RIVERMEAD COURT

NEWSLETTER



Photograph: Franey Irani

Spring 2020

Contributions to the Newsletter

Thank you to all those residents who sent me suggestions of things we can do and listen to while confined to our homes.

I always welcome contributions to the Newsletter and in particular any good photographs for the front cover.

Fiona Fowler, flat 69 <u>fionafowler31@gmail.com</u>.

From the Chairman

When a month ago I began the first draft of my introduction to the Rivermead Court Newsletter, there was merely an oblique reference to a subject which now monopolises the media, your thoughts (and probably anxieties) and a great deal of the Board's time as you may gather from the many emails on the measures being taken here to deal with Covid-19's unwelcome arrival – fortunately so far at any rate not directly in Rivermead. More detail on these measures is provided later on in this Newsletter; the Board is devising arrangements to try to shield the Rivermead Estate from the present logistical impact of the pandemic and also working on strategies, should conditions significantly deteriorate.

We've concentrated on two aspects, the integrity and physical security (including health) of the Estate and the well-being of our staff on which the first-mentioned concerns depend. It was felt that "social initiatives" would be best left to volunteer efforts; the altruism of those who have stepped forward in response to the invitation of 20th March to help their neighbours is greatly welcomed. The two dimensions, Estate and Staff on the one hand and Social Initiatives on the other are being coordinated to try to avoid overlaps and contradictions.

We must assume – hopefully without unjustified optimism – that "normal" life will return and in due course "those bricky towers, The which on Thames' broad aged back do ride" will see life's rich pageant resumed. On that not too bold assumption, work on the Pipework project and the Lease Extension has been progressing, albeit not quite as swiftly as the Board would have hoped. Any delays aren't due to a lack of commitment from Pipework Committee or Focus Group members, but to a certain dilatoriness on the part of legal advisers which we hope now to have overcome.

To bring leaseholders up to date with the latest developments and with the currently expected timetable for both projects, you will be receiving a briefing paper in a few weeks. Please read it carefully; if you have any questions, please send an email to info@rivermeadcourt.co.uk or drop a note at the Porters' Lodge (if only just a 'phone number and a request to discuss the question you have with a Pipework Committee member).

You will read later on in the chapter on Finance that the redecoration of the West Block (long east and west elevations) has been postponed until 2021. Carol Ferguson, Chair of the Finance Committee, disclaims any prophetic powers predicting the disaster that might have befallen residents, had the scaffolding just been put up but the joiners and painters prevented from working owing to Covid-19!

May I end by imploring you to observe as strictly as possible the recommendations on social distancing and self-isolation (if needed) set out by the Public Health Authorities. I hope that we all emerge from this ordeal, with our numbers intact and our health unimpaired.

Tom Hackett

The Coronavirus (Covid-19)

These are extremely challenging times for all of us and our aim in Rivermead Court is to keep safe our staff and the residents. The Board is following closely the advice of the Chief Medical Officer, updated daily and available at: https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Actions by Rivermead Court

You will all be familiar with the Government guidelines about staying home, safe distancing and social isolating. Inevitably these have affected the Rivermead staff and their ability to get to work and may make it necessary for us to change our customary ways. Below are some of the changes you will see: they will be updated and changed as the need arises. Look out for circulars, emails from Rivermead Court and notices.

Porters

Residents are not permitted to enter the Lodge, all communication with the porters is through the window and preferably by phone on 020 7736 3993. Two porters will be available but there may only be one porter in the Lodge at a time.

A few porters are absent and others may be unable to travel to Rivermead Court in the future. Reduced numbers would mean further changes have to be made but you will be kept informed. For the present the porters' roles and the cleaning will continue as usual.

Parcels

Please ask delivery companies to leave your parcel outside your front door NOT in the Porter's Lodge: it will not be accepted there.

Back stairs

Contractors have been told to use the back stairs and the back lift at all times. Residents may therefore prefer to avoid them and keep to the main staircase and lift.

Gardens

Residents are asked to be considerate and mindful of other users, especially our more senior neighbours. A reminder that the social distancing rules (keeping 2 metres/six foot apart) apply, that children should be supervised, reminded not to shout, play football or go on or through the flower beds. Visitors are not allowed in the gardens unless they are assisting a resident.

