

# Embassy Court Newsletter

Summer 2022

Special Edition



Emma Jinks, Chair of Bluestorm Ltd, the leaseholder-run freehold company that owns Embassy Court, is stepping down from heading up the board of directors after 20 years of voluntary service to this iconic building.

Embassy Court is a modernist block of flats on Brighton seafront well known as much for its dazzling architecture as for its rocky history of severe decline, warring leaseholders and severe degradation during the 1990s. A full refurbishment in 2005, led by Emma, saw the block rise out of the ashes and back to the glory days of sparkling walls and refined living right on the sea front.

After buying a flat in the building at auction in 2002, Emma joined the then board, who had recently wrestled control of the freehold from a private property company. Using her professional business skills, Emma set about putting in place the organisational changes needed to bring the building back to life. Aided by a director of Conran & Partners, Paul Zara, an enthusiastic supporter of modernist architecture, the project fell into place in a way that demonstrated Brighton's love for this quirky and unusual building.

Having been a fundamental part of the decision-making at the building for 20 years and over-seeing prices of flats rise 10-fold, Emma is stepping aside for a break from property management and to concentrate her efforts on other areas of the community.

During her tenure, Embassy Court has received three major programmes of repainting and repair, the installation of a large-scale solar panel array on the roof, the creation of artists' studios in the basement, the employment of a team of maintenance staff, the establishment of a long-term relationship with a trusted managing agent, Harper Stone Properties, alongside the key responsibility of keeping the bank balance in the black for a building that costs £250k a year to run.



*Emma Jinks, Bluestorm Chair.*

Of her time at the building Emma says: “What a ride it’s been – saving an amazing piece of architecture AND the homes of numerous residents feels like a great life-time achievement. It’s not been easy but it has been really exciting and I love this building – she’s a dignified madam, permanently about to set sail across the channel. We’ll always be a part of each other.”

Emma’s contribution will be much missed and we wish her well in all her future ventures.



*Two surreal views of Embassy Court  
by Marc Jeanneteau, friend of Karen  
and Alan, flat 63.*



*Embassy Court: Lonely Planet*



*Embassy Court: Harvest Time*

*I had the pleasure of working closely with Emma for 10 years as a Director of Bluestorm while she was Chair. When I joined the Board she had already chaired it for 10 years and by that time had achieved an incredible amount; it is safe to say without her remarkable work during that time there would not have been an Embassy Court to buy into when I moved in, back in 2007.*

*I can only imagine what a difficult process it was to save that iconic building, dealing with some impossible personalities on the way. It was a thankless task, but she achieved her goal with what must have been incredible determination. I don’t think anybody else could have pulled it off.*

*Most Chairs in such posts stand for about 5 or 6 years, which makes it all the more remarkable as she was there for some 20 years.*

*I have worked with some very impressive people over my career, but I cannot recall anyone quite as brilliantly intelligent and competent across so many fields. Her warmth and generosity of spirit is what is my most abiding memory of her on The Board. As a colleague, I enjoyed her charismatic personality.*

*It was a true privilege to have known Emma during my pleasurable stay at Embassy Court and she will be sorely missed as the guiding light of that iconic building.*

**Andrew Birds**

*To know Emma was at the helm of Bluestorm offered the same comfort and security as an experienced captain navigating a ship through a nasty storm on which you were a passenger. With her hand on the wheel, you knew Embassy Court was in safe hands. David and I would like to thank her for her time and commitment to this iconic building we called home for 14 years. We reserve the right to call on her services should the managers of our new apartment block prove deficient in their duties. She’d sort them out in no time at all!*

### **Mark Cotton and David Broadus**

*I worked with Emma as a co-director for five years and found her to be, not just a good person to work with, but someone with a passion to save this building, Embassy Court, from a possible different end to its iconic past. Then, with others, returned it to a wonderful Grade 2\* listed building which I'm proud to have lived in since 1983. I wish Emma all best wishes for the future.*

### **Michael King**

*Just a big thank you to Emma for the last 20 years as chair of Bluestorm. Although I have only worked with Emma for the past three years (yes, three years already!) and Leo for five years, it is clear to me that her commitment to Embassy Court has made a huge difference and brought the building back from the brink, making it a much loved and much photographed local landmark! Emma has also been a great support to Leo and to me personally, particularly when I first started working at Embassy Court. Thank you, Emma, and enjoy your "retirement" from Bluestorm!*

### **Steve Riche and Leo Hammond-Sahin**

*Emma, you are a true force of nature and it was a joy to work with you at – and for – Embassy Court. You helped secure such a significant part of Brighton's history and led with aplomb and humour. When I think of Embassy Court I always think of you and these are such fond memories.*

