

Talkback

Newsletter of Keniston Housing Association

Spring 2017

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Happy Birthday Silver Court!



Silver Court is forty years old this year so we have been talking to two of our residents about their time at the scheme.

Mrs Joan Carlin has been at Silver Court since it was first built and was only the second resident to move into the new block. She can still remember the exact date that she settled into her new flat on 23rd May 1977. Joan was over the moon with her new place and has been very happy there, never thinking about moving elsewhere. Similarly, Ms Chris Boyce has never wanted to move having been happily living at the scheme since 1982. These were the days when Keniston Housing was known as Utopia Housing.

Silver Court sits on the old site of the Odeon Cinema. Both Joan and Chris have fond memories of going to see films such as *The Guns of Navarone* featuring the actor David Niven. Joan reminisced about when there used to be stage turns before the film started, one such performer being a singer called Donald Piers. Chris's eyes lit up when she remembered bumping into the actor and director Sam Wanamaker outside the Odeon one day.

Both ladies have lived in the Borough of Islington all their lives and have family and friends in the area. Chris's parents used to own a local shop so she knew the area around Silver Court well before she moved there. She would commute by bus every day for twenty years into the west end for her job in advertising and always loved the location and access to transport and local shops. *"You cannot get anything more central"*.

Joan has had varied roles over the years including working in a pub and also for the local bakery 'Stagnells' which has been established on Junction Road since 1911 and is still there today serving a wonderful array of baked goods. Joan watched Silver

Court being built from her home at the time and longed to be given a place there. *"I fell in love with the flat, I just loved it"*.

Silver Court today is a light, bright and airy place inside and out, but it was not always that way. Both ladies remember when the corridors used to consist of dark brick walls and black rubber flooring with heavy wooden windows. *"It was a bit grim years ago, but Keniston have done a great job and the new decoration and garden is just superb"* Chris said. Years ago, there were no barriers between the balconies and neighbours used to hop over and visit each other for a cuppa and a chat, as well as helping with little DIY jobs. *"There has always been a great sense of community"* said Joan.

Once upon a time the outside area had climbing frames for the children, but the garden was just an open space that was not maintained as a garden. As a result of this, The London Ambulance Service was able to land their helicopter in the garden of Silver Court some years ago when a local emergency happened, as there was nowhere else safe to land in the immediate area. That was an unusual event that caused a stir among residents, one which they remember well.

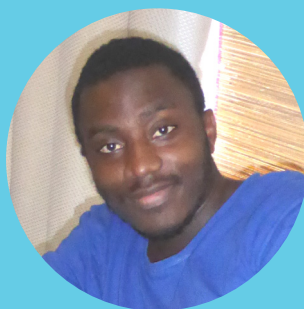
Both Joan and Chris have led very active lives at Silver Court, with Chris having once been a member of the tenant's association and Joan starting her life there as the cleaner alongside her husband. They have seen all the children grow up and said goodbye to the good old days of the milk and newspapers being delivered daily. *"There are so many shops and amenities around now, that you get anything you need"* said Chris. Nowadays Joan likes to spend time with family and continues her collection of frogs which she loves, while Chris still meets up with her old work colleagues from her days in the West End.

Yannick Folinou's dream is to become a qualified Civil Engineer and he has come a long way already in more ways than one.

Yannick has been with Keniston for nearly two years and is enjoying his time working and studying hard, but it hasn't always been a smooth journey for Yannick having come to the UK several years ago from a difficult life in Cameroon. Along the way, Yannick was fortunate enough to receive the assistance and support of a project called Latch which helps young people into independence and they eventually helped him to find his flat at Darrick Wood. *"I came to view it and decided straight away that I really wanted it."* It was Yannick's first place to himself and a chance for him to start living independently as a young man.

Yannick works for a transport company in North London working on the trains at night and spends a considerable time travelling to work, but says that the transport links are very good. When he isn't at work, he is working just as hard on his studies, working towards a Civil Engineering degree. He is a bright, motivated and inspirational young man who has a clear vision of where he wants to go in life now after a rocky start. His aim in the future is to be able to work on improving infrastructure and maybe one day to go back to Cameroon to help them with this as well.

