years. And the friendly and mutually supportive

atmosphere we enjoy here at The Albany signals a sophisticated society where differences between us are perceived as inspirational rather than a threat to one's own values and culture.

Not all Albany residents celebrate Christmas, but most of us do and "Albany Voices" tried to find out how many regional variations to the traditional Christmas Day turkey we could find.

The selected four represents South America, The Middle East, Central Europe and Scandinavia. There are also many residents who do not celebrate Christmas, like the many Jewish families, and also the Indian Festival of Light. These we plan to cover next year, and we welcome ideas and contributions from residents.



Starting at **29 Brunswick, Maudee & Michael Cumming** gave us an insight into how Christmas is celebrated in their native Brazil.

Celebrations start on Christmas Eve rather than Christmas Day, and the big meal could be either turkey or piglet. If turkey, it is served cold and not stuffed. The stuffing is made separately from farofa (a tasty sawdust from California), or fruit. The most common main course, however, is roasted piglet, served with an apple in the mouth — and a smile on its face.

The drink on Christmas Eve is beer, not wine. The beer must be served "estupidamente gelada" (very, very cold). For dessert they eat a caramel pudding made of coconut based condensed milk, fresh fruit salad and ice cream.

Gifts, hidden under the Christmas tree are exchanged after dinner, which can be very late. Mrs. Cumming also pointed out that Christmas decorations are a big thing in Brazil, including lights, starting from the top to the ground floor of every building. London's Oxford Street is no match for Brazil's thoroughfares.



Next we visited **12 Brunswick Court**, where **Karen and Hugo Steinnes** celebrate Christmas according to customs from the West Coast of Norway. This calls for a

shipment of wind dried mutton ribs from that area, where the meat has been prepared for the occasion since September. Before drying, the meat is soaked in salt, spices and herbs for a few days, then hung to dry.

On Christmas Eve, around 4 p.m. the ribs are steamed for four hours, and served at 8 p.m. in the evening with boiled potatoes and mashed turnips.

The meal is accompanied by Aquavit and beer — Aquavit being the Nordic schnapps. The best of all the Aquavits is Linje Aquavit. The word Linje refers to the equatorial line and which Linje Aquavit crosses twice in its lifetime as barrels of it are loaded onboard ships in Oslo, shipped to Melbourne and then back to Oslo where it is bottled. The reason for all this to-ing and fro-ing is that the ship's movement and the

changing temperature from arctic to tropic and back to arctic is the perfect way of maturing this nectar. And, as in Brazil, it must be served "estupidamente gelada", with a lager as chaser.

The dessert is always cloudberry which grow in Arctic marshland in the mountains. They look like raspberries but are yellow when ripe, and the taste is as deliciously wild as the area in which they grow.



The mountains connection can be found again at **20 Brunswick** where Mr. & Mrs. Solomon will celebrate a Lebanese Christmas with their son and two grandsons. Gifts, placed under the tree are exchanged after the family returns from the traditional Midnight Mass. The main meal is the Christmas Day lunch where according to tradition a whole Lebanese mountain goat is served, stuffed with minced meat, rice, spices and assorted nuts. To make the meat properly tender, the goat is roasted slowly for a whole day and served with salad, hummus, babaghannouj (aubergine, tahin, garlic, olive oil and salt) and roast potatoes. On top of this they also serve turkey with lots of vegetables.

The drinks are many and varied and the most exclusive is Arak, home brewed by Mr. Solomon's brother. But there is also wine, beer and whisky to drink. The desert is the great balewa (shredded wheat with soft cheese and golden syrup — probably a distant relative of the Greek baklava), then Christmas pudding and cakes.

Christmas is also the time when families visit one another. During the Christmas Season, all relatives are visited and variations of the same most generous and delicious Christmas Day lunch is served. They start eating between 12 noon and 2pm and keep on going until late night reminding each other throughout the meal — "sahtan" — a word meaning "may the food do you good".



The Dutch approach is to be found at **3 Ulster**, the home of **Irene & Robert Spikins**. The Dutch links the exchange of gifts to the arrival of St. Nicholas (Patron Saint of the Children) who for some reason comes by boat directly from Spain on December 5th, via Amsterdam. With him are lots of little helpers — the Black Peters — from North Africa. The St. Nicholas part of the celebration is for the younger ones — up to 7 years of age. Hay and carrots are left in a clog outside the front door for St. Nicholas horse. St. Nicholas arrives in Amsterdam and the rest of the country at the same time. This is how it works. If you have children in that age group, you make a deal with neighbours where one dresses up as St. Nicholas, another as a Black Peter. Mom and dad then provide St. Nicholas with a run-down of their offsprings' negligence and disorderly behaviour. Black Peter, meantime, gets a card with all their good deeds. When St. Nicholas knocks on the window to confront the youngster with the list of his or her shortcomings, his conclusion is

inevitably that a gift is not really on. However, Black Peter is always on the side of the kids and uses his list of achievements to convince St. Nicholas that, on balance, there is still good hope for the youngster and a gift is indeed deserved.

