

Connaught Mews NEWS



January 2003

Ground Force

Charlie's grand design

At the back of Lantern House, was a rather dull/dark courtyard, that had real potential. With what can best be described as an old brick flower bed, that had grown some rather large trees over the years. The trees cut out a lot of light for a handful of residents, and had grown so large as to push the brick wall over. The brick wall would have to be totally rebuilt, and if the trees were not removed then in a few years we would have the same problem all over again. We obtained quotes for the small works, and were shocked at their cost. £1,000 to cut down trees and remove stumps and £2,000 to replace brick wall.

The committee decided to remove the trees themselves saving up to £1,000. So early one Saturday morning armed with a chain saw we did exactly that. After the second tree was felled a hand full of residents asked if they could help. The Ground Force Team was born. Once the team got going, we split into two groups. One group concentrated on felling the trees (all 14 of them!) and chopping them up into logs whilst the other group carted all the branches up to the top of the garden for a massive bonfire.

The bonfire turned out to be a little too big for some as passing cars on the road must have spotted the flames and called the fire brigade out (twice!). After it pulled up, a ladder and head peered over the wall to see what was happening. There were no problems once they saw everything was under control. The fire also gave us a chance to burn some garden waste and other rubbish that had been dumped behind the paladin bins. At the same time we also managed to cut back a couple of trees that are growing in the wall along Woolwich New Road. As can now be seen from the road, these have already pushed up four courses of bricks.

A few ideas were bounced around that day.. "what if we replaced the old brick wall ourselves with old railway sleepers" Karen (13L) one of the Ground Force Team (Charlie as she likes to be known) put pen to paper and come up with an imaginative yet inexpensive design for the sad old courtyard.

Would you like to help ?

Your committee spends a lot of time and effort doing little jobs around the Mews. This helps to keep the cost of the service charge down each year. However we can always use more help from time to time.

Project 1 We are planning to have the old vehicle entrance (now for pedestrians only) partially reinstated, (see Gate Failure ? page 6). Once this has been completed the committee plans to attach some wire mesh to the bottom of the gates to stop leaves and rubbish getting through the gap at the bottom. At the same time giving the gates a lick of paint.

Project 2 Charlie's grand design - we still have a lot to do, and would welcome more hands.

Project 3 We are planning to fit new lighting, mirrors and possibly blinds into the gym. Finished off with a lick of paint.

If you would like to help, please send a note to: **CMMCL, 20 Lantern House, Connaught Mews, London SE18 6SU.**

Your committee welcome any suggestions and ideas for improving the Mews.

The Ground Force Team plan to remove the tree stumps and broken brick wall. The wall will be replaced with old railway sleepers. As they are saving the company £3,000, they have been given a budget of £1,000, so that they can transform the courtyard into Charlie's grand design.

The end result will be a much nicer courtyard for the use of all residents at a third of the price.

This proposal was put to the committee and was accepted.



A gentle reminder!

New residents might not be aware and the older residents might have forgot... so just in case please remember the following:

Rubbish

If you need to dispose of large items of rubbish that don't fit into the bins, don't leave them by the bins. The rubbish collectors will not take them. You can take household rubbish free of charge to the **C.A. Site Nathan Way Thamesmead SE18** Tel: **0208 921 4647**. Greenwich Council no longer operate a free collection service for 'Larger items'. **Please remember that some items might fit in the bins if dismantled or broken into smaller pieces.**

Car parking

Only park in the provided parking bays. If you prefer to unload your car closer to your block, then after you have unloaded please park in a proper parking bay.

Motorcycles & cycles

Please do not chain them to the railings around the buildings. We suggest that you lock them to the crash barrier by Artillery House for maximum security. **Please try to park at least two motorbikes together in one bay.** We recommend that you lock your motorcycle/cycle at all times when parked at the Mews.

Communal areas

Please do not leave rubbish outside your flat for any length of time.

