

# DE BEAVER



## The Met's Silver Lining

A proposal to turn the vacant Metropolitan Hospital in Kingsland Road into a varied array of craft workshops is being seriously considered by Hackney Council. Self-employed silversmiths, wood-carvers, instrument makers, fashion designers and the like would be able to set up business in the red-brick Victorian building which closed as a hospital in 1976 and was bought by the council earlier this year.

Details of the scheme are being worked out for the council by Mr Michael Murray, himself a silversmith and founder of the Clerkenwell Green Association for craftspeople. He recently helped Hackney Borough carry out a similar conversion on two buildings in Curtain Road.

The future of the Met and the adjoining Nurses' Home has been in limbo since Government-enforced cuts meant shelving the original plans to provide housing there.

Mr Murray outlined his ideas at a public meeting held in the Ufton Centre at the end of October. He said the proposal allowed for 250 people to use the building, each paying about £20 for a licence. Those requiring accommodation could be catered for too. The Nurses' Home could be converted into 2-room living units with people paying £16 to £18 a week rent.

The promised attractions of the scheme are many:

- \* What is now a derelict and dirty building would be cleaned up and the whole site properly landscaped.
- \* The Council would receive an income from rents and rates for the site instead of paying out vast sums for it to be patrolled by security guards.

\* The £400,000 conversion cost (£250,000 for the hospital and £150,000 for the Nurses' Home) would not have to be paid by the Council as this, together with the rent and rates, would be met by the rents charged to the craftspeople using the building.

\* The use of the building would be classified as 'light industrial', which should mean no disturbance to the surrounding residents.

In view of these points, many of the 50 people at the meeting were broadly in favour. Some doubts were expressed, some of the fears allayed - but some questions remained unanswered.

However, we were assured that there are plenty of people who would like to rent such a workshop and about a third of the places are already filled, assuming the proposals are adopted.

It is expected that maintenance costs can be met by the estimated £190,000 pa revenue, even if only 80% of the places are let.

Hackney people would be given priority when it came to allocating space.

The main entrance would be in Enfield Road and there would be on-site parking for over 50 cars. Very few of these self-employed craftspeople can afford to run a car, so it is not expected that parking in surrounding roads would create any problem. The sort of materials that might be delivered for these types of work are not usually bulky, so there should be no difficulties regarding deliveries by heavy vehicles. Lorries delivering fuel and refuse vehicles would be the only users of the other proposed entrance in St Peter's Way.

Noise should not be a problem as no heavy machinery will be in use on the site. The licences granted to the occupiers would specifically say that noise must be kept down to an acceptable limit. In any event, a noisy occupant would disturb his fellow-workers and the proposed tenants' committee of 12 would soon deal with such a person.

But among the unanswered questions were:

What would happen to the nursery and Short-Life Users Group at present occupying the ground floor of the Nurses' Home?

And, on a more contentious note,

what would these craftspeople be contributing to Hackney? Wouldn't it be better to provide much-needed housing, even if the site does have a frontage on a very busy main road?

Clearly, some more thought must go into the proposal before it is finally adopted. Let us hope that if and when the Council and Mr Murray sign together on the dotted line of the 25-year lease, they will be bringing a valuable and trouble-free scheme to De Beauvoir and the people of Hackney.

HILARY HOCKMAN

## NEW TOWN NEWS

At the Liaison Meeting of the South-West District Office Committee on Wednesday 18 July 1979, there was a note on the agenda to the effect: Demolition of Laundry. This was discussed, together with the possible demolition of the St Helier sheds. Tenants from St Helier had asked that the sheds be demolished at the same time and that the area be considered for landscaping. Although this was discussed and the Housing Management Committee had agreed to the demolition, nothing came forward until October 1980 when plans were proposed and shown to the 1972 Tenants' Association. These plans were supposed to be going to the GLC and, if approved, the GLC would pay. The work was supposed to be completed by the end of March 1981.

Needless to say, as most people on the De Beauvoir Estate know, that did not happen. Work appeared to start in March. The sheds were demolished and the laundry was knocked down. The rubble was piled up in a heap and... just left. A far cry from

the landscaping that had been promised!

