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French Pour vous assister en votre propre langue	Somali Luqadaadoo lugugu caawinaayo	Arabic لمساعدتكم في لغتكم
Portuguese Assistencia na sura propria lingua	Farsi برای کمک به زبانتان	Kurdish بۆیارمه تیدان به زمانی خۆت



Email View Magazine **view@whitefriarshousing.co.uk**
 Text View Magazine **07781 489 833**
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 (Nothing else needs writing on the envelope and no stamp is needed)

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If you, or a friend, would like a copy of View on **Audio Tape** or in **Large Print Format** call the Communications Team on 024 7676 7029.
 If you would like to receive **View** by **Email** please let us know and we will add you the distribution list.



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WHITEFRIARS HOUSING GROUP CUSTOMER MAGAZINE



ISSUE 1 AUTUMN / WINTER 2008

there's no such thing as average



so we're getting to know you better!

FIRST ISSUE!

See inside for your chance to WIN... a Nintendo Wii, a Dyson & Family Tickets to Birmingham Think Tank

WELCOME TO VIEW

Hello and welcome to the very first issue of the all new View Magazine. If you are reading this it's probably because you are already our customer, a Whitefriars' resident, and even if you aren't we hope you still find something of interest in these pages.

If you are a customer, you may well be wondering why you got this magazine through your door and what its purpose is. Well, many of you will be familiar with Home, our previous customer magazine. View represents a different direction for us in the way we communicate with our customers. Much like Home, View is still one of the easiest and most straightforward ways that we communicate with our customers, telling you about the things we are doing on your behalf and things you may wish to know. The difference is the way we are doing it.

Over the last few years we have tried to understand you better. We have put lots of time and effort into starting to appreciate what our customers want, like and need. We still have much more to learn but one thing we can say with confidence is that there is no such thing as an average customer.

That's one of the reasons why we have brought you this new style magazine. We still want to tell you about important

stuff but we hope that you will find the new format interesting and informative as well. Rather than just making it a list of facts and figures, we have concentrated on people and real life situations to bring you features that, put simply, are worth reading.

On top of that we now have even more customers involved in the writing and creation of articles, just take a look at the contents page opposite to see what we mean. From reviewing attractions to giving us a local history lesson, it has been created with your help.

If you turn to page 23 you will see that we want your help again. We really want to know what you think of the new Magazine, good or bad, we want to hear it all. These comments and ideas will help to shape the Magazine in the future. And if you needed any incentive, every comment we receive stands a chance of winning you a fantastic prize. So what are you waiting for?

Anyway we will sign off now and let you get on with exploring View for the first time. We hope you enjoy it.

the View Editorial Team

Ps. In case anyone was wondering, by producing this new bigger magazine three times a year instead of a smaller one, four times, it doesn't cost us any more money to do. Which is nice!



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DEEPLY IN DEBT..?

As inflation reaches its highest level for 16 years and price rises continue to eat into income, debt is a looming problem for a great many of us. The story below shows examples from real life and highlights just how easy it can be to get in a mess with money, and thankfully what you can do to sort it out.

Paula's Story

Paula is a single mum with two children, Toby and Kelly. When she split up with her partner she needed to move, and following a successful bid on Coventry Homefinder she got a Whitefriars flat.

Paula went along to her housing office to sign her tenancy agreement and get the keys to her new home. Paula worked and received tax credits, but her housing officer worked out that she was still entitled to Housing Benefit. Together they filled in an application form.

The following week Paula and her family moved in and started to settle into their new home. After they had been living there for a few days there was a knock on the door. It was a lady from a doorstep-lending agency who said that her company would lend Paula £500 and that she would come and collect the re-payments every week.

We all know that moving can be an expensive time and both the children needed new beds, so even though she already had other debts Paula agreed to have the loan. Although she knew she had to pay back £15 every week, Paula did not query the interest or how much she would have to eventually pay in total.

A couple of days later a letter arrived from Housing Benefit asking to see Paula's wage slips so that they could pay her the Housing Benefit she was entitled to. Paula put the letter to one side meaning to reply when she got her wage slip that week.

Then Paula had a phone call from Whitefriars to say that no rent had been paid and that she was in arrears. Paula and her housing officer agreed that she would get her Housing Benefit claim sorted out, but until then she would pay £25 rent every week.

In the meantime, the bills were piling up, the catalogues Paula owed money to were sending her letters and the cost of her gas and electricity seemed to go up every week. In addition, the lady from the doorstep agency arrived every week for her £15. Paula never seemed to have enough money to pay everyone and many bills went unpaid.

As things got worse, Paula stopped opening letters and bills and didn't answer her telephone unless she knew it was someone she didn't owe money to.

She was constantly worried about paying the rent and all the other debts, and felt ashamed that she was unable to cope.

One day she was at home nursing one of her children, who was poorly, when Clare, her housing officer, called at her house to talk to her about her rent arrears. The arrears had got so bad that she could have been taken to court. Distraught about her situation, Paula finally decided to tell Clare all about the financial problems she had.

Together they decided that the best thing would be for Paula to go to her local advice agency who could help her sort out all her money problems and Clare made the referral for her.

Clare was able to help Paula sort out her housing benefit claim by arranging for her to see an officer from Housing Benefit at her housing office. When the claim was paid this helped to pay the rent arrears she owed

Paula went along to the advice agency the following week and took with her all the letters and bills that she had. Jim at the advice agency helped her to set up a budget and to write to the people she owed money to asking



them to accept small weekly payment until the debts were paid..

Most of the companies agreed to accept the lower payments except the door step lender. Paula was shocked when Jim told her that she was being

charged 183% interest on her £500 loan and would end up paying back £840!

He helped her to set up a credit union bank account and Paula knows that if she needs another

loan she will be able to apply for one through her credit union and only be charged about 12% interest.

Now if Paula hears about anyone with money or debt problems her advice is always, "Don't bury your head in the sand".

She added, "Your debts will not go away! Talk to the people you owe money to and get some advice, there is nothing wrong with asking for some help when you are struggling. It so easy to slip into debt but once you start to get things sorted and there is light at the end of the tunnel it's such a massive relief."

*Don't bury your head in the sand
- ask for help today.*

"Paula stopped opening letters and bills and didn't answer her telephone..."



As soon as you have any problems paying your rent please contact your Whitefriars Rent Team:

- Little Park St/Radford on 024 7676 7111
- Riley Square on 024 7670 8400
- Torrington Avenue on 024 7649 6700
- St James Lane on 024 7651 6700

We are here to help. We will make sure that we arrange with you an affordable repayment plan for any rent that you owe and we can offer help and advice on money and benefits.

You can contact the Credit Unions on:

- Coventry West 024 7663 3456
- Coventry East 024 7651 1117

There is also a Credit Union Shop at 33 City Arcade, Coventry.

