

DAKINI

DAKINI 4 - A News-sheet for Women Order Members, Mitras and Friends. June 1977

Editorial

This issue has been somewhat delayed, partly because of lack of time on my part, and partly because I rather wanted to produce this issue from Wanstead. However, as I write this we are all packed and ready to go, our seven day eviction order from Balmore Street, which is effective on Monday 28th, is pinned onto the kitchen wall, and we are just waiting for the go-ahead from the Department of Environment. Hopefully that will come before next Monday! I hope I will be able to add a stop press to Dakini saying we have actually arrived in Wanstead.

Once settled, and once we have cleared an office space, have acquired a typewriter and a duplicator, I hope Dakini will come out at regular two monthly intervals with a fixed copy date, which will be firmly imprinted on everyone's mind, and that the articles etc come flowing in.

I have had the idea that to prevent Dakini becoming a London orientated sheet, that perhaps the responsibility for producing an issue can circulate around those centres where there are a number of Order members and mitras.

Finally on the subject of MONEY over half the people who receive Dakini have not paid a subscription. There is no money left in the kitty to produce and post this issue. Can eve yone who wants to continue receiving Dakini please send me a £1 sub which will cover the first 6 issues. No sub no Dakini O.K.?!'

News

While we are waiting to move into Wanstead, three other womens communities have started. Last weekend Malini, Annie Leigh, Teresa Fisher and Srimala moved into Street Farm, Aslacton, Norwich, and are busy settling in and starting work to convert it into a womens retreat centre; Marichi, Dawn Mastin and Janet Martin have moved into a house in Bethnal Green and are calling the community Bulah, which I understand is a high Blakeian Realm containing only women; and in Brighton Dawn Inkster, Marguerita and Diane have moved into 62 Exeter Street.

ORDINATION RETREAT OF CHRISTINE SEYMOUR

Anoma

I'm writing this on the Monday following the above retreat and my image of the weekend is of lots of energy, flowers, people (arriving at various stages of the retreat), and most importantly, lots of Bhante. For those who haven't been there, Broomhouse Farm is situated in the middle of a pine forest near Thetford. It's very quiet (except for occasional planes from the nearby airfields) and there are lots of birds.

The retreat, led by Dhammadinna, started on Friday evening with 15 of us; 9 from Archway, 4 from Norfolk and 2 from Brighton. This includes 6 Order Members, 8 Mitras and one almost-Mitra. The new converted barn shrine room is excellent and we concluded the evening with a puja, all of us sitting before a red and blue shrine with Manjushri sitting aloft.

On the beautifully sunny Saturday morning, the water ran out and several of us were out early, scratching our heads over how to get the pump working. We were cranking away but it wouldn't start. We decided to go and meditate and try again afterwards. Not being a mechanical genius, I didn't reckon my chances on discovering how to get the pump working, so during the Metta Bhavana, I directed all the metta I could towards the non-functioning pump! Afterwards we tried again and this time Janet Martin pushed a little lever while Malini was cranking, and it roared into action, accompanied by a loud cheer. Soon after this, Helen Johnston, from Cornwall, who had been due on the retreat but who hadn't yet arrived, pulled up in the van which Christine (now Sanghadevi) had brought in Cornwall for the new Wanstead Community. It had gone wrong while she was there and so she had returned to London without it, leaving it to be mended. It hadn't looked as though it would be ready for the weekend, but Helen had pulled out all the stops, got it fixed, and then driven it all the way from Cornwall to Broomhouse Farm in Suffolk! She was absolutely exhausted and promptly fell asleep in front of the living room fire. A little while later, Srimala collected Moreen Scott from Brandon station. Moreen was just back from the Channel Islands.

Jan drove over to pick up Bhante from Padmaloka and brought him back about 4.30 to have tea with us. He was introduced to those women he didn't know, and a very enjoyable discussion followed. On both the Saturday and Sunday we talked a bit about communities. All members of the Wanstead community were there (Dhammadinna, myself, Christine (Sanghadevi), Helen, Kay, Moreen, Maggie, Annie, Hilary, Anne and Joan) and 3 of the 4 members of the new country retreat centre/community (Malini, Srimala and Teresa - the 4th member, Annie Leigh being away on solitary retreat). During the discussion Bhante said there were two kinds of people. Late people and early people. Late people liked to get up at 9-9.30 and go to bed at midnight or 1 O'clock and early people went to bed at 10 and got up at 6 or 7. When you get these two types of people in a community, life can be rather difficult. Bhante felt it might be best to let everyone meditate in their own rooms in the morning and then sit together at a convenient time in the evening.

