

DIVIS BULLETIN

ISSUE ONE
NUMBER FOUR
MAY 1984

DIVIS FLATS

*I live in a place called Divis Flats
a place that's badly infested with rats.*

*There's writing on walls, and rubbish
on the ground, and the old drunks they
still can be found, singing and shouting
till their heart's content, yet our mothers
are still expected to pay the rent.*

*And stolen cars we have one every night,
with screeching of brakes it would give
you a fright.*

*They don't go to mass or say a prayer
to get out of Divis I would live anywhere.*

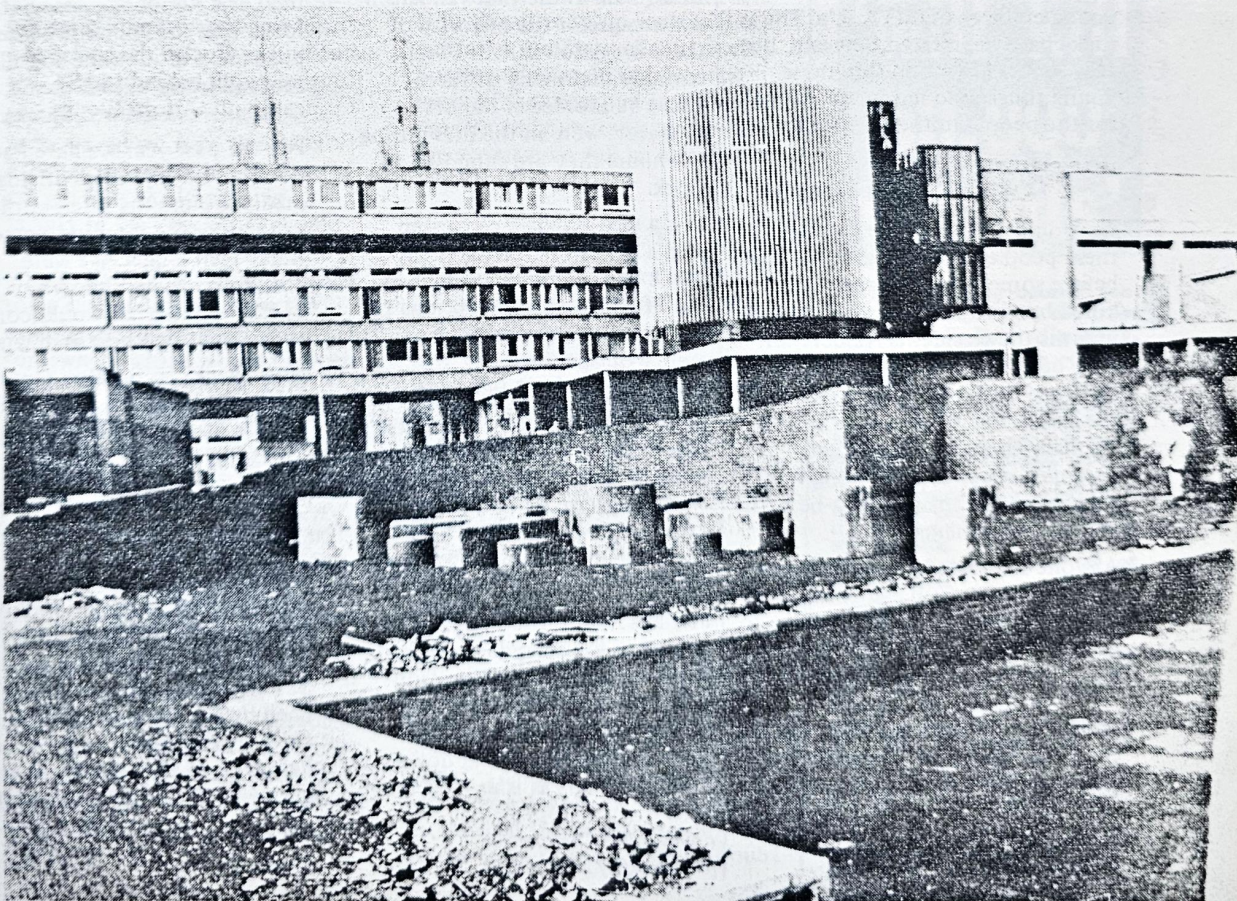
Lisa Burns
St Comgalls Primary School

BLOCKING THE JOY RIDERS

LAST MONTH THE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION WERE forced to block off several parts of the flats in an effort to curtail joy-riding. The areas blocked were the football pitch and the arches at the old Shelbourne Bar.