You can get budgeting advice from the CWCD (Coventry and Warwickshire Co-Operative Development Agency) on 024 7663 3911

Other useful numbers of advice agencies are:

- Citizens Advice Bureau on 0845 1202 920
- Willenhall Advice Centre on 024 7651 1117
- Wood End Advice and Information Centre 024 7661 3629
- Holbrooks Community Care Association on 024 7663 8681
- St Oswalds Community Advice Centre on 024 7646 6282

ON THE FRONT LINE

My name is Ian Moreton and I'm an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer based at Whitefriars Torrington Avenue office. I have worked for Whitefriars for the last 3 years. Working here can be challenging, and rewarding in equal measures but is rarely dull. This story is very much a typical day for me and the team



7.00am It's a warm Monday morning and I'm off to work. Now don't get me wrong, I love my job, but I also love my old campervan that I'm rebuilding and I look longingly at it as I walk down my drive. It would be a perfect day to do a bit of tinkering on it, oh well! It's a 40 minute drive to work and on the way, I pick a colleague up and chat about our weekends. She usually talks about what pubs she's been to, and I talk about what DIY stores I've visited, I must be getting old.

On the way, we call in to say 'hello' to a witness in a case I am handling. She tells me of the problems that have occurred over the weekend and hands me some incident sheets. I have to admire the lady, she has been a victim of anti-social behaviour, off and on, for a long time, but still is so positive about the world. We are doing everything we can to help her resolve the issues.



8.00am We arrive at work and grab a quick cup of coffee while my computer warms up. I was in court last Friday obtaining an injunction so I did not see any of Friday's emails. I look at my emails and decide which need immediate action and which can wait. This takes me the best part of an hour.

9.00am I can now get on with the planned work for today. I've been gathering evidence about a case of noise nuisance. So far I have interviewed six witnesses, spoken to the police, and Kilo2 (the council's noise team). Gathering the evidence has taken weeks of working late and visiting all of the witnesses in this case. The time spent has really paid off. I had time to get to know the witnesses and for them to get to know me. I was able to explain what I could do for them, but also that I could not do it without them taking an active part. It has been important to build a relationship with them. They need to trust me and I'm asking them to stand up and be counted.

The only problem I have is sorting through all of the information I have gathered. Thankfully the administration team here have typed up much of it for me. That means I can spend time putting the statements together for each of my witnesses. What's important in these situations is not just the facts about the problems that are being caused, but making sure we are able to get across the impact that anti-social behaviour has on people's lives.

Until I started this job I did not realise that even comparatively minor incidents can have a huge impact on somebody's well being or way of life. After two hours of sweating over a hot keyboard it's time to head off to a meeting in town.

11.20am The meeting is about one of my cases, a man called 'Dave' who has serious mental health issues. Most of the people at the meeting are only concerned with Dave's care. For me it's far more complicated than that as I have to wear two hats. It goes without saying that I want the best for Dave, but I also have a responsibility to consider the needs of Dave's neighbours. They have shown a great deal of tolerance with him, but do have to put up with his often problematic behaviour.

We all agree that Dave needs supported housing but no one seems able to offer it, I suggest that I contact a hostel in Birmingham that specialises in the sort of care he needs. We agree to try this hostel and meet again in a month's time. I'm sure we will be able to sort out help for Dave, but I think it will be a case of taking things gently and slowly. From my point of view it has been hard work, but along the way I have built some important links with lots of professional services in Coventry which will be useful in the future.



mum have been working with the 'Family Intervention Project' and things are looking great.

Ben admitted to me that last week he had been spoken to by the police about some anti-social behaviour. I was actually quite pleased he was honest enough to tell me, because the police had already told me about it. As it turned out it was a very minor incident and probably not really his fault, but we talked about the people he was mixing with and the possible problems that might lead too. I decided it was best to just leave it at that.

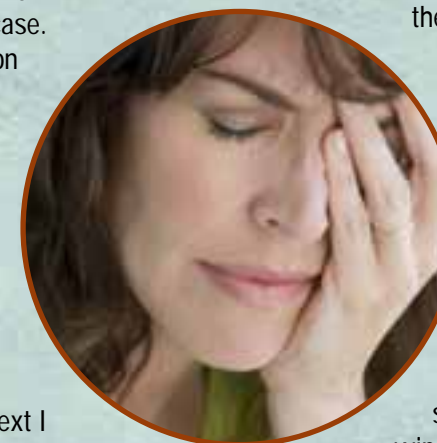
4.00pm I'm on the way back from the meeting when my mobile goes. It's the police telling me that the injunction I obtained on Friday has been breached. The person involved is in the cells after threatening a witness and we need to get our evidence together for the morning. I call the administration team to ask them to contact the witness, but they tell me he is already waiting in our Little Park Street office.

Twenty minutes later and I'm sharing a cup of tea with a badly shaken elderly couple. I take a statement from the resolute 70 year old man, and a second corroborating statement from his wife. I give the couple a lift home and join them indoors for half an hour while our Response Team fit a CCTV system. I arrange to pick the couple up in the morning if we need to go to court and start off on my way home.

6.35pm It's been

a long day but at last I'm back at home. As I eat my supper I'm looking out the window and wondering if I can get a couple of hours on the campervan. Just then the 'phone rings, oh well, maybe tomorrow.

3.10pm Next I am off to an 'Acceptable Behaviour Contract' review on a young man, aged 15, called 'Ben'. When I first met him he was out of control, but since then both Ben and his



Tips to deal with Anti-Social Behaviour



- Try and note down the time and date the incident occurred. The more information we have, the more we can do. If it's an ongoing problem, we may ask you to keep an incident diary to help any court case.
- If it's a problem with a neighbour, firstly see if talking to them helps. If it's not working out between you, we have a mediation service which may be able to help.
- Find out if it's affecting others in your area by contacting your local residents association or neighbourhood watch. It may be that work is already underway to investigate it.
- If you are suffering from noise nuisance we will ask you to call the Noise Team at the City Council to independently witness the noise. You can call them Monday to Friday from 8.30am - 5pm on **024 7683 1834**. From 5pm until 2am and at Weekends from 10am - 2am on **024 7683 2222**.

SHOCKING BILLS?

When it comes to the cost of gas and electricity bills, there's no getting away from the fact it been a pretty bad year. With the papers reporting more rises on the way, possibly as high as 40% this winter. We offer you our top three tips to bucking the trend and actually taking your bills back down again.

1 How much do you pay?

Gas and electricity is charged by the kilowatt-hour (kWh) even though gas meters actually measure the gas in cubic metres. The number of kWh in a cubic metre of gas is shown on your bill because it varies. The cheapest way to pay for gas and electricity is by monthly direct debit and you will get an extra discount if you buy both your gas and electricity from the same supplier. Usually the most expensive way is through a prepayment card meter. If you use a lot of electricity during the night, it may be cheaper to have an 'off-peak' tariff such as Economy 7. Remember that with an off-peak tariff, you pay more for your daytime electricity.

2 How much do you use?

Do you check your meter reading when you get a bill? Most energy bills are based on estimated readings so if you do not check you may be paying more than you need. If your actual meter reading is less than the bill says, ring your supplier and tell them the actual reading. They will send you a replacement bill. Get into the habit of taking regular meter readings (say every week or month). That way you will see if your energy use is unusual; you may have a fault with your electric or gas or may have left something switched on, such as an immersion heater.

