

TOLMERS NEWS

PUBLISHED BY THE TOLMERS VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Edited this week by Pedro George, Christine Rieger & Douglas Smith

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Nº 2

The TOLMERS NEWS will hopefully be published every two weeks. It has two aims. First to keep local people informed about the latest developments of plans affecting our area, and second to provide people who live or work in the area with a means to express their views about what is happening. If you would like to write a letter or article for the next issue please bring or send it to ; TOLMERS NEWS, 160, North Gower Street.

BUILDING COLLAPSES!

THE FACTS

At 9.15 AM on Saturday the 13th, the houses on nos. 56 and 58 Hampstead Road collapsed into the street. The tenant, Mr. Mario Castro, a Portuguese, and two friends fled from the building seconds before it collapsed. Luckily no one was injured seriously. Two policemen and a fireman were treated for gas poisoning and small cuts in the hands when digging out the rubble.

The buildings were owned by Stock Conversion & Investments Trust, Mr. Levy's company. That morning, the builders were in the house to "shore up a bulge in the front wall" noticed by one of Mr. Levy's surveyors who had had a look at the house the previous day.

These are the facts of the incident, and most newspapers reported them more or less accurately. However, we feel some more questions should be asked.

WHY DID THE BUILDING COLLAPSE ?

Well, it was old. Yes indeed, but all the buildings in the area are old. Why did this particular one collapse? It was in Hampstead Road, and the heavy traffic affects the buildings quite a lot.

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Firemen at the scene of the collapse.

'LEVY DEAL' STOPPED

Report by P. George

Since the last issue of the Tolmers News, a number of events have occurred which changed the situation in the Tolmers Square Redevelopment Area radically. On the 8th of October, the Labour Councillors met and reached the decision to withdraw the report which advised the Council to sign the deal with Stock Conversion. This decision was arrived at after a vote in which a large majority of Councillors voted for the withdrawal of the report. Then, on the 10th of October, the Council met at full strength. The Meeting opened with a deputation from the Tolmers Village Association which read out a statement to the Council; the main points were:

- A summary of the situation in the area.
- The reasons why the Association was opposed to the 'Levy Deal'
- A recommendation for immediate action by the Council (i. e. opening up empty houses, pressure

to bear on landlords to make them keep the houses in good repair, temporary use for empty sites, increase of the number of rubbish collections, etc.)

And finally the announcement that the Tolmers Village Association and the Stop the Levy Deal Campaign is preparing an alternative plan for the area, to be ready in 12 weeks, which will be presented to the Council.

When the Tolmers Square issue came up in the agenda the Leader of the Council, Frank Dobson, read a statement in which he recommended that the report be withdrawn.

He also announced that a deputation, headed by the MPs for St. Pancras North and South could be sent to ask Mr. Rippon the Environment Secretary to consider alternatives to the way in which London is being rede-

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FIRST BATTLE IS WON!

Everyone probably knows by now that the Council has decided not to enter into a deal with Joe Levy. This is a great victory for all those who live and work in the area, as well as for those who want to stop London being carved up by money-grabbing developers. The Council changed its' mind because of the pressure exerted by the 'Stop the Levy Deal Campaign'. 8000 signatures (over 700 from this area) were collected from people in Camden who do not want the Council to give away money to a developer, but instead, want to see the profits from any scheme come back to the community. Faced with this massive public opposition the Council had no choice but to reverse its decision.

No Time To Rest

Although we have won a major battle, we must not sit back and relax. Everyone wants to see major improvements in the area, and the building collapse on Hampstead Road emphasises the need for speed.

The Council says it will look at other alternatives before making any decision. But the Council does not have the time, money, or the political will to do this properly. For this reason the Tolmers Village Association, with help from 'Stop the Levy Deal Campaign', has offered to work out an alternative scheme as quickly as possible

Our Scheme:

Work has already started on our scheme. The legal and financial details are being handled by professional consultants, but the local physical planning is being worked on by a team including:

- * Architects from the Circle 33 architectural firm;
- * The City Poverty Committee;
- * Students and Staff from University College planning and architecture departments;
- * Members of the Tolmers Village Association.