### **Cara Courage**

*When I first met Emma and Rowena to discuss how I could help them save the building the enthusiasm was obvious. Since then, 'tour de force' barely covers what Emma has achieved. She has enthused various teams, countered the critics, and ultimately has transformed a crumbling wreck of a building back into the*

*seafront icon that it was always intended to be.*

*People often say these things are a team effort, and they are, but a successful team needs a strong leader and Emma is that person. The city, and the architectural world, owe her a huge debt of gratitude.*

**Paul Zara, RIBA**



***One of many events organised during Brighton Festival.***

*Emma very generously gave the building and everyone involved HOPE. Hope based on trust, dedication, experience, talent and leadership, that sustained us through the apparently insurmountable challenges, with a uniquely engaging, entertaining style that calls to mind so many wonderful moments. Saving the building for Brighton and sharing it may be a bigger achievement than building it in the first place! Thank you.*

**Tim & Ling Mack**

*Having known Emma and her family for over forty years, she contacted me in 2008 to ask if I would "help out" temporarily by taking minutes at Bluestorm's monthly board meetings. 14 years later, I'm still "helping out" and, during that time, on countless occasions, I've had the opportunity of witnessing Emma's incredible ability to apply her diverse professional skill set*

– accountancy, employment law, property management, health and safety and leasehold legislation – to running this iconic landmark building effectively. An accomplished individual who, like Embassy Court itself, is unique!

**David Cooper**

We moved into Embassy Court just as the big restoration work had finished. The block was transformed. But there were still snags to resolve. We had heard that tensions among residents still ran a little high at times. So we went to our first Annual Meeting with some trepidation. It was the first time we had seen Emma in action. She was passionate, knowledgeable and tough. (And she had a great 50s frock on). Her love for the building was very evident. And her determination to overcome problems and barriers was palpable. For sure she sometimes ruffled feathers but without her drive, Embassy Court would not be the handsome building it is today.

**Olivia Johnson and Catrin Evans**

I first met Emma shortly after she purchased her flat in Embassy Court in about 2002 at a point when Bluestorm was embroiled in litigation with the previous freeholder which resulted in a 10-day trial and two days in the Court of Appeal creating an iconic legal precedent for an iconic block.

Emma's incredible diplomatic skills came to the fore in galvanising support for the major refurbishment of Embassy Court, enlisting the help of Sir Terence Conran and playing on the strengths and experience of flat owners and others who wanted to see the building restored to its former glory. She worked tirelessly to see the project through to completion – celebrated by Rusty Nail cocktails on the roof terrace and fireworks viewed from the beach on a glorious summer evening in 2006.

During, and since, that time Emma has overseen a change in the ethos and fortunes of

Embassy Court, now a national treasure and landmark building of Brighton's seafront. She has been a pleasure to work with, always adopting a pragmatic but commercial approach to the challenges involved and the everchanging dynamic of the building and its occupants.

**Belinda Walkinshaw**

Thank you so much Emma for your tireless, dedicated work on our behalf. As a long-time resident, I remember only too well the bad times both we residents and the building went through. You took on a huge challenge and with great skill and determination, you steered us back to the good times. We wouldn't be where we are today without you Emma. You've always been so kind and supportive to me.

**Jill Robertson**

Embassy Court owes Emma such a lot. Indeed, it is doubtful if Bluestorm would have been successful in saving this historic building from the ruthless and rapacious grip of property developers if it hadn't been for her diplomacy and business skills, together with – of course – the enormous number of hours she dedicated to the project.

I was a fellow Bluestorm director at the time of the final court battles, and the subsequent major refurb. Emma moved in and joined Bluestorm shortly after me (we were the "new blood", "the artist and the accountant") and I was so pleased to have her, having been overwhelmed with the scale of what needed doing. Emma was never less than impressive: I admired her whip-smart mind, clear-sightedness, fairness, kindness, outstanding organisational abilities, and humour in the face of some very slippery characters and grade-A sh\*ts. As one journalist put it: "You'd have to rise very early in the morning to get one over on Emma Jinks."

