

Around the clubs he's known simply as 'Harry'. But Harry Waterman's influence reaches far beyond clubland. He has quietly carved out for himself a large slice of Merseyside. Here we look at his connection with New Brighton Tower — and how it made him £400,000 richer...

# Nightclub boss behind hot deal in New Brighton

CONTROVERSY surrounds a plan to build houses where New Brighton Tower once stood.

The site — which has been derelict since a mysterious fire destroyed the tower buildings in 1969 — is now owned by Wirral Council.

The story of how the council came to own that 23-acre site is the story of one of Merseyside's most secretive and profitable land deals.

The deal stripped the bankrupt New Brighton Tower Company of its last asset — its land — and completed the fleecing of its shareholders.

And Harry Waterman, the shadowy boss of a Liverpool property and club empire, picked up a £404,000 profit.

It began in 1964 when Judah Eleazor Binstock joined the board of the New Brighton Tower Company. Binstock is a close business associate of Waterman.

The tower company's fortunes were already in decline and Binstock speeded up the process.

The Department of Trade and Industry found that Binstock enriched himself at the expense of the company's shareholders. Between 1968 and 1971 share capital and reserves of £440,000 were transformed into a deficiency of £350,000.

So the tower company was milked of everything it owned — except its land. And the land had little value while the tower stump and the old buildings around it remained.

In April 1969 fate took pity on the company. Fire swept through the buildings.

This was most convenient. As tower company chairman Leon Davies (last heard of on the Costa Brava) explain-

ed: "We were in a better position after the fire than before. We were advised professionally that the value of the site in a cleared state was £160,000 and offers could be expected at that figure".

But the professional advisers were reckoning without Harry Waterman.

Waterman had a long-standing connection with the New Brighton Tower Company. His Garston bottling firm, H. King & Co, leased restaurants and bars on the tower site, and Waterman had been involved with the tower company over the purchase of the Grand Hotel in New Brighton.

The land was first offered at £160,000 to Northern Developments, the builders and land hoarders. But they turned it down.

Then in 1971 a receiver was appointed to sort out the tower company's financial mess, and a solicitor offered £96,000 for the land on condition it was a quick sale.