Volunteers

Some kind residents have offered to assist those needing practical help. If you would like to help, please contact Anne Isaacs who will pass on your name (info@rivermeadcourt.co.uk, 0785 251 8345 or a note at the Porters' Lodge). This is a residents' initiative and organised by them but Anne will put you in touch.

Annual General Meeting

The Rivermead Court AGM was due to be held on 1 June. It is most unlikely it can be held that day and it will have to be deferred. The Articles of Association allow it to be held up to 15 months from the previous one, i.e. to September 2020. It is hoped to rearrange then.

Do you need help?

If you need some help or if you are worried about a neighbour who you think may not be coping, please email Anne Isaacs (<u>info@rivermeadcourt.co.uk</u>, 0785 251 8345 or a note at the Porters' Lodge) giving her permission to share your contact details with the volunteers.

Self isolating/quarantining

Please let Anne Isaacs know if you are self-isolating either because of being infected with the Coronavirus or because you have been in proximity with someone with the virus.

Please remember – safe distance from other people at all times

Contact Information

Rivermead Court information will be sent to residents via email/ post (email to those with email, paper copy to the rest). Copies of current circulars will also be on the Noticeboard by the Porters' Lodge.

Rivermead residents in need of help.

Contact the Estate Manager, Anne Isaacs, who will contact one of the volunteer residents who will be in touch. (info@rivermeadcourt.co.uk, 0785 251 8345 or a note at the porter's lodge)

Rivermead residents who would like to volunteer to help those in need.

Contact the Estate manager, Anne Isaacs, who will refer you to the volunteer group.

NHS website for information about the virus and how to protect yourself. Online information on what to do if you think you may have symptoms.

https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19

The NHS ask you not to phone 111 to tell them you have symptoms unless you are feeling seriously ill. Testing for coronavirus will not be carried unless ordered by a hospital.



Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital

Report from the Finance Committee

Financial matters, including delaying the West Block by one year to 2021.

In recent months, much of the work of the Finance Committee has been taken up with carrying out a full assessment of the financial health of the entire Rivermead Court entity (Service Charge, Reserve Charge and the company). Cash-flow projections have been prepared taking into account the planned Major Works cycle for the next five years, the pipework project costs and timings and estimates of the Lease Extension income and timings. The reason for doing this now is to prepare as far as possible for every conceivable eventuality that could affect the flow of funds before the proposed start of the heating project in mid-2021.

As a starting point, the Committee reviewed the recent activity on the Reserve Charge. It is worth pointing out that the Major Works plan can only budget for the anticipated regular outlays for maintaining the buildings and the estate in general. This includes external renovations and roof repairs, internal decorations of the common parts, lightwells, roadways, lifts and so forth. These are major outlays – for example the West Block renovation, which was due to be carried out this year (2020) according to the Major Works schedule, will cost over £700,000.

Ordinarily, the Reserve Charge would be able to cope with these outlays as the 5% per annum escalating annual charge would on average meet escalating building costs. Two factors have upset the hitherto happy balance. The lesser of these is that construction industry inflation rates have recently been greater than 5%. These high rates of inflation may or may not persist.

However the more serious factor relates to items of a one-off nature outside the normal planned maintenance headings. Often the result of an emergency or due to increased regulation by outside agencies, they are unanticipated and therefore unbudgeted. For example, major remedial work was carried out on the boilers in 2015/16 amounting to over £800,000. Meanwhile, there were three other major capital outlays caused by the introduction of new regulations: (in round figures)

Fireproof doors	2014	£200,000
Fire detection system	2017	£130,000
Emergency Lighting	2018/19	£425,000 (approx.)

In the last 5 years, therefore, upwards of £1.5 million has been spent either on boilers or to comply with regulations. There has in addition been significant annual expenditure on water hygiene, only part of which has been absorbed by the Service Charge. And who knows what the future will bring? For example, as a result of Grenfell, Rivermead Court will be re-assessed for fire safety and additional requirements may be imposed upon us.