Despite the difficulties, we did have lots of fun. Wells Coates cocktails on the roof spring to

*mind. And I'll never forget a certain Chinese meal, which gave us both a laugh.*

*I haven't kept in touch with the building since I left, and I'm astounded that Emma's only just stepping down. 20 years!! Thank you so much Emma, for everything. You are a genuine shero.*

**Rowena Easton**



**Emma Jinks in front of a poster of Embassy Court.**

*I won't forget the day Emma came home and told me she'd been to an auction, acted impulsively and consequently, we were moving to Embassy Court. Nor will I forget my first closeup impressions of the notorious building, when we came to view the property. All I could see was the rusting, pockmarked exterior, the blown out boarded up windows and the graffiti lifts. The flat itself had holes in the outer wall you could put your arm through. I looked at Emma and asked "What have you done?". I was more than sceptical at her reply, "I love this building and shall just have to get it restored". To my knowledge, people had been saying that for the previous 20 years. But, within a year, that's exactly what she was doing.*

**Steven Greenfield**

*If you want to restore a classic building which no-one wants to pay for...*

*If you are battling with unscrupulous owners who have already fleeced tenants once...*

*If you need to sign a £5m building contract when there is hardly a bean in the bank...  
...then you need Emma Jinks!*

*Calm, good natured, a true leader. The right woman in the right place. Well done Emma for the last 20 years. And thanks, it was a blast.*

**Neil & Judith Walker**

*As absentee leaseholders and Londoners to boot, initially we were totally unfamiliar with Brighton, with Embassy Court and, as importantly, with the ramifications of owning a leasehold property. On the few occasions when we needed help or advice, Emma could not have been kinder, more patient with us 'novices', and we are very grateful to her.*

*Appropriately, given Embassy Court is on the seashore, the good ship "Bluestorm", with Emma at its helm, has been run smoothly and efficiently. We have never felt less than excellently informed of any issues relating to the building, large and small, which has been very reassuring to us, absentee leaseholders. Each of us running our own businesses, we fully appreciate the considerable private time and personal effort that Emma, with her colleagues, has dedicated to the running of Embassy Court.*

*Whilst Emma's presence and unremitting hard work will be sorely missed by all the residents [as well as the likes of us] when she stands down as Chairman of Bluestorm, we wish her all the very best and safe sailing in calm waters. Our very best wishes.*

**Trish Walker & Kim Dyas**

*Paul and I met Emma in late 2012 as we were completing our purchase of an extremely dilapidated flat in Embassy Court. With a twinkle in her eye, Emma supported the*

*refurbishment plans we proposed, reassuring us that we would regret neither the expense nor the disruption caused by our endeavours – and so it proved!*

*Subsequently, Maddie shadowed the Bluestorm Board for a year. Emma's expertise in finance, conveyancing, and risk management were impressive. Her passion to retain the spirit of modernism and Wells Coates were evident.*

*In her time as Chair, Emma welcomed many initiatives. She helped set up the Arts Committee and pioneered the popular EC tours as part of Brighton Festival. During the pandemic, she supported the formation of an EC Covid Advisory Team to provide practical and emotional support to residents during lockdown. She also encouraged an EC Residents Newsletter, just like this.*

*Good luck in your pastures new, Emma. We have no doubt you will embrace the new challenges with great aplomb!*

**Maddie & Paul Dennison**

*It's hard to put into words how special Emma is, as her skills cover so many areas. Residents past and present owe a large debt of gratitude to her for being the driving force (along with other pioneers) in the renaissance of Embassy Court. Emma gave a huge amount of her time over many years to EC for no reward other than success in her mission.*

*We also love her unique look and her huge smile which means she connected with everyone. We will sorely miss you, Emma, and please come back for fun times on the roof!*

*Best wishes for your well-earned rest.*

**Tony and Vicki Wells**

*We just wanted to send our grateful thanks for your thoughtful chairing and stewardship of Embassy Court. As newer residents of the block, and with the pandemic preventing us from, so far, being able to spend as much time in Brighton as we would like, it has been such a*

*relief to know that there was a proactive committee working - under your leadership – to preserve the building's heritage and to promote its future. Thank you for all you have done. We hope to meet you in person (rather than Zoom!) at the September event. All best wishes.*

**Sarah and Simon Winstone**

*It was Emma who suggested we form an Arts Committee at Embassy Court, as a way of maintaining its high profile after the refurbishment. As joint chair of the committee, together with Sue Milnethorpe, Emma's help and cooperation enabled us to stage several successful events. I got to know Emma socially and enjoy her company very much on the occasions when we met for "girlie" lunches. I wish her all the best for her future activities.*

**Sue King**

*As you have seen from the wonderful comments above, the contribution made by Emma Jinks to the renaissance of Embassy Court is immeasurable. She has fostered this iconic building and its thriving community with dedication and fortitude for over 20 years. As we all know, the building is not without its faults and idiosyncrasies but it is a wonderful place to live and to a large extent that is due to Emma's hard work. The remaining Board is incredibly grateful for the guidance, leadership and extraordinary enthusiasm she has shown and we will endeavour to follow her example in providing value for money for shareholders and leaseholders, protecting and engaging with all residents and, above all, taking best care of Embassy Court.*

**Angie Clapham, Dave Clapham,  
Gareth Stingemore and Mark Washer**