The 1972 Tenants' Association asked what was happening and various answers were given. It seemed that, although the plans had been approved and the money had been agreed, Hackney Council had to spend the money first before it could get it from the GLC.

It took letters from a tenant to the local MP, Ronald Brown, to get things moving. Mr Brown consulted with the Secretary of the Tenants' Association and the Ward Councillors. Thanks to Mr Brown and the Councillors who met the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of Planning and Highways Committee, the money was finally allocated. This was exactly a year after the approval of the plans! The scheme is now under way and the tip of rubble has been removed. We hope it is completed without further delay.

CHRIS CROWFOOT, Secretary  
72 Tenants' Association

## And over the rainbow



Are you at home with a baby or toddler? Perhaps you're bored with the noise and the nappies! If so, this may interest you -

The Rainbow Mums and Toddlers Group meets twice weekly at the Ufton Community Centre (Mondays 1.30-3.30 and Wednesdays 10.30-12.30).

The mums drink tea and chat while the children use our good play facilities - a large comfortable room with toys and play equipment.

We have just received £100 worth of toys from the Thames TV Telethon. We are also starting regular trips to Crouch End Pool where there is a trainer pool for babies and toddlers.

Story: MURRELL NEUBURGER  
Picture: BARBARA NOKES

Learning to share are Alan Techiera (left) of Rover House and Darren Marsh of De Beauvoir Road.

## Green thoughts for De Beauvoir!

An idea currently under consideration could involve De Beauvoir being improved by a Manpower Services Commission Community Enterprise Project (CEP). These projects are part of the Government's response to the problem of unemployment. A project could be set up with the specific aim of improving De Beauvoir, and would be under the control of the people who live there.

It is now obvious that Hackney Council, owing to financial cut-backs, will be unable to complete the road closures to provide sitting or playspace areas, so it seems reasonable to consider whether we could do something of a temporary nature ourselves.

The small open space on the corner of Buckingham and De Beauvoir Roads has brightened up that part enormously and, although there are few areas of that size lying vacant, trees, shrubs or flowers planted in odd corners could ensure that De Beauvoir becomes brighter and greener again.

Do you have an idea for brightening up a corner of De Beauvoir, Old or New town? Would you like to be involved in a group looking at the possibilities and setting up a CEP? If so, please come to a meeting at John Alridge's house, 118 Hertford Road, on Monday 7 December at 7.30 pm, or contact John on 249 3577 or myself on 249 1729.

MARY CANNON



# FACTORY FACTS

There has been a flurry of activity concerning the Appleby Upholstery factory since the huge fire in June, featured in our last issue. The GLC, who own the factory, are preparing a report to go to the

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Industry and Employment and the Planning Committees very shortly. Our MP, Ronald Brown, has been very active in putting forward the views of local residents to the GLC. He is just the man for the job. He has campaigned for a long time in Parliament to outlaw the use of polyurethane foam as a filling for soft furniture because it produces lethal cyanide gas on burning. Appleby Upholstery has a polyurethane foam store and, as it is surrounded by houses, it could qualify for a place on the list being compiled by one MP of smaller factories which are hazardous to the community.

The GLC has the unenviable task of trying to strike a balance

A carpet firm called Starinease recently began trading at 80A Mortimer Road. The house appears to be open to the public 6 or 7 days a week and residents complain that it causes traffic congestion, with articulated lorries calling about twice a week to make deliveries. One end of Mortimer Road is blocked by a road closure so vehicles cannot get out there. Also, as the road has been narrowed, they cannot turn round, and instead reverse into Downham Road. Customers' cars are said to add to the problem.

If nothing is done about this, there could be an accident.

## Round the Square

We are lucky in having in De Beauvoir Square one of the most attractive square gardens in Hackney. Just to have some green grass and trees is wonderful in London, but the flowering cherry and late-blooming roses in the Square have given particular pleasure to those living here.

So, it was sad to see the maintenance of the Square fall into neglect this year. Lack of regular mowing and care of the Square meant that by the end of the summer it was overgrown and the flower beds denuded. Litter was everywhere and the area behind the vandalised hut looked like a tip.

between keeping jobs and satisfying the fears of the community. Since there have been two bad fires in 6 years on this site, the residents feel that it is not suited to a furniture factory and that Appleby Upholstery should be relocated.