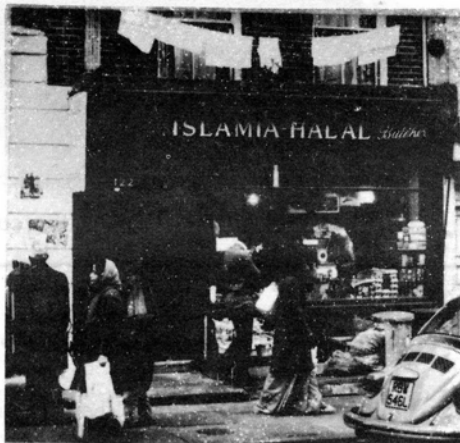
These people (none of whom are being paid), are trying to decide which buildings need replacing, which buildings need repairing, what can be built on the empty sites, how can the area be made better to live and work in, and so on.

If we are to produce a good scheme it is vital that people in the area participate, and we need assistance from everyone who is willing to help in any way.

The work is being coordinated from 160 North Gower St. (above the Barber shop). Please come and help.

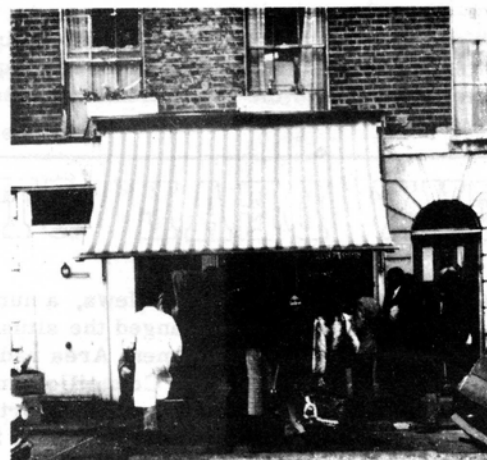
In a few weeks the new scheme will be publicly displayed in the area and a public meeting will be held to discuss and improve it.

Nick Wates



One of the area's Halal butcher and spice shops.

These photographs were taken only last week. They illustrate the importance of the Indian community in our area. The Ambala Sweet Centre is widely known and receives orders from Indian restaurants all over London.



People queueing up outside the Ambala Sweet Centre.

MANY THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE SENT IN CONTRIBUTIONS OR HELPED US IN ANY WAY

Tolmers Village Association.

CAMDEN COUNCIL'S ARCHITECTURAL PLANS FOR OUR AREA.

Even though we managed to stop the Council's deal with Levy, we decided to go and have a proper look at the Feasibility Study Exhibition at Euston Town Hall. This consisted of a small model, plans and pictures of what the architects wanted to do with our community.

OFFICES

The whole of the south side of Tolmers Square is occupied by a large block up to eight storeys high, with commercial space on other parts.

A large hotel is planned for the East side of Euston St. It will certainly have some effect on the hotels already operating there...

SHOPS

These are mainly round the edge of the site, a shopping concourse being just behind Hampstead Road. The shops have commercial space and housing above, and are serviced also from Starcross St. and Euston St., the rest of the site being pedestrian free. Much space has been allowed for shopping and commercial use, but it would be very different from now. Units are bigger and better serviced, meaning high rent and maintenance costs. This favours high turnover industries, employment agencies, chain restaurants, super-mark-

ets, etc, rather than small personal corner shops, for which the premises are not really suitable. The Scheme allows existing shops in Drummond Street to remain, but at higher rents as the area is improved.

HOUSING

This all goes with the kind of people expected to live here and who will be able to afford to do so. The building is expensive, and the units small and inflexible. There is no accommodation for families larger than five, single people, or several families living together. Neighbours and large family groups will be split up, living in isolated flats between three and six storeys from the ground, the lower floors being for shops and commercial use. Expensive underground car parking has been provided in addition to a little on-street parking.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Various community, social and recreational facilities were to be provided, which we badly need. However, this doesn't compensate for the fact that our most important asset, streets of character, in an area we know, and are part of, providing diverse and friendly businesses is being destroyed.

Douglas Smith

Building Collapses !

(Continued from p. 1)

Also, we were told, during the construction of the Euston Centre monster just across the road, heavy steel pylons had to be driven into the ground to reinforce the foundations. This created very strong vibrations which affected all the buildings in that road. (Incidentally, after Mr. Palmer from no. 3 Tolmers Square complained to the Council, they somewhat managed to stop this.)

Another reason was that this particular building had been the object of an ill-conceived conversion, which knocked holes in structural walls and left the load-bearing walls very unstable.

All this certainly contributed towards the collapse, but the main reason can only be the fact that the buildings, as most of Stock Conversion's property in the area have been deliberately neglected and allowed to run down so that there is a case for the complete redevelopment of the area (with huge profits going to that company, of course...). This, and nothing else, is the main reason for the collapse of 56-58 Hampstead Road!