"An 'A' rated fridge saves about £40 a year compared to a 'G' rated one."

3 Switch it off

Now that you have got your energy as cheaply as you can, do not waste it. Low energy lights only need a fifth of the energy of a filament bulb and should last several years. Over its life, just one 20W low energy bulb can save over £100 in electricity. Many energy suppliers will give you some free, just ask them. There are lots of different styles to fit most light fittings and they are much better now than they used to be. Check out the special offers in the supermarkets and DIY stores. When you buy a new appliance, check the energy label to see how much it will cost to run. An 'A' rated fridge saves about £40 a year compared to a 'G' rated one. Finally, if you are not using something, switch it off. Do not leave things on stand-by.

For free advice on saving energy call FREE on 0800 512 012

FAMILY MATTERS

Residents of Coventry will soon have another resource to assist them in achieving and maintaining good health. By September 2008, you will be able to log on to www.coventryhealthhub.nhs.uk, Coventry Health Hub, the public health information and resources website of the Coventry Primary Care Trust.

A New Website!

This site is designed to keep you informed about the latest local, regional and national developments in public health. It will also provide information on diseases and disease conditions, in particular preventive information.

The Coventry Health Hub will also signpost you to local health and related services and events.



The site will offer something for every member of the family and we are sure you will find our site useful and interesting. We are committed to reaching everyone, so people of all ages and cultures should find something of relevance to them.

Your feed back and input will also be appreciated. A link has been provided on the site for you to let us know what you think. Please use it for your comments and suggestions.

If you need more information about the website or have any other questions about public health resources, feel free to contact a member of the team.

Valerie Beach-Horne, Public Health Resources Coordinator.

Tel 024 76246087 or Email valerie.beachhorne@coventrypct.nhs.uk

Nadine Pearson, Resource Officer

Tel 024 76246081 or Email nadine.pearson@coventrypct.nhs.uk

We are based at: Public Health,
2nd Floor, Christchurch House,
Greyfriars Lane,
Coventry, CV1 2GQ.





thinktank
Birmingham science museum

Knowing where to take the kids out for the day is always a bit of a problem. Theme Parks are great fun but with a trip to Alton Towers costing around £100 for a family of four just to get in by the time you have added in lunch, ice creams and all the other stuff the kids want you would be lucky to get change out of £150. It's not something many of us can afford to do very often, if we can afford it at all.

However, do not despair because there are plenty of more realistically priced and equally exciting attractions around our area, some of which you may not have considered before. In the first of a new series of features, we have sent the Phiri family to one of these attractions to give us the low down on the Think Tank, Birmingham's very cool science museum.

How do you get there?

The Phiri family chose to drive there and found it very easy to find. Just take the M6 from Coventry to Birmingham, leave at J6 onto the A38M Aston Expressway and follow the Brown Signs from there. Alternatively the Think Tank is easy walking distance from Birmingham New Street Station, with plenty of trains running from Coventry.

So what's it all about then?

Think Tank is where science and history come alive in unique and amazing ways. Spread across ten galleries you are free to wander around and explore the massive display of interactive exhibits. Touching is not just allowed it's downright encouraged. The exhibits are designed to make science and technology real and understandable, and show how it means something to our daily lives. The idea is to teach us all about ourselves, our world and the way we live in it, but in a way that really is fun to do.

Mrs Phiri says, "We had a fantastic time from the start to the end of our day. There was so much it's hard to say what were the best bits but if we had to pick our favourite part it was probably the human body section. My kids loved the giant sized body parts, especially the giant ear that you can shout into to see how it all works. They could have played with that all day!"

There's so much there that it's impossible to tell you about all of here, you need to experience it yourselves. Basically, the exhibits are themed around past present and future, and as we said earlier how that relates to us and our lives. This is about as far from a boring and stuffy museum as it's possible to get.

Thanks to the Phiri Family for this review.



How long did you stay there?

"We were there for just over five hours, but if we had gone to the IMAX it would have been longer"

Would you recommend Think Tank to other people?

"Definitely and I would recommend Think Tank to people of all ages. My children really enjoyed it, but I had a lot of fun too. The best way to enjoy it is to really go for it and have a go on everything. You might be surprised at what you learn, I certainly was. I would give it 10 out of 10 and if you are looking for something that offers great value for money and a day out that is just a bit different then this is the place for you."



Apart from the main exhibits, the Think Tank is also home to two other fantastic attractions, the Planetarium and the IMAX cinema.

The Planetarium is a spectacular 360° domed cinema that shows a series of short films and shows about the universe and nature, planting the audience right in the middle of the action. Mrs Phiri describes it for us, "The Planetarium was breathtaking, and the combination of images and sound being all around you was amazing. You really felt that you were in the heart of the experience. I would recommend the experience to anyone."

If you really want to make a day of it, then you could take in a movie at the IMAX Cinema too. Though to be fair, calling the IMAX a cinema is like comparing a 42" TV to the screen on your mobile phone. The sheer size of the screen has to be seen to be believed. Showing a mixture of current movies and shorter features many of which are in 3D a trip to the IMAX is well worth the extra cost if you can stretch to it.

What about the other facilities?

As you would expect the Think Tank has excellent disabled facilities and all of the galleries are wheelchair accessible. The whole place is very child friendly and the café is roomy and offers reasonable value and choice.

win win win
Thanks to the nice people at Think Tank we can offer your family a chance to go for free!
See page 23 for your chance to win family tickets to Think Tank.

Admission Prices Prices for Thinktank and IMAX® Cinema are as follows:

Ticket	Thinktank	IMAX standard	IMAX DMR* (additional cost per person)	Planetarium Presenter led	Planetarium Automated	Thinktank Season
Adult	£9.25	£8.25	£9.25	£2.50	£2.00	£37.00
Child (3-15 yrs)	£7.25	£6.25	£7.25	£2.50	£2.00	£26.00
Concessions	£7.25	£6.25	£7.25	£2.50	£2.00	£32.00
Family of 4 (max 2 adults)	£28.00	£26.00	£30.00	£2.50pp	£2.00pp	£65.00 (family of 5)*

*IMAX DMR is a process by which a conventional 35mm cinema film is digitally re-mastered into IMAX's larger-than-life format (15/70mm size and resolution). The film format is 10 times larger than its original size and feature length, and therefore an additional cost is incurred.

Think Tank Facts

Thinktank is a fun and fascinating museum of science and discovery, with more than 200 hands-on exhibits over four floors and a state-of-the-art Planetarium.

This autumn, Thinktank, Birmingham science museum has a new programme of events and activities to help visitors find out the fascinating science of the weather in our world. The Extreme Climates season is running from September until December 2008.

