

Community file

Meet John Stansfield —he's the big man of Tolmers Village

by Howard Hannah

JOE LEVY may have his Euston Tower and Harry Hyams his Centre Point, but the Tolmers Village Association have their own large asset — John Stansfield.

But unlike Centre Point, John Stansfield, the association's new chairman, doesn't just stand there doing nothing — he does plenty.

Over six feet in height and weighing just under 20 stone, he enables the TVA to boast the largest chairman of any community association in London. In case you haven't guessed, that's him pictured on the right.

John has lived in Hampstead Road in the heart of the Tolmers Development Area for over five years, and became interested in the association during the past year.

Since then he has thrown

his whole weight and enthusiasm into it — and he's got plenty of both. He's a mathematician, and earns his crust as a computer programmer for Clarksons the travel people. At the moment he is applying some of his technique to the association filing system, and can be found at the headquarters in Drummond Street almost every spare moment of his day doing what he calls "rationalising" the system.

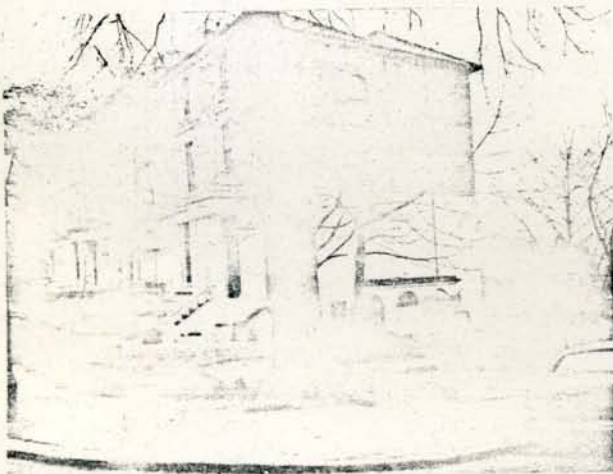
He's also uncovering some of the history of the locality which reveals how Tolmers Square got its name. Tolmers Square was built on property owned by the New River Water Supply Company," he told me, "and it

was named after the hamlet of Tolmers in Hertfordshire which is the source of the New River."

In John Stansfield, the TVA have a large David to face the property barons' Goliath, and not least of his qualities is his wit, which has been known to befuddle a number of men of property who are occasionally to be found sniffing out the field there.

Witness the following exchange between John and a property man who was anxious to know the colour of his politics. Property man: "What are your politics?" Stansfield, deadpan: "They're a little to the left of Marx". Exit property man.

Tale of a golden garden



MR AND MRS PEAKE are enjoying their new garden at their home in Cannon Place, Hampstead. When you pay thousands of pounds for a patch of wilderness, you've got to enjoy it.

"We just don't think about the cost of it any more — however crippling it is," Mrs Noelle Peake told me — and though she was reluctant to tell the Journal the exact amount they paid she said it was way above the £6,000 they had originally been asked for it.

When Mr and Mrs Peake moved into their home, nine years ago, the man who sold it to them held on to the patch of wilderness that adjoined it, making some vague reference to wanting it for some minor purpose.

Then all of a sudden they heard that he had submitted a planning application to Camden Council to build a house on it.

The help of the Heath and Old Hampstead Society was enlisted in objecting to this plan and the Peakes made

an offer to buy it. But they regarded the asking price of £6,000 as being excessive.

The original plan for a house was turned down, but yet another plan for a bunker style house was submitted.

Although the Peakes, with three children, made it quite clear that they would like to transform the site into a garden, thereby saving the over intensification of housing in that part of Hampstead (albeit that housing there is pretty well spread out), Camden agreed to the plan.

But the Peakes didn't give up even then. They told the owner that they were still prepared to buy with the planning permission which automatically bumps the price up. So they settled on a price about half as much again as the original asking price.

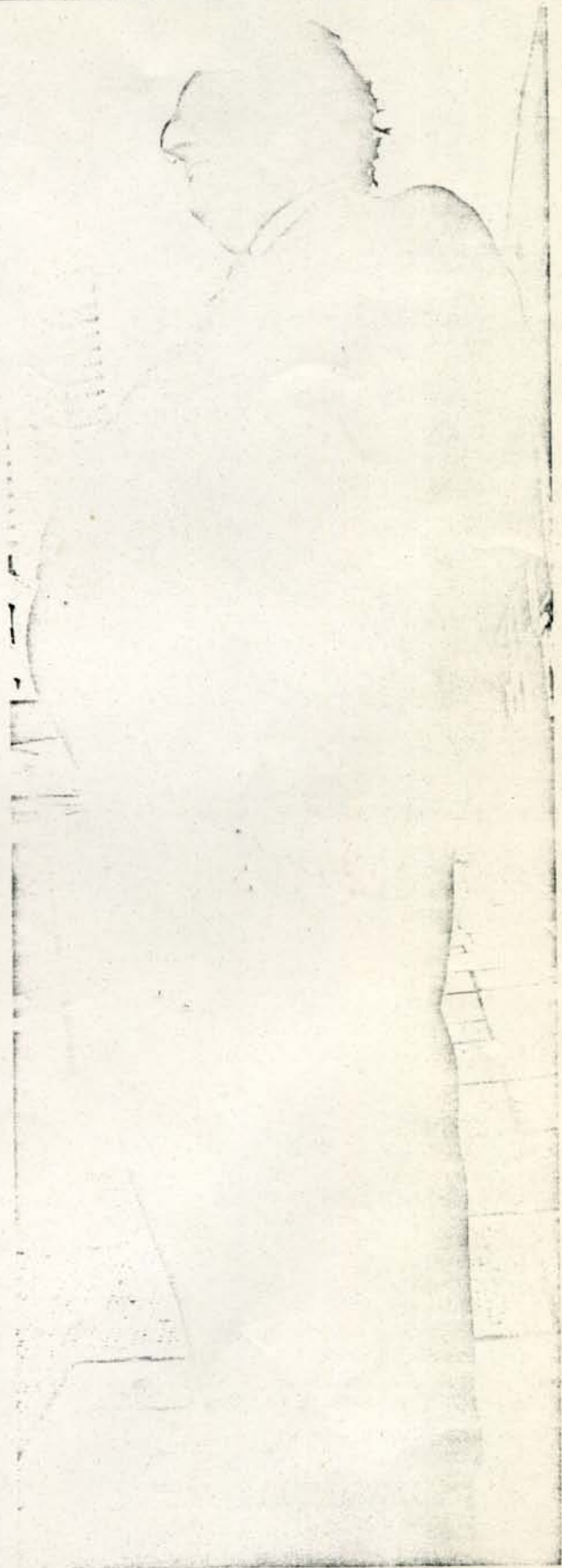
So now they've got something that would make any self respecting property developer tear his hair out with frustration. Using a valuable prime housing site with planning permission in the posher part of Hampstead as a mere garden for their children to enjoy must seem to a property developer a bit like keeping coal in the bath.

But the Peakes are going to make a nice garden out of the wilderness — and they're going to enjoy every golden square foot of it.

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