WHAT ABOUT THE COUNCIL'S DISTRICT SURVEYOR IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THIS ?

It is the job of the Council's District Surveyor to ensure that all the inhabited property is up to the required standards and in good repair. Was 56-58 in good repair? Well... It isn't now! But why wasn't the fact that the building was nearing collapse known by the District Surveyor, and why didn't he act accordingly i. e. placing an order so that it either be vacated or brought up to standards? We would very much like to see the Council come out with a statement on this whole affair.

An Assistant District Surveyor did come to the sce-

ne of the accident and had a look at the adjoining houses. Apparently they are in good condition.

NO CAUSE FOR ALARM !

It is also important to mention that almost all of the buildings in our area are in fairly good structural condition and that there is no need for alarm or concern. It's not because one neglected house collapsed that the whole area is coming down!

T. V. A. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

The T. V. A. issued a statement (the complete text of which can be seen at 160 North Gower St.) where it called for a full inquiry into the incident to be made by Camden Council. It also called for action (if need be, legal action) by the Council to ensure that landlords (and amongst them the Council itself) will keep their buildings in good repair.

However, if anyone thinks that their house is in a dangerous condition, get in touch with us at 160 North Gower St. and we will take the necessary steps to ensure that it is made safe.

P. George

ADVERTISEMENTS

Ads will be printed in future issues. Cost: 5p per line. Displays 25p per column inch.

If interested contact the editors at 160 North Gower Street

T.V.A. REPORT

velopped at the moment. They will press him to make the Tolmers Square Redevelopment a pilot scheme in urban property development. Furthermore, the Leader of the Council acknowledged the T. V. A. Statement and agreed to consider its alternative plan before anything is decided. After some rather irrelevant comments from the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Greengross, the Council voted on the issue. All Labour Councillors voted for the withdrawal of the report except Mr. Tim Skinner who abstained. The report was therefore withdrawn. **THE "LEVY DEAL" HAD BEEN STOPPED!** The "Claudius Deal" is now also considered by the two journalists (Chris Booker and Benny Gray) who proposed it, as inadequate to meet the requirements of our area, and it is going to be replaced by a whole new set of proposals, which are being worked out at the moment. **THIS IS OUR FIRST MAIN VICTORY. LET IT NOT BE THE LAST!!**

From the Management Group Meeting 18 Oct. 1973
 *Frank Goodingham's resignation, brought about by his heavy commitments elsewhere, was accepted.
 *Mr Fenn asked to be relieved of the Treasurership, because he was unable to find time for the office. Mr Shah was nominated to succeed, subject to his approval.
 *The appointments for Street Representatives were made. They are part of the T. V. A. Management Group and are your immediate personal contacts with it. The representatives are:-
 North Gower Street (North) - Sheenagh Goodingham, Basement Flat, 183, North Gower Street.
 " (South) - Jane French, 160, N Gower St.
 Drummond St (West) - Mr J. D. Shah, 161, Drummond St.
 " (East) - Mr C. R. Ahmad, 125, Drummond St.
 " - Mr EH Fenn, 2a, Charles Place.
 Euston Street - Douglas Likermore
 Tolmers Sq. - Pedro George, c/o 160, N Gower St.
 Coburg St/Melton St/Starcross St
 - Frances Hollis, 58, Euston St.
 Hampstead Rd. - to be appointed.

November 5th.



We are organizing a Guy Fawkes night for everyone in the community. There will be a bonfire, food, drinks and fireworks. We need to find a suitable site, and we'll also need help with the refreshments. Anyone who is a good sandwich maker, or who has some time to spare will be very welcome to help. We'd also appreciate suggestions for a good site.

There's not much time left!
 Contact Doug Smith at 160 North Gower St.

Our group of volunteers was busy on Saturday morning, cleaning windows, and doing odd jobs for some of the people in Tolmers Square. Please don't be shy asking us if you would like them to help you.

PREMISES URGENTLY REQUIRED

We desperately need space for an office where we can prepare a scheme. Preferably we would like a shop front where we could display information and where people could come in at any time and see what is going on. If you know of anywhere suitable, please get in touch with us. All suggestions will be considered.

HAVE YOU JOINED ?

PLEASE ENROL ME AS A MEMBER OF THE TOLMERS VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Name.....

Resident ()

Address.....

Worker ()

Signed.....

Date.....