

replaced the cooker and have also carefully examined the amount of cleaning required in the hall. This programme has indicated both the need for more cleaning (inevitable as any building and its fittings age), the urgent need for renewal of the tubes in the lights, the replacement of the common room windows and the need to replace the rear emergency doors (see note above concerning vandalism). These were major factors in our decision to increase fees by 10% this year.

Quietly working in the background is, as always, our Bookings Manager - Margaret Stubbins - whose report is below. I would like to express my thanks to her for the work she continues to carry out with the bookings and the capable manner in which she has helped out with financial affairs.

A final point concerning the hall, and this is more in the nature of an appeal to those living close by. The Play group tells me that when the children have been using the grassed area, to the side of the hall, they have been finding large chunks of bread, obviously thrown out for the birds. Unfortunately these have to be cleared away before the children can use the area and if not cleared away are likely to encourage vermin into the area. It would be appreciated if this practice could be stopped.

CONCLUSION

Looking to the future I'm pleased to see that the Play group is still firmly established, despite the shaky future of many other such groups in this country. It has in fact, in common with Eastborough School, recently been Ofstedded and so parents looking for such a group can be confident that their needs will be met within a short walking distance of their homes.

After the departure of Vinters Christian Community from the community centre St. Lukes Church have now held an Easter Service and will be holding an "Alpha Course" on weekday evenings at the Community Centre. The different clubs and societies that meet there continue to flourish and I'm always encouraged

by those groups specifically for the local community, such as Brownies, Guides, WI not to mention the Child Health Clinic. It is there to meet the communities needs and is not a council run hall, but is run by the Association for the residents benefit.

Finally perhaps we should be looking forward to the year 2000 and thinking about some way to celebrate it. I am tempted to be involved in arranging a 'street party' for people on the estate, making sure that it is something that any family could feel happy to attend and 'see in the new century.' I know that I'm not the only one feeling like this and if anyone else is interested in the idea perhaps they would like to contact me. So my thanks as in previous years to our Secretary, Keith Rogers, the other committee members, our managers and everyone who has helped in this last year.

BOOKING MANAGERS REPORT

The Community Centre was completed at the end of 1986 and since that time local groups such as the Brownies, Guides, Playgroup and Women's Institute have used the hall as their base, together with a number of groups and clubs from outside the area such as the Maidstone Computer Club, Beverley Bridge Club, Child Health Clinic and Drama Group. A list of users is set out below. The Centre is in regular use throughout the week, with the exception of some days during the school holidays, but most weekends are available for occasional bookings, bearing in mind that alcohol is not permitted on the premises. The Common Room is also available for hire, usually for committee meetings and will seat about 30 people comfortably. For further information regarding hire charges and availability please contact the Bookings Manager, Margaret Stubbins on 01622 201192.



PARK RANGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
VINTERS PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
SPRING 1998

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 20th May 1998, 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. Matters arising from the 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
10. Question Time with :-
Geoff Russell Borough Highways Manager.
A representative from Maidstone Police Station to discuss any matters of concern.
Judy Ride Head Teacher of the new Valley Park Community School.
Deanne Cunningham MBC Parks and Ground Maintenance Officer on the new Focus Park.
10. Any Other Business

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

With the new millennium almost upon us it should really be a time to look forward. I am happy to be able to say that this last year has for me been an encouraging time, so that looking forward is not something that fills me with alarm or despondency. I hope that it may be the same for you.

In this spirit of optimism I would like to present my report to the residents of this estate. I hope that I will see many of you at what looks like being a very interesting AGM. May I suggest that if you feel involvement in your community is important, or indeed you feel that the committee should be doing more, you should seek nomination to the Executive Committee of the Residents Association. Nomination forms are available from the Secretary at 24 Lombardy Drive and should be returned to him within seven days. Alternatively nominations may, normally, be made at the meeting.

SCHOOLS

The merger of Vinters boys and Mid-Kent school for girls is now upon us. The creation of the Valley Park Community School will make major changes both to the lives of many of our children and to the traffic flow in the area. Representatives of the Association have attended meetings at County Hall to discuss the effects of this development especially on traffic and have been able to discuss the options available with officials. July Rider, the Head teacher of the new school will be attending the AGM to discuss the relationship of the school with the local community. You will be able to ask her and Mr Cole, the retiring Head teacher of Vinters Boys School, questions about the future of education in the area.

ROADS AND FOOTPATHS

Our roads footpaths and the people that use them occupy a considerable amount of the committees time. There is a continuing concern about the speed of traffic on the estate and also inconsiderate or dangerous parking, concerns that have been expressed to the police on a number of occasions with some success.

This year also saw the introduction of the cycle paths. The Association, in conjunction with many residents and others, were quick to express concern about the mixing of cyclists and pedestrians on busy footpaths especially the one from Snowdon Avenue to Huntsmans Lane. Cyclists should always dismount when they are using that route to and from Vinters Road.

The committee have kept up an almost continuous dialogue with the Council concerning the trimming of hedges to allow unhindered use of the footpaths. This is usually successful but does not occur overnight.

We have also, on many occasions drawn the Council's attention to the state of the subways, to little effect until the beginning of this year, since which time they have been cleaned twice. Our graffiti artists usually return quickly, in one case literally within hours, but at least, at the moment of writing this, it is not necessary to have to answer too many of our children's questions concerning the meaning of certain words!

