

## Newsletter – March 2012

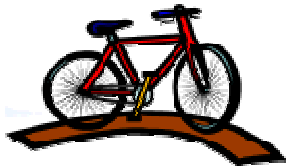


### Digital Television Switchover

Digital UK has announced that the London region including our transmitter will switch over to digital television in April 2012.

The aerial systems in blocks of flats are ready for digital TV and many people are enjoying this already. You will need digital TV equipment and to retune this twice on 4 and 18 April 2012 to receive digital TV after the switchover.

See the Digital UK website for more information: <http://www.digitaluk.co.uk/>



### Bicycles

We have received several requests about storing bicycles recently. Unfortunately, no provision for bicycles was made nor required by the council when the Estate was built in the 1980s.

Building a secure bicycle store would be very expensive. It would need to be brick to avoid risk of arson, need planning approval and be a long way from some properties. Previously, property owners have decided not to increase service charges considerably for such expenditure, especially now expensive building repairs are needed.

Charging bicycle owners using it to recover costs would result in very high charges. The Directors will investigate and report the likely costs of a store and an insecure open rack to the next AGM for owners to decide if to go ahead.

The law requires us to keep flat communal areas clear of obstructions and flammable items (like tyres). These areas are the only means of escape in a fire and blocking them or making them hazardous would put lives at risk. Bicycles must not be left in flat communal areas and any that are will be removed immediately for safety.

You can store bicycles either in your property or chained to a low metal hoop installed in your parking space at your cost. To install a hoop, you must ask permission from the Managing Agent.



### Website

The St Benedicts website continues to be hosted free of charge, but now has its own address: <http://www.stbentooting.co.uk/>

Please use this new address, which can be opened on smartphones with a quick response (QR) application by scanning the code at the top of the page, although the old address still works.

Most questions that you ask the Managing Agent are already answered on the website.

Announcements between Newsletters are made on the website and on Twitter: [@stben\\_tooting](https://twitter.com/stben_tooting)



### Rebuilt Wall

The driver whose car damaged the wall in St Benedicts Close in June was a tenant and he left the Estate shortly after without providing a proper forwarding address. The driver's insurer refused to deal with us as he had apparently not reported the accident to them. We were left to pursue him through our insurer, which is one reason why owners voted to change the terms for approval of sub-letting at the November AGM.

We are pleased to report that we received insurer permission in November to proceed with repairs. We arranged for the replacement wall to be built in January, to avoid leaving it unfinished and unattended over Christmas.

In early January, Hobex built the lower new wall that we had specified after consulting owners of adjacent parking spaces. We are now recovering the costs from the insurer.

### Items in Flat Communal Areas

You must not leave items in flat communal areas as these are the only means of exit in a fire and must be left clear and free of flammable material.

Any items found will be removed and disposed of 30 days after writing to nearby flats.





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## Rebates – Apology

Rebates for maintenance-free windows that reduced decoration costs in 2010 were applied to the service charge accounts of owners who had advised us by the deadline.

Unfortunately, the Managing Agent did not reduce the direct debit payments for owners paying by this method. Rendall and Rittner is sorry for this mistake and made refunds to bank accounts as soon as the problem was identified.



## Fire in Bin Store

Arsonists set fire to a bin store in St Benedicts Close overnight on 14 - 15 January. The fire brigade was called and soon put out the fire.



## Secure Dustbins

Anyone buying a new bin should consider one with handles securing the lid to deter foxes. Thank you to the resident who suggested this.

These can be purchased locally, for example at Ace Mica Hardware, 174 Mitcham Road, Tooting and also online, such as from Amazon: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/> by searching for "bin lockable handles". They cost just over £10.



## Clock in Tower

We changed the low energy fluorescent bulb lighting the clock faces when it failed in January.

Contractor Public Clocks serviced the clock on 9 February. We now have this done every two years rather than annually to keep costs down.



## Blocked Drain

Contractor Unbloc cleared another blocked drain in early January, behind 17-27 Carlisle Way.



## Snow and Grit / Salt

Following the snow on the night of Saturday 4 February, we put a bag of grit / salt out by the bin on Sunday for any resident who needed it.

This followed a request at the AGM in 2010 to provide grit / salt. The bin is in the centre of the Estate in the middle of St Benedicts Close, by the orange pole.

The Gardening contractor put down grit / salt on Monday and that, combined with some sunshine, cleared most of the snow.

Further light snow on Thursday evening, 9 February melted on paths because of the grit / salt already spread, so no more was required.



## Parking Permits

New grey parking permits have been issued to property owners and must be used from 1 March. The old pink ones will no longer be valid after this.