After supper we had an Order Meeting and then went across to the shrine room for the Metta Bhavana, during which Christine received her private ordination from Bhante, in a small shrine room which had been prepared in the house. When both she and Bhante had returned to the large shrine room we had a puja, with everyone making offerings.

Early next day, Hilary, Anne, Joan and Lisa (a Finnish Friend) arrived in Friends Foods van from Archway. They had been cooking the previous day for a banquet in aid of the new Pundarika, but as they wanted to be at Christine's ordination they had left London at 6 a.m. to be in good time. They also brought a nice supply of food left over from the banquet which we had for lunch. Bhante arrived mid morning and first of all performed a Kalyana Mitra ceremony for Helen and her two Kalyana Mitras, Malini and Dhammadinna. Then we went across to the shrine room for the Public Ordination. First of all there was a short mitra ceremony for Kay and Moreen and then we went into the Seven-fold Puja followed by the Public Ordination. We had intended to tape Bhante giving

Christine her new name, but unfortunately there is no electricity at Broomhouse and our batteries failed us, so I made notes instead. I will ask Bhante to check these before publication.

Before giving Christine her new name, Bhante talked about how you're given a name when you're born and given a name when you're reborn. This is because you are now a completely new person. He said that to put all your past behind you is very, very important. Only too often we take it around with us. As an example of this, he told how some years a lady visited him who said she was depressed as her husband had left her. Bhante asked when he had left her and she answered, "15 years ago!" So Bhante emphasised strongly the need to leave the past behind. So you had a horrible childhood - that's the past - leave it behind! And don't let other people treat you as the same old person, when you're now completely different. In the case of the now ex-Christine, she is now dead and reborn as Sanghadevi. This is made up of two words, Sangha and Devi. Firstly, Sangha, or spiritual community. Bhante stressed how important the spiritual community is and mentioned that of course some of us would soon be going to Spiritual Communities in Wanstead and Norfolk. Devi means lady, goddess, divine being, literally "a shining one". Bhante remarked that this was appropriate for Christine as a real individual is a god or a goddess, deva or devi. He went on to say that this gives her something to live up to and he was sure she can and that she will be a real Sanghadevi of the new Wanstead spiritual community. He said he was personally very happy that within the Western Buddhist Order there had appeared this new phenomenon, this Sanghadevi, and he really did hope that she would make her mark on and within the Order and within the Movement.

After Bhante had chanted the blessings, we all shouted three very loud Sadhus and then left the shrineroom, leaving the new Sanghadevi alone for a while.

Bhante stayed till about 4 and then we had a final meditation and puja. After saying our goodbyes, Helen and Malini roared off to Norwich on Helen's motorbike (she'd brought it up from Cornwall in the van and was going to stay with Malini for a week) and the rest of us returned to our bases in various vans and cars.

The retreat was, as you might imagine from the above, somewhat scattered, but there was a lovely atmosphere and it was really good to see so much of Bhante, who looked very well after his stay on Arran. Of course, as one of Sanghadevi's Kalyana Mitras (Dhammadinna being the other), I was very happy to see her ordained. Now there will be three Order Members at Wanstead and I feel this will be a strong nucleus for the community.

So sadhu Sanghadevi, thank you Bhante, and here's to the next one!

LEAVING HOME- THE START OF THE GREAT ADVENTURE

Helen Johnston

Something in the air. The smell of change is born on the breeze, gulls wheel in the blue sky overhead, each white speck the personification of restlessness, each melancholy cry the expression of longing to be away in search of the mountains and oceans of far lands. The sea; restless and constantly changing, ever adapting to time and tide, mysteriously and endlessly encompassing, mastered by none.

Such are the musings of one for whom the turning point is reached. A crossroads of life where behind is childhood, the green valleys of family and home supportive and comforting: soft flowing streams, moss carpeted vales. To either side lie the plains of adult life, seductively appealing in their regularity. Row upon row of neat fields and hedgerows, little coloured houses with front gardens where flowers grow. Smooth, paved streets where people walk endlessly to and fro, to and fro.