Service charge payment

You should receive your service charge invoice shortly. Late payers like last year will be charged interest for late payment. *(see back cover for information on a monthly standing order idea).* **Delay means that important works will be put on hold!**

Gardens & lawns

All gardens & lawns can be accessed by all residents. Please do not drop litter or dispose of cigarette butts anywhere in the grounds or pathways. **All ball games are strictly prohibited.**

Sub letting

The company will readily give its consent to lessees wishing to sub let their flat providing that you obtain the company's prior consent. This is a condition of your lease.

Washing lines

These are strictly prohibited.

Music/noise

Not too loud or too late (suggestion 10.00 pm) please.

All of the above are conditions of your lease. You will encounter problems if you do not stick to these rules.

If you would like a copy of the lease, please send a note to: **CMMCL, 20 Lantern House, Connaught Mews, London SE18 6SU.**

Buying the Freehold

Premium property

Some residents have expressed interest in buying the freehold of their Connaught Mews flat. Not a bad idea as those who have done so find their property at a premium when it comes to selling.

You too can buy the freehold to your flat for £1,500. This gives you a say in how the Mews is managed with voting rights at the Annual General Meeting. Ground rent, normally charged at £100 for leaseholders, is usually waived.

If you would like more details on buying the freehold, send a letter to: **CMMCL, 20 Lantern House, Connaught Mews, London SE18 6SU.** Or email us at **cmse18@hotmail.com**

External Decorating

Possible action required

We are currently carrying out a survey of the property for us to produce a specification for the external decorating. This will also highlight the flats that currently have problems with the window frames. We appreciate you might not be aware that your frames might be in need of repair. A couple of residents have already completed their window frame repairs for next year.



External decorating will take place in the spring. Please note that it is the responsibility of the property owner to repair damaged window frames to their property. If you have damaged frames, you should start to think about getting them repaired before the decorating takes place in the spring. **Damaged windows will not be painted.**

The Lease states: At all times during the said term to keep the Demised Premises and all additions thereto and the Lessors fixtures and fittings therein in good tenable repair and decorative condition and in every fifth year and the last three months of the term in good and workmanlike manner to clean prepare and paint with two coats of good quality paint and lacquer varnish or polish all such internal parts of the Demised Premises as have been previously or which ought properly to be painted and lacquered varnished or polished and in the same manner strip wash and repaper the walls and parts previously or which ought properly to be papered with wallpaper of good quality (but not to decorate any part of the exterior of the Demised Premises and forthwith to replace all broken glass.

The Sash Windows Workshop Ltd Tel: **01344 868668**
Sash Windows / Glass (Charlton) Tel: **020 8319 2699**

2003 Service Charge

Major works

It is that time of the year again; the yearly Service Charge bill will be going out early on in January. There have been a great many tough decisions made relating to what is being planned for next year. As you know, the lease states that a number of works should be carried out on a specific schedule. The major items include internal and external decorating. Both the internal and external decorating should be carried out every three years. Before the CMSE18 Management Company was set up these had never been carried out and so we have been playing "catch up" ever since.

In 2001 the external decorating for the blocks was due again, we decided to postpone this one year as we also had the big expense of installing the new entrance gates and railings. We have been asking for you to double check your window frames and have them repaired if necessary (see article), a number of you have already completed this.

In 2004 we are once again due for the internal decorating to be redone. As you can appreciate these are major works with big price tags. We have also planned to have the carpeting replaced in all of the blocks. This became especially necessary following all of the flooding in Nightingale's basement. Our insurance had fortunately paid to have this done. Unfortunately as you know this year has seen a couple of big expenditure issues. Firstly the issue with not costing in the railings (this was explained in a previous newsletter) and secondly the emergency repair works carried out on Artillery House roof. This has meant that we have had to redirect these funds to these more important jobs causing the re-carpeting to be postponed once again.

This year we will be carrying out external decorating probably around Easter time (when the weather improves) but we also need to complete the re-carpeting works that desperately need doing in some areas of the Mews. We appreciate that some residents have raised concerns about the state of the carpets. It has been decided to carry out the re-carpeting in the summer when we might need to issue a further demand as the combined cost of both sets of works arriving just after Christmas would be unfair. The external decorating will also include some fairly major repairs to some of the rendering on some of the external walls, especially in some of the gullies of all blocks.

