



Kirkby wives beat the bookie

The housewives of Kenmay Walk, Kirkby, have won the next round against Connors, the bookies, who offered them gifts to stop their opposition to one of the betting shops.

A local court has ruled that the betting shop and a neighbouring pub, The Peacock, represent a loss of amenity for the twenty families who have to live nearby.

And the court—considering an appeal for a cut in rates—granted the housewives a £12 a year reduction.

The court decided that the families living nearby "suffer a disadvantage in having to overlook so closely the betting shop and public house."

The next round against Connor comes in April when the women of Kenmay Walk will launch a legal fight against the renewal of the betting shop's licence.

"We are prepared to give up the pittance we got off our rates in return for seeing the betting shop moved. Nothing can stop us winning now," said Mrs Sadie Edwards, one of the housewives.

"We will do what we did last time and take the petitions round. Last time we got 600 signatures. This time it will be more."

No women, say TV firm

Visionhire—the television rental company with 14 branches on Merseyside—has joined the ranks of firms discriminating against women.

If a woman wants to rent a set, she has to have a male householder to stand as guarantor—even if she herself is a householder.

How Mr Wade will make a million...

Realmdeal Investments (alias Standfield Properties) are amassing a fortune in Toxteth. James Standfield Wade is the man behind Hibernian Properties and Standfield. Under the name of Grant Improvements Ltd he is using the 75% government grant scheme to rake in almost a million pounds of taxpayers' money...

"THERE'S a fortune to be made by any purchaser with enough capital and time to spare on Toxteth." Those were the prophetic words of Mr William Cox in 1969 when he handled the sale of 7,000 Toxteth properties owned by Metropolitan Estates and Property Company.

And the man who has taken that advice to heart is Mr James Standfield Wade, the driving force behind the Realmdeal/Standfield/Grant Improvements Ltd/Hibernian slum property empire.

Wade bought the properties dirt cheap. Then his men moved into Toxteth, harassing Realmdeal's tenants. Their aim was to break controlled tenancies, sell some houses off immediately, gain vacant possession for flat conversions, and sell the freeholds at inflated rates.

The exercise was geared relentlessly to maximising the profit on every single brick that Realmdeal owned.

Wade quickly saw that one of the most lucrative operations lay in the government's 75% improvement grant scheme, which lasts until June 1973.

Grant Improvements Ltd was set up to gather in all that lovely taxpayers' money. The title of the company was no accident—it is deceptive, giving the impression of an official body administering improvement grants.

Grant Improvements Ltd concentrate entirely on £2,000 improvements—the government's ceiling for work that qualifies

for a 75% grant. That means Wade will be getting £1,500 per house from the taxpayer.

On architects' fees alone Wade stands to make a hefty profit. Out of the £2,000 expenditure per house, £182 can be spent on architects' fees, and 75% of that can be recouped as a grant.

So for every house improved Wade is given £136.50 to cover his architects' fees.

But the actual cost of the architectural work on the houses, many of them identical, is only a fraction of the government grant.

Until the end of December, Wade employed a part-time consultant architect, John H Ritchie, lecturer at the University School of Architecture, who no longer advises Grant Improvements.

The number of houses Wade is likely to get improved before the 75% grants expire in 1973 is about

600. On 600 houses Wade will get £81,900 in grants for architects' fees alone.

On the improvements themselves, Wade's Grant Improvements Ltd will net £1,363.50 per house in public money—a total of £818,100 on 600 houses. Assuming a 10% profit on the work done Wade is raking in another £81,000 from the taxpayer.

Wade's immediate cash benefit, therefore, is in the region of £160,000—minus a small amount for his architectural expenses.

And into his 600 properties the taxpayer has poured £900,000 to finance the improvements. From those improvements Wade will get increased rents. When he comes to sell off the houses, he will realise the value of those improvements and far more besides, as house prices ride up on the inflationary spiral.

If Wade sells those houses for £2,000 each—and that would be cheap—he would rake in £1,200,000 from houses that cost him only several hundred pounds each.

And Wade is on the lookout for more houses. Regularly he advertises in the Echo offering to buy houses with controlled or regulated tenancies—once the tenancies are broken the houses are highly profitable.

"Large funds available," says the advert. Not surprising in view of the 1971 turnover figure of £1,463,000 for Realmdeal Investments. The £850,000 Wade

paid for the Toxteth properties was peanuts.