But there is another way at the crossroads, a stony path overlooked by most travellers. A long and winding road which crosses deep chasms on tottering bridges, follows steep mountain paths and runs beside unknown oceans.

Once a traveller has paused on the road of life and glimpsed this path he will never forget that view, and if he follows the other roads it will come back to him sometimes, as he sits by his fireside gazing at the flames, or at night in a dream, and he will feel a longing he can't quite grasp. Like a hunger that has long been denied or the ache of an old wound.

Leaving home is a spontaneous action born from emotional conflict. It is a great leap into the unknown, a rejection of old values and an expression of overwhelming optimism for the future. Above all it is the first step of the greatest adventure of one's whole life, perhaps the greatest adventure that mankind will ever undertake, the quest for self-knowledge. When I say that it is born from emotional conflict, I mean that 'leaving home' in the Buddhist sense is never a thing that can be decided upon or planned in a rational or intellectual manner. Of course you may decide you would like to leave, you may even start packing all your belongings, but unless a certain state of mind is also involved these things are no more than empty actions. In fact, one could theoretically 'leave home' without actually changing one's physical environment but for most of us this would be extremely hard to accomplish.

So what are the events which lead up to this supreme act or irrationality? I can distinguish four main stages or areas (for they may overlap or run concurrently).

Firstly is the experience of restlessness, of dissatisfaction - with life as it is, with surroundings, with old friends and with self. Eventually this may get so violent as to be a state of positive mental torment.

Secondly, there is the realisation that you must do something about relieving this torment and at this stage one begins to look long and hard at oneself, in fact to prepare for the great adventure, even if we don't realise it in these terms at the time. Because this is an adventure we embark on alone, we are our own travelling companions. We step out naked and vulnerable, throwing off the supports of the old life, the emotional entanglements, the material involvements. We stand up courageously and say 'Here I am, just as you see me. I have nothing to lose and everything to hope for, and I consider myself worthy to strive towards those things'.

This aspect of self-acceptance is tremendously important; to see things we like about ourselves and the things we dislike. To acknowledge both and say 'O.K. let's get going and do something about the bad things, not just sit here and feel guilty about them'.

Thirdly, and perhaps hardest to overcome is our emotional response to the thought of leaving behind the old life. For although we now feel repulsed by it, paradoxically this is the time when all the good and the beautiful things will spring to mind. We will see them all perfectly, devoid of the negative attributes which they may have had and we will feel regret for what was and what might have been

This is how Gautama must have felt as he stood beside his sleeping wife and child, listening to their quiet breathing in the fragrance of the Indian night.

Fourthly is the catalyst. A catalyst is scientifically defined as a substance which speeds up or triggers off a reaction between other substances, the catalyst itself being unchanged during that reaction. So in our situation it is that occurrence, event or factor which just pushes us over the edge, from contemplation into action. The catalyst is usually nothing whatever to do with the reality of the situation, but of course at the time we are sure it has!

Finally there is the action itself. You just walk away. Away from the old life and towards the new, and at that point you truly become a new person. A person with direction, a creator in your own right. Living itself assumes a heroic invincibility, the momentum of which carries you some way along the path so that when you at last turn to look behind you you have already gone too far to turn back, and the lights of the little houses twinkle far behind, seductive no longer.

LEARNING WIRING

Kay Roberts

There's a certain way of being that you get into doing different types of work - unconsciously you seem to put on a particular coloured cloak suitable to a particular kind of job and work surroundings, and show a particular aspect of yourself to the kind of people you are working with.

It feels SO GOOD to step out of the role of typist, into that of a work-woman! Hilary and I have been going over to Golgonooza (the new centre in Roman Road near Sukhavati) a few days a week basically to try and learn something about wiring. Both of us have really enjoyed it.

For me, in a way, I felt quite apprehensive about it before we went, for although the 'idea' of learning something about wiring had appealed to me, the reality of it scared me a little - perhaps I just felt a bit scared of stepping out of my work role as a typist and all that entails, into something I knew nothing about. In a way, even the thought of getting dirty rather put me off!

