

maintenance being necessary this year our finances should be in healthy state. They would be far healthier if, due to key holder losing their key, we had not had to purchase new locks, and keys for all users, a sum amounting to some £300. The committee is still pursuing the matter of recovering this money.

Community Centre

As stated above there have been no major works carried out at the Community Centre in this last year. We are however close to replacing all the chairs, thanks in part to a grant from Boxley Parish Council, and the curtains in the Hall. The curtains have been delayed by our discovery that a grant is available from Maidstone Borough Council for fireproofing - which could amount to about half the total cost. It is hoped that these matters should be finished with by the AGM.

On all other matters our Premises manager has done invaluable work quietly and efficiently throughout the year. Graffiti have been removed, arranging for dumped cars to be towed away, manhole covers lowered with little fuss or inconvenience to others.

Conclusion

My thanks, as in previous years to the unsung heroes of the Committee who, without fuss, make much of this work possible. My especial thanks to Noreen Latham, who after several years on this committee has decided to step down and to Keith Rogers, our Honorary Secretary,

whose unobtrusive but firm hand has smoothed the work of the Committee. If you feel that you would be interested in joining this committee then please come to the AGM and ask about being nominated for a rewarding and worthwhile task in your Community.

A New Church for Vinters Park

Anthony Delaney St Lukes Church

"We've had this lovely problem at St Luke's of too many people wanting to come to the services! We've just run out of room. We felt that we should be looking for somewhere else to offer local people of all ages where they'll be welcomed warmly, and have an opportunity to learn more about God. Lots of us have an idea 'He's out there somewhere,' but don't really know how much God loves us. Many don't go to church because they think it'll be unwelcoming and boring, or they're uncomfortable about how their children will fit in.

I've been going in Eastborough school over the last couple of years telling the children there in assemblies about Jesus, they seem to like him and we've had a lot of fun. It seemed the natural place to start something new, and Easter Sunday is a great time for a fresh start in this Millennium year. Anyone who comes to the short services (starting at 11am Easter Day) will find lively songs, a warm and friendly welcome, and teaching rooted in real life to inspire and encourage them; kids will love it, and there'll even be a space for them to sit!"



PARK RANGER

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
VINTERS PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
SPRING 2000**

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 19th April, starting at 8.15pm.

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. Consider a motion to waive the annual subscription
9. The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Frances Brown, will speak on "The Role of the Mayor and community involvement."
10. The Borough Secretary Richard Snaith speaking on elections and the pro's and con's of creating a Parish Council.
11. Local Policing:- PC Ian Gedge Crime Prevention Unit
12. Question Time: A chance to ask our speakers and guests questions about their work. Guests will include Geoff Russell from Highways.
13. Any Other Business

Chairman's Report Happy Valley

Over a hundred years ago the site of the roads and houses comprising Vinters Park and the Woodlands Estate was part of a country estate owned by the Balston family. Then the valley that we now know as Vinters Valley Park was known as "Happy Valley." I sincerely hope that despite the many problems that we all face for the vast majority of us this estate can still be thought of as a "Happy Valley."

As in previous years we do not wish to bore you by reading out this report to you at the AGM. Instead we have invited various guests whose work directly affects our lives now, or may do so in the future. This includes the Mayor, the Borough Secretary, Jeff Russell (Highways), PC Ian Gedge (Crime Prevention Unit) and Heads of the local schools. They will be there to answer your questions as well as to talk about their work.

In this report I have outlined issues that have been dealt with by the Executive Committee of the Association in this past year. All adult residents of this estate are automatically Association members and entitled to stand for election to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee

I have tried to cover very briefly some of the matters discussed in the Executive Committee. This normally meets about ten times a year and its task is both to oversee the Management of the Community Centre and to discuss and act upon, where practicable, issues directly affecting life upon this estate. Our secretary, Keith Rogers, helped by his experience in local government has to be especially thanked for the tireless way in which he conducts most of the correspondence for the Association. All the committee members help in whatever ways they can and the Chairman has on the odd occasion been known to do a bit. Our Bookings, Finance and Premises Managers work efficiently and with great competence often carrying out tasks far exceeding anything that could reasonably be expected of them.

