

Community Centre Activities

A wide range of activities take place at the Community Centre. Although the Monday Aerobics class and the Tai Chi group meetings are no longer held at the Centre, the halls are still very well booked by the regular weekly users including playgroup, Guides, Brownies, Clinic, Computer Club and Bridge Club to name just a few. Groups such as the Antiquarian Horological Society National Deaf

Children's Society, Floral Art Group and WI hold their committee meetings in the small hall which will seat about 30 people comfortably. Weekends are available for occasional bookings, bearing in mind that alcohol is not permitted on the premises. For further information regarding hire charges and availability please contact the Bookings Manager, Margaret Stubbins on 01622 201192.

GROUPS USING THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Woodlands Playgroup	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	9.00am - 3.30pm 9.00am - 12.30pm
Toddlers	Wednesdays	1.45pm - 4.00pm
Karate	Mondays	5.30pm - 6.30pm
Guides (Term Time only)	Mondays	7.00pm - 8.30pm
Brownies (Term Time only)	Wednesdays, Thursdays	5.15pm - 7.15pm
Aerobics	Mondays	8.35pm - 9.35pm
Fitness Firm	Tuesdays	6.45pm - 9.15pm
Slimming World	Tuesdays	.00pm - 9.30pm
Vinters WI	1st Wednesday of month	7.15pm - 10.00pm
Child Health Clinic	Thursdays	1.30pm - 4.30pm
Computer Club	Thursdays	7.30pm - 10.30pm
Bridge Club	Fridays	7.15pm - 11.00pm
Tai-Chi	Fridays	8.00pm - 9.30pm
Drama Group	Saturdays	9.00am - 12.00pm

Vinters Valley Park

Notes from our Nature Reserve

Tucked away as it is the valley is protected but is also squeezed by the ever increasing demands for more development.

The Valley Park Trust has now been operating for six years and has recently been granted a 99 year lease on the property.

The western side of the lake has been cleared of much overhanging vegetation and this should greatly benefit the lake.

Birdlife around the lake is plentiful and it is possible, if you are lucky, to see herons, Canada geese, moorhens, mallards, an occasional cormorant and a cheeky young swan who insists on examining visitors bags and pockets.

Away from the lake can be found blackcaps, finches, siskins, tits nuthatches etc. The yaffles laughter and drumming mixes with the harsh call

of jays and crows and the chattering of jacksnaws. Foxes are busy raising their cubs.

The icehouse has acquired lodgers in the form of bats, cavespiders and some overwintering butterflies.

We have a new Volunteer Warden - Helen Morley - who is eager to learn about life in our nature reserve.

We had a very successful concert at Grove Green this year and hope to have another one in November. We also hope to raise funds through a sponsored walk in June.

When visiting PLEASE Use the dog bins, stop fishermen- hooks and lines can kill- and don't dump unwanted rubbish it is all hazardous.

Extracted from an article by Lida Macgrory



PARK RANGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
VINTERS PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
SPRING 1997

RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

All residents of Vinters Park and Woodlands Estates are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Vinters Park Residents' Association, to be held in the Community Centre on Wednesday 14th May 1997, starting at 8.15pm. Refreshments will be served from 8pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last AGM
3. Matters arising therefrom
4. Chairman's Report
5. Presentation of Accounts
6. Election of Officers and Executive Committee members
7. Appointment of Hon. Auditor
8. Consideration of a motion to waive the annual subscription
9. Donal McGrory to speak on developments in Vinters Valley Park
10. Question Time with :-
Geoff Russell - who will be able to answer queries concerning highway matters.
Andrew Bale :- To discuss recycling of waste.
Chief Inspector Williams from Maidstone Police Station to discuss any matters of concern.
10. Any Other Business

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Introduction

A little while ago one of the residents of this estate asked me if the Residents Association was still operating. I was a little surprised at this question, but as this is the only piece of publicity we give ourselves regularly, I suppose many people would be justified in assuming we no longer exist - or if new residents never have existed. So for those who are not aware of it Vinters Park Residents Association exists to "promote the benefit of all the inhabitants of the Vinters Park and Woodlands Estates without distinction of sex or of political, religious or other opinions." We also manage the Community Centre with our first thoughts being for the benefit of the community.

In fact every inhabitant of these two estates is a member of the Association and can therefore be represented (if appropriate), by the Executive Committee and can be elected to that committee.

I must admit that in this last year we have devoted a lot of time to a problem directly affecting only one part of the estate but other work does get done and additional hands (or letter writers or phone diallers) would be very useful - so if you wish to see something happening around here, come to the AGM and join in!

Many of these reports have centred on Law & Order and it is necessary to report yet again on this subject.

Law & Order

For more than a year residents of Ashurst Road have been plagued by groups of young people making excessive noise, damaging property, leaving litter about and generally behaving like many teenagers well into the small hours of the morning.

Most of us can tolerate this sort of behaviour for a while, especially if a few words to the "kids" calms things down. However this was not happening, some of these kids were hardly teenagers and a lot of

alcohol was being drunk at the same time. The area was also attracting youth from off the estate (certainly from as far as Ringlestone) and things were starting to get out of hand. To anyone living at Snowdon Parade this may also sound familiar but the area we are talking about cannot easily be seen from a through road and therefore attracts less attention from police patrols.

These problems were drawn to the committee's attention by Gerry Kirrage and a meeting was arranged with representatives of local residents and the police during which it became clear that the sale of alcohol, directly or indirectly, to underage youths was part of the problem. It was also apparent that drugs were involved with there being evidence of "pushers" actually coming on to the estate. A further meeting was arranged for more of the residents, with the police, in the Community Centre and at a later date the Committee arranged a meeting with One-Stop's manager and Area Manager to address some of the problems.