On the first day Manjuvajra (in charge of the wiring at Golgonooza) showed us how to wire up a ring-main - that is taking the wiring up from the fuse box in the basement to the sockets on the ground floor, and gave us little jobs to do - screwing sockets onto the wall, laying cables, etc. Since then we have learnt how to wire up the lights and switches.

It feels good to be doing these things. Both Hilary and I find that ^{it} is very easy to get involved and concentrated in what we are doing - though of course at times it is exasperating (for instance, we seemed to have amazing difficulty screwing the sockets onto the walls, which is something that seems such a straightforward thing to do). It is good to be using one's whole body while one works, as well as one's initiative. It feels rather like when I was a child and I got into making things - dolls houses, or boats and castles in the sand, or something and I would feel totally engrossed in what I was doing. Also it is in fact GREAT to get dirty and not to care about one's body and what it is doing, but to just do, to let it just do what it has to do in the way that it has to do it. One day Hilary kept finding that she was lying on her stomach in the muddle, because that was the best position to be in to do whatever it was she was doing. It might seem unnecessary to mention this, but for me, anyway, I really notice how good it is to be able to do this - probably because being a girl one is quite conditioned to act in a certain way, but you don't really realize it until you're in a situation that calls for you to act in a different way.

Besides just learning about wiring, we've also picked up a lot of other useful things - even just how to learn to use different tools - how to chisel out grooves in the rafters, drill holes etc. We still ~~feel~~ a bit awkward about doing things, and often don't do them particularly well or efficiently, but I guess that is just a question of time and practice. I am sure that by the time we have finished decorating Wanstead we shall all be quite proficient at everything!

Another positive thing I've noticed while we've been at Golgonooza is that this kind of work does seem to encourage one's energy to flow quite freely. In fact

on several days I've arrived there in quite a bad mood, but after a few hours work that mood has completely passed away and always at the end of the day, although of course feeling physically tired I feel good and very unblocked and my mind very clear and alive - so different to the feeling at the end of a day in an office, where my mind usually feels strange and blurred, as if a lot of energy has been held in and sat upon during the day.

I feel that all this is being a very positive experience for me and I'm LONGING to move to Wanstead to get into working on our house there - I think its going to be a really beneficial and enjoyable experience for all of us.

F.W.B.O Wanstead

Although at the time of writing this we have still not moved into Wanstead, a lot has happened since the last Dakini in terms of development of the community. Since we decided who wanted to live there and who was prepared to go out to work to get the money needed the 11 of us involved have met together about once a fortnight to discuss all sorts of different aspects of the move. At first we had been offered two houses, but the latest position is that we have been offered one large house, and we are just waiting for the owners to complete the sale to the DOE so that we can move in. I am enclosing in Dakini plans of the house drawn by Sanghadevi and a building report compiled by Dipankara to give you some idea of the potential of the house and also of the amount of work there is to be done. Initially we decided that if everyone gave £50 this would be enough to redecorate the two houses. However, this one house has had a fire in it and is in much worse condition. We reckon we need about £1000 and probably more. For the last few months most people have been out working full time at various office jobs and giving all their money to the project. Joan has been teaching and Anne working at the Buttery. We think that probably at the moment there is about £900 in our bank account, (an accurate financial report has not been done recently), we have several pounds worth of tools, and a van which has been taxed and insured and also has had several pounds worth of repairs done on it. The period of waiting has in fact been very useful to us as it has meant we have been able to save more money, and also several people have been out working to learn the sort of skills we are going to need when we get there, such as wiring, plumbing and painting and decorating. Several people are attending a carpentry class held by Atula. The other major aspect of the waiting period has been that we have spent time together, so that when we move we will move as a fairly cohesive community. For quite a time Anoma myself and Sanghadevi lived at no 1, then Kay moved in, shortly followed by Moreen and Helen. So over half the community have been living in one house. We have had a lot of good times together which I'm sure will carry over to Wanstead. Recently we arranged a weekend retreat at Broomhouse for all the Wanstead community which was a great success. We followed the normal sort of retreat programme, and did some study on the Mangala Sutta. In the short time we were there quite an intensive atmosphere built up though in a relaxed manner, which seemed mainly to do with the fact that everyone there was committed to the same project. Everyone is now very eager to move and get on with the work and building the community. We have decided to have a common purse, and everyone put their money in and take pocket money out and we will be following a daily programme of meditation yoga and puja around all the work. We also hope to hold working retreats as soon as possible.