This action was taken after repeated requests made by this Residents Association and the last one to the Housing Executive to have certain places blocked, but apparently the major obstacle was the RUC who said they needed access to the flats. We believe the areas blocked will be no real inconvenience to any resident except the joy-riders who used the football pitch as a race track, and to the RUC who have shown no concern at all to the tenants' plight.

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BLOCKING THE JOY-RIDERS

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We believe it actually suits the RUC to have this activity continue. On many occasions residents have retrieved the stolen cars and sat in them to make sure they were not taken again, only to find that the RUC just drove by.

One car in particular had dangerous drugs in it and the RUC had actually put a bulletin on TV and radio. This car was found by members of the Residents Association who contacted the RUC and although they drove by on a number of occasions they made no effort to take the car or the drugs away.

A FEW WEEKS OF PEACE

For a few weeks the residents of Gilford and St Comgalls Blocks had some peace and quiet, but in the early hours of Good Friday these thugs who call themselves joy-riders crashed into the rocks at the football pitch, continually knocking the rocks over and again turning the pitch into a race track, thus terrorising the local community including young children and O.A.P.'s. The rocks have been fixed up again, but how long will it be before these young thugs who have no concern for the people in the flats strike again?

CONCERNED PARENTS

We would appeal to the parents of these people to stop their sons now before some innocent person is killed by their activities. In the past months the Residents Association have been discussing ways to try and stop this activity, and one of the things that came out of it was the formation of a Concerned Parents Group, as in the long term we believe the answer must be with the residents themselves.

Anyone interested in becoming involved in this group can contact us at 22, St Peters Row, or go along to the Drop-In Club, Cullingtree Path, any Wednesday night at 8.00pm.

It is only through your help that we can stop these antisocial activities and make our community a better place to live.

Fra McCann

TRANSFERS

It has been brought to the attention of the Resident's Association the number of tenants in the flats who have applied to the Housing Executive for a transfer from Divis to a house.

At present the Residents Association is trying to compile a list of all the tenants involved and the length of time they have been on the transfer list. We would appeal especially to anyone who is disabled, or to people with serious health problems to contact the Secretary at 22, St Peter's Row and give her the relevant information so that at future meetings with the Housing Executive the Resident's Association may highlight these cases and get some answers.

Marie Osborne

LIFTS

Over the last few weeks I have lost count of the number of breakdowns in the lifts here in Divis. I am aware that vandalism is the cause of the majority of these breakdowns, but I feel strongly that many of them could be avoided if the lift operators were in the lifts during the hours they are supposed to work.

It is a rare occurrence to step into a lift during the daylight hours and find an attendant in the lift. There are exceptions to this, but in general the lifts are empty of operators.

A few weeks ago paint was thrown into the lift on St Peter's Massarene at about 7pm in the evening, and some residents had clothes destroyed as a result.

This happened during a time when the lift is supposed to be staffed.

Perhaps if all those who are employed as lift attendants were on duty at the times they are supposed to be we would not be caused the constant inconvenience of walking up and down flights of stairs as is usually the case.

*Frank Gillen Chairperson
(on behalf of the DRA)*

WANTED URGENTLY



Woodwork Supervisor to run a workshop in Divis Education Project, 37 Cullingtree Walk. If interested in this job please contact any Committee Member at the above address.



Letters

Dear Sir

I wish to express my thanks to the Divis Resident's Association for having the common sense to put blocks around the so-called football pitch behind the St Comgalls and Gilford Blocks.

