

WESTGATE HOUSE A FINE BLEND OF OLD AND NEW



The new flats at Westgate House which have now been occupied for a fortnight.

ANYONE with a cultural bent will tell you that the old and the new do not mix, but that they can be blended and the result, if expertly carried out, is a pleasing blend giving offence to none and in fact lending an air of distinction to an environment.

That is what has been done in Alnwick where the solid security of the new Westgate House flats rear stony-faced in the town's Clayport Street.

The block, made up of four bedsteads, three 3-bedrooms, 25 one bedrooms and five 2-bedrooms, was built for Alnwick Urban Council by the Northumberland building firm of Ralph Bovey and Son Ltd. of Gosforth.

But long before clearing operations were started on the site—part of which was once utilised as a Fire Station and before that occupied by slums—the arguments raged as to whether or not such a project would be worthwhile.

Challenges
"A concrete blockhouse, tenement, an institutional-like building," and "the demand for such flats will not justify the expenditure," were some of the criticisms hurled at the project.

What in fact has happened is exactly the opposite to the fears expressed, for, although the savage nature of the sloping site with its sand, old wells and drains, undoubtedly posed a difficult problem in producing

Gazette Special Feature

a satisfactory development, the challenges were overcome by the architects.

From an architectural viewpoint, the block is magnificently designed and quickly impressive, with the number of applications received proving its need.

It was a need in the town for something in between Council and private houses," said a Council spokesman.

On trial

The flats, the culmination of five years of teamwork, involving the Council, the planners, the architects (Hewell and Cahill, of Alnwick), and the builders, were first mooted almost exactly a year from the date of the signing of the deed.

Had they not been completed in time the Council would not have received a Government subsidy, and as the Housing Revenue Account was so finely balanced, the delay could have resulted in all Council house rents being increased.

Some idea of the planning involved can be gained from the fact that when the flats were first mooted an intensive investigation was conducted by the architects into the feasibility of the scheme.

Maps dating back to 1624 were inspected, and the key was found in the medieval 11th field pattern. All through the town from a narrow frontage on the streets stretches back deep narrow plots of land. This, of course, is the medieval pattern throughout England but in Alnwick it persisted almost unmodified until the 17th century.

Subtle

It was decided that the flats should not look like the orthodox flats, but be designed so that they would slip unobtrusively into the medieval character of the town.

This was achieved by breaking the skyline silhouette irregularly, by changing the walling material and by a subtle rhythm in the arrangements of the windows.

A pitched roof—traditional to the town—also gives a turret-like appearance emphasising the medieval note.

Said Mr. Cahill: "Because of the fierce nature of the site we had to make an early appreciation of all the circumstances and we came to the conclusion it would not have been economical to build two-storey houses there. What was needed was to get a high number of housing units to balance the housing costs of the site works."

Succeeded
In this the architect succeeded admirably, for the site has the highest density of any in the North-east—145 people per acre—and has earned the firm the congratulations of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

As a result of careful planning and logical thinking, is how Mr. Cahill puts it. The flats, designed in collaboration with Ministry architects, conform to recognised standards.

Satisfactorily dealt with were such questions as refuse collection, heating, and, of course, the comfort of the tenants.

Pipes made of plastic, fire hazards, the noise element, have also been solved. The whole block has been laid out in a deep section, which gives additional interest to the facade and introduces elements of perspective and shadow to what might otherwise be flat and uninteresting.

Interior equipment includes 13 amp. ring main electrical installations with generous numbers of sockets, wiring for telephones and television aerial points in all the dwellings.

Rubbish disposal arrangements involve the use of paper sack assemblies in place of the traditional dust bin.

Completion of the flats within the 52 weeks was made possible by the use of lower cranes—three were in use for part of the time—supplied by Gosforth Plant Ltd., a subsidiary company of Ralph Bovey and Son Ltd., while wooden window frames, with centre pivots enabling the windows to be cleaned from the inside were provided by Gosforth Joinery Works—another subsidiary of the Bovey Group.

Target reached
The Council have set great store on timely completion and have expressed great satisfaction that the target was reached, as this resulted in significant financial benefits in the housing accounts for 1967-68.

In addition to the flats there are 27 garages built on land at the rear acquired by the Council. The fine balustrade was the work of the Shipley Engineering Company, of Newcastle, who were also responsible for the hidden metal work on the flats.



A fine view of the rear of Westgate House, Alnwick, which shows it is just as imposing as the front.

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WE HAVE A NEW BRANCH OPENING SHORTLY IN ROTHBURY

FESTIVAL HAS NEW CLASSES AND TROPHIES

THE 56th annual Wansbeck Musical Festival was "piped" off to a good start on Wednesday when primary schoolchildren competed in the recorder classes.

Shalstead County Primary School held on to the Isabel Fullerton James Cup for the second year in succession, when they won the recorder band section with 172 points over Red Row County Primary, who were awarded 170 points.

Seven new cups and a number of new classes have added to the competition of the festival this year, and Miss Gladys Willis (chairman), said that entries were well up to standard, with an increase in recorders, and a lively interest in orchestral instruments.

Cup winner

Descant recorder solo with piano 1. Janet Scott 85; 2. Pamela Winthrop 87; 3. Kari Hutchinson 86. Treble recorder solo with piano 1. Kari Hutchinson 86; 2. Pamela Winthrop 87; 3. Frances Forth 81.

Co-operation
The adjudicator, Dr. Leon Forrester, of Newcastle-under-Lyme, has recently judged musicians in Canada and the U.K. He told competitors in the descant recorder band section on Wednesday, that the importance in duet playing is to learn to listen to your partner. "Co-operation is also very important in many other things in life as well as in music," he said.