The money we have saved is only really going to cover basic building materials. Any contributions to the fund will be appreciated. If you like you could donate to something specific like towards decorating and furnishing guest rooms (you might want to stay in one at some point) or towards the shrine room, the common room, study room or kitchen, or towards a hut in the garden we are thinking of converting into a special guest room for Bhante. We will need a typewriter and duplicator to produce Dakini on, we need a rupa, etc etc. Please send us whatever you can cheques payable to F.W.B.O. (Wanstead) sent C/O Dhammadinna, 1a Balmore Street N.19 for the moment. Wanstead will be the biggest community in the movement after Sukhavati and is bound to have an important effect on the growth of the movement. Please help that along.

30 Cambridge Park, Wanstead,
Site inspection 2nd May 1977

courtesy of Dipankara

Basement
Ground
First
Attic

General

Extensive fire damage to basement: Take out all partitions, ceiling panels and fittings. New plasterboard ceiling, clad walls with plasterboard on stud battens.

Rewire basement and ground floors.

Fire damage to rooms at back of ground floor. Renew doors and frames where badly charred.

Plumbing: all fittings have been disconnected and lead and brass removed.

Refix and replumb fittings as required, reconnect storage tank in attic.

Install new bath heater (gas)

Reglazing: about 150 sq ft

Dampness in walls: refix or replace guttering above both bay windows and connect effectively into downpipes. Repoint brickwork where damaged. This should remove the cause of damp stains on the walls of ground floor front rooms and also the mould in the cabinet in basement. Allow these areas to air and dry out before making good.

There is sign of roof leak in one attic room and possibly the flashing behind the dormer needs replacing.

Apart from the fire damage, the pilfered plumbing, and the dampness in the walls the house seems in reasonable condition. The walls and ceiling elsewhere are in good condition under the paper and should need just washing down and painting.

There then followed an estimate for basic materials which comes to £670. When we move we will be removing as many fittings as possible from the houses here. First of all we will have to clear out the house over there as it is full of junk, then fix up one toilet and get some water turned on. We will be cooking over calor gas as the fire was in the kitchen and it is pretty burnt out. From there we will move in, camping out in the good rooms, storing most of our stuff and getting to work on the house. We will fix up one of the big rooms as a shrine room and one other room as a common and eating room. The first two weeks there will be a working retreat for the community, then we will have to see how the money is going and whether some of us will have to take outside work.

