

OPENHOUSE

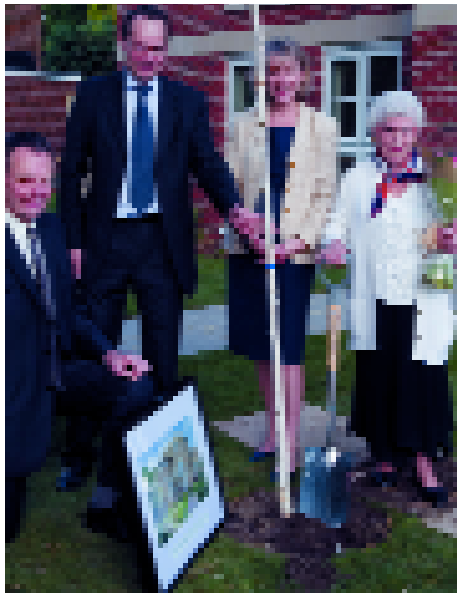
December 2008

ISSUE 2

THE ROSEMARY SIMMONS MHA & FELLOWSHIP HOUSES TRUST NEWSLETTER

MIGHTY OAKS

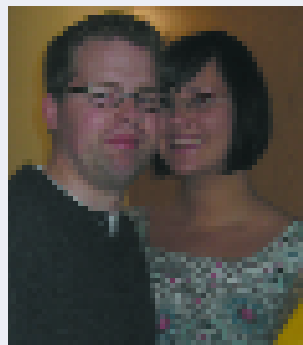
October saw the official opening with RSMHA life president Iris Simmons of our newest and largest housing development in many years, at Simmons Court, Oak Tree Drive, in Guildford



Our 12 new apartments here have just been given the finishing touches and are now available for sale under 'shared ownership' – the part buy, part rent scheme. Simmons Court is part of a larger development of new homes overlooking a large green, built for sale by Lacey Simmons. Pictured left is Iris Simmons with chief executive Wendy Pridmore, centre, and the developers.

GOING FAST – JUST SIX OF 16 APARTMENTS LEFT

Are you, or someone you know, interested in buying one of our two-bedroom shared ownership flats? At Simmons Court in Guildford, for example, you could buy a 35% share of an energy efficient, carpeted and decorated flat, complete with stylish fitted kitchen appliances. Over time, you can buy out our share until you own your home outright, or you can carry on as a shared owner. Find out more by calling Val Johnston on 01372 461 440.



Our warmest congratulations to Kayleigh Hewitt and James Lee who are among the first buyers of a shared ownership apartment at our new Imber Place development in leafy Thames Ditton.

£19 MILLION LOAN

With the global economy in crisis, demand for affordable homes is soaring – with high price areas like Surrey and Sussex especially hard hit. So we're very pleased to have secured a £19m loan agreement with LloydsTSB so we can build more homes.

Building plans

We will be drawing down the money over the next five years to help fund an ambitious house-building programme which could nearly double the number of homes we own, up from 411 to 711 by 2014. Most of our new homes will be for local families to rent, but a substantial number will be for older or disabled people and some will be for part buy, part rent.

'This loan will make it much easier for us to help local people in need, including families who badly need a larger home and people who need a home better suited to their health,' said housing director Nick Coverdale. 'But there will be absolutely no let up in our commitment to improving services for existing residents.'

The deal was signed in October this year, and its size reflects LloydsTSB's confidence in our financial management and the combined value of our properties.

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AROUND THE HOUSES: SPOTLIGHT ON GUNTERS MEAD

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SOCIAL CIRCLE

AGM MARKS NEW DIRECTION

We were delighted that 22 of our residents were able to join us at our 48th annual general meeting in September. Addressing the AGM, board chairman Trevor D'Cruz spoke of our commitment to building new homes. He also welcomed three new members to the board: legal and business expert Stephen Cooper, chartered engineer and company boss Alistair Court-Smith and Jane Worsley, who has extensive expertise in housing management for councils and housing associations. The evening rounded off with a light buffet, allowing residents, board members and staff to relax and chat over a glass of wine.

BANGERS AND MASH

Jean and John Hemmings, residents at the ever sociable Edgar Court, fed a whopping 16 of their neighbours at their sausage and mash night on 11 September. Everyone had a wonderful evening, reports scheme manager Barbara Robson. Special thanks to Marai Cioffi and Jan Challis, who helped prepare the food, and everyone who helped set the tables. Jean and John are hoping to hold more events to foster community spirit at Edgar Court.

COFFEE AND CAKES

Just two weeks later Edgar Court played host to their small part in the 'biggest coffee morning in the world', held to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support. Over £100 was raised at the event attended by 14 residents and their relatives and friends and organised by Barbara Robson. Home-baked cakes raised funds and those unable to come along sent cash.

What's been going on where you live? Why not let other Open House readers know what you're planning or what you've been doing. And remember, take your camera!

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 for you.

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.

MOLE ABBEY TUCKS IN



Mole Abbey residents made excellent use this summer of a new barbecue set paid for by RSMHA. Scheme manager Liz Shury tells us the first event in August used her own mum's birthday as a handy excuse for having a party. The barbecue got hauled out again later that month, followed by a bingo evening.

Mole Abbey is home to 26 of you, in bungalows that have all been improved recently to the government's Decent Homes standard: 'weathertight, warm and reasonably modern facilities'. 'Someone said it almost looks like a holiday camp,' says Liz, who has worked there for eight years. 'They're a nice bunch here, very sociable and we're planning on being here a long time.'