A further matter raised at meetings was the issuing of parking permits. These can only be collected, in person, at 13 Tonbridge Road if the first attempt to deliver it to a residents home has failed. It is only possible to vary this in exceptional circumstances.

Most recently it has been drawn to our attention that there is no progress on providing a crossing of the Bearsted Road at Nottcutts. This was originally part of the, now delayed, road widening scheme however in the memory of this Chairman is the fact that it had been agreed as being necessary but only to be put in place when that scheme was finished.

BUS SERVICES

The committee were delighted, last year, to note that bus services had been improved. John Ashdown (who had been instrumental in pushing

for these improvements) had also reported, during the year, on the fact that these services were enjoying an increased level of use. It is regrettable therefore that I have to report the withdrawal of some of these services in January.

THE VALLEY PARK

As some residents will know the Association have always been interested in the development of the Valley Park, and have a member (Peter Lott) on the management committee of the Park. The Park has recently been given control of another section of land which will now make this valuable asset to the estate ecologically secure. However life is not always a bed of roses. The committee have recently become aware that the Park is almost continually running at a deficit and have decided that a small quarterly contribution will be appropriate from the Association.

CRIME

It seems strange that I cannot find, in the committee's minutes, mention of any major disturbances on the estate. Although I am aware of other incidents of vandalism such as the attempts to burn trees, the attacks on the Community Centre and damage to cars parked there. I would be interested to hear from residents who have had a different experience this year and also from those who might be able to say why those incidents have decreased. Certainly during the summer months the police were much more active than in previous years and on a number of occasions I noticed a bus load of them touring the estate. Perhaps we are just at a quieter stage of the cycle that would appear to be associated with such matters.

Certainly at one stage this year, because of attacks on the Community Centre, the committee were actively considering some sort of TV surveillance. Time will tell if it is necessary, however I do know that the police often find visual evidence (video or photo) very useful.

A member of the committee (Keith Rogers) has also been monitoring the use of the town centre CCTV systems, as a representative of the Association. The purpose of the monitoring group has been to prevent the misuse of that information.

We anticipate representatives of the community

policing unit will be present at the AGM, however we do not know if we will see Inspector Williams there again this year as I understand that he is shortly to retire.

SNOWDON PARADE

Literally while the last AGM was in progress a considerable amount of damage was done to the steps at Snowdon Parade. Although the repairs should have been fairly straightforward it was necessary for the committee to encourage more rapid action to carry out repairs from the landlords, whose identity was not easily established. It has similarly been necessary to press for the replacement of missing fence panels, the lack of which was allowing small children to run straight out into the car park.

The cost of these repairs would of course have been borne by the tenants but the Association were also able to establish, with help from the Borough Council, the limits of the tenant's responsibility. In other respects little has been heard of major problems in that area. Certainly the committee are always keen to hear of any incidents of nuisance, in any area of the estate, as this helps to establish a larger picture of life here.

ASHURST ROAD PLAY AREA

Residents of Ashurst Road and areas adjoining the play area may have been pleased to hear that this will become the Boroughs latest "Focus Play Park". The work will include improvements in the facilities, both for young and older children, some of which will be inevitably used (and abused) by young adults. Readers may detect a note of cynicism in this last comment, however part of the development will include the control of more troublesome elements by both the planting of suitably prickly shrubs, the removal of 'cover,' and the improvements in lighting. Part of the planning process involves lengthy consultation, not just with the Residents Association, but more especially with all the residents in roads immediately adjoining the play area. This should have been completed by the time of the AGM. Deanne Cunningham the Borough Councils Parks and Grounds Maintenance Officer will be attending the AGM and so it will be possible for Residents from the

wider part of the estate as well as local residents to ask about the Focus Park and discuss this development at the AGM.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MATTERS

One problem that took longer to resolve than was desirable was the appointment of a new finance manager. Hugh Reddington was unable to continue in this position and as a result the hunt was on for a replacement. Regrettably while this was happening it became difficult to maintain the Associations finances in the sort of order to which we had become accustomed. Fortunately an old friend of the Association, John Stubbins, stepped in, brought the situation under control and then set up a system on a computer purchased by the Association. A new finance manager, Avice Harms, was then appointed in September and following that appointment she has maintained our books in good order, liaised closely with the Bookings Manager and used her experience in debt chasing to reduce the levels of outstanding fees for hire of the hall.

COMMUNITY HALL

Bernard Bellchambers continues to carry out an excellent job as our Hall manager ensuring the good maintenance of this valuable asset to the community. Regrettably some parts of the community do not appear to share this view of the Hall. Reports of vandalism to the Hall have been an unfortunate element of many meetings this year. During this last year it has been necessary to replace the glass above the entry doors with a UPVC infill, because of the glass being broken, and as was noted at the AGM last year shortly before that time the doors themselves had some of their panels broken. Two of the main Hall windows have also been broken in the Hall by stones and on at least three occasions attempts have been made to either lever and/ or kick open the rear emergency doors. At one stage during the year it looked as though the total cost of repairs caused by vandalism would exceed 10% of the Associations income. If you think about this in terms of your own household income you can understand the concern of the committee.

As part of our continuing programme of maintenance and renewal of the hall we have