- Thinktank is one of the largest and most visited museums in the West Midlands. In 2006/7 over 280,000 paying visitors came to Thinktank and/or IMAX, with 190,000 of those visiting the museum.
- In addition, in 2006 Thinktank received 17,001 visits from season-ticket holders and 13,000 under 3s (for whom there is no charge).
- Thinktank is the most popular school museum visit in Birmingham
- Over 70% of the schools in Birmingham have already participated in Thinktank's education programmes

WHAT'S IT LIKE...?

really

It's not easy maintaining over 17000 homes across the City. Every week HomeWorks, our repairs and maintenance section complete a staggering 1200 jobs with a sizeable chunk of those being emergencies. We are pleased to say that most of our customers are satisfied with the service but we are not perfect and we constantly try to improve what we do.

Now, they do say you should never judge a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins. At least that way you will be a mile away from him and he can't run after you because you have his shoes! But seriously to give you an idea of what it's like being 'on the job' and the things our workers have to deal with every day, we've turned the spotlight on Dean and Daz, two HomeWorks Tradesmen, who take us through a typical day for each of them. Enjoy...

A Plasterer's Tale

My name is Daz Arcus and I'm a plasterer for Whitefriars HomeWorks. 5.45am and off goes the alarm. Stick my head in the sink, walk the dog, a quick smoke, cup of tea and off to work.

Arrive at work 7.10am and collect job sheet for the day. Tea, porridge and toast are already waiting for me (I'm lucky to have some good friends at work). Then I'm on the van and out on the road to my first job which is

finishing a job off from yesterday, a damp treatment to a house. It involves a lot of scraping wallpaper, sterilising, sealing and painting. Then it's load the van back up with the dustsheets, paint and tools and do the paperwork while I listen to 'Pop Master' on Radio 2.

Next job is plastering at a high rise block and I arrive at the appointed time. I take the lift to the 12th floor and when I get there, guess what? Nobody's in! You wouldn't believe how many times a week that can happen. It's a serious waste of time and money. All I can do is put a 'sorry I missed you' card under the door and head back to the lift.

Then I'm off to a house to repair a ceiling caused by a leak. The family are in, so far so good, but as soon as I get to the room where the job needs doing we find a problem. The leak is still leaking!

Unfortunately this means that we need a plumber first and then the plaster has to have time to dry out before I can do my stuff. I explain this to the tenant and that we will have to arrange another appointment.

When you report a job it's important that you explain all of the problems and give as many details as you can, so we can send out the right people.

Next is another mould and damp treatment and would you believe it, another top floor flat? Typical. On the bright side the resident's in, the job is straight forward and I even get offered a cup of tea.

Once that's done it's time for my lunch break so it's back to the depot for a sarnie and a bit of banter. Only it doesn't work like that, because I get an emergency call to assist a Floor Tiler who is having problems with an angry tenant. So much for lunch! Once that is sorted out I finally get back to the depot, manage to grab a cup of tea to slurp on the way and back out for the afternoon shift.

First job is plastering above a window. Nice family with young children and a Staffordshire Bull Terrier. On inspection, it turns out that the window is loose so water comes through when it rains. I sheeted up the bedroom, and took off the loose plasterwork to make it safe for them. I filled in the paperwork for a follow on appointment for a Window Fitter to come and fix the loose fit. Then I cleaned up my mess and headed back to the van.

Daz



Next job is a sheltered housing block for the elderly. When I get there I ring the buzzer but the Warden is busy and it takes a while before they can get there to let me in. It's turning into one of those days. The good thing is that once I actually get in it turns out to be quite a simple job so I phone in to arrange another job to do afterwards. Job done and I manage to grab a quick smoke break when I get a call sending me to Jewsons to pick up supplies for tomorrow.

Half way there and the phone goes again. Change of plan, another emergency instead – go and make a ceiling safe after a flood from the bathroom above. By the time I'm done there and cleared up after myself it's me done for the day.

All in all it was pretty typical really. Some things are straightforward and went to plan and some things didn't but that's life for you. Anyway I need to head for home, the dog needs another walk.

A Glazier's Tale

My name is Dean Edwards, and I'm a glazier for Whitefriars HomeWorks.

A typical day for me begins at 7.30am when I head to the yard in Willenhall. I start by collecting my list of jobs and then empty my van from the previous day. After saying a quick "good morning" to the team, I head off on the first scheduled job.

My jobs can be pretty varied, from replacing most of the windows in a large communal block, to repairing a single pane of glass in someone's home. Each job must be initially assessed to determine, what work is required. Measurements are taken and I call the order through to our glass suppliers. On some occasions I can go and measure up some more jobs from my list before I have to go and collect the glass I have ordered.

Over the years I have forged a good relationship with the team at Glass Replacements, so sometimes I get to enjoy a cup of tea with them if I am waiting on an order. The glass is then carefully loaded onto my van and I return to the property to carry out the first repair work.

Depending on the particular job, large and extremely heavy panes of glass are needed and this requires working with another of my colleagues Barry.

Each job must be logged into my handheld computer,

detailing start and completion times. If a customer is not at home

when I call, a card is filled in and left, requesting that they make a new appointment. This has to be about the most frustrating part of the job. Having gone through all of the effort required to organise the job, measuring up and ordering, collecting and so on, to get there and find out that the person isn't in, when you turn up is a real pain. I know sometimes things happen and people can't be in as arranged but the amount of time it wastes is amazing. How many more jobs could we get done if people who knew they couldn't make an appointment rang us and let us know?

Dean



Anyway, I'll get off my soapbox now and finish my story...

After I have done all my allotted jobs for the day I return to the yard and fill in my paperwork log off my handheld computer and head home for the evening.

"I turn up at the appointed time, take the lift to the 12th floor and when I get there, guess what? Nobody's in!"

To finish off what do you want to say to all those potential customers out there?



Well I suppose we should say thank you to all those people who have been kind enough to put the kettle on when we arrive.

Joking aside, it makes such a difference when people report repairs properly and clearly. That way when we arrive, we find what we are expecting to find and more importantly we are able to get it sorted for you. And as we both said before, the worst thing we encounter, apart from angry dogs, is people not being in when we call. If you can't make an appointment just call us and tell us. We'd rather change the appointment than waste time by missing you.

**Repairs Line (24hrs)
0845 850 6090**

THESE CITY WALLS...

Nowadays Coventry is well known for its love it or hate it ring road that goes all around the City centre. 650 years ago things were a bit different and it was a great medieval stone wall that surrounded us. Local historian, John Russell, tells us the potted history of the wall that took nearly 200 years to build and just a few weeks to pull down again.

The Great Build

In 1329, King Edward III granted permission to the Prior and 'Goodmen' of Coventry to collect taxes, specifically to fund the building of a protective "Town Wall". Building began in 1355, with the first stone laid by Mayor Richard Stokes at New Gate, which would be known today as the 'London Road' gate.

The 2 1/8 miles of the City wall was finished in 1534. The stone walls were built eight feet thick, and twelve feet high, with twelve gates and twenty watch towers to guard the City.

The pictures show the original 12 gates into to the City.

The brown line shows City Walls in 1534 compared to the ringroad today.



And Down Again...