When asked what he thinks about living in Farnborough, despite Darrick Wood being our largest Housing Scheme, Yannick thinks it very quiet here. He thinks this may be something to do with the fact that he works nights though and misses the hustle and bustle of the school run!



Tenancy Audits

Keniston is carrying out tenancy audits at our properties. A tenancy audit is the process we will use to check that the occupants have a legitimate right to be living there.

When we visit, you can also raise any concerns with us or request information about the services we provide.

Keniston staff will carry out tenancy audits on a random basis. Some visits will be made by pre-arranged appointment. When we visit your home we will ask you some questions to confirm the identity of the tenant and occupancy of the property.

At the visit, staff will confirm the name and date of birth of the tenant and all household members living at the property. The tenant must be present at the time of the visit and will be asked to provide several forms of identification e.g birth certificate, passport, utility bill etc. If we don't currently have a photograph of you on file then we will take this opportunity to take one.

All Officers carrying out tenancy audit visits will carry a Keniston Identification Card. Always ask to see identification and never let anyone into your home who cannot provide proof of who they are.

If you have any information about sub-letting, properties not being lived in, or other activity that contravenes the Tenancy Agreement, contact Keniston Housing Association on 01689 889700 or email enquiries@kenistonha.co.uk An officer will investigate in confidence, and your personal details will be kept confidential and not disclosed.

You said, we did!

Our Nethewode Court residents have been getting on their bikes safe in the knowledge that they will be secure when they return home thanks to the new bike storage area.

Residents asked Keniston if they could provide a storage facility and Keniston responded using the 'Better homes, better neighbourhoods' fund to create a light, airy and secure space for residents to keep their bikes. Miss Sarah Lloyd is very impressed with the new bike store.

"There is plenty of space inside and room for plenty of bikes to park safely. It is well constructed - not like a bike shed at all. Lined and painted, the bike store is a fresh room with lights that come on automatically when the door is opened. The door locks securely and keys are only given to those who have applied to Keniston in advance assuring that my bike is safe. I have pad-locked it onto the sturdy racks inside too."

We are sure with the warmer weather on its way, residents will want to get out there pedalling, but unfortunately Sarah is out of action with a broken ankle right now. She at least knows that there is one less thing to worry about knowing her bike is safe and dry while she recovers.

Sarah says *"Thank you Keniston Housing"*.



LATEST UPDATE ON BENEFITS

- Following the Supreme Court's judgment last year, on a number of bedroom tax cases, the size criteria rules have changed on 1st April 2017 to allow a bedroom to be allocated to a carer where a disabled person living in a household requires, and receives, overnight care from a non-residential carer on a regular basis.
- From April 2017, some young people (aged 18-21) will be excluded from the housing cost element of Universal Credit i.e. their rent will not be covered by Universal Credit or Housing Benefit.
- Don't be caught out if you are going abroad. Housing Benefit will only be payable whilst you are abroad if you intend to return home within 4 weeks.

If you think any of this affects you, then please contact your Rent Income Officer for more information.

- An increasing number of Keniston tenants are now claiming Universal Credit. We are interested to hear 1. How long people are waiting for their Universal Credit claim to be processed, and what impact is this having on them? 2. How are claimants managing with being paid Universal Credit being paid monthly in arrears? 3. How well is Universal support working, and how could this be improved? 4. What impact is this having on rent arrears, and how could the situation be improved?

You can share your views with Vivienne Astall, via email vivienneastall@kenistonha.co.uk or telephone 01689 889700. All information will be kept confidential.

Landlords Gas Safety Checks help us to help you stay safe

As a landlord Keniston are required by law to carry out a gas safety check to all its appliances within 12 months of the last check to ensure the appliance is safe and working correctly. The stakes have never been higher with the HSE statistics recording 7 deaths and a further 190 people hospitalised each year as a result of Carbon Monoxide poisoning (CO) a year caused by Gas appliances and flues either being poorly installed or maintained. Landlords are being regularly prosecuted for failing to comply with their legal obligations

Keniston employ Clairglow heating to carry out the landlords gas safety check in properties where we have gas appliances installed. Clairglow Heating aim to complete the safety check within 11 months of the last Safety Check to ensure Keniston avoid prosecution for failing to comply with the law. Where residents have failed to provide access Keniston shall act swiftly and take legal action to achieve access any cost incurred will also be passed on to those residents

Your Tenancy could also be at risk for failing to provide access when required. So help us to help you stay safe respond to request for access immediately.

