

# TOLMERS NEWS APRIL 77

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JUST THE OTHER side of Euston station is the first hospital in the country ever to be occupied — it's the EGA, the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for women.

"The DHSS and the Area Health Authority had made up their mind that we were to go, and despite all our protests they tried to plough on with the closure. So really it was obvious that nothing but direct action was going to have any effect. We occupied the hospital in November to keep it open — to go on providing a service to patients and to safeguard our jobs. A 24-hour picket ensures that patients and equipment aren't moved out from behind our backs."

—Pam Jones, NUPE shop steward

The authorities want to move the EGA to a few wards in the Whittington hospital in Islington — but this would mean not only a loss of facilities and of 300 jobs in this area, but also the end of the EGA as a unit for women, which can act as a focus for women's health needs, and where women can be certain of seeing a woman doctor.

## Our local hospital

Many of the links between the EGA and the community in Camden have been cut as the hospital has been run down, and many of you may not even have heard of it until they tried to close it — but the EGA is trying to build up these links again.

They are planning to open a well-woman clinic in the near future — you don't need a doctor's note, you can just go to the clinic for a thorough check up, or if you need help with some of the 'minor' illnesses that women are often just expected to suffer (eg cystitis, period pains).

If you have any suggestions about the kind of facilities you would like to see provided in the EGA, the hospital is having a meeting in the near future between staff in the hospital, local people, and those with experience of women's health needs.

We need to draw up proposals for an upgraded, expanded EGA at Euston, which will provide for the needs of local women.

(For further details see Candy in 155 Drummond Street.)

## So why are they trying to close it down?

Well, they've never said what they want the site for, but like us, and the other people who live and work in this area, the EGA occupies land that would be a gold mine for property developers. Yet again we're having to fight for something we need rather than another empty office block.

Barbara Castle said it was an old and expensive hospital — but the EGA's own survey has shown that it's cheaper than most hospitals in the area, and will last at least until the end of the century — and anyway if they pulled down all the old hospitals we wouldn't have very many left.

They call it rationalisation, but that is in fact what the government is trying to do — there are plans to close 120 out of 150 hospitals in London without replacing them, many of them are to go in the next few months.

## Cuts in Camden

The effect in this area is going to be catastrophic — the proposed reduction in spending on health in Camden and Islington is 30%, and this is going to affect everyone — except those who can afford private practice.

The National Temperance and the St Pancras hospital up in Camden Town are to shut. Even UCH is threatened, and they already tried to close certain departments there, while the waiting list gets longer and longer.

And it's not just hospitals — playcentres and nurseries are to be drastically hit and a few weeks ago the town hall was bombarded by angry kids, with mothers and fathers, protesting against the closure of their facilities.

Pensioners clubs are threatened too, and they want to shut down Holborn Library, and close the others for part of the week.

The building programme in Camden is to be cut by HALF this year ... and at the same time as all this, the council has just announced a rise of 15% in the rates to 75p in the £.

## What you can do

The Area Health Authority has now said that they will try to move patients out from the second week in April.

The EGA need help with the 24-hour picket; Tolmers Village has been covering the Thursday shift from 10am till 2pm every week — if you can help come down to the hospital, or contact 12 Tolmers Square or Moni in No. 17 to find out when help is most needed.