During the English Civil War, Coventry citizens shut all the gates when King Charles 1 approached and they refused to allow him to enter the city. Because of this his son King Charles II, ordered for the wall to be demolished in 1662. Work began on the 22nd July 1662 and took 500 men just 3 weeks to complete. Entertainment and lodgings for the workers was supplied by the people of Coventry!

The Years That Followed

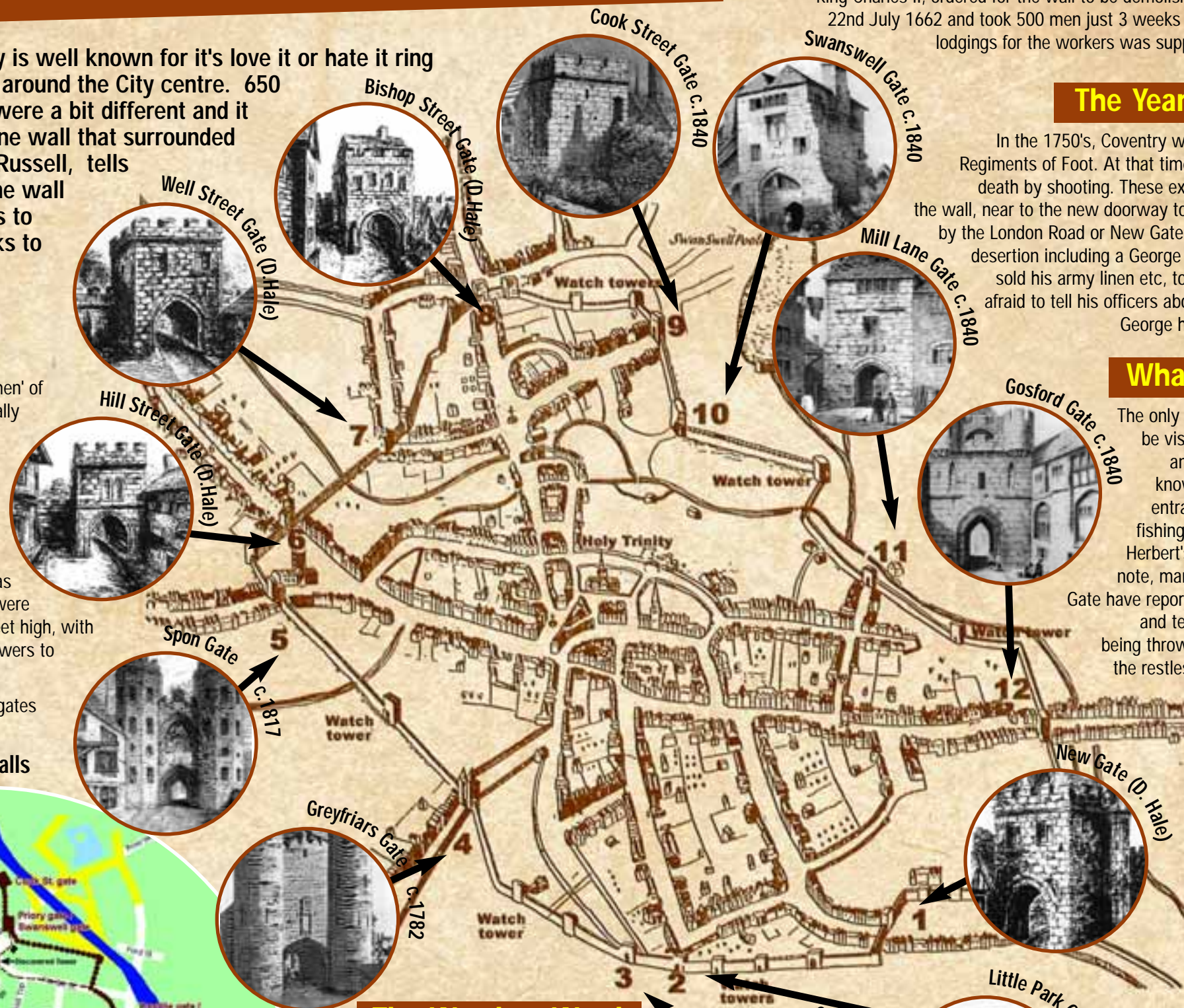
In the 1750's, Coventry was used as a barracks for many Regiments of Foot. At that time, the penalty for desertion was death by shooting. These executions took place at a spot in the wall, near to the new doorway to the reformatory of Whitefriars, by the London Road or New Gate. Six men were shot in 1757 for desertion including a George Robinson. It is recorded that he sold his army linen etc, to pay for 'lewd women' and was afraid to tell his officers about what he had done. Sadly for George he was shot on 30th June 1757.

What Remains Today

The only two remaining gates which can be visited today are Cook Street Gate and Swanswell Gate, (sometimes known as Priory gate; as it was the entrance to the prior's own land and fishing pool), by walking through Lady Herbert's Garden. On a final and spooky note, many past occupiers of Swanswell Gate have reported feelings of 'not being alone' and tell stories of objects inexplicably being thrown across the room. Perhaps it's the restless spirits of all the builders who saw their hundreds of year's hard work turned to rubble.



Cook Street Gate and Swanswell Gate c.2003



The Watch & Ward

The governing body of the City, the 'Court Leet' ruled that every citizen was required to stand their turn guarding the city walls from attack, and to take a turn 'doing the rounds' inside the walls to ensure the safety of other citizens. By 1422, 'eight good and decent men', were elected to be Constables. This was increased to 16 men on duty each night by 1431, and again increased to 40 by 1450. They worked in a rota to protect the city from dusk to dawn each night.

Thanks go to Rob Orland whose site on Historic Coventry is well worth a visit and whose photographs are shown on these pages.

Willenhall Local History Group



The Willenhall Local History Group Committee. L to R - Kath Barrie, John Russell, and Iris Weir.

For over five years, the group have been active in the Willenhall area, collecting and collating information and photographs of all kinds. These have been scanned, collated and placed on the group's web site, along with some 10,000 other pictures. These include a whole section of photographs taken at Chase School during the period 1980 to 1992, including the local carnivals and events.

Along with the work on local history, the group are the only people world wide trying to research the story of the World War 2 hostels and the many millions of people from every country in the world, who at some time passed through the hostel system. Many thousands where moved from their homes to other places and so into hostel accommodation to do war work. These included people such as the 'Bevin Boys' and the many, many others who one day were house wives and the next had become factory workers.

The experiences of these people are some of the few remaining untold stories of the war and we are seeking any information on Coventry, or other hostels and the people who lived there, during WW2 and the following years.

Please visit our web site www.virtualmuseum.co.uk or come along to a meeting at the Willenhall Library on the first Monday of each month.

A LITTLE RESPECT...



Aretha Franklin warbled it, Ali G rapped it and now it's the turn of Coventry youngsters to utter it - respect.

With knife crime, anti-social behaviour and troublesome gangs hitting the national headlines it can be easy to assume that every young person is a would-be mugger.

In truth, statistics show youngsters are more likely to be victims of crime than perpetrators and with more broken families, less community spirit and new technology, the problems they face are often more complicated than those faced by previous generations.

