

EDITORIAL

THERE IS a new look to Netherhall Gardens these days. The two Victorian houses which used to house up to forty of Netherhall House's hundred students, have disappeared in the last six months. In their place there is rising fast a complex of specially designed buildings. This "Netherhall 2000" project will provide sixty single study bedrooms, ancillary facilities, an extension to Lakefield Catering and Educational Centre and a school.

Also under construction is an impressive and carefully thought out central common area, which will contain lecture rooms, language laboratory, computer centre and multi-purpose hall/gymnasium.

On 1 November 1993 construction activity was briefly stilled for the laying of a foundation stone, undertaken with style by the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, H E Chief Anyaoku (just returned from chairing an important international summit in Cyprus). There were over a hundred invited guests, including the Lord Mayor of London, the Mayor of

Camden, High Commissioners, Ambassadors, academics and university administrators. H M Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother sent a most gracious message expressing her pleasure and best wishes. This was formally read by the Chairman of the Netherhall House Trust, Sir Bernard Audley, and appreciated by everyone present.

This major building project has had a complex planning history. In fact nearly a decade has elapsed since the "Old Block" was closed due to serious structural problems. Since then Netherhall has run at half-capacity with a heavy annual deficit, and has had to survive on the goodwill built up over the years with its bankers and ex-residents. Thanks to them Netherhall will be firing on all cylinders once again at the start of the 1994-95 academic year.

The completion of the hall of residence has been a major objective of NEA for many years. The condition of the old buildings has happily forced our hand as regards timing, but there is a great deal still to do in the vital field of

fundraising. On 1 November the thoughts of many of us went to the unforgettable figure of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei, who had inspired his children in London to work with friends of many faiths in order to achieve the dream that is Netherhall House.

Netherhall is by no means the only centre administered by NEA, and much of the news in these pages comes from elsewhere. Dunreath (Glasgow) organised in the summer of 1993 a voluntary work project at a small outpost in the arid desert of northern Mexico. Closer to home, Elmore (London) ran a junior summer school in Brixton, and also organised a week long "home help" programme renovating the homes of several senior citizens in Westminster. Kelston continues to offer many and varied activities.

I trust you will enjoy the many fascinating articles in this first issue of NEA Occasional Papers and that they will convince you that life this last year in Netherhall (and elsewhere) has continued as lively as ever.



FEATURE

The New Netherhall

After the first stage of Netherhall was opened by the Queen Mother on 1 November 1966, detailed studies were undertaken to complete a second stage of the project.

In 1984 severe structural cracking was located in the old Victorian buildings which dated from 1886 and which had been acquired in 1952 when Netherhall opened its doors for the first time. The old building had to be vacated and an effort made, with a new sense of urgency, to finish the project. Little did anyone realise that it would take over six years to secure planning



CLARENCE HOUSE
S.W.1

I was very touched by the kind message of loyal greetings which I have received from the students, former residents and all those associated with Netherhall House.

I remember so well, as Chancellor of London University, opening the first stage of your developments in 1966, and I was very pleased to learn that so many former students on return to their own countries have made such a positive contribution to the societies in which they live.

I am delighted that Chief Anyaoku, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, is to lay the foundation stone of this second and final stage. I am confident that all those young people who live in these buildings will benefit not only from many new facilities but also from the family atmosphere which has for over a quarter of a century been so apparent at Netherhall House.

I send to you all my best wishes for peace and happiness in the years ahead.

ELIZABETH R.
Queen Mother

1st November, 1993

permission, and this only after two appeals. In 1990/91 the DoE inspector adjudicated that the buildings were clearly in a state of terminal decline, and that the replacements built in Victorian style to blend in with the Conservation Area would both preserve and enhance the neighbourhood.

The next two years saw the completion of detailed architectural work, alongside fundraising at home and abroad, and a search for suitable loan finance.

It was an opportunity to reinforce our body of Honorary Patrons. In May 1993, on the very day the contract was signed a new Patron who is a Director of the Bank of England was at Netherhall accompanying Sir Martin Jacomb, a fellow Director, who was giving a talk to the students in his role as Chairman of the British Council. They both congratulated us and commented that in real terms it was the best time to build. It is true that over

more than two years of negotiating with contractors, not only had the building cost not increased, but we were able to fit into the same price an extensive refurbishment of the existing buildings. This will cover major work made obligatory by new and more stringent fire regulations, and the refurbishment of the kitchens at Lakefield Catering and Educational Centre to enable them to meet the demands of the professional bodies which monitor the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

All except the Lakefield extension will be completed by the end of September 1994, ready for the new academic year.

Over the past two years Netherhall has seen a stream of distinguished

visitors pass through its doors and the hall of residence has become much better known, both in the City and in the university world.

We have also renewed contact with former residents abroad. Through them and distinguished friends and Patrons in the UK, it has been easier to access people with the will and capacity to help in countries visited. One contact led to another and the project has been supported by friends around the world.

The strong traditional links enjoyed by Netherhall in Commonwealth countries made of HE Chief Anyaoku, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the natural choice as guest of honour to perform the ceremony of laying a foundation stone. And what better day to choose than 1 November, 27 years to the day after the Queen Mother had opened the first stage. Naturally, we decided to write a message of loyal greetings to the Queen Mother and she responded with a warm message of support.

We then contacted a number of High Commissioners and Ambassadors. As they receive a lot of invitations, it was largely through the former residents who now work or move in these circles, that the diplomats agreed to come, and the end result was a very impressive list of representative dignitaries – from India, Kenya, Uganda, Fiji, The Philippines, Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore... We were also delighted that the Mayor of Camden and the Lord Mayor of London decided to be with us on the auspicious day.