PRIZE DRAW

Gunters Mead resident Ken Matthews won our prize draw promotion in the last issue of Open House for those of you who pay your rent or service charge by direct debit, phone or text message. Another prize draw will be held in the new year. Make sure your name goes into the draw by arranging to pay your January rent or service charges by direct debit, or using your Allpay card to pay by phone or text message. If you'd like to find out how, or need a new Allpay card, call our finance team on 01372 461 440. See below for instructions on how to pay, the easy way.



Pay on time, every time: and your name will go into our next prize draw in the new year to win £25 worth of high street vouchers.

GUNTERS MEAD

IN ESHER, SURREY

Gunters Mead has 65 one and two bedroomed homes, set in six acres of stunning landscaped gardens. All the residents own their properties as leaseholders. Also resident are scheme manager Liz Byrne and gardener Steve Green.

Resident board member Jenny Edwards travels to Esher to visit Gunters Mead

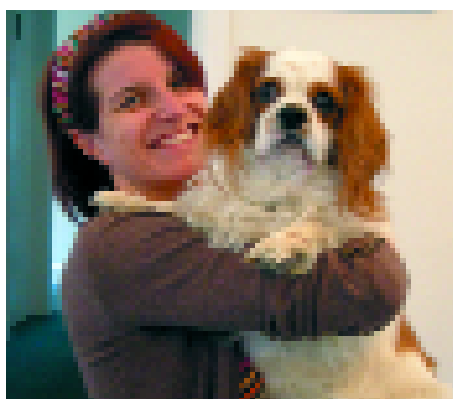
I have driven along the beautiful tree-lined road that passes Gunters Mead many times, but had never seen all that lay behind those trees and bushes. So the other day I put that right. I was amazed at the beauty of the buildings and gardens – old and new. And the residents I met told me Gunters Mead is indeed a remarkable place.

Nora and Sheila, who gave me a guided tour, are clearly very proud of their home and gardens. We were joined by Geoffrey the cat, who kept a keen eye on my wheelchair, and later I met Liz and her dog, who between them 'manage' Gunters Mead.

Tea, cake and a good natter with other residents confirmed that this is a united community. Residents share Bridge evenings, play Scrabble and the occasional game of Bingo, and run activities to help the charities they individually support.

Asked what they would most like to happen at Gunters Mead I was told: more younger people, a road crossing and a new minibus! Gunters Mead has a very wide spectrum of residents but all look after their lovely homes with pride and want to stay independent and active as the years roll on.

I had a wonderful afternoon and shall be visiting again – how about you?



New residents for Gunters Mead could certainly be on the cards, although the terms of the lease bar prospective residents below a youthful 60. All the flats are leasehold and a number of the one and two bedroom flats are now up for sale. But possibly not for much longer. We've had extremely positive feedback from some of the 20 plus people who visited on our open day in late September. Visitors toured the landscaped gardens, viewed the empty homes and enjoyed afternoon tea and cake with residents. We're waiting to see if any will make an offer. If you know of anyone who might be interested, call Jeremy Lowry at our office on 01372 461 440.

Scheme manager Liz and her dog Deefa, *above left*. Below, tea and cakes at the open day

STAFF UPDATE

New appointments

Elaine Gregory, who has been working with us as a temp since June, has been appointed senior housing officer, part-time. Elaine will manage FHT properties in Hove, Worthing and Lancing.

Ellie Melham joined us in November as our new customer services officer. She will be working part-time, covering our office reception and taking your phone calls on Thursdays and Fridays.

Leavers

Jenny Barnes, scheme manager at Bartley House. We've also said farewell to Mike Hughes and Jessica Brownjohn.

Good employer

We recently had our Investors in People award renewed in recognition of our consistently high standards for supporting, training and developing our staff. This helps us make sure we have the right people with the right skills working for us so, together, we can meet your needs.

CONTACT US

tel:
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email:
enquiries@rsmha.org.uk

Customer services:
Louise Stevens, Ellie Melham

Repairs:
Jackie Younis

Housing and tenancy enquiries:
Karen Woolton (RSMHA)
Elaine Gregory (FHT)

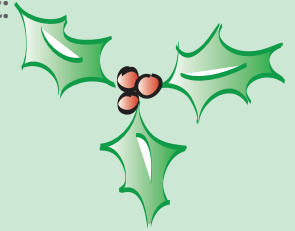
Leasehold enquiries:
Jeremy Lowry

Out of hours **emergency**
repairs telephone:
Homeserve **08457 573 842**

CHRISTMAS CLOSING

Our offices will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. At other times over the festive period we will have a slightly reduced service so it may take a little longer for us to answer your calls. Please note that from lunchtime on Wednesday 24 December to Monday 5 January you can report **emergency repairs (only)** at any time of the day by phoning our contractor direct:

Homeserve - 08457 573 842.



LEASEHOLDERS TELL US THEIR VIEWS

Thanks to all of you at Edgar Court, Gunters Mead and Elizabeth Hart Court who replied to our latest survey. Over six in 10 of you told us your views of our service. In a nutshell, you said you want us to consult you more often so that you can influence the decisions that affect your homes. And you also told us you were most satisfied with:

- your emergency alarm service
- how clean we keep the areas you share
- how polite our staff are
- the service given by your scheme manager
- information we provide about your lease account and budgets.

The areas we need to improve are:

- replying more promptly to letters
- dealing with repairs and maintenance
- the quality of external decorating
- consulting you before we make a decision
- value for money from service charges
- opportunities for you to take part in decision-making.

We take this useful criticism seriously. We will do more to get you involved in decisions and will give you more ways to put forward views and ideas. We're also going to sharpen our act when it comes to responding to your letters.

We'll be sending full results of the survey to our leaseholders shortly. If you'd like to know more do let us know.

Nick Coverdale, Housing Director