### STOP PRESS

The very latest news on Appleby Upholstery comes in the form of the following revised recommendations which have just been passed by the Industry and Employment Committee of the GLC:

- That Appleby not be offered a new lease.
- That Appleby be offered assistance by the Council in being relocated to new premises in the vicinity.
- That the Council's freehold interest in the site be offered to the London Borough of Hackney.

BRIGID PHILLIP

People living nearby have already written to the Planning Department hoping they will take some action. In the meantime, one of the most troublesome factories in De Beauvoir is no more. Mr Sam Eatly reports that in September Glen Furniture ceased trading at 1A Southgate Grove.

For years the factory caused its neighbours distress with its unpleasant smells, showers of sawdust and, most of all, incessant noise. It is unfortunate that jobs have been lost, but let's hope no future tenants of the factory are allowed to give so much cause for complaint.

HILARY HOCKMAN

At the end of July a meeting was arranged with Mr Elphick, the Council's Parks Superintendent. Mr Elphick was sympathetic and helpful and positive that there would be improvement as more staff were about to be taken on by the Parks Department. A major reason for the damage done in the Square was the fact that it had not been locked at night, ever since one of the park keepers had been intimidated by local youths. It's worth remembering that the park keeper's job is not always easy and can be lonely - local support and appreciation mean a lot. We offered to organise a rota amongst those living near the

## What's on at the Odeon.

Planning permission has been granted to redevelop the Dalston Odeon site into a covered market, not a freezer centre as was once proposed.

The now sad-looking cinema at the junction of Stamford and Kingsland Roads is scheduled to be demolished early next year and replaced by a two-storey building, housing stalls and spaces for about 40 small traders, two larger shops and a cafe.

Proposed hours of opening are 9 to 6 Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, and 9 to 8 Thursday and Friday. There are plans for parking for 20 cars with the entrance in Stamford Road and the exit in Tottenham Road.

BARBARA NOKES



The GLC is currently considering an application for music and dancing licences with an extension of hours from the licensee, Mr Cowley, of the De Beauvoir Arms in Stamford Road. Concerned about noise and parking problems, nearly 100 local residents have signed a petition in protest and the De Beauvoir Association is now involved.

Picture: JOHN WARD

Square to lock the gates at night, but Mr Elphick said that this was unnecessary and that it would be done in future. Despite Mr Elphick's optimism, we are still waiting for many of the improvements which he promised. Nevertheless, the gardener, Jim, has been hard at work and the Square remains something to be proud of.

ELIZABETH HAINES

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# Bouquets for the winners



The De Beauvoir Gardeners exhausted themselves in a mad flurry of activity this summer, so autumn will come as a welcome relief. Everyone can sit down with their feet up for a while, before digging over their estates for the winter.

The garden competition in July occupied two weekends blessed by fine weather. We worked our way through 25 gardens, 18 small gardens and patios, 7 windowboxes, 10lbs strawberries, 3 Victoria Sandwiches, 15 Devonshire Teas and a bucket of Pimms. Volunteers and experts from the club judged the preliminary round, whilst experts from outside judged the finals. Next year's competition for the gardens will be held in the spring, around April/May, so start dreaming up your spring surprises now.

The Flower Show was again held in the vicarage garden at St Peter's one glorious Sunday in September. So many folks gave their time, their talent, their thoughts and their goodwill to make the day a success, so, without mentioning anyone in particular,

many, many thanks to everyone for your help.

Entries in the domestic delights and the vegetable classes were fewer than last year. Apparently the cold spring and 'funny summer' affected the vegetables, but what happened to the domestic delights?!!! Surely the Mrs Beetons of De Beauvoir didn't go on strike!

The club visited the Chelsea Physick Garden in July and some members were lucky enough to visit the Royal Parks Nurseries at Hyde Park one heady summer's afternoon in August. They were given a guided tour of the greenhouses and dallied at leisure by the Serpentine before returning home. For the rest of us, a treat was in store that evening in Heather Larsen's garden where people turned up in their best dressed hats for a summer evening's nonsense and chat.