Step forward the Whitefriars' Team

Since April Karen McDowall, Terry Rollings and other members of the Whitefriars team, have headed into schools to give pupils lessons in staying safe and the positive role they can play in society.

By sponsoring a special Respect guide (supported by the Childrens Safety and Education Foundation), students are guided through the tough topics of drugs, anti-social behaviour and bullying, as well as gaining practical tips to keep them safe.

So far three schools across Coventry have signed up to the 'your life, your choice' scheme, including Ernesford Grange Community School, Caludon Castle School and Lyng Hall School. More students will benefit when the new term kicks off.

"All too often young people are portrayed as the cause of social problems, but with the right information they can play an active role, and in fact they're more likely to help than hinder," said Karen.

"As the largest affordable housing landlord in the city we want to ensure that the communities our residents live in are pleasant and safe so by introducing ourselves to the next generation we can show the impact of anti-social behaviour and make them think about the role they have in making Coventry a decent place to live for everyone.

"With a teenager myself I know that young people have a lot of important decisions to make about their lives which can be extremely difficult. The booklet we use in the lessons can help that process and also enable them to make decisions which will keep them safe and take the right options for the future."

"The anti-social behaviour workshops were a great success"

To support the scheme and spread the message further, pupils who have taken part designed posters, with an ipod up for grabs for the best design. According to one local headteacher, this incentivised approach is hitting the right note.

Carol Reid, headteacher at Caludon Castle School, said: "The anti-social behaviour workshops were a great success and many students enjoyed taking part in the discussions. Students at Caludon Castle School are now aware of the dangers and what to do if anti-social behaviour takes place in their community."

The success of the scheme has now gone beyond Coventry's boundaries, with Karen invited to the House of Lords and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations to share the project's benefits with others.

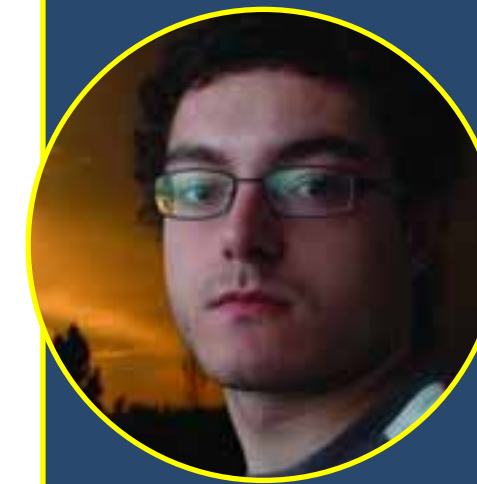
So what next for the teaching team?

"Well this is just one part of our wider work to tackle anti-social behaviour and boost community spirit," said Karen.

"As well as working with schools, we also have a specialist mediation team to help resolve neighbourhood disputes, and our estate walkabouts which sees Whitefriars' officers patrolling areas with residents to flag such things as fly-tipping, graffiti and anything affecting how residents feel about their neighbourhood. So there's no rest for now!"



Young People Did You Know?



- In 2006/7 30%, (513) of all our vacant homes went to people aged under 25.

- That of all the families we housed in the same year they had 1029 children amongst them.

- Over 10% of our homes are now lived in by tenants under 25, that's around 1,600 homes

- We had more cases of anti-social behaviour in high-rise blocks with over 40's lettings policy than in blocks with open age access

- We are looking at ways we can make our services more accessible to younger people like the introduction of text messaging.

- An increase of applications on Coventry Home Finder suggests that younger people appreciate accessing on line services

- We are doing more work to understand how we need to change the way we offer services to a new generation. This includes survey work and a project with Birmingham City University that had young tenants talking openly about what they expect from us as a landlord.

How does your garden grow? PROJECT '08

This year Whitefriars took an offshoot of its popular Gardening competition into 12 Coventry Primary Schools by launching its 'How Does Your Garden Grow Project'.

Each school that took part received a free 'Gardening Pack', sponsored by our landscape contractors Glendale, including books, tools, plants and bulbs, designed to fit in with the National Curriculum.

The project, aimed at Nursery, Reception and Year 1, was to encourage the citizens of tomorrow to better appreciate the environment and get interested in the garden and all things green.

All we asked was that the schools sent us, at the end of the summer term, a small project telling us about what the children have learned.

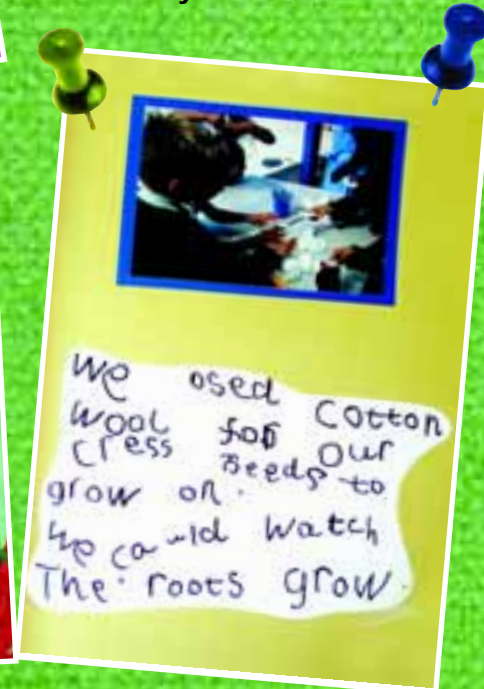
What it was definitely not about was creating the best floral display. What we wanted to know was how and what the kids have learned, and what they enjoyed about it.

All the schools who took part were then invited to a celebration and presentation afternoon at the Britannia Hotel where they were presented their awards by the Lord Mayor of Coventry. Look out for pictures in the next issue of View.

Next year Whitefriars hope to expand the project to even more schools in Coventry.



This is just some of the project work from the schools who took part. Thanks to Frederick Bird, Spon Gate Primary, Willenhall Community Primary, St. Patrick's, Moat House, Limbrick Wood, Stoke Heath Primary, Templars Primary, St. Augustine's, Courthouse Green, Alderman's Green Community and Broad Heath Community schools.



FUTURE UPDATE

In June and July we asked you what you thought about the proposal to join with the West Mercia Housing Group. You may remember that this was through a special leaflet sent with the last ever edition of HOME magazine.

Just under 100 of you gave your views either through telephoning us, returning the cut out slip or through residents groups or personal conversations with our staff.

Overall the majority of people had no objections to the proposal. Most customers who contacted us seemed to be reassured that as no change of landlord, rights or services was proposed, (that is all the day to day things stay the same), that there was no reason to object. Some mentioned the opportunities to build more new homes for rent in the city as their reason for supporting the proposal.

Of those customers who expressed concerns or objections some thought this was like the transfer from the Council, in 2000, when Whitefriars, then a completely new organisation, took over the ownership of the Council housing. We have given reassurance where this was the view expressed that it is not like that at all.

A few people objected because they felt this might distract us from trying to improve services where they felt they were not as good as they might be. In this case service delivery and responsibility for its improvement were possible, will continue to be Whitefriars' issue and we need to bring about improvements by working with customers locally on this.

