



Cover: A 'snowbound'
Victoria Park

Welcome to the Summer 2008 edition of Housing News. Is that a freak unseasonal blizzard on our front cover? Sadly not, in fact, as these photos show, it's a fascinating advertising shoot for VW cars that took place in Victoria Park during March. Snow machine and all!

The Housing Business Group's move to one single office continues apace and this edition features the latest news about that, a feature on our Lee Green estate plus much, much more.

If you require larger print copies of any of the articles in this edition, please email the editor Nick Hart on nick.hart@thecrownestate.co.uk or call 020 8985 7064.



4-5
Profile:
Lee Green

Contents

- 4-5** Profile on Lee Green
- 6** Dual fuel for osbornes
- 6** Jan Harris
- 7** Cleaning up
- 7** Water, water
- 8** Why can't we all live together?
- 9** Repairs prize draw winners
- 9** Hellos and goodbyes
- 10** Lotte and Siegi Moos
- 10** Electrical and gas safety checks
- 10** Office move: September 1st 2008
- 11** Rent: if you want to stay, you've got to pay
- 11** Not making a drama out of a crisis
- 11** No ID, no access



Plain English
Campaign

Profile on Lee Green

LOCATED ABOUT A MILE SOUTH of Blackheath Village and two miles from the transport hub of Lewisham town centre, our Lee Green estates are becoming increasingly popular choices for applicants on our Choice Based Lettings list.

Consisting of a very pleasant mixture of Victorian conversions in Cambridge Drive and more modern 1970s built flats and houses centred around Millbank Way. This leafy estate enjoys good local shopping facilities – a large Sainsbury’s is located just a few minutes walk away – as well as regular bus services to Bromley, Lewisham and Eltham.

With rail services running to London Bridge, Charing Cross and North Kent from Lee station – around 10-15 minutes walk from the estate – as well as the Dockland Light Railway running from Lewisham into Canary Wharf, Stratford and the Bank, the area is very well connected indeed. Why not take a look the next time you see a vacancy advertised on our website?

Lee Green – Useful information

Local authority – *Greenwich*

Lee Green – Local Facilities: *Leegate Shopping Centre (0.5 mile Sainsbury’s and small local shops as well as buses to all parts of SE London.*

Blackheath Village (1 mile) – *bars, restaurants, the heath, rail services to Central London and North Kent – including the Bluewater Shopping Mall.*

Lewisham (2 miles) – *large scale high street shopping as well as rail and DLR links to Central London.*

Greenwich (2.5 miles) – *historic Thames side location, world famous museums, river boat cruising, bars, restaurants, cinema and theatre.*

Famous Residents of Lee Green

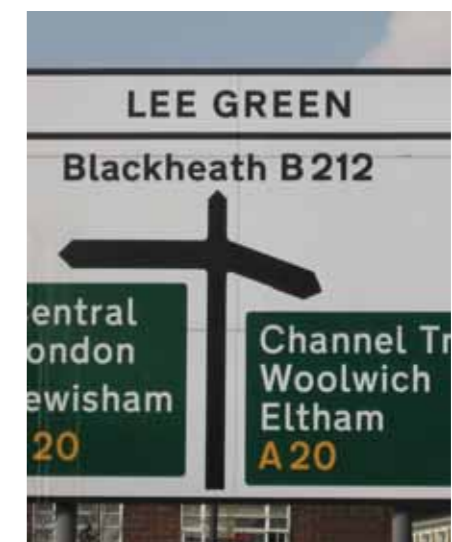
James Robertson Justice – actor born In Lee.

Max Wall – actor and comedian.

Sir Francis Baring – founder of Baring Bank in 1762.

Chico – X Factor contestant of ‘It’s Chico Time’ fame.

(source – Wikipedia)



Dual fuel for Osbornes



MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR OSBORNE has switched over to greener transport with the purchase of two new dual-fuel vans.

A Ford Transit and a Vauxhall Astra, both run on unleaded petrol and Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG). Maintenance Supervisor Roger Lautier says: "I think they're great, they drive exactly the same as regular vans, but they're so much better for the environment. The vans even have a hand wash station which lets the guys have hot water when they're out on site!"