We have estimated the service charge this year to be just under £1,500 + ground rent. This includes the estimated cost for the external decorating set at over £30,000.

Most of the other items have fortunately been kept at similar levels to previous years but there have been some notable exceptions. Our refuse collection costs have increased significantly, this is as a result of having to pay to have dumped items removed from the Mews. **Please remember that if an item does not fit in the bin, it will not be collected and we need to pay to have it removed.**

The other major increase has been the buildings insurance. Our insurance quote is only due in the spring. In 2002 we had to estimate this based on the knock on effect of September 11th, we had increased this to £6,500 from £5,657 but unfortunately we had underestimated with the actual amount being £8,899. This is likely to increase as a result of further claims.

There are also a number of other works being planned and some have already been started. As mentioned in the water works article, a number of further water related works have been actioned to hopefully solve the flooding issues once and for all. We also have quotes for carrying out a tree maintenance programme. This is more expensive than you might think. As a result, we have recently been tackling some of these smaller jobs ourselves; this has already led to savings of around £2,000 (see the ground force article).

CMSE18 Management Company was created to improve the Mews, whilst keeping costs to a minimum.

Previously we had been managed by various management companies that were not interested in keeping our costs down. In fact it was in their interest to keep them high, making them more profit at our expense.

Your committee is selected from residents only and has the Mews interests at heart. We continue successfully to keep costs to a minimum and work hard on a voluntary basis to meet these objectives.

2004 Service Charge

More Major works

As already mentioned, in 2004 we are due for internal decorating. This is another major works with a big price tag. We are currently estimating that the 2004 service charge will be slightly lower than 2003.

Gym

Not in tip top condition

Some of the more fitter residents among us, might have noticed the Gym is a little worse for wear. The exercise bike and step machine have been broken for some considerable time. The Gym is a valuable part of the complex, and we would have liked to have replaced this broken equipment straight away. However due to tight budgeting we didn't have enough money to replace it so late in the financial year. The equipment will be replaced very soon.

A bit of Trafalger Square

Duncan Horne (13Lantern) has managed to acquire two benches that were situated in Trafalger Square up till October last year. These benches will be cleaned up and fitted ready for the summer.

Fire wood (logs)

Do you know anyone that would like some FREE fire wood. Please drop a note to: **CMMCL, 20 Lantern House, Connaught Mews, London SE18 6SU.**

Water works

In the last newsletter back in July, we explained a number of water related issues that have been happening around the Mews. Including the problems with the drains, gutters, roof and damp. Well, things have not stopped there and we have been hard at work trying to combat a number of other water related problems.

Nightingale's Gully

A number of water related works have now been completed to help combat the problem of flooding in Nightingale House. As outlined previously, Nightingale gets the brunt of the entire water role off from the property with most completely bypassing Lantern House. When the flash floods come (all too frequently nowadays) the drains are only able to cope for a certain amount of time. If leaves block the drain covers then water can quickly build up. Food waste in the drains also slows things down.

With this in mind we have now added concrete plinths to two of the walls in the basement gully. Lantern House for example already has such a plinth. The plinth has also had a special black "synthaproof" coating added to repel water.

It was interesting to note that whilst carrying out these works, remains of an older less effective coating was found so our predecessors have obviously been having similar problems.

In the event the drains become blocked again and water starts rising, the plinths will now stop water from entering the basement flats. In addition to this we have installed two barrier walls, one across the gully and another raising the level of the meter cupboard door. Unfortunately, the barrier across the gully has proved ineffective (resulting in internal flooding again in November) so we have now added a similar barrier to the base of the fire exit door. We are in the process of replacing the affected internal woodwork that has been damaged from the previous floods.

Leaking Pipes

A number of flats have been dripping externally recently. It is not always obvious this is happening so please check the pipes outside your windows to make sure you are not dripping as it causes dampness to the walls and can leave permanent stains on the brickwork.