## HOME MADE

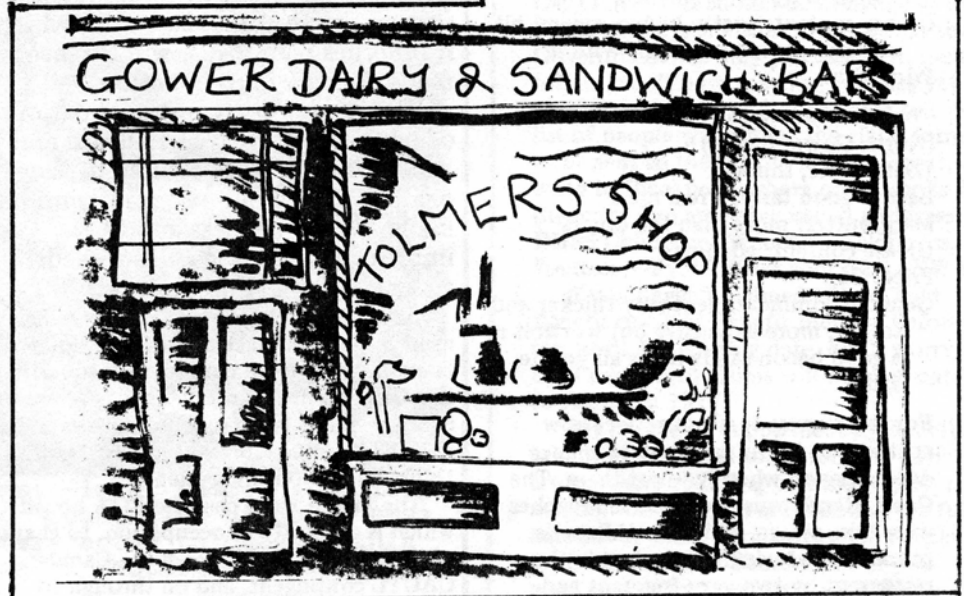
GOOD NEWS! Alex and Chiara have opened the TOLMERS SHOP. It is in the old dairy in North Gower Street, which had not been empty long after Mr Williams had allowed the shop to run down.

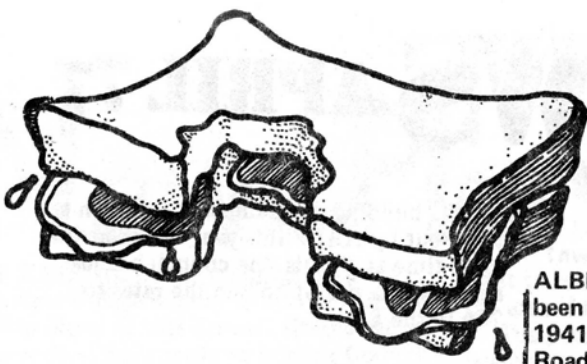
They have removed the dust-covered Heinz advertisement and crinkled lining-paper from the window and replaced it with flowers. There is bread, fruit, fresh veg, cakes and books for sale in the white and blue front room. At the back there are clothes.

This is a real community shop — it is ours. Alex and Chiara want us to buy and sell what we want, to call in and talk when we want. It is a chance to get together again apart from a supply of cheap and good food.

Alex also wants to open up the basements under the garages at 19-24 Tolmers Square. Anyone interested in a sound-proof dancing and meeting-place, again much needed, should help Alex both financially and practically.

Call in at the shop and use what is yours. But don't forget that Alex and Chiara have done the dirty work.





# DARK DEEDS

A Tolmers News survey of bacon sandwiches in the village reveals that the more you pay, the more you get, but how much you enjoy it depends on where you eat it.

Sampling took place at random over three days and included a high error factor: the two Tolmers News reporters were unable to inspect all the sandwiches together and eat them at once because of dieting restrictions and cash-flow problems.

Also, at least one eater had an ideal of mounds of crisp yet greasy bacon wedged between heart-attacking inches of butter lining chunks of brown bread, which she knew would not be realised.

**The Capri sandwich**  
(Euston Street)

Loaf: white, thicker-cut, a bit stale

Bacon: good taste, but not a very generous portion

Marg/butter: hardly any

Grease content: very low

Price: 20p

General comments: didn't slip down too easily.

**The Villabella (Restaurant) sandwich**  
(North Gower Street)

Loaf: white, thin-cut

Bacon: very good taste, but there could have been more of it

Marg/butter: low

Grease content: enough to lubricate it nicely

Price: 22p

**The Rendezvous sandwich**  
(Drummond Street)

Loaf: white, thin-cut

Bacon: lots of it, but not much taste and not much meat

Marg/butter: unknown because it was obscured by

Grease content: pretty high — a good bit of crispy frying-pan came with it

Price: 20p

**The Gino sandwich**  
(North Gower Street)

Loaf: white, thin-cut

Bacon: good taste, a real meal

Marg/butter: more than the others

Grease content: adequate

Price: 25p

General comment: generally thicker and tastier, more expensive but worth it if a good bacon sandwich is all you're after.

For this survey does not reflect how attitudes to bacon sandwiches change depending on where you eat them. The Capri, Rendezvous and Gino sandwiches were take-aways, while the Villabella rounds were lovingly munched in the restaurant by two very frequent and satisfied customers.

