



12 Sandringham Drive

How they creamed off the cash to the Isle of Man

TWO DERELICT HOUSES in Aigburth were sold for an astonishing £121,000 to H King & Co — the Garston bottling company now in liquidation — as part of an operation to strip huge amounts of cash from the firm.

A small group of businessmen bought and sold the houses — 12 and 14 Sandringham Drive — among themselves before “persuading” Kings to buy the bricked-up houses for a hugely inflated price.

And within a fortnight of the deal going through, Kings had knocked down the value of the houses in their accounts to £60,000. Not even the nostalgic jazz singer George Melly, whose childhood home was at No. 14, would put their value that high.

But this was no ordinary property deal.

The Sandringham Drive houses were just some of the many pieces manipulated in a real-life Monopoly game that drained £1 million out of Kings.

Until the early 1970s the houses were owned by slum landlord Paul Jones. Jones sold the property when he had to leave Liverpool for a short stay elsewhere.

In August 1972 a London outfit called Shop and Commerce bought the two Sandringham Drive houses for £36,000. Shop and Commerce had two directors — Donald Rees Williams and Mike Franklin.

Williams is a close business associate of Judah Binstock, the financier who bought Kings from Harry Waterman (Liverpool's club boss and tax refugee).

Franklin is a former Detective Inspector in Scotland Yard's Fraud Squad, and was bodyguard and dog-sbody for Binstock.

Franklin and Williams ran Shop and Commerce from the London address also used by businessman Frank Brockley (now serving five years for a Mafia bank swindle).

Williams did nothing with the property apart from getting a small Isle of Man builder, Sidney Games, to submit planning applications for permission to convert into flats. Games is another associate of Binstock.

In 1973 Shop and Commerce sold the properties — apparently to Mr Mark Drew of Ramsey, Isle of Man. At first sight Mr Drew's only connection with Liverpool was his

chairmanship of the Manx Everton Supporters Association.

His recollections of the deal vary. Initially, he told a reporter: “The Sandringham Drive property? That's been out of my hands for a long time now. I'm in the bath. Ring me back later.”

The next day, however, Mr Drew had clearly had second thoughts: “No, I never owned the property. I think you've got everything mixed up here. I've got nothing to say at any rate.”

Drew is a director of a Manx firm called Bride Sand and Gravel, which has one familiar name among its many London shareholders — that of Donald Rees Williams.

From the Isle of Man the ownership of the property then passed — very profitably for someone — to Kings in Liverpool, and £121,000 passed into a tax haven bank account.

At least two questions may occur

to the authorities:

The Inland Revenue might care to take Mark Drew aside on his next visit to Goodison Park and ask about just who benefited from the handsome profit made on the Sandringham Drive houses.

And the Department of Trade and Industry will probably want to ask Mr Marcus Nagley — one-time chairman of Kings — what inspired him to value the houses so highly.

The authorities will have more difficulty in interviewing the business partners of Messrs Nagley and Drew:

Judah Binstock — former owner of Kings and the man who appointed Nagley — was last heard of seeking a permanent exile in Brazil, the land of the train robbers.

Donald Williams and Mike Franklin were last heard of in Portugal debating whether they should also depart for the healthier climate of Rio de Janeiro.

The road to ruin

THE MEN who extracted £121,000 from H King & Co figured in a series of other deals that left the bottling company in financial ruin.

Until 1972 Kings was owned by The Two Harrys — Harry Waterman, the ‘invisible’ director of a chain of Liverpool clubs and a millionaire property owner; and Harry Isaacson, a long-time partner of Waterman, who is still very active in Liverpool.

Waterman and Isaacson sold out to Judah Binstock. Once Binstock had taken over, he appointed Mr Marcus Nagley as chairman.

With Nagley installed, Binstock's entourage came on stage and transacted the following series of remarkably unsuccessful deals:

HICKORY LODGE CLUB: An old wooden building in Fazakerley which had Isaacson as a director. (Isaacson remained with H King as a director after Binstock's takeover). Hickory Lodge was loaned an incredible £28,000.

COCONUT GROVE: Isaacson again is a director, and again H King was exceedingly generous in the

money it loaned to the club.