Jan Harris

AS REPORTED IN THE PREVIOUS edition of Housing News, in January 2007 an internal investigation was launched following a report of financial irregularities at our Cumberland Market office.

As soon as sufficient evidence had been found, the police were called in and a full criminal investigation was then launched into the actions of Jan Harris, who was at that time an Estate Manager at the local office. Following our internal disciplinary process Harris was dismissed in August 2007.

The police investigation resulted in 34 criminal charges being brought against her in November 2007.

Those charges related to theft, false accounting and deception involving losses to our tenants as well as to The Crown Estate of over £60,000.

In January 2008 she pleaded guilty to all charges and was sentenced to a nine month prison sentence on Friday 29 February.

At all times throughout this difficult period The Crown Estate has kept the welfare of our tenants at the forefront of our minds and has maintained open lines of communication with them.

We decided at the start of the investigation that no tenant would suffer financially as a consequence of Harris's actions and were commended for this approach by the Judge dealing with the case. We have now corrected the rent accounts of all of our tenants and made full refunds where appropriate.

Cleaning up



LONG SERVING CUMBERLAND MARKET EMPLOYEE Sue Marsh-Cann is looking forward to her new role as Facilities Supervisor. After September 1st, she'll be responsible for supervising all of the cleaning services across all of the housing estates.

With four diverse areas located as far apart as Hackney in the east and Lee Green in the south, she's certainly looking forward to the challenge.

Speaking to Housing News she said, "I've lived and worked in Crown Estate accommodation all of my life and I believe that our residents deserve the best possible services that we can provide. I'm really looking forward to working with everyone to make this happen."

Sue will begin her new role after the three area offices merge in September 2008, however if you have any queries between now and then, please contact your local estate manager.

Water, water



NATIONAL BRITANNIA'S WATER HYGIENE DIVISION has been appointed to check the communal water supplies across our estates. Their professional teams are highly experienced in the management of water risks and are entirely independent in the advice and solutions they provide.

National Britannia will also be checking all shared areas to ensure that the health and safety of all residents is being protected.

We would like to remind everyone that they may be required to remove items that are stored or

located in the communal areas if National Britannia say they are a health and safety risk. All operatives will be carrying ID, however, as they will be visiting all of our blocks over the months ahead, please call the estate office if you are in any doubt as to their authenticity.

Why can't we all live together?

SUMMERTIME IS COMING, the barbecue season is upon us and life moves outdoors - but what about the neighbours?

There's nothing worse than living with a nuisance, so what action can be take if you're being bothered by the actions of another resident?

Our tenancy agreements clearly state that tenants and their visitors mustn't cause a nuisance. We also expect neighbours to be tolerant of other people's general household noises during the day and of their differing lifestyles too. So what DO you do if your neighbour's actions are causing you problems?

Talk to each other – when people live close together, they often don't realise they are disturbing others. The first step to take is to explain politely to the people involved that they are causing you a problem. A quiet word in the ear can often solve a thousand problems before they start.

Contact your council's Environmental Health Officer – if the problem is about severe or persistent noise, or other environmental problems such as animals, rubbish, fumes or similar incidents, then your council may be able to take action.

Talk to us – disagreements between neighbours can be difficult to resolve. If the problem continues or it's of a serious nature, then contact us.

We can only get involved where there is proof that there really is a problem, so you will need to keep a diary of events and get statements from

independent witnesses.

We won't respond to anonymous messages, but we will treat all complaints seriously.

All information given to us is treated as confidential if you request this, but please be aware that it may limit what we can do to help you.

Use a mediation service – many neighbour problems can be sorted out by talking and coming to an agreement, but it can be difficult to do this without getting into an argument.



Mediation services can help. They are organisations with independent mediators who discuss the issues with everyone involved and help them come to an agreement.

Check with your local authority to see if such a service runs in your area.

Repairs Prize Draw Winners



WE'RE PLEASED TO REPORT that satisfaction with our repairs service remains high with 74% of tenants who returned their survey forms saying they were very happy with the service and 16% saying they were happy.

