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WESTER HAILES SENTINEL

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FIRE RESCUE DRAMA

Prompt and brave action by three Wester Hailes youngsters helped save Susan McGhee (72) from her burning house in Dumbyden Grove at the beginning of the month.

At 11.10 pm on Monday, 2nd November the three boys "Minger" Tant, "Navi" Dudgeon and "Bud" Stenhouse were driving past when they noticed smoke coming from one of the houses in Dumbyden.

They rushed to the scene and their rescue act began. Neighbours said the front door was locked and an old woman was stranded inside. "Minger" Tant

forced open a kitchen window and went in.

"Minger" told the *Sentinel* "The house was full of smoke and the woman was lying on the kitchen floor in a confused and shocked state."

At first she was reluctant to move. However, "Minger" managed to open the front door and with the help of the others dragged Mrs McGhee out of the burning house to safety. They then tried to put the fire out in the bedroom with buckets of water.

Mrs McGhee was slightly overcome by smoke and was suffering from shock. She was released from hospital after a short stay.

Damage to the house

was confined to one room where furniture and internal decorations were burned.

A spokesman for the **Lothian and Borders Fire Department** told the *Sentinel* "The officer in charge on that night believes their actions warranted a recommendation for bravery and has included this in a special report to the Fire Master."

If the Fire Master believes their actions were brave enough they will receive bravery commendations.

"Minger" Tant comes from Murrayburn Gardens, "Navi" Dudgeon from Wester Hailes Drive and "Bud" Stenhouse lives in Beaverbank Place.

SENTINEL EXCLUSIVE

Every ground floor flat in the Calder area of Wester Hailes may be affected by dampness caused by a design fault when the houses were initially built.

We have now intercepted a letter from the Director of Housing to the Director of Administration dated 7 November 1978 where the Council admit: "On investigating complaints of dampness in ground-floor houses in the Calders area it has come to light that there is a fundamental fault in the design of the concrete sub floor."

Despite the seriousness and widespread effects of this fault the Council chose to keep the problem from local residents and out of the public eye.

In 1978 some dampness was discovered in 81/1 and 40/1 Calders Gardens and investigations revealed the design fault. Residents in these specific houses were rehoused, but the findings of the Housing Department outlining the likely implications for the whole area never came to light. They concluded "the material used could deteriorate over the next ten years to such a stage that a high percentage of the houses could be uninhabitable due to dampness."

Over the next two years the Housing Committee agreed to begin remedial work in four houses in Calder Gardens and monitor the situation elsewhere. McData, in the course of an independent study into Edinburgh's dampness reported there was little evidence of dampness in the Calders.

Requests for investigations by local councillor Mark Lazarowicz were

CALDERS DAMPNESS SHOCKER

"... I am not satisfied with what appears to be a whitewash job"

—Cllr. Mark Lazarowicz



Rotting floorboards in the bathroom of one of the Calders flats. Pic. Martyn Petrie.

consistently rejected by the Housing Committee.

Then, earlier this year the inevitable happened. The resident of 67/1 Calder Gardens who had consistently complained about dampness (but had been fobbed with the usual "its condensation, dear,") fell through her rotting floor boards while she was making her bed and widespread dampness was discovered throughout the flooring in her house.

In an exclusive report on the incident in the "Sentinel" (published 16 August) at the time we suggested the likely faults at 67/1 Calder Gardens stemmed from a fault in the floor fixings and concluded that the same fault could well affect many other houses in the area.

The Housing Department letter indicates that our conclusions are correct. The question many people will ask is: Why has there been such lack of action by the authorities after this discovery? Either the Housing Department chose to ignore the possible long term dampness problems in the area or red tape has

led to no action.

The Housing Department concluded in 1978 that any survey in the area may start a certain amount of anxiety and decided to do nothing. A spokesman for the Housing Department told the *Sentinel* "we have no intention of carrying out widespread repairs but we intend to repair any fault as and when it arises." Does this mean waiting, like the resident of 67/1 Calder Gardens, until you fall through the floor?

Local councillor Mark Lazarowicz commented "The Housing Department's own letter on Nov 1978 suggested it could be a general fault and I am therefore not satisfied with what appears to be a whitewash job." The Council are currently considering taking legal action against the builders, Crudens Ltd who deny any liability.

If you live in the Calders and have any dampness problems you should contact the Housing Department at Waterloo Place immediately and also let us know at the *Sentinel* in Halesland Place.

**PUBLIC MEETING
ON
HOUSING
Cafe Venchie
Hailesland Place
Monday 30th
November
7.30**



Fire heroes (left to right), "Bud" Stenhouse, "Minger" Tant and "Navi" Dudgeon. Pic. Mel Young.