Results—
Descant recorder solo with piano 1. Oena Armstrong (Red Row) 86; 2. Alison Strathairn (Blyth) 85; 3. Lynn Price (Blyth). Graham Reay (Red Row) 86; 2. Sheena Proudlock (Red Row) 86; 3. Jill Bransy 85. Descant recorder duo 1. Judith Robson and Lynn Price 86; 2. Diane Tennant and Christine Swales, Anne Short and Lynn Wood 84.

Descant and treble recorder duo 1. Jacqueline Twist and Jill Bransy 85; 2. Susan Verditt and Daphne Jones 84; 3. Alison Kainbeck 83. Treble recorder solo with piano 1. Oena Armstrong (Red Row) 87; 2. Sheena Proudlock (Red Row) 86; 3. Lynn Price 85.

Descant recorder solo with piano (Walsby) 1. Elaine Macdonald (Longbenton) 86; 2. Alison Wright (Longbenton) 85; 3. Joan Kerr (Longbenton) 84. Recorder band 1. Thomas A.G. 130; 2. County Secondary School 134; 3. Hirst Park County Secondary School 130; 4. Hirst East County Secondary School 133.

Duets
Treble recorder solo with piano 1. Elizabeth Pagett (Newcastle) 85; 2. Joana (Newcastle) 85. Descant recorder duo with piano 1. Joan Kerr and Pamela Winthrop (Longbenton) 86; 2. Alexander Armstrong and Elaine Macdonald (Longbenton) 85; 3. John Phillips and Brian Dwyer (Widopen) 84. Treble recorder solo with piano 1. Elizabeth Wilson (Longbenton) 86; 2. Doris Dickinson (Ashington) 85. Descant and treble recorder duo 1. Pamela Winthrop and Alison Wright (Longbenton) 86; 2. Alexander Armstrong and Elaine Macdonald (Longbenton) 85; 3. Jean Kerr and Maureen Kello (Longbenton) 84. Treble recorder duo 1. Joan Kerr and Maureen Kello 84; 2. Barbara Cairns and Helen Smith (Marple) 85; 3. Alexander Armstrong and Elaine Macdonald 82.

Trio Two descants and treble recorder 1. Elaine Macdonald, Alexander Armstrong and Elaine Macdonald 82.

Chimney fire at Amble
Following a busy fortnight when Amble firemen dealt with several outbreaks, they were called out on Sunday morning to the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. Forster, of 6 Baisley Road, Amble, when the chimney caught fire.

An accumulation of gases from a boiler caused an explosion which cracked both sides of the chimney breast. Firemen under Sub-Officer H. Braithwaite were quickly on the scene to deal with the outbreak.

LIBERAL BALL
Berwick Constituency Liberal Association Spring Ball was held in Haggerston Castle ballroom, near Berwick on Friday, April 19. It was provided by the Magdalen and the Jays.

Lynne Armstrong 87; 2. Judith Sewell, Barbara Cairns and Joyce Cowans 85. Trio, Descant, treble and tenor recorder 1. Judith Sewell, Barbara Cairns and Joyce Cowans 85; 2. Alison Backlaw, Jane Sutcliffe and Frances Forth 81.

Descant recorder solo with piano 1. Janet Scott 85; 2. Pamela Winthrop 87; 3. Kari Hutchinson 86. Treble recorder solo with piano 1. Kari Hutchinson 86; 2. Pamela Winthrop 87; 3. Frances Forth 81.

Descant recorder solo with piano 1. Elizabeth Campbell 87; 2. Alexandra Armstrong and Elaine Macdonald 82. Descant recorder 1. Thomas A.G. 130; 2. County Secondary School 134; 3. Hirst Park County Secondary School 130; 4. Hirst East County Secondary School 133.

ROTARIANS TAKE LOOK AT ALNICK
THE Alnwick area, rich in history and scenery, formed the subject of an interesting symposium in the Louth Restaurant, Alnwick, on Thursday.

It was organised by Alnwick Rotary Club. Speakers were Rotarian D. Graham, who made the company aware of the local history; Rotarian H. Sell, a local historian; and Rotarian A. J. Meakin, who spoke of aspects of cultural change.

The guests included Rotarian P. Bramham, from Newry, who expressed the view that many people in Britain were unaware of the magnitude of the North Northumberland scenery and suggested that the only way to bring it to their attention was to visit the area.

Rotarian P. O. Clarke presided and thanked the speakers who also illustrated their talks with slides.

FELLOWSHIP TALK ON UGANDA
THE speaker at Alnwick St. James' Presbyterian Church Fellowship this week was Mrs. M. L. Howard, who spoke of her travels in Uganda.

Mrs. Howard was away for 15 weeks over the Christmas period when the weather in the islands was not so hot. From where she stayed in Kampala she had covered quite an area of country, visiting Lake Victoria, the Nile and Kenya.

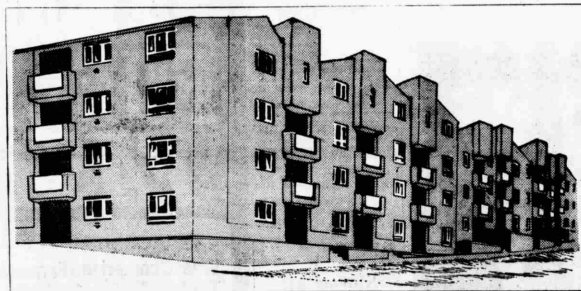
She told of how Christianity had first come to Uganda, of the many setbacks there had been and of how even in this day and age there were many non-Christians.

She showed many colourful slides of things she had seen and places she had visited.

The Rev. Roy Backhouse was in the chair. Mr. J. Hall operated the projector and Mr. D. F. Graham proposed the vote of thanks.

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