All of this unplanned expenditure has been absorbed by the Reserve Charge and Rivermead Court Limited between them. However, the net effect is that the cash resources of Rivermead

as an entity have been almost entirely drained at a time when healthier bank balances would allow smoother cash management during the early stages of the pipeworkproject.

The bottom line is that the Board has concluded that the West Block refurbishment should be delayed for 12 months. This delay will give us some of the necessary financial headroom to manage the day-to-day bank balances; and the work on the West Block is now scheduled to begin early in 2021. The Board understands that any additional deterioration over the next 12 months is likely to be minimal and City Restoration, who gave us the best quotation, will start work in February 2021.

Carol Ferguson, Chairman

From the Pipework Committee

Hygiene

With everything else going on, it is easy to forget that we still need to maintain the safety of our water supplies. We do! For the time being, our contractors have said they will not sample occupied flats (to protect both parties). As a consequence, apart from some tidying up work with flats already sampled, there will be no more sampling for the time being. This now puts even greater reliance



on regular flushing. So, please, at least once a week make sure that you flush every outlet for two minutes, descale when necessary and make sure your towel rails are hot right to the top. This is for your own safety and for the safety of your fellow residents.

Pipework Project

We are regularly reassessing the risks to the project of the present circumstances. Since work on site would not start for at least a year, we have to hope it will be able to continue. Whether, in the meantime, we can complete the legal and technical work on which the physical works depend, remains to be seen. If we can, we will proceed. But that is a big 'if' at the moment. There will be further updates as events unfold.

Ionic filtration shower heads

We have now had exceptionally high Legionella readings from two flats fitted with these devices. Whatever the marketing hype may suggest, these are a bad idea; please do not be tempted to buy them. The beads make a breeding ground for bacteria.

There are plenty of 'normal' showerheads available, so why run the risk?



Tim Soane, Chairman

From the Estates Committee

West Block Redecoration and Roof repairs (East/West elevations)

After a successful redecoration/roof repair project on the East Block in 2019, our focus has now moved to a similar project on the West Block. Previous plans had foreseen that work would start on the redecoration of the West Block in 2020. The Board agreed in January this year to defer the West Block redecoration for a year with work to start now in February 2021 and this has turned out to be timely as it is unlikely that Building Contractors could have worked over the next few months due to the Covid-19 lockdown while the residents would have suffered from having the scaffolding in place.

Property Insurance

Owing to a series of significant flooding bills, Rivermead Court's property insurers have increased the annual premium from the previously budgeted level for 2020 of £125K (actual 2019 - £122K) to £153K. The increase in premium has been attenuated by our agreeing to raise the "excess" (the share of a claim borne by the Service Charge before insurers pick up the tab) from £250 to £2,500.

To limit the increase in the Service Charge for 2020 to 3.2% (including the regular 5% increase in the Reserve Charge), Rivermead Court Limited will pay the insurance premium increase of £28K. However, this one-off contribution to contain the Service Charge increase cannot be guaranteed for subsequent years. Residents should help limit insurance premium increases by their own vigilance on flooding or other incidents likely to trigger a claim. You are also reminded once again to insure the contents (furniture, art, antiques etc) of your property which is not covered by the Rivermead Court policy.

Poplar Trees

Hurlingham Court had eight poplar trees along our common boundary. Three were diseased

and had to be removed. Hurlingham Court have been advised that poplar trees are not ideal for replanting in the gaps, and that silver birch would be more suitable. One silver birch has already been planted in the existing gap just past their garages, and they will be looking to plant more as appropriate. The view, as shown here, is looking very different for those of us who look west from the West Block.



Community Fibre

We are interested to know how satisfied residents are with Community Fibre. Would you send a brief email to Mike Cave (<u>mikecelestecave@gmail.com</u>) and I will pass to Peter Wentzel who is the focal point with Community Fibre - the good as well as the bad please.

Electric Vehicles (EV)

Because of the inclusion of Rivermead Court in the London Ultra Low Emission Zone in October 2021, we will be doing a survey to understand the possible move of residents to own Electric Vehicles and the requirements for EV charging. The problem is that Rapid Chargers

for vehicles like Teslas are expensive to install and require substantial electrical infrastructure from both us and the Local Electricity Provider.