Forthcoming events in St Peter's Crypt, De Beauvoir Square at 8pm. 1 December. Gala lecture from Jude Moraes who will speak about unusual

Whittington' on 24 January 1982.

## UFTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

### Monday

Mums and Toddlers 1.30-3.30.  
Gingerbread Group 7.30-10.00.

### Tuesday

Yoga 9.45am-11.15am.  
Dressmaking 7.15-9.15.

### Wednesday

Mums and Toddlers 10.30-12.30.  
Screen Printing 7.00-9.30.  
Keep Fit 7.30-9.30.

### Thursday

Senior Citizens 2.00-4.00.  
Tai Chi 6.30-8.30.

COMING SOON: cooking, air-weapon range, luncheon club, legal aid.

New members needed for building, fund raising, social and activity planning committees/groups.

Interested? Any other ideas? Come along to 12 Ufton Road or

## INTERESTING PROJECTS FOR UFTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

### THAT YOU CAN DO FROM YOUR OWN ARMCHAIR AT HOME...

#### Put a mural on Ufton.

Involves finding a muralist, getting a design drawn up and applying to 3 funding bodies for finance.

#### Organise weekend lettings.

Involves advertising the 2 available halls and finding a weekend caretaker (paid) to let wedding parties, etc, in and out.

#### Assist with fund-raising letters.

Involves sending out letters to companies and trusts, asking them to support the Centre.

#### Assist with book-keeping.

Look for a cook with qualifications acceptable to the AEI.

... and, at the Centre, work with a group on an air-weapons range.

Involves making up partitions and target stops, buying equipment and supervising youngsters using the range.

If you want to help with any of these, contact Meredith Yates, Project Co-ordinator, on 254 2941.

varieties of plants and will try and persuade us all to grow them. 5 January. Festive Party - all welcome! 3 February. Slobodan Paish will speak about the gardens of the Alhambra in Granada.

JENNIFER STEVENS

## GARDEN COMPETITION PRIZEWINNERS

### Gardens:

Joan Ward (pictured centre), 20 Northchurch Road, won the De Beauvoir Plate.

### Small gardens and patios:

Janet Londt (right), 26A De Beauvoir Road, won the De Beauvoir Trowel.

contact Meredith Yates, Project Co-ordinator on 254 2941.

### A hall for a wedding?

Space for your club or association?

Rooms and halls can be hired for weddings, parties, etc, at the Ufton Community Centre, 12 Ufton Road, N.1. Cheerful, well-heated rooms, kitchen and toilet facilities. If your club or association has aims similar to the Centre's there will normally be no charge made. Contact Meredith Yates (see above).

Ufton Youth Club - for details ring Jim Armstrong 254 9072.

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Windowboxes and areas: Mavius Melvern (left), 58 Culford Road, won the De Beauvoir Watering Can.

## FLOWER SHOW WINNERS

Flower section: Sam Eatly.

Vegetable section: Doritie Kettlewell.

Houseplants: Hazel Senechal.

Flower arrangements: Jennifer Stevens.

Domestic delights: Miss Gregory.

Children's classes: Ian Senechal and Elizabeth Morson.

Overall winner of the De Beauvoir Rose Bowl: Doritie Kettlewell.