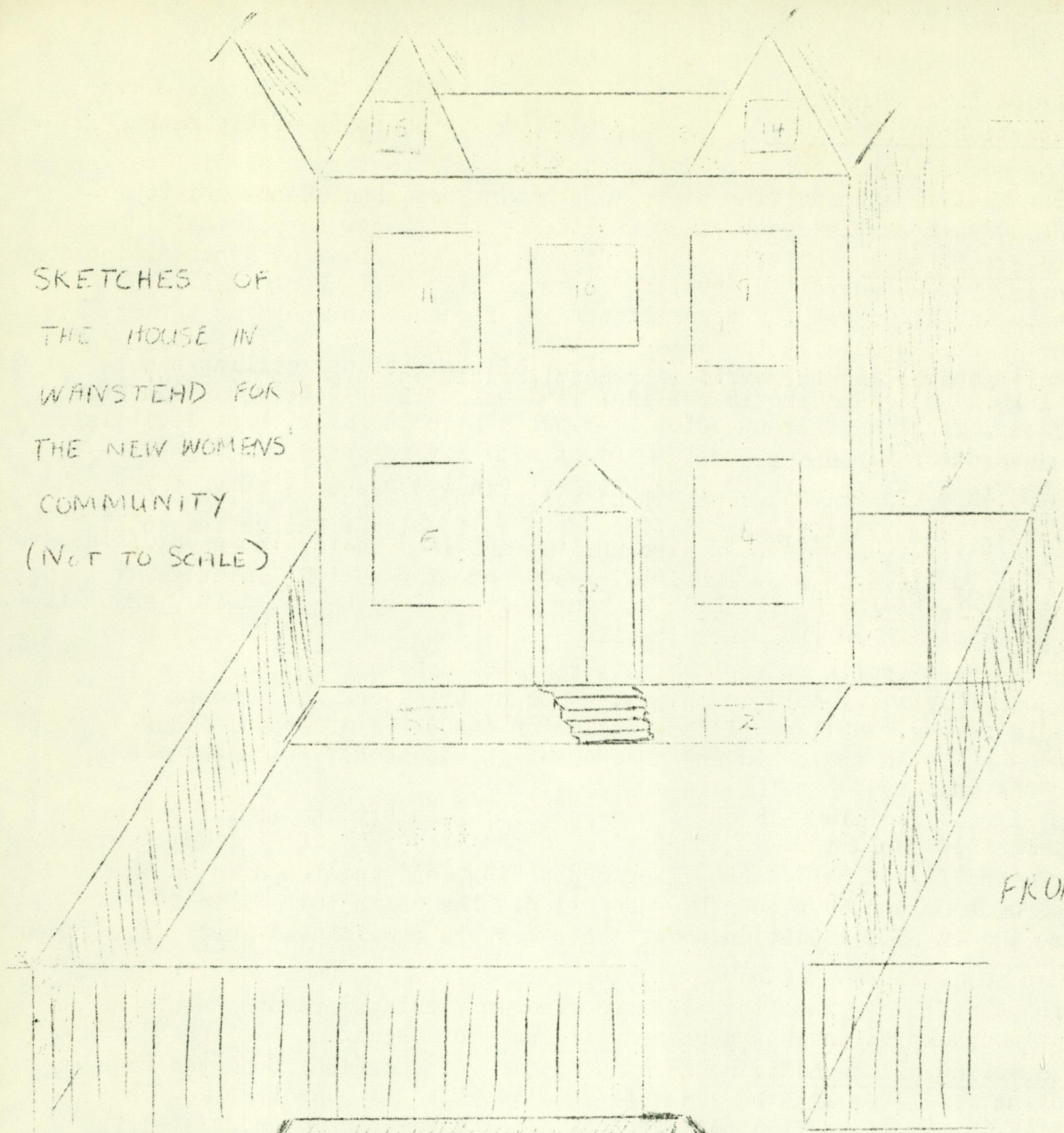
We agreed at our community meetings that Helen Johnston is works manager, Hilary Swain, housekeeper and cook and Sanghadevi treasurer and responsible for the van.

We hoped that we would move in the summer so that the lack of windows in certain rooms wouldn't matter that much and so that we could spend some time getting away from the rubble in the garden. Unfortunately this summer seems to have come and gone but no doubt we won't be too uncomfortable.

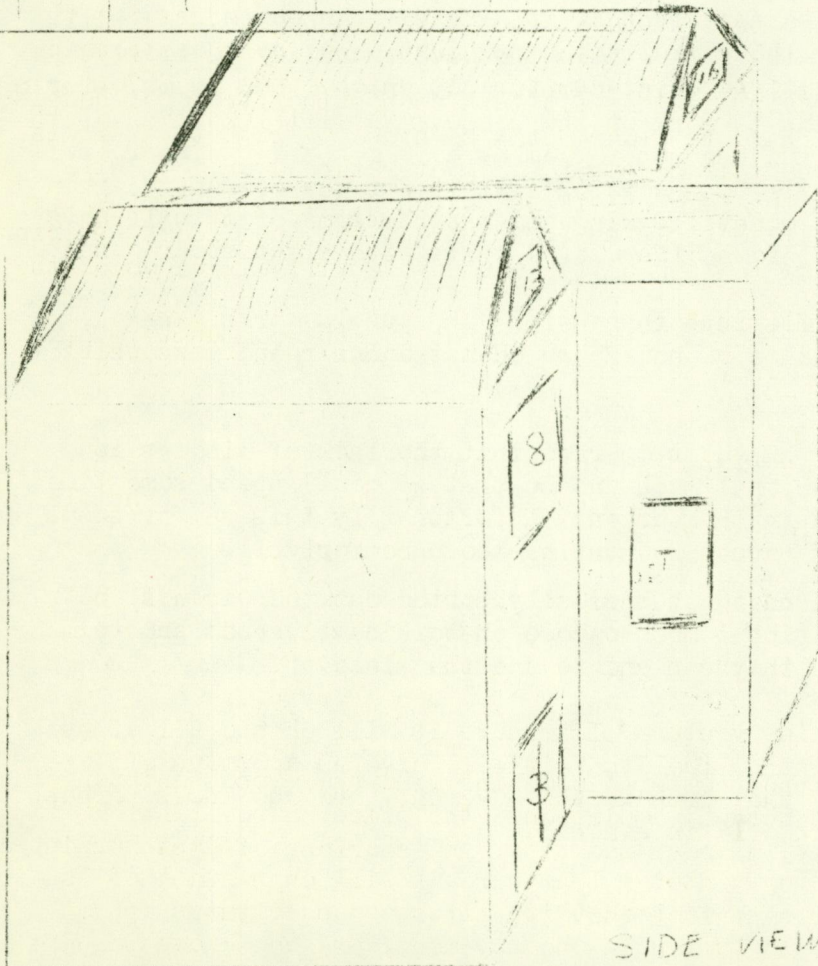
As soon as we are there and have got basically sorted out then we will be contacting centres and inviting women to come on working weekends and to come over and help out when they can and to see the place.