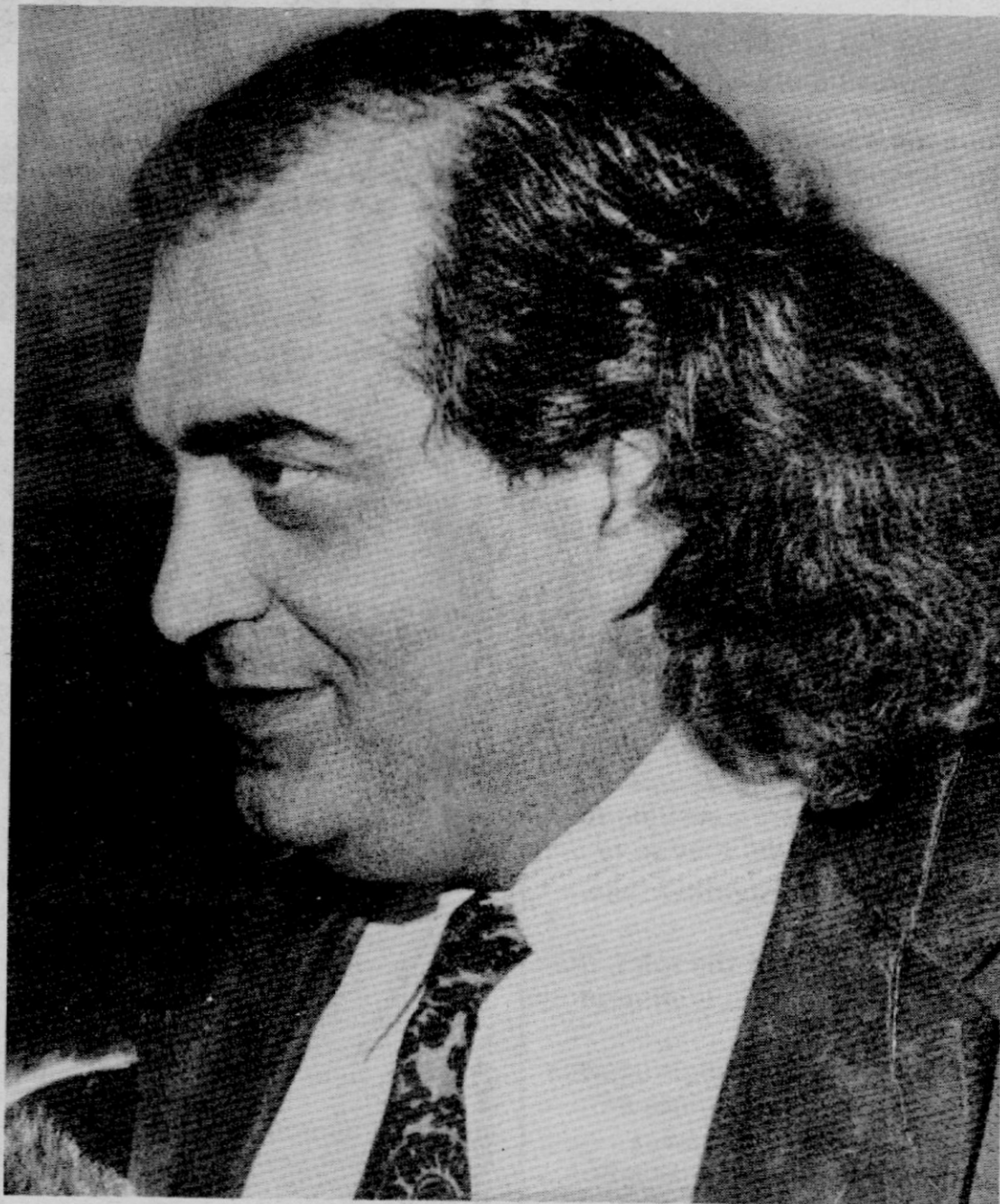
The solicitor did not name his client, but later the purchaser was disclosed as Ardfern Ltd, an Isle of Man company set up seven weeks earlier.

The directors were nominees — a group of Manx accountants.

Normally, Manx nominee companies are the end of the line for anyone investigating a particular deal. For tax and fraud purposes the nominees are used to hide the real controlling interests.

But in this case one of the nominees was J.D. Bolton (son of the Manx Chancellor of the Exchequer), who is not as tight-lipped as most Manx accountants. He named Waterman as controlling Ardfern Ltd.

## Harry's inside man



MAN ON THE INSIDE of the New Brighton Tower deal — Judah Eleazor Binstock, a Paris-based property speculator and former London solicitor. He's also a former owner of the Victoria Sporting Club Casino and present owner of the Isle of Man Casino. He apparently bought H. King & Co, the Liverpool bottling firm from Harry Waterman, and has now registered it in Kuala Lumpur and the Isle of Man.

So it was actually Waterman who bought the New Brighton site for £96,000. He knew it was a knock-down price. And very soon his judgement was proved correct. He calmly re-sold the site to GCT Construction for £500,000 — a swift £404,000 profit.

Curiously, GCT Construction is a subsidiary of Northern Developments, the company that originally turned down the site at £160,000.

A Department of Trade investigation criticised the speed of the deal and the concealment of Waterman's interest. Of Waterman, it hinted:

"The least (that) can be said is that he was acquainted to some extent with the company's affairs." The very least.

At the end of the day, when the tower company had been stripped of its one valuable asset the receiver was left with the paltry sum of £3,700 to add to the buttons paid for the land.

The tower site came into the ownership of Wirral Council after they did a land swap with Northern Developments — exchanging it for land at the end of the M53 motorway near Moreton.

## Council 'concern' will take away home

A THIRTEENTH-FLOOR flat in Northwood, Kirkby, is so overcrowded that two people sleep in the living room.

And what particularly concerned Knowsley Council was that four of the twelve people there were young children. But the council found a solution.

A young couple and their four children will have to go.