It was apparent from these meetings that many local residents were considering resorting to violence, an attitude that although understandable is not sensible. The police were concerned but, as always, were very stretched by having to cover a large area with very few officers. The newly appointed Parish Constable(s) were taking some action but were not always able to catch those involved. One-Stops senior management denied any knowledge of intimidation of staff, stated that they sold alcohol in a responsible manner at all their 135 shops, indicated that they had no intention of changing their trading methods and denied flatly that they had sold alcohol to anyone under the age of 18.

The police were in due course seen to be much more active in the area, quite spectacularly so on at least one occasion, and the problems have died down again with the onset of colder weather.

The Committee are concerned to find long term answers, as well as helping with the immediate problems. Certainly one solution is for every one to know where their children are at night, and the state that they return in! I know for a certainty that children under the age of 12 have been seen in that area and many of the others are 16 or less.

Unfortunately it is not illegal for them to consume alcohol so the police are powerless. We explored with councillors the possibilities of a by-law prohibiting the drinking of alcohol in certain public places but this does not seem to be the right solution and is unlikely to gain MBC or police support. Legislation may be pending to allow the police to confiscate alcohol found in the possession of minors. The Committee also requested that One-Stop considers stopping the sale of alcohol at an earlier hour, but residents will note the attitude of their senior management.

Overall we cannot be certain the situation will improve this year, although it is hoped that with the advent of "zero-tolerance" policing residents will have to tolerate less disruption before the police take action. The Committee are quite happy to hear of other problems as they occur on the estate but advise all residents to report problems to the police, and to ensure that all crimes are listed as crimes. Above all do not tolerate antisocial behaviour; you have as many rights as the next man!

Youth

The Committee have heard very little about the youth group at Grove Green but it has been suggested that the answer to some of the Ashurst Road problems could be met by a "Youth Club" or "drop in." The unfortunate fact is that this sort of facility needs a very strong "youth leader", to be available 7 days a week, to be accessible to youth from a very wide area and to be in an area "insensitive" to noise. On most of these counts the Community Centre is totally unsuitable and as many of the young people who appear to need this facility do not live on the estate the committee feel that this should be dealt with by the Borough or County Council at a central location.

A "Sports Wall" has been suggested as a short term measure to provide more recreational facilities for the young. This would be a single wall, and hardtop surface surrounding it, marked out to allow a variety of ball games. The Committee would support this sort of development if an appropriate location could be provided. We have heard little of this for several months.

Transport

Some of you may remember that, last year, we had been making efforts to improve the bus service for the estate. We have not made great efforts to push this matter, during the year, but it is now good to see that a number 9 is serving the estate, increasing the frequency of buses to three an hour. If this service is used frequently then it may be possible to further improve the service so please don't ignore the possibilities when travelling into town or to Grove Green..

Planning

At this moment there would appear to be no major development threats to the estate. I'm not aware of anything concerning roads and the development adjacent to Stakis has not been heard of for a while, unfortunately this includes the Park & Ride facility that we do need. I hope we may hear more of this by the next meeting. It would be good to hear from residents about the incidence of inconsiderate parking and of "rat-running" on the estate so that we can better judge the continuing need for the park & ride facility.

The committee is taking an interest in the proposed development of Vinters Boys school into a co-educational school. Part of the proposal would include a large sports hall which would also form a sports-centre for use by the general public. The Association is being kept informed of progress on this development and has been asked to contribute to a committee advising on the hall.

Environmental

On other matters relating to the estate Keith Rogers, our Secretary, has had frequent correspondence with the council on various maintenance matters on the estate. These have included the state of the subways, overhanging hedges, grass cutting, the state of the bus stops, street lights and potential dangers on the roads.

Community Centre

The Community Centre also absorbs much of the Committee's time and has been the subject of considerable work this year. The Premises Manager, Bernard Bellchambers, deals with most of the routine problems and during the year he has had to cope with an attempt to kick in one of the

doors, two broken windows and a complete redecoration apart from the halls routine maintenance. We have also, thanks to the work of Peter Lott and Hugh Reddington, replaced all the tubes in the Community Centres lights, replaced the fridge and are now looking for a new cooker. More disturbing is that the Association has been the subject of an insurance claim due to a fall in January 1996 because of icy conditions. We cannot go into details because action is still pending, but the result may affect the way we run the hall in bad weather. My worry is that imposition of a routine of inspection could easily make the halls charges excessive or if inspection and snow clearing is impossible, require the closure of the hall at short notice for safety reasons. Overall the hall maintains its good bookings record, thanks in no small measure to Margaret Stubbins' efforts although there are still opportunities for making bookings at the weekends, probably because of the ban on consumption of alcohol on the premises.

Finance Manager

Unfortunately we are unable to provide a Finance Managers report in time for going to print. Hugh has done a magnificent job this year despite tremendous pressures on his time from work. He is unable to continue in this position and this has meant that we have to find a new Finance Manager, fortunately an interest has already been expressed by a resident but this does require confirmation by the Committee.

Conclusion

We hope, this year, to have representatives of the police, Borough Council and also elected representatives at our AGM. As residents of the estate you are of course all welcome to come along both to discuss any problems you might be experiencing and also to hear about the place that you live.

My thanks, as in so many years, to the capable work of our Honorary Secretary, Keith Rogers, Premises Manager, Bernard Bellchambers, Bookings Manager, Margaret Stubbins, Finance Manager, Hugh Reddington and all the committee members.

Neil Sinclair Chairman.