Mike Cave, Chairman

Do you want to give back to Rivermead Court?

The House Committee and Estates Committee are both looking for a new member. Those residents who are members of a committee enjoy the work and are interested in being involved in the running of Rivermead Court and making it a great place to live. It is perhaps worth noting that if you want to be considered for Board membership, it may help to have served on one of the sub-committees.

The House Committee

Their responsibilities include:

- The maintenance and décor of the Common Parts
- Internal Communications and the Newsletters
- The Summer Party and the Christmas Carols
- The Basements
- Health & Safety
- Staff at Rivermead
- Cleaning
- Other topics requested by the Board

The committee meets in the Rivermead Court Boardroom approximately eight times a year on a Thursday afternoon at 5.00pm and the meetings take no longer than 1½ hours. Wine and nibbles are on offer after each meeting! If you would like to be considered for the House Committee, please contact deborahrichards89@gmail.com explaining why you would be interested in being a member and what skills you would bring to the committee.

The Estates Committee

This committee works actively in conjunction with the Faraday's Surveyor and the Estate Manager in maintaining the infrastructure of Rivermead Court.

Responsibilities include:

- Issues arising from the Licence for Alteration
- Supervision of Faraday on projects
- Guidance to the Estate Manager on areas such as lifts, garages/storerooms, parking
- Other topics requested by the Board

At present the Estates Committee meets at least 4 times a year. These meetings are about 2 hours in duration and are held on weekday mornings at 9 am as both the Faraday's Surveyor and the Estate Manager need to attend. If you would like to be considered for the Estates Committee, please contact Mike Cave on email mikecelestecave@gmail.com explaining why you would be interested in being a member, and what skills you would bring to the committee.

In brief

Regulations and Guidelines

The current edition of the Rivermead Court Regulations and Guidelines dates back five years. Members of the Board have been working on a revision and re-organisation of the document particularly with regard to requirements and obligations for renovations. It is hoped to distribute the final version to all residents in the summer.

Parsons Green Clinic

The Parsons Green Clinic is no longer a Walk-In centre: it is now providing a car swabbing test centre. This is a referral only service. If it is decided a caller needs a test, the NHS 111 call centre passes them to Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. If staff decide a test is required, they refer you to the Parsons Green Centre, where you arrive in their own car. Throat and Nose swabs are taken outside by specially trained nurses and you are given the results by phone within 72 hours.

Stations – step free access

Fulham MP, Greg Hands, is running a campaign for stepfree access at Putney Bridge & Parsons Green underground stations. Putney Bridge Tube Station remains one of the least accessible stations with three flights of stairs and no lift. If you would like to sign his petition, go to: https://www.greghands.com/putney-bridge-petition

Heathrow

On 27 February, the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of a group of councils, including LBHF, environmental groups and the Mayor of London who had argued that the government's decision to go ahead with a third runway at Heathrow was invalid because they had not taken proper

account of changes in environmental policies.

This result calls into question any expansion of Heathrow as the government has confirmed they do not plan to appeal against the ruling. Heathrow, however, has said that they will be appealing. Furthermore, the judge, Lord Justice Lindblom, said an expansion has not been ruled out. He said: "Our decision should be properly understood. We have not decided, and could not decide, that there will be no third runway at Heathrow.... The consequence of our decision is that the government will now have the opportunity to reconsider the NPS in accordance with the clear statutory requirements that parliament has imposed."

Nextdoor

https://nextdoor.co.uk/news_feed/ is the neighbourhood hub for the exchange of helpful information, goods, and services. It is considered safe.

