

Return to former glory

Natasha Higgins talks to Edward Benyon, Landlord of the Benyon Estate, De Beauvoir Town



Edward Benyon, Landlord of the Benyon Estate

with stunning period homes lived in by wealthy merchants and their families. The Victorian properties remain and today the area attracts similar professionals and has a healthy village atmosphere and sense of community.

The area is steeped in history and The Benyon Estate, remarkably, has been owned by the same family for more than 300 years. Richard De Beauvoir, first came to the area from Guernsey in 1640 and bought the Balmes

Estate: a farm and a large house which is now De Beauvoir Town. De Beauvoir's grandson, the

Reverend Peter De Beauvoir inherited the Estate but died in 1821 and it was left to his nearest relative; his aunt's great grandson: Richard Benyon, a landowner and philanthropist.

De Beauvoir Town was originally to be designed by William Rhodes, a large tenant farmer in the area who'd persuaded Peter de Beauvoir to grant him a 99-year building lease. When Benyon inherited the Estate, however, he challenged this building lease on the basis that Reverend De Beauvoir was not of sound mind when he granted it. It was a long and expensive court case, but Benyon eventually won. The construction of De Beauvoir Town as we know it today was started around the late 1830s.

Today the estate lies in the hands of Edward Benyon who is often seen cycling around De Beauvoir Town. He is a local resident and without a doubt, its greatest supporter.

"I've been in property for most of my working life. Looking after the family estate was a natural progression – I see myself as a custodian ensuring it's in good condition for when it's handed to the next generation".

Benyon's work involves looking after and servicing all 250 buildings and 391 leases of the Estate. He works with a team of five and it's a full time job: "There's always maintenance work to be done as they're all period properties. While some of the homes have been renovated, we still have 80 protected tenants whose homes have been lived in since the Sixties, Seventies and even the 1930s!"

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"We take huge pride in each and every property ensuring they're comfortable and well maintained". Last year Benyon took on a renovation project in De Beauvoir Square. The five bedroom house needed to be gutted and entirely renovated but once the finished product was complete, Knight Frank let it for a record price in the area.

This year, Benyon took on a second similar project on Northchurch Road: "It's a stunning period property and we were keen to keep all its original detail such as the French windows, the cornicing, the original

fireplaces and the wooden floors – albeit with underfloor heating! The finished product is stunning. Our architect, Lisa Shell, was amazing and we've used her for every project we've worked on".

It's all go for De Beauvoir Town and its crown jewel Estate. Benyon is keen to emphasise how far the area has come: "We now have a local greengrocer, a deli, a florist, an Argentinean restaurant, a pizzeria, a cafe, De Beauvoir School (a free school) and a summer fete. As for public transport, there are a number of nearby station and excellent connections into the city".

With such fantastic amenities, demand for property is rife. A small tip from *London Property Magazine*: get in there before it's too late!



The rear garden of the latest renovated property – Northchurch Road. See opposite page for more details.



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Knight Frank, Islington (020 3657 7360) at £1,500 per week