For the past year we have had to put up with joy-riders driving madly around the pitch until two or three in the morning, sometimes even longer. We were afraid to put our children to bed in case a stolen car would come in through their bedroom window.

Now thanks to the Residents Association we can go to bed and be sure of a good night's sleep.

Liz Malone, 2 St Comgalls Walk

Dear Residents

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as your new Resident's Association Secretary.

I am based in our office at 22 St Peters Row. Please come if you need help in dealing with the Housing Executive or if you need help with the Social Security, as we have a Welfare Rights worker.

*Margaret Callaghan
Secretary, DRA*



DIVIS DROP-IN COMES OF AGE

It's still much too early to wish 'Happy Birthday' to the 'Divis Drop-In' because it's only been opened for some four months. This week, however, is an important milestone for all those who have put so much time and effort into helping the project get started, and for the growing number of young people who use the premises.

On Tuesday last the Divis Education Project established a subcommittee made up of local people and some professional workers to take the young project through its second stage of development.

THE TESTING PERIOD

The first 16 weeks was the testing period, and the project has come through with flying colours.

It was started in February when a group of workers from various agencies agreed with the Divis Education Project to see if, together, they could provide a facility in the area which would be used by those teenagers and young adults who couldn't or for some reason wouldn't use the existing facilities. They also wanted somewhere which would be open when the young people wanted it, or when the other services were closed.

There was no abundance of money or resources. The Education Project committed some of its very limited finance towards buying materials to do up the building and to obtain some table games, a second-hand TV and a video recorder. They also used their good influence to get the long-term free loan of two pool tables and some computer games. Their staff gave of their time to do the physical work to allow the premises to be opened with at least acceptable facilities.

WOULD IT BE USED?

There were no great plans or programmes for working with the kids. The first need was to see if the young people it was intended for would use it. Secondly, would they relate to those who were staffing it, to allow a programme to be developed. Thirdly, could we start to involve more people from the flats in the running of it.

The pilot period has proved that all three hopes can be more than fulfilled. Despite the lack of programme and facilities the youngsters are coming in, at time in droves, as they say. Initially it had been intended to open for only two nights and Sunday afternoon. Now, it's already open six nights, and when staff is available also on Sunday. We would like to draw more of the older age group in to the late night sessions, and part of the programme will be directed to this.

NO PROBLEM

The Drop-In has proven invaluable in allowing us to get to know the kids better, to listen to them to help us to establish what they want and need, and at times to be of some help to them individually and collectively. There has been no problem relating to them. They want to share, to be accepted, and despite all the problems which we know they can cause, and the image they have, Divis has young people as good as any in West Belfast.

The Drop-In has also been fortunate in drawing to it a number of local people who have a concern and commitment which is exceptional. Together with some of the professional workers they have established the need and viability of the Drop-In and I have no doubt

but that in their hands it will flourish during its second stage.

We do need more help, and indeed would welcome anyone who can give even a little time, or some particular skill, which can be incorporated in the new programme.

If you can't give the time regularly, why not just call in some night. You can see what's happening, have a bit of crack, and a cup of tea. After all, it is the Divis Drop-In.

Jim McCorry

**Asbestos
'will kill
50,000
tenants'**

Daily Mirror May 17 1984

FIFTY thousand council tenants are doomed to die from asbestos-linked diseases, claims the housing charity Shelter.

It warns that families exposed to low doses of asbestos in their homes are more at risk than workers handling the material, because workers wear masks.

Now tenants have launched a nationwide campaign to clean up more than a million homes riddled with asbestos.

Councils could face a bill of £1,000 million.

Shelter says in a report: "It could be one of the costliest tasks ever undertaken in public housing.

"Additional resources from the government are nowhere in sight and government silence is increasingly frustrating councils."

Half of Britain's local authorities have banned asbestos which was largely used for insulation.

Housing officials have also listed how many homes in their areas are affected.

In a bid to reduce the risk of contamination, tenants have been warned not to disturb the material.

YOUNGER USER USERS AT THE DROP-IN