We would like to encourage everyone to return their feedback forms – all of them (good and bad) will be entered into our quarterly prize draw to win a £50.00 Marks and Spencer gift card.



The following winners were picked at random from the repairs feedback returns at our Millbank offices in May.

Mr Baldwin of Cambridge Drive, SE12

Mr Hoffman of Victoria Park Road, E9

Mrs Frith of Bonner Road, E2

Our thanks go out to everybody who helps us keep our maintenance services running well by returning these slips.

Hellos and Goodbyes

SINCE THE LAST EDITION we've said goodbye to Vikki Websdale, Tom Crook from our Bessborough Street offices and to Zara Williams from our Cumberland Market office. In turn we're pleased to say hello to Magdalena Kozłowska at Cumberland Market plus Sarah Shalan and Sophie Broadwell at Millbank. We will include a piece on all of the housing team in our next Housing News which will be a special based on our move to the new offices at Camberley House.

Lotte and Siegi Moos

A PLAQUE TO THE MEMORY of former Victoria Park residents Lotte and Siegi Moos was fixed to the wall of their home in Gore Road by their daughter Marilyn Moos on June 16th 2008.

Refugees from Nazi Germany, both Lotte and Siegi were internationally recognised poets, playwrights and economists who found happiness in their later years living in Gore Road as Crown Estate tenants.

In a simple but moving event, poems, readings and songs commemorated two lives which left their mark on a world that they sought to change for the better.



Rent: if you want to stay, you've got to pay

THE VAST MAJORITY of our tenants pay their rent on time. We will however take legal action against those that don't - or who don't keep to a repayment agreement. This can lead to an appearance at the County Court and ultimately eviction from the home.

Remember:

- If you have a joint tenancy we can take action against either or both of you.
- If we have to take court action, you may be held liable for our costs.
- You will have to pay us what you owe – even if you move away.
- You could lose your home and could be

regarded as intentionally homeless.

- You may not be rehoused by any council or housing association.
- We will not accept you onto our waiting list if you approach us again in future.

If you have any problems in paying your rent, contact your estate office for further help and advice.

Electrical and Gas Safety Checks

As a landlord, we are required to carry out five-yearly inspections of the electrical installations and annual checks to the gas installations in all our monthly rented properties.

D C Hurrell have been appointed to carry out our electrical checks and Village Heating are now in their second year of gas servicing and safety checks. We realise that it is sometimes inconvenient for tenants to be at home to give access for these works but the checks are designed to ensure that your appliances and electrical installations are safe to use so it is important that they are carried out.

All operatives working on our behalf will be carrying ID, please call the estate office if you are in any doubt as to their authenticity.

Office Move: September 1st 2008

As announced in the previous edition of Housing News, we are working toward unifying our housing management staff into new premises based at the Cumberland Market estate. Due to ongoing work at the new premises, the date set for the opening of the new central office is now September 1st 2008.

Our local presence will continue by regular opening of the local offices – more news on estate office opening times will be published very soon.

We believe that by bringing the offices together into one cohesive team, we can provide better services to all of our residents – wherever you live.

Not making a drama out of a crisis

FLOODS, FIRES, THEFT ... a domestic crisis can very swiftly turn into a disaster if you're not insured. Contents insurance will cover the cost of damage to your personal items, furniture and decorations.

If an accident happens, The Crown Estate will not be responsible for any damage to your belongings and if – for example – a bath or washing machine overflows, you might be responsible for putting right the damage. A contents policy does not cost a lot – contact a reputable insurance broker or check online for a quote.

No ID, No Access

Letting someone into your home is one of the biggest decisions we can take. So if you have a spy hole in your door, always check to see who it is before opening the door and if you have a door chain, keep it on when you're speaking. Always ask to see some identification. If you're unsure in any way whether the caller is genuine, don't let them in. Don't give in to anyone - man, woman or child if you feel unsure. Remember: it's your home and if they have no ID, then don't give them access.



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Mission Statement

The Housing Business Group exists to provide modern accommodation, in keeping with their historical surroundings, at an appropriate level of rent and to work with our tenants to maintain and enhance the properties.

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