Tony Coward - Property Services Director

New Heating in Merrow Street



Residents at Merrow Street are delighted by the upgrade of the night storage heating system. ***"It's like the Bahamas in my house"*** says Ms Palmer now that the new gas central heating is installed.

Combination boilers supplying hot water on demand have eliminated the need for cold water storage tanks and hot water cylinders. The cupboards where these were stored has since been decorated and fitted with slatted shelves and a small radiator providing residents with a new airing cupboard facility.

We have had a chance to catch up with Ms Rebekah Duff to ask what this upgrade means for her.

"There are so many great things I could say about the work, but the best part is no more waiting for hot water! Hot water on demand, yay! It makes bath times so much easier for me and my two daughters, with nice warm towels waiting on the radiator when we get out.

I could not be happier with it all, the water pressure is so much better now. My home is nice and toasty; my washing dries quickly next to the radiators and my lovely new airing cupboard means I have been able to free up space in my bedroom. I haven't received a gas bill yet so it's difficult to comment on the cost but my electricity costs have halved.

The contractors were helpful and friendly too. There was nothing that was too much trouble for them, especially Peter the Site Supervisor."

We are thrilled with the positive feedback and thank residents for their patience during the upgrade works.

"One of the best things that Keniston have done and this comes from the heart" Mr & Mrs Techie-Afful.

GETTING THE MESSAGE

Keniston prides itself on giving residents every opportunity to keep in contact, so we will soon be introducing a new text messaging service.

From your mobile phone, you will be able to:

- Report and receive important information about your repairs
- Query your rent balance
- Receive appointment reminders
- Find out when important events are coming up

So if you have changed your mobile number, please make sure we have it. Thanks. More details to follow soon!



Keniston Office
01689 889700

My Tenancy

Don't forget that you can access your rent account online by signing up to 'My tenancy'. This service enables you to do the following:

- look up your rent balance,
- view recent account transactions,
- print account statements,
- place a repair order (tenants only),
- view outstanding repairs (tenants only), and
- view and request changes to your account details.

One Darrick Wood resident says
"I regularly use the service on a weekly basis to check my rent account. I like to check that my payments and Housing benefit have all gone through ok and are up to date. I do most things online now including paying my bedroom tax via Allpay and I find the 'My tenancy' service very useful."

Please sign up via the Keniston website www.kenistonha.co.uk or by phoning the Keniston office.



Ann Welfare Memorial Plaque



Keniston would like to take this opportunity to mention a special lady called Ann Welfare from Darrick Wood (featured second from right). Ann sadly passed away towards the end of last year and had been a Keniston resident and long-serving member of her community for many years. Ann was an active member of the Darrick Wood community group (DWC) and in particular was the driving force behind the Darrick Wood community centre's activities. She will be very much missed by her family,

friends and those in the community who knew and worked with her.

Ann loved elephants, so we would like to thank our Resident Caretaker Keith Farmer for hand-making the elephant carving, it looks amazing and is a fitting tribute. We also thank the remaining volunteers who continue to keep the community centre running and who provide a variety of events, activities and training for Keniston residents and the wider community.

Interested in joining the Resident Panel?

Are you keen to make a difference to the services you receive? Or perhaps you're looking for a new challenge? If so, you could apply to join the Resident Panel.

Our Resident Panel has already made important improvements to our services. We are interested to hear your views and experiences from your perspective. You can help us to make important changes that will benefit everyone.

Joining the panel will give you the opportunity to help shape our services and make sure we're providing a service that meets the needs and expectations of all of our Residents. We know time is short, so you can have your say in a variety of different ways, such as by telephone, by email or joining us on a focus group.

If you'd like to find out more about joining the Resident Panel, contact Lynn Walsh on 01689 889700 or lynnwalsh@kenistonha.co.uk



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