**ALBERT AND SIMONE Colson** have been on the council housing list since 1941, when they moved into 52 Hampstead Road.

Since then, they have seen four changes of landlord — from Salter Rex, to Walter Lawrence, to Joe Levy and finally to Morgan Grenfell — and, they claim, not one of them has ever been inside the house, nor carried out any repairs or redecoration.

But with their own money and labour, the Colsons have kept the stairway and the rooms that they rent on the first and second floors in excellent condition.

Mr Colson admits that they've never asked a landlord to do anything: "If you've got handyman skills, it's quicker to do it yourself. After, all it's only you who suffer from waiting for someone else to do it".

They think the shop on the ground floor has been empty for more than ten years. The basement has been allowed to rot with fungi growing on the walls and terrible smells which have been the cause of their calling out the health inspector on more than one occasion.

In 1973, the rafters in the roof were damaged when the hostel next door, to which the top floor was connected, collapsed.

The council surveyors were immediately on to Joe Levy, the owner at that time,

to repair the roof as it was letting in water.

A temporary tarpaulin was put up which has remained over since, for once Morgan Grenfell had bought the property off Levy, the council, as managers of the estate, were more keen to move the Colsons out than spend any money on a house destined for the bulldozer.

Then, in 1974, Mrs Colson suffered a heart attack after their home was broken into for the second time. While she was in hospital, Mr Colson renewed their efforts to get rehoused.

In July 1974, the Housing Department agreed to offer them a new flat in the Netley Street development as soon as it was ready. But when Woodhall was finished, they were offered nothing.

Since then, they say, the council has offered them five places elsewhere: each one has been unsuitable, either because it was too high up (Mrs Colson has arthritis in one leg and cannot manage many stairs) or because it was not big enough.

A few weeks ago their housing problems took a turn for the worse when they woke up one morning to find that the electricity wasn't working, even though the only electric appliance they'd had on all night was the fridge.

The LEB electrician had a look at the main fuse in the basement and said it was too dangerous to mend — the whole place would need to be rewired.

## campaign against a criminal trespass law

**2,500 PEOPLE** turned out on Saturday March 19th to demonstrate against the Criminal Law Bill, which, if it comes into force, will threaten many forms of direct action.

Those who carry out occupations of homes, workplaces, colleges and institutions such as council offices or the DHSS could become criminals liable to up to two years imprisonment if the Bill succeeds in getting through Parliament.

About 40 people from Tolmers Village went on the demonstration. There were many banners from community, squatting and CACTL group from all over the country, but unfortunately there were only 15 banners representing the Trade Union and labour movement.

The march went past the EGA hospital which is currently in occupation, to chants of "EGA Stays OK", deom the Camden CACTL contingent, and on through to Islington where one person was arrested.

The demonstration then turned back to picket Islington police station until the man was released on bail, after which the march went on to a Rally in Highbury Fields. There was a social in the evening with rock bands, theatre and films.

The Bill will have its third reading in the House of Lords on April 19th after which it will pass into the House of Commons, probably around the beginning of May.

CACTL is mobilising as much opposition as possible to the Bill both within Parliament and without. CACTL is now supported by several unions nationally and by many at branch level, as well as by many community groups.

Whilst squatters will inevitably be the first to experience the effects of the Bill if it becomes law, this does not mean that all squatters will become criminals overnight. The Law will probably be used selectively, at least at first.

Camden CACTL meets every Wednesday at 8.00pm at 30 Camden Road, NW1.





## CHILD BENEFIT NOW!

Two council electricians confirmed that it was too dangerous to put in even temporary lighting.

The next visit was from "a council labourer and his chief" who were scandalised at the condition of the basement; the labourer suggested moving the meter up to the front passage but his boss told him "Forget it — we'll arrange for an emergency move".

Mrs Colson told them she didn't want a home; she'd already got one; she just wanted some light and heat.

Ever since, they have been without electricity. Mrs Colson says: "You're living a normal life, with a TV, fridge, and so on — you can't imagine what it's like without electricity until it happens".

Adds Mr Colson: "It's amazing how soul-destroying it is — and it is particularly depressing because we know the council isn't going to do anything about it".

Nevertheless, friends and neighbours have been very generous with offers of alternative heating, invitations to dinner and the use of their homes.