Community organisations

Hammersmith and Fulham Council is up a Community Aid Network (*H&F CAN*) with people who run foodbanks, homeless shelters, youth clubs, community centres, residents' groups and many more to:

- co-ordinate a borough-wide volunteer operation
- provide an easy way to donate money to support vulnerable people

https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/help-yourneighbours-volunteering-our-communityaid-network

The Vicar of **St Etheldreda with St Clement** in Fulham is coordinating a support network for vulnerable individuals and those self-isolating. They can be contacted on 020 7736 3809 or by emailing communitycare@stethsfulham.org

Report from the House Committee

The 2020 members of the House Committee are: Deborah Richards (Chair) Shane van Rossum, Marguerite Griffiths, Fiona Fowler, Jenefer Tatham, Rosemary Raza, Jean Henderson and Anne Isaacs.

It was a busy end to 2019 and has been a challenging start to 2020 with the Coronavirus. The Committee has the technology to meet virtually and I am hugely grateful to my Committee members, who all give of their time to make Rivermead Court a great place for us all to live.

Christmas Carols

In December Alexander Tatham very kindly volunteered to conduct at the Rivermead Court Carols, the House Committee provided the refreshments, and Carol Ferguson was the keyboard Maestra. The venue was changed from outside the Centre Block to the Board Room under the West Block, this meant that we were not impacted by bad weather. The feedback from residents was positive and we would hope to repeat the event in December 2020.

A collection was taken and over £600 was raised for the Royal Trinity Hospice in memory of David Tatham.



Staff Christmas Fund

This Christmas residents showed their appreciation for the Staff's work by giving a record amount. The sum of £32,100 was collected allowing for a distribution of £25,700 after tax. In 2018 the amount given was £30, 000, with a distribution of £24,000 after tax.

Rivermead Court Summer Party

We had planned a Summer Party in July, but in the current circumstances are not committing to any dates. If there is an opportunity to host a late Summer Party we will let you know.

Maintenance of the Common Parts

Committee members inspect corridors and entrance halls and we would normally have a rolling programme of redecoration and touching up of paintwork. This is currently on hold, but will be resumed once movement restrictions are lifted. If anyone notices damage to paintwork, please do let Anne Isaacs know and it will be added to the maintenance list.

Deborah Richards, Chairman

Noticeboard

Do remember to look at the Noticeboard opposite the Porters' Lodge. Any resident can post a notice there if they think it will be of interest to the whole community.

Report from the Garden Committee

Coronavirus withstanding, spring seems to have sprung this week, with the glorious weather both creating optimism in our hearts, and creating its own problems. I'm sure you will have been conscious of the greatly increased numbers using the garden, and it is essential that we follow the rules and guidelines laid out in this newsletter - no parties, no visitors (unless they are assisting a resident) and everyone, including children who must be supervised and controlled at all times, obeying the instructions from the Government on social distancing. James



Sheen our gardener and his small team will continue to work in the garden at present and we would ask you to observe their space as they will yours.

On a more cheerful note, spring planting is continuing with a number of new shrubs and plants to go in over the next few weeks. We are concentrating particularly this year on the most easterly border which is to get a considerable facelift. The window boxes are completed and I hope you will agree that we have had a better crop of spring bulbs this year.

I'm afraid we have had to postpone any major improvements to the Secret Garden for the time being, although plans are still in the pipeline for when times are better. Meanwhile, we are planning to tweak its appearance this summer with some planted tubs and the introduction of a limited number of annuals and herbs.

We have changed our arborist to Parsons TreeCare, which is a small firm based in North London. Mr Frank Parsons came in at the beginning of the year and, provided that his work continues to prove satisfactory, will be dealing with the trees in the garden on an agreed three year plan.

I do hope we shall all be able to go on enjoying the garden. We are incredibly lucky to have such an asset in Central London.

Catherine Nunneley, Chairman

Whats App

What about setting up a Whats App group? Maybe some neighbours have done so already. The Centre Block has a group and perhaps someone would like to start one in the other blocks.

This would not be the place to contact if you needed help or wanted to volunteer: those requests should go to Anne Isaacs. This would be for the more light-hearted posts and for local information that residents think might be useful for others to know, such as delivery services, special shop opening hours etc.

Some suggestions while staying at home

Music. As more festivals, performances and concerts are cancelled due to the coronavirus shutdown, musicians are taking to social and streaming platforms to play live.