For everybody over seven, the exchange of gifts takes place in the evening. They are brought into the living room in a big basket and again — what follows is all different from the rest of Europe. Firstly, the actual gift is wrapped in such a way that the gift itself is very difficult to locate. Irene remembers receiving a gift ones hidden in a wooden horse. Secondly, each gift comes with a poem, written by the giver in a very teasing manner making the receiver wondering who the gift is from. However, all is revealed before the evening is over.

There is no tradition of special food on Christmas Day. While they have a big Christmas Eve dinner, families eat their own favourite food. Then it is off to Midnight Mass and in the morning on Christmas Day a large breakfast is served — big enough to provide energy through to the evening. Christmas ends after Boxing Day, the day for visiting family and friends.

Snapshots from the Summer of '99

By Maureen Abel

The Summer season didn't start all that well with major work on the pool, several visits by local hooligans and unsettled weather. However, when the Summer did arrive, we had some jolly good parties in the garden. The BBQ parties, of which one was organised at some 8 hours notice, turned out to be most successful. It appears that residents are warming up to this kind of partying, as shown on the pictures.

We also held a bric-a-brac sale in June which turned out to be quite a social gathering. Residents kindly donated items to be sold and sales came to a total of £88. Some of this money was spent on BBQ coals, lighter fuel, etc. and the remainder will go towards future events.



*The "Master Chefs"
— obviously enjoying
cooking for The
Albany's residents on
a balmy summer
evening*

In December we intend to hold a drinks party in the respective lobbies before lighting the Christmas tree. You will also have received information about a Millennium Lunch we hope to arrange in January. As Head of the Social Events Committee, I invite residents to contact me (20 Ulster) with ideas or suggestions about other future social events.



A small selection of photographs taken at our various "Garden Parties" during the summer at The Albany.

Anyone know of a good plumber?

"Albany Voices" is compiling a directory of decorators, plumbers, electricians, and builders that have provided quality workmanship and good service to residents. Please send your recommendations in writing giving the tradesman's name, trade and telephone number to Brenda Lewis (5 Ulster) or Hugo Steinnes (12 Brunswick). The directory will be distributed to all residents in March. No-one will be held personally responsible for their recommendations.

Comments from Residents about the Spring/Summer edition of "Albany Voices"

Dear Mrs. Lewis, (re security) — Surely if we turn The Albany into a sort of Fort Knox and pull up some of the roses we are giving the victory to the vandals. How about spending the money on a guard with dog, perhaps at weekends or at night.

Peggy Brooking, 3 York.

Dear Brenda, I don't recall receiving the previous "Albany Voices", but the Spring/Summer edition was waiting for me when Dorothy and I returned this week from abroad. We enjoyed it very much indeed. Reference the Plea with which it ends, please don't be discouraged by off stage grumbles. We remember with pleasure our time at the Albany and are quite determined to return there.

Mr. & Mrs. Watson, ex. 8 Brunswick.

Dear Brenda, Regarding Barbeque. Not a problem but a big thank you for yet another enjoyable BBQ on Saturday evening (at very short notice) involving a lot of work for a marvellous team. It was really a truly happy occasion and expert chefs available, indeed. Again, thank you from **Dolly, 10 York.**

Dear Mr. Steinnes, Thank you so much for sending me a copy of your excellent "Albany Voices". I will certainly be showing it to other members of our committee, who will be delighted, as I am, to find that there is a new focal point for Albany residents. We are also very grateful for your references to our organisation and will be pleased in the future to discuss interchanging material for mutual advantage.

Mr. John H. Clarke, CARA

And residents have given these verbal messages to the editor: **Alan Spong** phoned to say "Albany Voices" is excellent; **Diane Parker** called in to say how much she enjoyed "Voices" and so did **Vivian Abel**. **Paul Temple** stopped me to say "Albany Voices" was fine with its interesting contents and lovely colourful pictures; **Jennifer Kerckhove** has not only enjoyed every issue but she lent the first issue and has never had it back. She keeps every issue and is impressed with how different they are; **Monica Heppner** said she did enjoy it, but couldn't it be cheaper? **Esme Layton** read it all through and thinks it is very interesting; **Maureen Abel** was most impressed by it and says you can never please everybody — don't let the antis get you down; **George Newman** said it was a good and useful "Voices"; **Dudley Vaughan** was not impressed, however. He said I was scraping the bottom of the barrel writing free ads, i.e. CARA, the North Kingston Centre article, Turks, The Hawker Centre, etc.; **Michael Lewis** said it is a delightful read.