This is really a very exciting venture, I am sure it will change all of us immediately involved, but I also feel that it will have an enormous effect on the movement, especially the women in the movement, and who knows perhaps on women in general and the world in general.

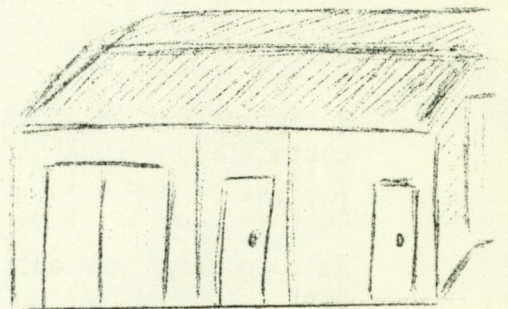
SKETCHES OF
THE HOUSE IN
WAINSTEAD FOR
THE NEW WOMENS
COMMUNITY
(NOT TO SCALE)



FRONT VIEW

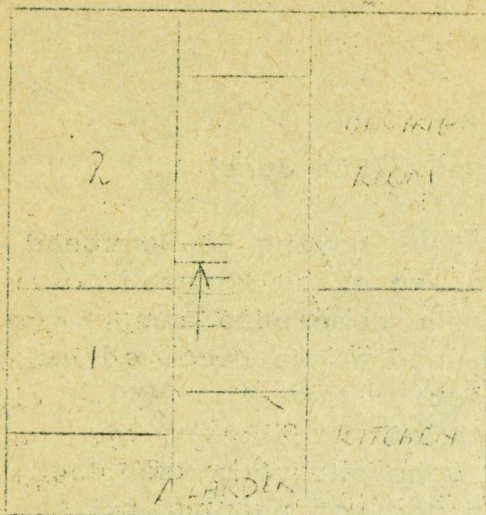


SIDE VIEW (BACK)