Dripping can happen for a number of reasons. The most obvious is that the adjustment on your toilet needs readjusting (which they do from time to time). Simply lift the top off your toilet and with a flat bladed screwdriver, tighten the plastic screw thread a couple of turns. Now flush and wait for it to refill. This time, the water level should be an inch or two below the height of the overflow pipe. Repeat as necessary. Problem solved and you should save a few pence on your water bill!

Failing Boilers

A more serious problem regarding leaking has been happening with the elm leblanc boilers which most of the flats still have. It is well known that these units are less than exemplary. A common problem is with loss of water pressure, this tends to cause water to drip from out of the pipe on the wall outside your flat. With the loss of water pressure the boiler is meant to automatically switch off. It is then common for us to top the pressure up using the two taps below the boiler to get it going again. Unfortunately this turns out to be a short-term solution. The water pressure soon falls again. Some residents have taken to leaving the taps slightly on to keep the pressure topped up! Under no circumstances do this! At worst, your pipes could be damaged causing serious water damage and needing your floorboards to be raised to fix the problem. High pressure also reduces the life expectancy of the boiler's pump that is expensive to replace. At the same time there will probably be a constant stream of water coming out of the pipe outside causing problems.



If you have the water pressure problem, you probably have a faulty valve on your boiler, all the water you are adding is being discharged out the side of your property which if not caught soon leads to dampness and wall damage.

Megaheat on 020 8660 2520, is an elm leblanc specialists and have worked on many boilers at the Mews.

The correct pressure is around 1 bar when the heating is off or around 2 bars when the heating is on. A temperature setting of about 70°C is also ideal. If the pressure is too high, there is a release valve at the back, push this with your fingers and water will be emptied out of the external pipe.

Drain Repairs

We have now fitted a long drain cover to one of the drains at the car parking level, this is hoped to help with the problem of the drains becoming quickly blocked with leaves when there is a heavy downpour. We are monitoring the situation on this.

The drain to the side of Nightingale House has also been overhauled as this takes a large percentage of the water run off from the car park and garden. We are also having a new drain cover manufactured for in front of Nightingale House. Unfortunately it is not an off-the-shelf purchase due to its age and so this is taking a while to replace.

Lantern House Roof

Some of the chimneys in Artillery House have now been capped. A special cover is added to stop rainwater from going down the chimneybreast. When the chimneys were in use, this was never a problem, as the heat from the fires would dry them out. Now they are no longer used, this can sometimes cause problems. One of the flats in Artillery's basement has been having such problems.

It was also found that building material had been left in the chimney from when the flats were converted, this acted like a sponge holding the rainwater causing damp.

Artillery House Roof

Last but definitely not least: we have had to carry out repair works on the Artillery House roof. A relatively small leak was reported. What started out as a small leak actually turned into a major repair job, not made easy by various problems.

The first contractor that was contacted let us down, after many weeks they failed to show (after countless promises). The next contractor we tried was not able to give us an estimate until we had scaffolding erected to give him access to the problem areas on the roof. This in turn led to further problems trying to get a contractor to erect scaffolding.

Finally we managed to get everything in place. When the problem was assessed however it turned out to be a bigger job than was anticipated. Two contractors were then contacted and submitted estimates with the second one being substantially less than the first.

It turned out that there were a number of areas that needed work. A complete overhaul to the rear elevation, replacing a large number of missing slates, repairs to gullies, drains and gutters. A replacement of the flat roof needed to be done above the stairwell as this was leaking. After the repairs were carried out, the roof was then fully re-asphalted.

The works are now complete and have been guaranteed for 10 years so hopefully there will not be any further issues here.

All Safe & Secure ?

Don't be too complacent

The fitting of the gates has improved security for the Mews, but it will not stop a determined criminal. With this in mind please be vigilant around the Mews. Please ensure that all doors are shut when entering or leaving. Do not let anyone enter the building, unless you have established their identity.

It took the best part of eight years, a handfull of committee members and a change of planning officer, combined with the constant pressure from our very own Janet Bellis (2 Artillery) that finally secured the gates for the Mews. Janet took the tough challenge to hassle and keep on at Greenwich Planning Department, until they said yes.