*Owners with tenants must make sure that they have forwarded the new permits to their tenants.*

## Rubbish and Foxes

Recently, residents have dumped several large items. Those we could identify were charged with commercial disposal. It is much cheaper for you call the council on 020 8871 8558 to arrange and pay them for domestic disposal.



There are several foxes on the Estate, so please put all rubbish bags in bins or they will tear them open.

*Fox in car park, Feb 2012*





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### Maintenance Update

The surveyor, Smith Baxter, delivered the statement of work required to repair the blocks of flats. We reviewed this and asked Smith Baxter to clarify a number of points and ensure that the work is specified clearly enough to avoid confusion when builders quote for the work.

It became clear that Smith Baxter had not correctly identified nor reported on all the blocks. To complicate matters, the surveyor who carried out the work had left the company.

We raised these problems and withheld payment of the invoices for this work until it is completed satisfactorily. Smith Baxter has now produced new versions of the inspection report and statement of work, available on the website at <http://www.stbentooting.co.uk/maintenance.htm>. You need a password to access the documents, which is the same as given out at the AGM, and owners can obtain it from the Managing Agent.

We are now reviewing these documents again. When satisfied that they are correct, we will tenders the repair work with several contractors to keep costs down and take up references to verify that their work is of suitable quality.

We will continue to provide updates on the website, in the newsletter and, when costs are known, by writing to the owners concerned.



### Faulty Lights

When lights are reported as faulty, for example at an AGM, they have often been out for weeks or months! The Managing Agent inspects the Estate weekly for problems but has to do so in daylight to be able to see, so cannot check if communal, street or security lights have failed.

Please report any faulty lights to the Property Manager straight away so that they can be fixed on the next electrician's visit. Her email address is: [angela.petts@rendallandrittner.co.uk](mailto:angela.petts@rendallandrittner.co.uk). The faulty light at the rear of 121-135 St Benedicts Close was reported in February and will be repaired soon.

### St Benedicts History – Part 4 of 4

#### St Benedicts Estate



Entrance and St Benedicts 2010 © Kevin Herrmann

*This view replicates as closely as possible the postcard of the Military Hospital in part 2.*

Laing Homes bought the site for housing development in the mid 1980s, reportedly for around £2.2 million. The surviving remnants of the hospital buildings are the entrance gateway with its posts still on Church Lane, and the main hospital block's portico and clock tower, which were positioned at each end of Limetree Walk.



Portico on Limetree Walk 2010 © Kevin Herrmann



Clock tower in Limetree Walk 1987 © Kevin Herrmann







## Newsletter – March 2012

*The amount of news required the newsletter to be printed on two sheets, even if the St Benedicts History had been deferred. As the second sheet was needed anyway, it has been used to finish the series by combining the last two parts, which were originally intended to be parts 4 and 5 of 5.*

The clock tower windows have been boarded up due to vandalism and it was extensively repaired in 2009 for about £25,000 (comparable to the cost of the site and building work in 1897!) by the Management Company with the aid of a 50% grant from Wandsworth Borough Council.



### Entrance



The old Hospital entrance is not part of the Estate and now serves Hawthorn Crescent. The metal decorations on the tops of the pillars have been vandalised and the entrance has been cluttered by Council signs, which have been digitally removed from the main image. Any text originally on the pillars has faded from view. The letter box appears original, bearing the letters 'VR' (Victoria Regina), since Queen Victoria died in 1901.



### References

- Lost Hospitals of London - St Benedict's: <http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/stbenedicts.html>
- The Workhouse - Wandsworth and Clapham: <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/index.html?Wandsworth/Wandsworth.shtml>

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This concludes the History of St Benedicts, which is available on the website at <http://www.stbentooting.co.uk/historystbenedicts.htm>, and can also be downloaded as a PDF.

### Final Reminder on Sub-letting

As decided by the majority at owners at the 2011 AGM and advised in the December Newsletter, new policies on sub-letting came into effect and former permissions to sub-let were cancelled after 29 February 2012.

Owners sub-letting without current permission are in breach of their lease and may have action taken against them at their cost.

Owners must complete the new form sent in December for permission to sub-let. This contains an indemnity for costs of damage caused by their deliberate actions or negligence which cannot be recovered from the tenants. Permission must now be renewed on change of tenants and annually, allowing action where nuisance has been confirmed by a competent authority. Owners are recommended to take out landlord insurance with cover for third party liability. The Estate provides buildings insurance.

While copies of the lease agreement and references are not required on renewal, *this only applies if you have previously submitted them*, and, if not, you must send them now.

Thank you to those who have already done this.