Now the Colsons' aim is to move as quickly as possible — but to a place that will allow them to maintain their present standard of living. "It'll be our last move and we want to be happy" Mr Colson says.

It is strange to hear them talk of this last move, as neither look their age: Mr Colson is nearly 65, but although he

was made voluntarily redundant from his engineering job a few months ago he intends to go back to work when he can be more easily employed as a pensioner.

Mrs Colson looks nothing like her 73 years — her youthfulness reflects her enjoyment in life: "I do what I like, when and how I like, without anyone looking over my shoulder".

Born in Flanders, Mrs Colson has some fine pieces of continental furniture which have been in the family for several years, and which they want to take with them wherever they go.

As Mr Colson says: "Your memories and sorrows are all in your furniture — it's unfair if we should have to sell it — you'd be cutting your life shorter than it already is".

Yet they've been told by a council Lettings Officer: "We understand you're awkward people and won't take what we've offered you".

But Mrs Colson says: "All we want is a ground floor flat, or a flat with easy access to the lift, and two bedrooms or a bedroom large enough to fit twin beds, and a living room large enough so we don't have to sell our furniture". She is resigned to selling the bedroom furniture.

Now they are waiting, in the dark, for a letter from the council offering them a flat in Woodhall which was promised them last week but which has failed to arrive.

**IF YOU have one or more children, you should be claiming Child Benefit: it is yours by right — no matter what your income is.**

Under the new Child Benefit scheme, which replaced the Family Allowance system on April 4th, all families are entitled to £1.00 weekly for their first child, and £1.50 for second and subsequent children. One-parent families, however, are entitled to an extra 50p for their first child.

Child Benefit is paid by cashing the orders from your book at the Post Office of your choice. Payment is made to the mother unless the husband gets a signed statement from his wife that she does not want to claim herself. The names of both husband and wife are shown on the front of the order book unless the claimant asks for the other's name not to be shown.

People who were getting family allowances (not available for the first child) have already had their order books for payments after April 4th overstamped with the increased amount of money they are entitled to: if, for any reason, you were getting family allowances but have not had your book overstamped take it to the Tavistock Square or Kentish Town social security offices.

All families who have only one child should claim the £1.00 Child Benefit they are entitled to on form CH 2(T) in the centre of leaflet CH 1 (T), available at Post Offices and social security offices. Order books will be issued to you from the Child Benefit Centre in Newcastle.

If you are a one-parent family and were claiming Child Interim Benefit before April 4th, you will have received an order book for the extra 50p automatically, but don't forget to make a claim for the basic £1.00 that everyone is entitled to.

One-parent families who weren't claiming Child Interim Benefit, but who are nevertheless entitled to the extra 50p for their first child should fill in form CH 11 A — this should be available at the DHSS office in Melton Street, but as the Government has only just issued it, many offices won't have received supplies yet.

You can either add your name to the list of people waiting for the claim form to be sent to them from Melton Street, or write to Blackpool, where order books for the extra 50p are being issued (Address: DHSS Child Benefit Increase, Norcross, Poulton-le-Fylde, Blackpool FY6 8NW.)

If you haven't claimed either Child Benefit or Child Benefit Increase before the April 4th starting date, don't worry: until next April claims will be back-dated to April 4th 1977.

But people on supplementary benefit take warning: local social security offices are probably reducing your money on the assumption that you are claiming the full amount of Child Benefit you are entitled to. So claim Child Benefit now if you want to avoid a temporary shortfall in your income.

**IF THE CRIMINAL TRESPASS PROPOSALS BECOME LAW, THE PEOPLE TAKING PART IN DIRECT ACTION COULD FACE IMPRISONMENT FOR FROM 6 MONTHS TO TWO YEARS.**



St. Agnes Place, Lambeth: Police enforce demolition of good homes. Squatters acted to prevent this happening. Photo: David McKay.

# New Plans for Tolmers?

AT A LOCAL public meeting called by Tolmers Village Action Group in February at the Maria Fidelis School, alternative suggestions were made to present Council plans for Tolmers.

The discussion at that meeting resulted in the formulation of proposals based on the needs of the people of Camden for housing, employment and community and recreational facilities.