As the committee has had only positive comments regarding the finished gates, I'm sure that you would like to thank Janet for her hard work with this project.

Some gate faux pas

There have been a number of cases where vehicles have gained access to the Mews as a result of the gate recently being opened by another vehicle or pedestrian. Quite often though they are unable to contact the flat required or indeed get back out of the Mews. If you see someone at the gate, please let them out.

Pedestrians, please don't use the vehicular gate by using the remote control.

Please use the pedestrian side gate. (Don't be lazy)

Don't forget to let your visitors out

The gate doesn't open itself, (We have deliberately not activated the automatic exit feature for security reasons)

A good idea

Have you thought about updating your answering machine message?

Don't forget, your phone now also answers calls from the gate so if you are out and waiting for a delivery, why not add a suitable message to your answer phone instructing them to leave their collection details.

Gate Failure ?

What to do if it happens

Step one

You need to ascertain if the fault could possibly be with the remote control unit. Press the yellow remote control button. If the red light doesn't come on or is faint, you should test the battery and its connections, as this could possibly be the fault.

Step two

Using the entry phone system on the gates, press the button for flat 20 Lantern House. The call will go through to PG Ashton's, explain the situation to them and ask them to try to open the gates.

If you experience a problem outside of office hours, you should telephone the gates (just like if you were letting out a visitor). If the gates open, it is likely to be a remote control unit fault.

Step three

If the gates still do not open, then you need to telephone PG Ashton's, and make them aware of the problem. PG Ashton's will then contact the committee. The committee will then disable the gates as soon as is possible and the gates will be left in the open position, until the fault can be repaired. If you experience problems outside of office hours, you should seek a committee member directly.

Due to health & safety, warranty and insurance issues, only committee members can disable the gates.

Therefore it is not possible to let non committee members shut down the gate in the event of a failure.

Step four (emergencies only)

We are currently arranging to have the old vehicle entrance (now for pedestrians only) at the other end of the Mews partially reinstated. In the event of an emergency and the above steps have failed, it will be possible to get out via this exit. The gate will be padlocked but keys will be made available to residents.

Please be aware though that you use this at your own risk. There is no kerb crossover here and so you must be extra careful when driving out.

P.G. Ashton Property Management Co. Ltd

5A High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 6PU.
Tel: 020 8590 1219 Fax: 020 8597 0051
E-mail: pgashton@romfordbranch.freeserve.co.uk

Connaught Mews SE18 Management Company Ltd

20 Lantern House, Connaught Mews, London SE18 6SU.
Fax: 020 8316 5298 E-mail: cmse18@hotmail.com

Gate Remote Control Units

Unfortunately, because we no longer purchase them in bulk, the cost from the supplier has increased. They now cost £45.00 each.

Gate Telguard system

If you need to change your telephone line, which answers calls from the gate entry system. You will now be charged an administration fee of £20.00 to update the Telguard system.



“What the papers say”

The Wharf

OCTOBER 3 2002

Ken Backs new bridge for Thames

"Take X-rail south" plans slammed

By AARON LANGMAID

PLANS for an alternative Crossrail route - bypassing Canary Wharf and Royal Docks - have been slammed by Newham Council. Newham Mayor, Sir Robin Wales, said the proposed Royal Docks option was the only "sensible way ahead".

"It would connect London and the whole Thames Gateway area to 370 acres of prime development land," Mr Wales said. "This includes London City Airport, ExCel, a new substantial Royals Business Park and the University of East London.

"There are simply no development opportunities of this scale South of the river." The clash over Crossrail came when Greenwich Council announced it was backing an alternative route. The Council wants the £5bn transport link South of the Thames to Charlton. Both of the route proposals will be directed through the Isle of Dogs at some point - but different parts. What direction it takes from there remains contentious.