ORALHURST: A St Helens bookmaking operation in which H King had a 50% stake. Donald Williams and Marcus Nagley were directors. It was loaned £75,000.

ORALJAN: Another crazy venture of which Nagley was a director. It bought the Carr Mill Dam site in St Helens, which was later involved in another tax-evading transaction via the Isle of Man.

HARPBOROUGH: Mike Franklin and the unquitting Marcus Nagley were directors. It enjoyed £5,000 of H King's money, which was used to finance the development of a revolutionary car alarm system that failed.

PURZONE: Another bright idea from Franklin of the Yard (to purify oil), which accounted for £20,000 of H King's money.

M.V. VAEROY: A Greek yacht for cruises round the Mediterranean while the passengers enjoyed Tetley's best bitter. It lost £44,000 of King's money and was last heard of in Corfu.

Special Branch and a candid camera

THE IRA MEN arrested with arms and explosives in Waterloo are now in prison after a trial in Manchester.

But an incident connected with their earlier appearances before Liverpool magistrates has not had the publicity it deserves.

One Friday last December, when the Irishmen were being remanded, there was a bomb scare at Cheapside police station.

A couple of weeks later two men called at the home of a young NUPE union official at Walton Hospital. (He has asked us not to print his name.)

The men identified themselves as Special Branch officers. And they wanted to know what he had been doing in Dale Street on the day of the bomb scare.

They told him: “You were seen in the area on that day by camera.”

The man does not know whether they meant photographs had been taken or whether he had been spotted on one of the many television cameras, used primarily for traffic control.

More important, he wonders how he was recognised.

This raises a number of possibilities. The official would be regarded by most managements — including hospital management — as an industrial militant.

Last November, shortly before the visit by the Special Branch, he was disciplined for refusing to do work outside his normal duties. A two-day strike by ancillary workers at Walton Hospital changed the

management's mind. During the strike he appeared on Granada Television.

In a separate incident earlier last year, the police stopped his car on the way home from work. He was charged with the theft of a number of small items, including a hospital coat.

All the charges were thrown out of court. And the man was assured by the police that his fingerprints and photograph have since been destroyed.

But someone, somewhere, certainly has a picture of him on file. And other information as well. He says the Special Branch men told him: “We know you have certain feelings about the police.”

They also asked which newspapers he read and whether he took any interest in Irish organisations. And they searched his bedroom before leaving in their silver-coloured Cortina.

Address book suspicions . . .

LIVERPOOL Trades Council have taken up the case of Freddie Gleeson, a building worker and member of the Communist Party.

Mr Gleeson was arrested in March while sticking up Communist Party posters in Garston. He was charged with causing damage to property by bill posting.

At the police station, personal property — including an address book and a union card — were taken from him and kept for over a fortnight. The address book contained names and telephone numbers of people active in the labour movement on Merseyside.

Last month the Home Office admitted that the book should not have been taken (though no doubt the information in it is now on file). And the charge against Mr Gleeson has been dropped.

'A' code leaves claimants cold

THE SUPPLEMENTARY Benefit Commissioners do not consider “the existence of a fuel debt” to be an “urgent need”.

This is the basis of recent policy changes in the new A-code sent to the area offices of the DHSS.

The A-code, which is not published because the commissioners say it will not be understood, has been leaked to Merseyside welfare rights workers and the Press.

The DHSS wanted their policy on fuel debts and disconnections clarified because their area offices are facing more and more requests for help with fuel bills.

The new policy has three main points:

- People in full time employment are disqualified from exceptional needs payments for fuel bills. These people are to be “advised to make their own arrangements ... with the appropriate fuel authority.”
- People already receiving supple-

mentary benefit will only be made an exceptional needs payment if they have an “imminent need”.

This means that people who have not been claiming their heating allowance will be paid a lump sum for the amount they would have got had they been claiming. If this does not cover the debt extra money will only be made available in “exceptional circumstances”.

- All other claimants will not receive an exceptional needs payment for a fuel debt. However in cases of hardship the Social Security will deduct a small sum from the weekly benefit and pay it directly to the fuel authority. This sum will not be less than 50p and will cover current consumption as well as the arrears.

There were 2,668 homes disconnected on Merseyside in the first three months of this year — a 15% increase on last year. It is not thought that the new policy will reduce this increase.

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