The "State of the Estate."

I am quite certain that many of us have been seeing a steady deterioration in the condition of the estate. Weeds up to 18" (45 cm) high abound in the gutters, pot holes are a frequent hazard for the unwary on roads and most footpaths, bushes frequently blocking footpaths, and all footpaths show signs of hard wear. Walking through a subway makes one feel threatened with graffiti always present and the subway lights frequently painted out.

The committee has viewed this with increasing concern over the last year and in the last few months have been making representations to the council bodies responsible. A common answer to this has been - "we'll do something if we have the money left over." Because this rarely

happens we are now approaching those council members responsible for the Annual Budget, for maintenance and repairs, to give our area a higher priority.

Some of the air of dilapidation is caused by the residents themselves - garages not used and cars parked on foot ways, walls left collapsed, 18" high grass in front gardens (which encourages the weeds in the gutters). It will be much easier for the RA to push for repairs if everybody who lives here shows some pride in the area.

Police Liaison

Our meetings this year have been enlivened by regular reports from the Community Policing Unit in the form of Ian Gedge or John Ansell. They have let us know the crime statistics for our area but have also had valuable feedback from the committee about matters on the estate. They have also now set up a "mobile surgery" that will appear from time to time in most areas of Maidstone, to allow local issues to be addressed. Sometimes when we have finished one of these meetings one could wonder -

Are we safe to walk the streets?

It would be very easy to believe, just by looking at crime statistics, that Vinters Park was an increasingly dangerous place to live. 4 cases of vehicles being set on fire and each month at least two or three burglaries and several thefts of or from cars not to mention innumerable cases of vandalism.

Having lived on this estate for many years now I do not actually believe that the problem is significantly worse than in the past, with the exception of the burnt out

cars. That seems to follow a definite pattern that suggests it is caused by someone of school age who is frequently out in the early hours of the morning during the holiday period. Other than this problem, and one case of a Special Constable being assaulted when checking some suspicious characters, there have been no incidents that have suggested a serious threat to person or property. That is not to say that burglaries and theft are not very distressing or frightening, but it does mean that this is a safe place to live and walk the streets. Perhaps, however, we should all consider becoming active members of a "Neighbourhood Watch."

Community Building

Vinters Park is a community of 1550 homes separated from the town by a "wall" of major roads. Many of us would like to see this becoming an advantage not a burden. With this in mind committee members Chris and Gerry Kirrage have been making first steps towards community building projects. But they need your help if they are to get anywhere with a variety of different social and practical ideas to bring people together and to support and improve local facilities.

In the realms of community building it is interesting to hear about another development -

New Churches

Many will find it exciting to know that very shortly there will be two new churches within our community. One meeting at the Centre and the other meeting at Eastborough School. You will find more details about the church at

Eastborough School in the box, but all that we know about the other church is that it will be an offshoot of a Church in London and that it will be intended for this community.

The Valley Park

The Residents Association has continued its financial support of the Valley Park and welcomed the new Warden (Helen Morley) to one of the meetings where she outlined developments in the Park and distributed copies of her new Newsletter. Subscriptions to this will go to support the Park.

Peter Lott continues to be deeply involved with the committee managing the Park and as such keeps us informed of developments.

Finance

Is mainly derived from the Community Centre. Generally it has always been used for its maintenance and to cover the administrative costs of the Association. In the last few years the Association has however been making a contribution towards the costs of the Valley Park. However, as was pointed out by our Auditor last year, this has meant that for the last two years we have been running at a slight deficit. Our Bookings Manager, Finance Manager and Terry O'Connor have therefore reviewed our fee structure with a view to increasing our charges. As a result moderate increases were introduced. We have also been applying for any grants that were available for any major expenditure in this last year and for years to come.

Thanks to this, and a no major