That will make them homeless of course. But that's no problem because the council have decided the family are not their responsibility.

The Jackson family went to live at 112 Quarry Green, Northwood last March. They left a council house in Liverpool when they were threatened with eviction for rent arrears.

Knowsley Housing Department agreed to them moving in with Mr Peter Jackson's mother for a while. And they've been there ever since.

But last summer more members of the family turned up — making twelve people in all in the three-bedroom flat.

Now the Housing Department have said the Jacksons must leave. But Social Services have told them they will not be regarded as 'homeless' as far as Knowsley is concerned. They say the Jacksons are Liverpool's problem.

The family, who live on Social Security are unlikely to be welcomed with open arms back in Liverpool. Rodney Stables, the city's housing manager is all in favour of evicting people for rent arrears.

And he's not in favour of re-housing them when eviction makes them homeless. (See Free Press 20).

Not surprisingly, the Jacksons are thinking about squatting. And with local authorities who punish you for being naughty (in arrears), and houses burning down in Tower Hill because they're left empty, who can blame them?

Room available in mixed house, Sefton Park area. Woman preferred. Tel. 227 2514

# The rising cost of Sally Army shelter

THE SALVATION ARMY moves in mysterious ways to perform its good works amongst the poor.

Just inside the door of Arden House, the Army's hostel off Scotland Road is a notice. If you need help, counsel or spiritual advice, it says, please ask to see an officer immediately.

Ask. "But if you come in with no money," a resident told us, "they show you the door. They send you to the S.S. or give you a ticket for the Spike. There are no free beds."

The cost of living in Arden House has gone up a lot recently. And it's annoying many of the residents.

Less than a year ago you could get a bed for £4.90 a week, without breakfast. But then the Army ordered everyone to have breakfast. So now you can't stay there for less than £6.90 a week.

This includes daily vouchers for up to 30p-worth of breakfast in the hostel. There are no refunds if you don't spend them. Nor can you use

them for an evening meal instead.

This may sound trivial, but a lot of people in Arden House have to watch their coppers carefully.

Many complain that the breakfasts are worse — and more expensive — than in transport cafes.

Tea is 6p a cup (though they'll sell you half a cup if you haven't enough money). Eggs are 7p each, tomatoes 7p and pilchards 10p each.

Some of the men in Arden House are working and can afford to pay. But many are not. Full board costs £11.80, which for those on Social Security only leaves £3.50 a week to spend on other things.

There's no shortage of people willing to give to the Salvation Army. The hostel is often given cakes and sandwiches by confectioners. But the Army then sells these to the residents.

The same happens with clothes. The Army's adverts in the Echo say they need clothes urgently. These are not given to the destitute. They

go to Salvator House, the Army's saleroom next to the hostel.

One resident said that when he arrived, he gave them a spare suit, thinking someone else needed it more badly than he did. Three days later it went up for sale at £3.50.

Obviously the Army needs money, and the old 330-bed hostel is costly to run. But certainly the money doesn't provide a life of luxury for the non-Army staff.

One man works from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. for six days — a 60-hour week. He gets £14.50 before deductions of £7.50 for his keep and 81p for his insurance stamp.

Still, there's always Christmas, the time of goodwill, when residents get a little present along with their Christmas dinner.

Residents recalled one incident last Christmas. The dinner was timed, strategically, to start just as the pubs were opening. One man, an alcoholic, couldn't bear to wait and left his dinner. As he went out, his present was confiscated.

## His just reward

STORIES about his company, Liver Launderettes, have appeared twice in the Free Press.

He pays women staff 35p an hour, and gives pay rises (when unavoidable) of a miserly 2½p an hour.

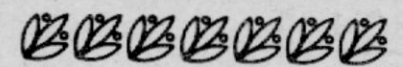
His company have an anti-trade union policy.

His launderette manageresses, who live in flats over the shops, have no security and no rent books.

And, at last, he's been exposed in the pages of the Liverpool Daily Post.

Yes, they have made Robert P Harling, director of Liver Launderettes, a household name — winner of their Business Executive of the Year award. No comment.

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