These were recently circulated in the area — for anyone who has not got a copy they are available from 12 Tolmers Square. In outline what we are asking for is:

- 1 the retention and rehabilitation of the Square for housing and extra housing to be provided along the southern end of North Gower Street.
- 2 The retention of existing light industrial and craft workshops and additional workshops to be built on the Euston Road site.
- 3 That all shops, restaurants, small businesses and residents should have the

right to remain and be relocated within the area if they so wish.

4 The provision of a multi-purpose leisure centre flexibly designed and equipped to accommodate many community activities such as cinema/theatre, dancehall/youthclub, nursery/creche, bar, meeting rooms for tenants' associations, etc., on the Euston Road site.

5 That Council architects be provided to cooperate with the residents of Tolmers, and representatives of other residents' organisations within the borough, the Trades Council and the Direct Labour Force in drawing up a plan for the area based on social need.

6 That the Council carry out its obligation to buy up the rest of the Tolmers Village site. And of course, no office blocks.

These proposals are being sent out to the various residents' groups, trade union branches, Labour parties etc., within the

borough together with an explanation of the history and needs of the area, and the background to present Council plans.

It is hoped in this way to open up discussion about the issues raised in this area, to develop a truly representative plan for Tolmers and gain the expertise and support in order to be able to carry it out.

We are also looking into the possibility of organising a one-day conference on the problems of development in the Inner City areas, particularly in terms of housing, jobs and public services.

So far we have received letters of support from Dave Ferris of Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, Ridgemount Gardens Residents Association, Kingsgate Neighbourhood Association, and a reply from Inkerman Area Residents Association.

We still have many organisations to mail and hope that we will be receiving many more positive replies to our letters over the next few weeks.



**TOLMERS CARNIVAL IS ON!** With £100 grant and a £50 guarantee against loss on offer from Camden Council and the possibility of more money from the Greater London Arts Association we have the basics with which to make it a really good day.

At a meeting on 18th April a date was set for Saturday 26th June, and many ideas were put forward. Ours is a varied community and it would be good if as many local people as possible could participate.

Number 12 will do their Rock Slot, various shops and individuals have offered to provide food, and great interest was expressed in a Tolmers Show, with music, singing, dancing, sketches etc.

There will also be sideshows, games, exhibitions, and events for children, as well as entertainment from professional groups, theatre, bands, etc.

If anyone would like to do anything for the carnival please contact 12 Tolmers Square.

Also TVAG will be devoting part of its weekly meetings to the carnival so if you have any ideas, please come along.

## LISTING

AN APPLICATION has been made for the listing of Tolmers Square by the Tolmers Village Action Group.

In central London, Tolmers Village is one of the few remaining areas of low rent, small scale housing — an oasis in a growing desert of offices and large scale development and a remnant of a time when people could live and work in the same close-knit, vibrant community.

The housing is structurally sound and surrounds a fine example of a late Victorian square which is thought to be unique in form.

Even the Council's architects themselves have agreed that the quality of housing that could be provided by rehabilitation would be better than that provided by new buildings, and at a lower or equivalent cost.

Support for listing has already been expressed by the Camden Civic Society amongst others, but needs to be further mobilised if we are to achieve results in our fight against the continual blind denial of value and potential in the legacy of our existing communities.

## WHAT'S ON

**Mondays 9pm** Tolmers Village Action Group meetings at 12 Tolmers Square

**Wednesdays 8pm** Camden CACTL meetings at 30, Camden Road

**Thursdays 10am-2pm** TVAG picket duty at the EGA

**Thursday May 5th 8pm** Dance and disco in aid of *Camden Tenant* at the Irish Centre, Murray Street, NW1

**Sunday May 1st 2-8pm** Event at 5 Huntley Street in the playground including bands, singers, clowns, inflatables, Puppetree, food, fire-eaters, glass-walkers, poets, etc.

There is a need for many different community facilities in the area — a neighbourhood centre, a centre where children can go and play under supervision out of school hours, a place where older people can meet, relax, and take part in some form of leisure activity if they so wish.

Ideas so far are that the Palmerston should be equipped with table tennis, a darts board, etc., where people can just drop in for a bit of light relief.

Also Moni would like to take dance sessions at the Palmerston for a minimal charge of 10p per class. If anyone is interested please drop a note in at 17 Tolmers Square, saying which days and times would be convenient.

If anyone has any more ideas please let us know.

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