One of the houses he bought very cheaply was in Cairns Street. He offered the sitting tenant £300 to get out, and then sold it for £1,800.

And Wade is in the process of selling thousands of freeholds to householders at prices between £40 and £100.

Add to that his use of the gaping loophole in the Rent Act to charge huge rents for student accommodation, and you see the extent of Wade's vast profit making machine.

Wade had the time and patience to exploit Toxteth, but he didn't quite have the money to start off with. For he borrowed £513,000 capital from the Leek and Westbourne Building Society and a further substantial sum from London and County (A & D) Ltd (the owners of Realmdeal at the time) to buy up the Realmdeal properties.

He's now repaying the capital and interest out of the huge profits he's made.

The final irony of the massive cheques Liverpool Corporation will pay towards Wade's grants is that they were offered the Toxteth properties at a far lower price than Wade paid. But they turned the offer down.

James Standfield Wade will be approaching millionaire status when he leaves Liverpool, and the only joy for the people of Toxteth will be his departure.

TO YOU - ONLY £45!

Standfield (Realmdeal) Properties—Merseyside's notorious slum landlords—have found yet another way to make money out of people living in Toxteth.

If any of Standfield's tenants, who own their house but not the freehold, want the firm's consent in order to get a Corporation improvement grant they are being forced to pay inflated prices.

Legally, a householder has to get the consent of the freeholder. Until Standfield's Director James Wade came on the scene, consent was a formality.

But now Standfield say it will cost tenants between £15 and £20 just to get the signature of consent.

Unless, of course, the tenant wants to buy the freehold of his house off Standfield. That will cost him £45—more than double the fair level set by the Lands Tribunal in a test case.

When tenants apply for

consent to improvements, Standfield just happen to send along a representative to offer the freehold for sale. Buying the freehold, they say, will save a lot of problems and prevent anyone having to wait for a long time while the consent is agreed to.

This happened to two neighbours in Northbrooke Street, Mrs Nelson and Mrs Hayes. Mrs Hayes is holding out against this legal blackmail but Mrs Nelson, desperate to have her house fitted with decent facilities, has been forced to give in to Standfield's methods. Their ground rents are £2 a year, and the Lands Tribunal say a fair price for these freeholds would be £20.

Before Standfield bought up their Toxteth properties, the estate managers for Metropolitan Estates were Sutcliffe's. When Sutcliffe's managed the properties, one householder in Cairn Street paid £1.1s for the consent signature and it took five minutes.

In their letter to Mrs Hayes, Standfield mention their London solicitor who has decided the legal fees. His name is Maurice Fooks.

By a neat co-incidence, Mr Fooks is one of the founding

directors of Realmdeal Investments. Along with his brother Joseph, Maurice set up Realmdeal in 1960.

In their letter, Standfield try to imply that Fooks is an independent solicitor. In fact he is part of the Standfield-Realmdeal organisation which is charging £15-£20 for the consents.

Dabbling in the docks...

With minimum publicity a "public" meeting was held by Liverpool Corporation on December 29, supposedly to let ratepayers discuss the Corporation's General Powers Bill, which goes before Parliament this year.

One section of the Bill which few people noticed gives the Corporation unlimited power to invest in the new Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. Already the Corporation has £30,000 in the company and any further investment will make it a major shareholder eligible to nominate a representative onto the Board of Directors. (And who better than Alderman Sir Harold Macdonald Steward, leader of the City Council? A directorship in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co would be yet another feather in his cap.)

But is all this in the public interest? The Corporation's financial involvement in the Dock company will conflict with its role as a planning authority.

For instance the Albert Dock warehouses, owned by the Dock company, are listed as buildings of architect-

ural and historic interest, which the Corporation is charged to protect.

With its huge shareholding in this company, however, the Corporation will have a financial interest in the demolition of these buildings to make way for more "profitable" developments.

Although public authorities, by definition, should consider more than profits, the Corporation has already promised the Dock company directors that they will not stand in the way if a "development" proposal (i.e. a massive speculative office venture financed by the surplus capital of some life assurance company) is put forward for this site. This is in spite of the fact that various individuals and amenity groups have outlined proposals for using the Albert Dock buildings.

That's why all reference to the Albert Dock was deleted from the Planning Officer's recent City Centre Plan review document [see Free Press No 4]. The Corporation believes that if you don't mention something everyone will forget about it. 1984 isn't very far away.

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