

Belvedere Court

Belvedere Court on Lyttelton Road is on the outer reaches of the Suburb and is noticeable by its four distinctive bays which, from the inside, feels like standing on the bridge of a ship with 270% vision. When it was completed, in 1938, two bedroomed flats were available to rent at £150 - £185 per annum. The 56 flats on four floors were described as 'truly labour saving' and came equipped with fitted kitchens including cupboards, fridges and ironing boards. There was a tradesmans lift, an entry phone system, dust chutes for rubbish and the garages were heated. All that remains of these features today are the dust chutes which are the bane of the porter's life as he has to unblock them on a regular basis.

Much was made of the show flat being furnished by the renowned furniture designer Gordon Russell.

ARCHITECT ERNST FREUD

The block was built by the Church Estate Commissioners and the architect was Ernst Freud 1892-1970, youngest son of Sigmund and father of Lucien and the late Clement. He started his practice in Berlin where he specialised in designing houses for doctors and, appropriately, consulting rooms. In 1933 he left Berlin for London where he settled in St. John's Wood. He secured a number of commissions for private houses and block of flats around Hampstead but his most notable achievement was the design of Belvedere Court offering a 'continental lifestyle' which appealed to émigrés from Germany. Freud made clever use of the slope of the site, from east to west, by setting down each successive block by a half level so that the cill bands of one block become the window head bands of the next so the change in levels is not apparent.

The layout of the individual flats has proved to be very adaptable to modern living as many of the flats have been refurbished to provide en suite bathrooms and additional shower rooms. In recognition of the importance of his design, Belvedere Court was listed Grade II in 1999.

BLATANT DISREGARD

Early in its life the block was acquired by the Liverpool Victoria Society and the flats were available to rent. In 1996 the block was sold by LVFS to a development company in a blatant disregard to the obligations imposed by 1987 Landlord & Tenant Act. The development company then applied for planning permission to add another floor (this was prior to the building being listed) and convert most of the gardens to car parking. The writer and the Chairman of the RA, Hymie Binder, organised the residents to challenge the sale as the block was not offered to the residents as the Act required. The problem was that there was no penalty for not complying with the Act so it was universally ignored by property owners. After winning the case at the County Court the developer appealed and the case went to the Court of Appeal where the then Master of the Rolls, the late Tom Bingham, ruled in favour of the residents. Following this case the law was changed and a penalty was imposed for non compliance and it was made easier for residents to acquire their freeholds. The flats are now all sold on long leases and the freehold is owned by a company controlled by the residents.

There are extensive gardens surrounding the flats and the rear boundary is formed by Mutton Brook but the busy main road now makes the gardens to the rear more appealing. Whilst the building remains much the same, the private road to the



front has been widened to accommodate the multi car families that now occupy the flats and an extensive programme of planting has been undertaken including shrubbery to the front and replacement of fallen trees.

NOTABLE RESIDENTS

Notable residents over the years have been Gerry Springer and Barbara Windsor when her now husband, Scott Mitchell, lived in one of the flats. Other resident have included a Royal Warrant holder who supplied linen ware to the royal households, a diamond dealer, a bookmaker and, now unfashionably, a West End furrier. Gerry Springer has caused confusion over the years

because he has returned on several occasions to visit the flat he lived in until he was 5 but his sister has told him the flat he has been visiting is not the one they lived in. It is a shame that a record of residents over the years has not been kept because it would have provided a fascinating record of some interesting characters. For example Hymie Binder who the Times reported in his obituary, '...he had chutzpah, one enterprise saw him secure an unscheduled audience with the Pope in the Vatican during the 1960 Olympics in Rome, while at the 1974 Commonwealth Games in New Zealand, the Queen was so

entranced by his explanation of the significance of the weight-lifting competition that she delayed her departure.'

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

The main differences a time traveller would note, however, is the profile of the residents. When the flats were rented many of them were occupied by families who were related to each other or were connected through business. This produced a very noticeable 'community spirit' and anytime when the sun was shining the gardens were always busy with sunbathers or groups of people in deckchairs just sat around chatting with those living on the lower floors

bringing out tea and cakes. Up until the mid 90's there were still several residents who had lived in the block, but not necessarily in the same flats, since it was built. When the flats were sold the profile of residents changed; the gardens do not seem to be used so much and whilst residents do talk to each other, there is not the same sense of community there used to be. This is perhaps not surprising and it is probably a situation recognised by other flat dwellers as it is a consequence of modern life rather than the influence of Belvedere Court which is still a much sought after location for flat buyers.

GEOFFREY MARRIOTT

Window (window) n. an opening in a wall fitted with glass in a frame to let in light or air and allow people to see out (Sp in *Hampstead Garden Suburb* - as important to conserve the look from outside, keeping to traditional proportions.

The cheapest option is not always the best value for money

The replacement of windows with new made of inappropriate materials will visually harm your property and devalue it.

It is a popular misconception that upvc windows, for instance, are maintenance free. The average life of a well-made and properly looked after, timber or steel window, is approximately 75 to 100 years. A upvc window over this period is as yet untested, but many will fail, indeed have, within 25 to 30 years, particularly where mechanical and moving parts are concerned. These are often unable to be repaired resulting in the complete replacement of the window. Timber and steel windows can be readily repaired and are a much sounder investment.

Any alterations to houses on the Suburb must be approved by the Trust and Barnet. Barnet are unlikely to approve double glazing on Listed buildings. Replacement windows need Trust consent and we are happy to give impartial advice, free.



Ripping out timber windows for replacement with upvc is not only illegal but will in fact reduce the value of the property. Such replacements are completely out of character.



Good quality timber windows made from durable species and properly maintained will last a generation or more.



Replacement timber or steel windows can normally be double glazed to enhance the thermal efficiency of your property.



Timber windows can be easily repaired, prolonging the life of the window and keeping the character of the house.

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862 Finchley Road, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London NW11 6AB · 8455 1066 · mail@hgstrust.org · www.hgstrust.org