The next stages involve reporting this and lots of other information to the Housing Corporation who will have the final say on whether this should go ahead. The City Council have already given their agreement. The Housing Corporation will want to make sure that this is in the overall best interests of Whitefriars and, its customers, and will consider the views and interests of tenants given through the consultation exercise.

"Overall the majority of people had no objections to the proposal."



SERVICES ON THE UP



Neil Papworth, an engineer, sent the world's first text message 15 years ago, and since then text tappers in the UK have taken up the cause and send around 70 each per month.

For Whitefriars customers we've used this popularity to help boost our repairs service. Over recent months we've been working with customers to find out how we can improve the service you receive - with information on the progress of your repair being a key area you wanted us to address.

To tackle that, we've launched a text service which means you can receive a text message confirming when your appointment is, and then a reminder the day before.

Each year we spend around £250,000 on missed appointments due to customers not being at home as arranged, meaning less money is on hand for improvements to homes and community projects.

The new system is designed to reduce missed appointments and bring more

convenience to customers with a choice of appointment slots. So if you want us to avoid the school run, or if you have another appointment, we can work around those busy times.

Karen Iceton, head of business and contracts at Whitefriars, said: "We really

want to improve our repairs service. Customers told us they wanted to be kept updated on the progress of their repair, and this system means we can improve the service for residents. With the savings made on missed repairs we can re-invest in homes and services."

As well as the text service, we're also making more calls to find out what you think of our service and to check if the repair has been completed to the standard you expect.

One in five customers who have had a repair are given a call within a week of the job being done to find out how they rate the service and any improvements needed.

The feedback has shown that last month 95 per cent of those who had a repair were satisfied or very satisfied with the service received.

"We are committed to improving our repairs service."

"What we really want to do is ensure that jobs are done when we say they will be done, and to the standard residents expect", said Karen. "We want residents to be at

home for their agreed appointments, report their repairs accurately and look after their homes, and in turn we will provide a reliable and professional repairs service."

Whitefriars customers wanting to be included in the text messaging repair service should provide their mobile number or landline number when they next report a repair.

Have You Got Yours?



Included with this issue of View you should find our 'Handy Guide' to reporting a repair to your home.

It tells you about the ways you can report a repair, what you should expect from the service and lots more too. Keep it safe, you never know when you might need it!



Gearing Up for Repairs

We've invested in a fleet of more than 100 new vans to ensure more repairs jobs are done on the first visit. By having a range of vehicles of different sizes and types, we can ensure the right stock goes to the right job.

Coventry-based firm Listers Van Centre, Longford, will be tasked with maintaining the vehicles to ensure they are out and about as much as possible.

HomeWorks a few facts

- We receive over 1200 jobs per week.
- About 500 of those will be 'Emergencies', 400 will be 'Urgent' and the other 300 or so will be 'Routine' jobs
- We also complete over 100 'Out of Hours' emergency jobs each week.
- We complete 98% of Emergency jobs on time
- We keep 97% of appointments that we make
- 93% of jobs are completed on our first visit
- 95% of our customers are satisfied with the completed job

EYE ON THE SKY

TELL US AND WIN

If you're a regular driver around the ring road, you may have noticed a slight change in the sky's skyline in recent years.

As well as the Belgrade Plaza, old fire station revamp, and Ikea springing up, Hillfields has also undergone a transformation.



Left: Before the work began

Above: The visit to Hillfields

The final stage of this physical project is nearly finished with three of the high-rise blocks, namely Pioneer House, Paul Stacey and Douglas House, having received a £5million refurbishment.

To show just how important this project is, including the extensive work and investment by Coventry City Council, The Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and Rt Hon Caroline Flint MP, Minister for Housing and Planning, paid the area a visit in September.



The Government ministers met Whitefriars' tenants, as well as representatives from Coventry City Council and Whitefriars who had worked on the project. They were particularly interested in the involvement of tenants in the improvement work.

Following discussions with residents, a number of blocks that were in poor condition were demolished with the three remaining benefiting from upgrading works including new kitchens, bathrooms and heating and a totally new look for the exterior and communal areas.

Feature lighting is also being installed to the roof and canopy of the blocks to improve security and give the area a lift at night.

"It makes a real difference to feel you are not living in a run down part of town anymore"

Keith Round, head of planning and procurement of Whitefriars Housing Group, said: "The blocks are a visible landmark, particularly from the ring road, and we and residents felt it was important to ensure the external refurbishment fits in with the clean futuristic look of the adjacent city college.

"The works are the final stage of our refurbishment of the Hillfields estate and have been really well received by residents. We believe, when complete, they will present an exciting new addition to Coventry's skyline and one that will bring good quality homes to our customers"

But more importantly the final word should go to a group of residents who made this passing comment as they surveyed the refurbished blocks.

"I'll tell you what, it looks great - a fantastic job. It makes a real difference to feel you are not living in a run down part of town anymore".

We think that about sums it up nicely!

"I am feeling so good to see the regeneration finally reach the flats estate of Hillfields. As a tenant of the high rise flats it is well worth the wait. Along the way there was a lot of heartache and disappointment but for those of us who remain on the estate I hope they are happy with what they have seen so far.

I hope residents and non-residents living in the area will appreciate the external refurbishment. Thanks to Whitefriars for keeping their promises of new bathrooms, kitchens and central heating. With a new City College and new car park surrounding the flats Hillfields will be the top spot again".

Dorothy Senior, Resident.

New competition with your chance to win some fantastic prizes...



Nintendo Wii



Family Pass to Birmingham Think Tank



Dyson DC19 Origin Plus Vacuum Cleaner

We'd like to hear what you think of our new style View Magazine. There are no right or wrong answers, so please be honest.

There are 3 easy ways to enter, just choose which prize you want to win and then choose a way to enter...

by text

Text either the word

WII or DYSON or THINK, followed by your comments and your name and a contact number to 07781 489 833 (Texts are charged at your normal network rates)

by email

Email your choice of prize, followed by your comments and your name and contact details to: view@whitefriarshousing.co.uk

by post

Write to us telling us your choice of prize, followed by your comments and name and contact details to:

FREEPOST WHITEFRIARS COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
(Nothing else needs writing on the envelope. No stamp needed)

We have one Nintendo Wii, one Dyson and two Family Passes to Think Tank up for grabs. One winner for each prize will be chosen at random from all of the entries. All methods of entry have an equal chance of winning.

All entries must be received by 1st December 2008.

also in the News...

Hillfields by the Sea



• Ravinder Kaur and the Mayor Of Weston Super Mare

Hillfields by the Sea is an initiative that is organised by the WATCH group (Working Actively Together to Change Hillfields).

WATCH proactively seeks sponsors from businesses and organisations working in the area to fund coaches for the less privileged to have a day trip out to the sea.

This year, 18 coaches were sponsored by various organisations and the community of Hillfields were able to, for a small charge, to enjoy a day trip out to Weston Super Mare.