Greenwich Council leader Chris Roberts had said there was increasing interest in the borough and said the Crossrail option would be vital in sustaining expansion in the region. The Greenwich council report formed part of the Council's response to Crossrail's consultation on preferred routes. It concluded that while both options being considered were feasible, bringing Crossrail to the Greenwich Peninsula to join the Kent line at Charlton Station would be of the greatest benefit. "Our study shows that the benefits are greater, and the capital costs far less, for the Charlton route in comparison to the Royal Docks," Cllr Roberts said. The council claimed that by 2023 Crossrail via Charlton could generate up to 407,000 jobs and save up to 806 million passenger kilometres in reduced car journeys.

A Crossrail spokesperson said both options would be considered before a final decision is made at the end of the year. The Royals route had so far been the favoured option with business leaders, claiming the line would regenerate the Thames Gateway and create important commercial opportunities. When it opens in 2011, Crossrail will run between East/West and North/South through London.

Whatever region succeeds in its campaign for the line can expect sky-rocketing property prices. According to a report commissioned by Canary Wharf Group prices, for properties within a one-mile radius of the new line would soar by £7bn.

At the time of the CWG report former Conservative London mayoral candidate Steven Norris said Crossrail was a "must have" option for the Docklands. "In reality Canary Wharf and the Docklands need more transport capacity if the area is to continue expanding," Mr Norris said. "Only a single route can be chosen, but it needs to be recognised as something of universal benefit for the city."

a.langmaid@wharf.co.uk

KEN LIVINGSTONE has set himself on a collision course with environmental campaigners by backing the first new road bridge across the Thames for a decade. The mayor will recommend the £385million project is given the green light at a meeting of Transport for London. He said the Thames Gateway bridge, part of a regeneration scheme expected to create 25,000 jobs, was a 'real opportunity for world-class urban development'. The bridge, between Beckton and Thamesmead, will be the first since the QEII bridge in Dartford, Kent, opened in 1991. It will be built by a public-private partnership and open in 2010. Business leaders say a chronic shortage of river crossings deters investment in East London. A report commissioned by the London Docklands Development Corporation and Thamesmead Town seven years ago said a new bridge was 'vital' for the area's economic future. But Friends of the Earth said: 'Claims this bridge will regenerate the area are misleading. Instead, it will bring travel chaos and more congestion and pollution to an area already suffering these problems.'

Service charge

A popular solution

Lets face it nobody wants a big bill so soon after the Christmas & New Year period. With this in mind we have set up a standing order, for many residents, allowing them to forget about the problem of finding this large sum of money.

A standing order is set up with your bank/building society to deduct a fixed amount monthly on a fixed day (whenever possible). The money is credited to your service charge account. When the service charge demand is sent to you, it will automatically have deducted the amount you have saved plus a small amount of interest.

You choose the amount to be deducted each month. We recommend a figure around £100, as this would give you a total of £1,200 + interest, after 12 months. This should leave you with just a small, more manageable sum in find for the remainder of the charge

Obviously you can set up a similar idea yourself. We do not make any money from this, it is a facility designed for your own convenience and peace of mind. If you would like to use this facility, please fill in the application form below.

Standing order

Please fill in the whole form in BLOCK CAPITALS using black or blue ink and send it to: **CMSE18, 20 Lantern House, Connaught Mews, London SE18 6SU**

To the Manager
Bank/Building Society _____
Address _____
Postcode _____

Name(s) of account holder(s) _____
Branch Sort Code _____
Bank/Building Society account number _____

Please pay: **Barclays Bank
Woolwich**
Account number: **40035088**
Sort code: **20 95 57**

the sum of £ _____
Starting from _____ until further notice

Signature _____
Date _____

SAMPLE

How to contact us

Urgent requests

Example - Water is leaking from the ceiling.

P.G. Ashton Property Management Co. Ltd
5A High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 6PU.

Tel: 020 8590 1219 Fax: 020 8597 0051

E-mail: pgashton@romfordbranch.freeserve.co.uk

Non urgent requests

Example - You notice that a corridor bulb has blown, send a note to the office, and a committee member will replace the bulb.

Connaught Mews SE18 Management Company Ltd
20 Lantern House, Connaught Mews, London SE18 6SU.

Fax: 020 8316 5298

E-mail: cmse18@hotmail.com