For **opera** lovers, the Met is live streaming an opera every evening (available for 20 hours afterwards). https://www.metopera.org/user-information/nightly-met-opera-streams/. The Opéra de Paris is making past performances available for free on its website



and Wiener Staatsoper is also broadcasting daily performances at www.staatsoperlive.com.

These are just a few of the many **concerts** available:

The Berlin Philharmonic http://www.digitalconcerthall.com/

NPR: Live Virtual Concerts to Watch During The Coronavirus Shutdown

https://www.npr.org/2020/03/17/816504058/a-list-of-live-virtual-concerts-to-watch-

during-the-coronavirus-shutdown

ClassicRock Concerts and Documentaries Streaming Online for Free

http://ultimateclassicrock.com/free-streaming-concerts-documentaries/

Books. If your family enjoys Audio books, Amazon's Audible, usually a paid app, has made it free for anyone to use due to the Covid-19 situation. There are a lot of good books on Audible that would interest both children and other age-groups. https://stories.audible.com/

Beautiful objects. So many museums have online collections. You can visit the Uffizi or the Rijksmuseum from your comfortable armchair. Here is just a tiny selection: Musei Vaticani, Roma

http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/it/collezioni/catalogo-online.html Pergamon Museum, Berlin

https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/pergamon/m05tcm?hl=en

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/van-gogh-museum?hl=en

Metropolitan Museum, New York https://artsandculture.google.com/explore

Exercise. *PT with Joe* is a daily exercise programme for children every weekday morning at 9 am. https://www.thebodycoach.com/blog/pe-with-joe-1254.html He also does a 10 minute session for seniors. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2wp8Ipxn9s

YouTube. There are a surprising number of interesting and touching videos on YouTube. See this, for example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTVXEGIS3LE

Do look at https://www.art-critique.com/en/ for more opera suggestions, at https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home for almost everything and don't forget **BBC Sounds** with its multitude of plays, serialised books, radio programmes and blogs.

Bridge Players

Sadly our Annual Bridge Match against Hurlingham was cancelled due to the threat of the Coronavirus. We had a Team of 32 players ready on 19th March to challenge our neighbours. The hope is that we may be able to reschedule the match to November.

Meantime with the help of Giorgina Soane some of our players have taken up Bridge Base Online (BBO). This is best played on a PC or laptop and it enables 4 people to play bridge remotely. If anyone is interested Giorgina Soane (giorgina@soane.net), Gerald Wombwell (gawombwell@btinternet.com), Bruce Fraser (fraserindenver@hotmail.com), and I would be happy to provide guidance on how to access the BBO website (it is free) and set up an initial session.

Lastly for those, who play bridge at Hurlingham, Giorgina and Tim Soane are supporting Hurlingham bridge in replicating with BBO the Wednesday duplicate and Thursday supervised duplicate sessions. A pilot of the Wednesday session has taken place successfully. Monica Davis, Chairman of Hurlingham Bridge will be contacting the Bridge Community shortly with more details and to seek expressions of interest.

Gavin Trechman (gavintrechman@googlemail.com)

Contact details

If you have a problem and need to contact someone, please first contact the Porters' Lodge on 020 7736 3993. The Estate Manager, Anne Isaacs, can be contacted on tel 07852 518 345 or email info@rivermeadcourt.co.uk. If you wish to contact a board member, please leave a note at the Porters' Lodge.

Board of Directors

Thomas Hackett (Chairman)

Mike Cave (Estates Committee; Basements)

Carol Ferguson (Finance Committee)

Fiona Fowler (Company Secretary; House

Committee; Communications)

Peter Green (Estates Committee; Pipework

Committee)

Deborah Richards (House Committee; Health

and Safety)

Tim Soane (Pipework Committee)

Michael Stevens (Pipework Committee)

Bernard Weatherill (Legal)

Staff Complement

Estate Manager – Anne Isaacs

Deputy House Managers – Berhane Dejenie Terry Fowler

Porters – Keith Moody, Nicholas Odei, Rony Pereira, Abel Abebe, Dylan Fowler, Ferenc Bartha

Cleaners – Jaime Villapa, Malinda Fowler, Roy Moody, Robert Baxter

Contract Gardener – James Sheen Ltd