Whitefriars sponsored a coach and Ravinder Kaur, was our steward for the day, looking after the welfare of all 52 occupants.

More than 850 residents of Hillfields enjoyed the day in August. On arrival, the Mayor of Weston Super Mare met them and the event featured on Central News showing that Weston is still a place to go, even

though their pier had sadly been severely damaged the previous week by fire.

Ravinder tells us all about the day...

"It was a good day, all the residents really enjoyed themselves. However, it did feel like a long day as we started at 7am and didn't get home until after 9.30pm that night. On top of that we nearly lost two lovely ladies on the way back, because they were waiting in the wrong car park and took me 45 minutes to locate them and escort them back to the right place.

We were greeted by the Lord Mayor and the Bristol Post paper and I was quite warmly embraced by the Lord Mayor.



• Weston's fire damaged pier

He was so pleased that so many had arrived from Coventry to grace his shores, especially since the pier had recently burnt down.

The residents all had a great day by the sea and my only regret was that as it was a special religious day for me so I was fasting. Not the best day to be doing that. It was sheer torture as people were eating all sorts of nice goodies on the coach and the seaside air was full of the smell of doughnuts, candyfloss and fish & chips. At one point, it got so bad, that I had to run and hide in a library for a bit, just to get away from constantly dreaming about food.

Overall it was a lovely day and everyone is looking forward to next year."

+++ PUBLIC INFORMATION NOTICE +++

New Face on Board



The last elections to find tenant board members from the north of the city gave us a new face in Christine Reid.

Christine who is from Coundon was returned with existing tenant Board members Bill Newey from Bell Green and Margaret Gale from Aldermans Green.

Christine replaces Janice Ashley who has been a board member for a number of years. Her experience is to be retained as a general committee member.

Christine is very enthusiastic about her new role and is looking forward to taking on the responsibility of a Board member. She attended her first meeting on the 4th September

ARE YOU A TEENAGE PARENT?



Would you like to gain new skills by attending a Training Course?

Your training can be anything from, a few days, a few weeks, Full-time or Part-time.

If so, Care to Learn can pay for your Childcare costs whilst you attend your training. Care to Learn is a Government Funding Scheme that will pay up to £160 per week, per child for registered childcare.

Care to Learn Funding will not affect your own or your families' benefits in any way, and you don't have to be on benefits to claim it.

Your local Care to Learn Co-ordinator, Julie Brown, will be able to support you to find suitable registered childcare vacancies and will accompany you to visit local provision to find a Childcare Provider who can meet your individual needs.



For further information you can contact Julie on 024 7678 5901 or e-mail: julie.brown@coventry.gov.uk

COMING TO COVENTRY

Coventry is a wonderfully diverse city. To celebrate our diversity we are running a series of articles about some of the people who live and work here.

Kicking us off is Jowdat Salman from Henley Green. Jowdat originally came from Iraq and has lived and worked in the city for the last nine years. We'll let him tell you all about himself.

Meet Jowdat

When I was a child in Iraq, the weather was very hot. I would usually be out till 12pm, but between 12 and 4 no one's out due to the heat. In my spare time, I would usually read a lot of knowledgeable books and spend quality time with the family. I always enjoyed building cars out of all sorts of materials and I would usually help the older people with their things.

I decided to come to England to continue my studies, and develop myself and learn more. When I was younger, the only time I saw a foreign country was either on the radio or the television and coming to England gave me the opportunity to have that experience myself.

When I first arrived, I felt very sad because I had to depart from my big and close family. When I came, I didn't know anyone. Also, seeing people from different ethnic minorities was something new to me. I had studied architecture in Turkey, so this is my second foreign country.

By then there was no way that it was possible to travel back to Iraq because of the war. So there was a new opportunity to change my life, for the better.

Since I came to England I have completed my masters degree in structural engineering, and also attended many of the related courses which will help me gain more knowledge in that field.

Since doing that I have created as webpage (just to name one of a few things) which I enjoyed making. I am also a member of the American Society of Civil Engineering. I'm currently trying to complete my part time PHD as a research student in disaster management between England and Turkey.

Now I'm based here, I've set up a business, been to university and I've made many friends here. Before coming to Coventry I travelled to other cities but when I came here it felt like home.



Jowdat receiving his Masters Degree

The best thing about living in Coventry is that there are a lot of differences in cultures, so blending in is no problem. I also found new friends, people who I learnt from, and who learnt from me. Food and restaurants are also not hard to find.

The worst thing about living in Coventry is that young people usually have a stereotype that a lot of the new foreigners are stupid and don't know anything. Sometimes they see us a threat. In

"there was no way that it was possible to travel back to Iraq because of the war."

fact, we value knowledge. My family for example has five scientists, four doctors, one surgeon and four engineers.

If I could change one thing about Coventry I would like a fully equipped community centre for all of the community to come together and engage together with the support of languages (Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish etc).

Will I always stay in Coventry? Inshallah (God willing), this is my hope



Jowdat and family in Iraq before the war.

What's life in Iraq really like?

Straddling the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and stretching from the Gulf to the Anti-Taurus Mountains, modern Iraq occupies roughly what was once ancient Mesopotamia, one of the cradles of human civilisation.



But the war with Iran from 1980 to 1988 and the Gulf War in 1991 following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, together with the subsequent imposition of international sanctions, had a devastating effect on its economy and society. In 1991 the UN said Iraq had been reduced to a pre-industrial state; later reports described living standards as being at subsistence level.

Iraq is now the battleground of several forces competing for control. The deadly power struggle was triggered when foreign forces, led by the United States, invaded to topple the government of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

A new government is now in place, supported by thousands of allied troops. But it faces a host of crises, the chief among them security and civil order.

Source: BBC Online

Whitefriars and New Communities

- We have a dedicated team to ensure that we are treating all communities, according to their needs.
- We train staff to ensure that they can address the individual needs of our customers.
- We work with local community groups such as the refugee centre and the African welfare association.
- We have strategies and policies in place to ensure we are working within the government guidelines.
- We encourage and support new comers to obtain employment with us through different projects.

Myth Busting - The Real Facts about Asylum Seekers in the UK

Who are they?

Men, women and children escaping from crises all over the world. In Coventry the biggest number are Kurdish people, mainly from Iraq. There are also people from Iran, Afghanistan and the Balkans as well as many African countries.

Are refugees the same as asylum seekers?

All people fleeing their country of birth are refugees. Refugees are described as asylum seekers while they are awaiting official recognition as defined by the United Nations.

Why do they come here?

They are escaping persecution, death or devastation in their home country. In 1951 Britain and many other countries signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees. This gives us responsibilities to offer sanctuary to people fleeing persecution.

How many stay here?

In the year 2001 a total of 71,700 people applied for asylum in the UK. This is equivalent to 0.14% of the UK population. During the same year 30,470 people were granted permission to stay here.

It is estimated that there are about 5000 asylum seekers and refugees in Coventry - about 1.7% of the population of the city.

(Myth Busting facts taken from www.hillfields.org.uk/Facts/Asylum_Seekers_Myths.htm)