

OPEN HOUSE

Summer 2009

ISSUE 4

THE ROSEMARY SIMMONS MHA & FELLOWSHIP HOUSES TRUST NEWSLETTER

50 YEARS OF ROSEMARY SIMMONS

Rosemary Simmons Memorial Housing Association celebrates its 50th anniversary this September. The association was set up by Iris and Roger Simmons who bought their first property – Alstonfield – just off the high street in Esher. Fifty years on from those early days running RSMHA from her kitchen table, Iris continues to play a role as our life president. Her contribution reminds us that our focus as a landlord must always be on residents and staff. We believe it is this approach that has kept us successful and independent, and it gives us a firm foundation for the next 50 years.



OUR FIRST PROPERTY

Roger Simmons, an architect, oversaw the conversion of this large Edwardian house into six flats, with 14 more flats and bungalows built in the substantial grounds to the rear. A maisonette block was added later. As in the early days, Alstonfield is reserved for mature residents aged 55 and over. Located within easy walking distance of Esher town centre, Alstonfield today remains a very popular residence.

HIDDEN GLORY

Tenant board member Jenny Edwards visits our first ever property

As I turned into Alstonfield's drive I was amazed to see hidden behind the hedge an old house surrounded by bungalows and maisonettes, edged by glorious flowers.



After adjusting to the lovely setting, I pondered how to enter the house. There were steps and I am a wheelchair user. I need not have worried as Sam came out to meet me and we toured the homes and garden.

Peggy zoomed over in her scooter, but told us she was cooking so couldn't stay long. Tom, a Scot who clearly loves his bungalow, said how easy it was to get to Esher and beyond by bus.

The residents refer to Alstonfield as a 'village' and I got the impression of a very satisfied community. With an active residents association, headed by

Sam, they share garden parties, barbecues and other social events.

All the residents I spoke to held Iris and Roger Simmons in very high regard. It was a very pleasant visit, and I hope to return for one of their social events later in the year.

Residents John and Pauline Steer above left, and Peggy, Sam and Eve left

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MEET OUR MAN IN MAINTENANCE • VI REACHES 103 YEARS

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INTRODUCING MAINTENANCE OFFICER JAMES JOHNSON

It's my job to help with any minor repairs or maintenance needed to your homes. I also coordinate the work done by our repairs contractors, says James.

I've been with RSMHA for many years and know the ins and outs of most of our properties. My day starts with a strong mug of coffee. I'm Anglo-American so tea in the morning just isn't enough! I then read my emails and go through my in-tray to see what work is needed.

Repairs officer Jackie tells me if any emergencies have come up as these take priority. Monday mornings are usually the busiest, with reports of blocked drains or leaks that happened over the weekend. Our out of hours service attends to emergencies but their job is to 'make safe' and follow-up work is usually needed.

I then start phoning residents to make appointments for repairs and inspections. This could be to replace tiles or repair the grouting, to make good after a leak, mend kitchen cupboards, fit new hinges, locks or grab rails, or repair fences. I also regularly



meet with contractors on-site and liaise with residents.

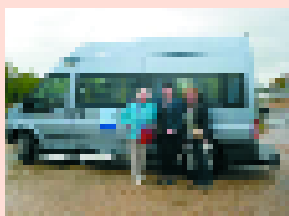
From time to time I get asked for advice or to check that a repair has been done properly. I'm always happy to oblige.

Very rarely I get some curious requests. Once I was called out to fix an alarm

which wouldn't stop ringing. I discovered the beeping was coming from the resident's personal organiser! Rest assured – I'm here to put things right...

James Johnson, Maintenance Officer

SOCIAL CIRCLE



Pictured: Ruth, Janet and Pauline from The Fairings

Round trip

Abbey Walk scheme manager Liz Shury tells us that residents from the West Molesey sheltered scheme and from The Fairings, in Hersham, put the new minibus through its paces on a recent 120-mile round trip to Bosham then Hayling Island. 'The weather wasn't very good but everyone enjoyed the meal we had in a small restaurant on the seafront at Hayling Island,' said Liz. Next on the schedule is a trip to Brighton in late July.

Classic Italian

Resident Maria Cioffi treated neighbours at Edgar Court in New Malden to an 'Italian night' in May. Authentic lasagna and chicken cacciatore were served to 19 enthusiastic residents who squeezed into 'not the world's largest' communal lounge. A lively evening followed.

NEW HOMES IN SURREY



For information on the shared ownership properties please contact Val Johnston at RSMHA.

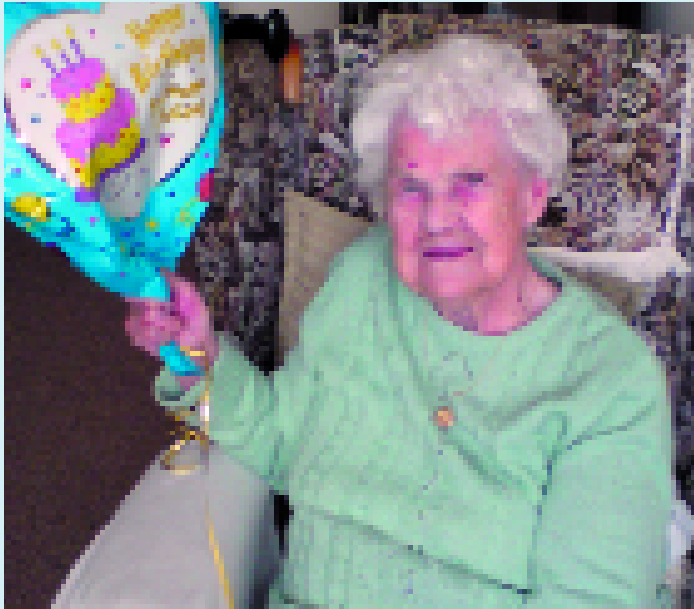
Hot on the heels of our popular new apartments in Thames Ditton and Guildford we're delighted to announce that we're now building more great homes in Esher and Walton on Thames.