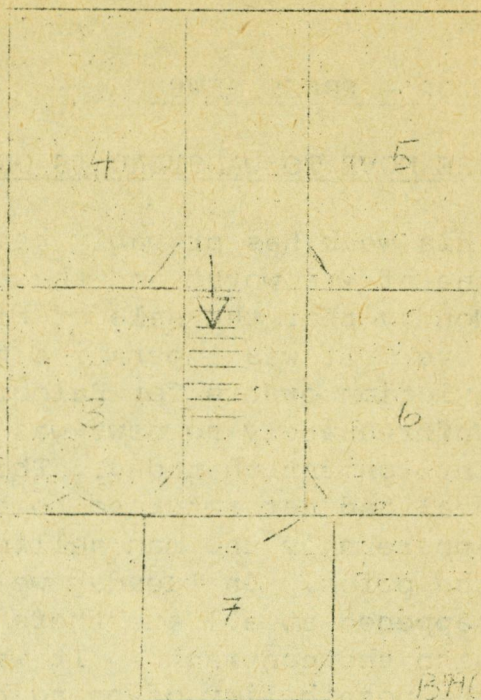
BASEMENT

FRONT

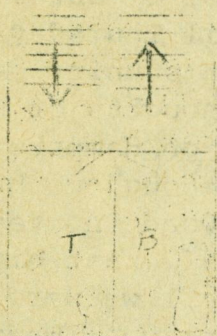


GROUND FLOOR

FRONT

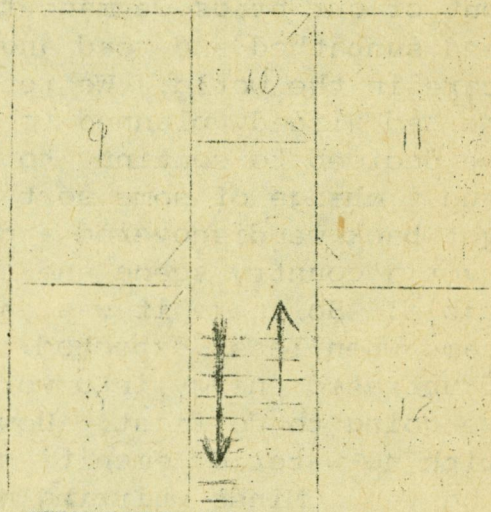


FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

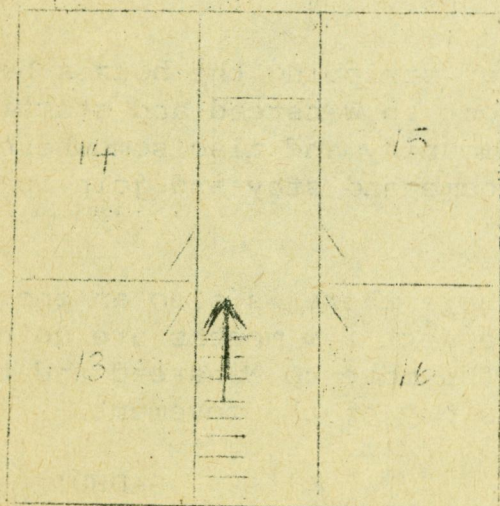
FRONT



BACK

THIRD FLOOR

FRONT



BACK

BASIC ROOM LAYOUT
AS IT STANDS.
(NOT TO SCALE)

STOP - PRESS NEWS

THE MOVE TO WANSTEAD IS ON - This weekend (25th June)

This week has probably been for those of us moving to Wanstead one of the worst and the best. We were expecting to hear on Monday that the sale of the house had been completed and we could move. It was imperative that this happened as we received our eviction orders for Balmore Street effective from the 28th. Unfortunately no news was available from the Department of Environment that day. The man who had gone out to clinch the deal had not returned to the office and had not phoned in. Apparently the man selling the house was being difficult over the price. On Tuesday we discovered that nothing had as yet happened at all and there was still some doubt that he would sign the contract. It was a black day. We sat mulling over the possibility of being homeless. Where were we going to go and what were we going to do. Was this the end of 6 months planning, working and negotiating. We had to wait until Thursday to ring again. Wednesday came and turned out to be a sunnier day than we had seen for a long while. Putting all thoughts of Wanstead out of our heads we made for the ladies pond on Hampstead Heath and sunbathed and read and ate icecreams as though we hadn't a care in the world. We returned home via Kenwood and tea and cakes. We had already planned to go to the Vegan cafe that night and we decided to continue to celebrate. After all we were being evicted and a change of some sort was bound to take place! When we got back we discovered a note pinned to our front door written over a country scene and a shining sun, saying message on kitchen table! So there it was, after days of anxious phoning the message came when least expected. Now we can turn all our excess frustrated energy into worrying about the actual move. What are we going to do first. How are we going to cope in this house with no water or amenities. How are we going to get everything in the van. Minds whirring and ticking at furious rates. Last minute fears of what we are actually going into and taking on surfacing. But nevertheless we are moving. Plans which were first talked about as long ago as 18 months - two years are coming into actuality and the more intense plans and working of the last few months are also bearing fruit.

So the next few days will see us moving, stripping the houses here of everything we can and then camping out in Wanstead and starting work on converting the house into a community and also somewhere where other women in the movement can come and stay and join in what we have built up.

Together with the Norfolk community, where there is also an enormous amount of physical work to be done, the next few months are going to be an active time for many of us. The move to Wanstead and to Aslacton are important steps in the history of the movement.

SADHU!

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