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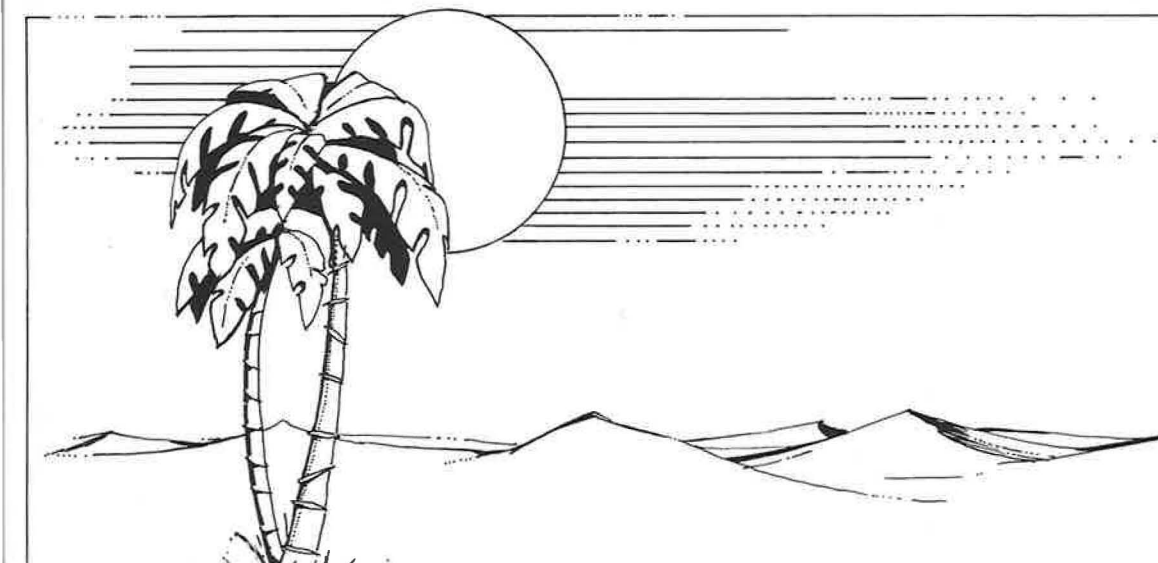
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# A Starlit Knees~up...

From 7 every Tuesday and Friday evening, deep in the heart of the Rose Lipman Library, a strange activity may be witnessed. In an enclosed - and, by the end of the session, steamy - room, the training of the De Beauvoir majorettes, now called the Starlights, is proceeding apace.

The idea of extending an increasingly popular activity for girls all over the country to this area was first thought of several years ago by Mrs Carrie Jay. But since 1980 the Starlights have been marshalled and organised by Pat Breadon and Sandra Foot.

On the night I watched, there were 14 aspiring girls, ranging in age from six to 14. They were every shape and size; some small, some tall; all of them graceful in their way, and all of them concentrating hard on the music coming from the cassette player in the corner.

"Knees up," ordered Mrs Breadon's daughter Michelle, who was taking the class and she proceeded to demonstrate with assured skill. The girls took turns to march around the edge of the room to a catchy tune, their batons held at the correct angle.

There are a variety of techniques for marching (many readers will perhaps remember seeing the Starlights at this year's De



Back: Michelle Hosford, Joanne Weight, Debbie Tuck and Ann O'Connor, all 12. Front: Teresa Thompson, 8, Dionne Powell, 9, Debbie McDiarmid, 9.

Beauvoir Carnival where they won a Carnival Procession Prize), whereas for competitions the emphasis is more on dance steps. All the girls spend many hours practising before setting out for official appearances in brown and beige uniforms with beige capes, white pop-socks and plimsolls.

The sessions cost 35p a week which has to cover expenses of running the group. Pat and Sandra give their services voluntarily as do other helpers. At the moment they are trying to raise enough money for a second-hand mini-bus so they could get to events and competitions more easily.

I asked some of the majorettes why they came. Michelle Hosford,

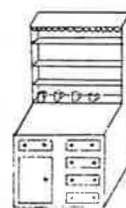
Joanne Weight and Deborah Tuck, all 12 years old, and who all live in De Beauvoir Road, told me they liked the exercise and they found it enormous fun marching through the streets.

The youngest, six-year-old Nicola Chalk of Phillip Street, has been attending for nearly a year and said she enjoyed it because many of her friends were there.

We look forward to seeing much more of the Starlights on the streets of De Beauvoir and to hearing of their progress in lots of competitions.

Story: ELIZABETH BUCHAN  
Picture: BARBARA NOKES

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### DE BEAVER

De Beaver is sponsored by the De Beauvoir Association, which caters for all people living between Balls Pond Road and the Canal and between Kingsland Road and Southgate Road. Meetings are held at the Upton Centre on the second Wednesday of every month at 8 pm. If there's anything you want to see done or if you just want to know what is going on and how you can make your voice heard, come along or contact Mary Cannon (249 1729)

### Thanks!

THANKS! TO ALL THE PEOPLE - AND THERE ARE MANY - WHO HAVE VOLUNTARILY HELPED WITH THIS ISSUE.

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