At the exclusive new Princess Square development in Esher we will have 16 new homes finished by autumn 2010. Six one- and two-bedroom apartments will be for shared ownership sale and there will be 10 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments for rent. Princess

Square is within easy distance of the town centre and transport links.

In Walton on Thames we have planning consent to build 21 new homes where Scammell House once stood. In place of the old sheltered scheme we will by summer 2010 have 15 new one- and two-bedroom apartments for rent, and another six two-bedroom apartments for shared ownership sale. This is a lovely residential area, close to shops and the railway station.

VI MALIN – 103 & STILL GOING STRONG



Our warmest congratulations to Vi Malin, our oldest resident, who celebrated her 103rd birthday in March. Vi has been with us since she moved south from Sheffield aged 97 to live closer to her family. Vi now lives in The Fairings and, despite moving to the southern counties, remains a huge fan of Sheffield Wednesday.

'She's a wonderful lady, has a great joy about her and the other residents love having her around,' said senior housing officer Karen Woolton.

Vi's birthday tea party was organised by scheme manager Madeline Marshall and Janet Ball, also a resident.

'Vi's a great football fan and watches sports regularly so she got a birthday card signed by all the Sheffield Wednesday players, a stuffed owl dressed in Sheffield Wednesday's strip and some other club collectables,' added Karen.

HOMESWAPPER: HOW TO SWAP HOME WITH ANOTHER TENANT

Would you like to move home? If you rent a home from us you have the right to swap your home – and tenancy – with almost anyone renting from us, or from another housing association or their council.

The swap is known as a **mutual exchange**.

Some conditions apply. For example, you and the person you swap with must have a clear rent account and some specially designed properties can't be exchanged.

But it's often the fastest and easiest way to move home.

The biggest challenge can be finding someone else who wants to swap home. We've just signed up to **HomeSwapper** to help you do that.

HomeSwapper is an online mutual exchange service holding the largest register in the UK of tenants actively looking to swap home. You can register on www.HomeSwapper.co.uk for free.

You can then use it like an estate agency, advertising your home and looking for one you'd like to move to. But before you go ahead with any exchange you must have written permission from both us and the other landlord.

To find out more about mutual exchange or HomeSwapper please contact us or visit our website www.rsmha.org.uk

NEW FINANCE DIRECTOR

After three years with us, finance director Michael Chinn is moving on to another housing association in south-west London. Michael has made a tremendous contribution to our association and we wish him all the best for the future.

We're very pleased to announce that Shaun Cooper will be taking over from Michael. As Michael did, he plans to work closely with residents and to make sure you get good quality services that give value for money.

SAFE AS HOUSES: GAS SERVICING

If a gas boiler or any other gas-fired service in your home develops a fault, the result can be fatal. We therefore have to check all appliances we've had fitted in all our rented homes once every year. If we don't we're not only putting you at risk we're also breaking the law.

Smith & Byford, our gas heating engineers, have again begun their annual round to service boilers in all rented homes we own or manage.

For your own safety and wellbeing we ask that when the engineers get in touch, you give them access to your home so they can carry out this vital task.

CONTACT US

tel: 01372 461 440

email: enquiries@rsmha.org.uk

Customer services:

Louise Stevens, Ellie Melham

Repairs: **Jackie Younis**

Housing and tenancy enquiries:

Karen Woolton (RSMHA)

Elaine Gregory (FHT)

Leasehold enquiries:

Jeremy Lowry

Out of hours emergency repairs

tel: **Homeserve 08457 573 842**

TENANT SERVICES AUTHORITY

In December last year a new government agency took on the job of regulating the work of housing associations. The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) replaced the Housing Corporation.

Its main aims are to raise service standards and check that housing associations are well run, financially stable and providing an excellent customer service.

As a priority it has been talking to tenants across England asking what they expect and want from their landlord. It will use the findings from this 'national conversation' with tenants to set standards it will expect all housing associations to work to.



If you have any suggestions or ideas for the TSA, please do get in touch with them. To send your ideas or just find out more visit www.tenantservicesauthority.org.uk or telephone 0845 230 7000.

STUDIO FLATS TO LET

We have some vacancies at our ever popular Dunmow House in Byfleet. This scheme is for people aged over 55 and is close to all amenities. For details please contact Elaine Gregory on 01372 461 440.



PAY WITH LESS PAIN

By direct debit: with your consent only, we can arrange for your rent or service charge to be paid to us direct from your bank account or building society account, if you have one. Just call our finance team and we'll set it up.

Over the internet: from our website www.rsmha.org.uk

By phone or text message: you can pay using a phone with buttons for numbers. Get your Allpay card, bank debit card and pen ready then dial 0870 770 0472. Don't forget to write down the payment reference number.

You can pay by texting using a mobile phone but will have to register first (just the one time) at allpayments.text, using your mobile number, Allpay card and a debit card. After that paying will be just a matter of texting a code and the sum you want to pay to the right number.

While shopping: use your Allpay card at any Post Office or shop displaying the Paypoint logo.



SATISFACTION POLL

In September you will all be sent a survey questionnaire by post asking your views on our service. The survey, called a STATUS survey, will go to all of you – tenants, leaseholders and shared owners. It will cover a huge range of issues, like the overall quality of your home and neighbourhood, whether you think we offer value for money for the rent or service charges you pay, our repairs and maintenance service, the ways we keep you informed and how well we take your views into account. The results will tell us how well we're serving residents and will pinpoint areas for improvement.