

Exclusive retirement property for the 55+ with security and exceptional service, managed with integrity

ROLLING GARDEN RENEWAL



Abbey Mill planting plan



As Garden Adviser to all Cognatum estates, Charles Gilchrist aims to increase the gardening knowledge and motivation of estate managers. In addition to regular visits two or three times a year, he is introducing 10-year plans in consultation with owners.

Gardens do not stand still and every 10 years or so it is necessary to look at the most overgrown plant beds and replenish the stock, in keeping with an overall concept, as well as addressing common problems such as lack of colour and high, dense planting in front of windows.

To introduce a system of restocking, 10% of the plant beds will be looked at each year (in an order of agreed priority) so that every bed gets refreshed every ten years and all newly planted areas conform to a unified garden design. The average life expectancy of a shrub bed is approximately 10 years although some shrubs, correctly pruned, have a longer life span. Plants such as hebes and lavender will be ready for replacement.

The plan from Abbey Mill in Prestbury is an example of how this works. The main features are detailed planting plans and cost estimates for two years ahead, with flexibility for swapping of priorities in future years. The plan solves the problem of someone who has replanted their garden with plants that cannot easily be maintained by the estate gardeners and wants to hand back the responsibility to Cognatum. It ensures that back areas, sometimes neglected as low priority, are not overlooked in the replanting programme. Garden costs will be evenly spread over the 10-year period.

MARLBOROUGH BRANDT



Dr Nick Maurice (centre) and Trevor Kearley (right)

The Marlborough Brandt Group, MBG, was set up in 1981 by a group of people living in Marlborough, following the publication of the Brandt Report that highlighted the chasm in living standards that exists between wealthy countries and the developing world. In 1982 a partnership was formed between Marlborough and Gunjur, a Muslim community in The Gambia, West Africa, founded on mutual learning through reciprocal visits. So far some 1,500 people from The Gambia and Wiltshire have taken part in the exchange programme staying with local families.

Commander Trevor Kearley, who moved to Cognatum's Wye House estate in 2012 as a convenient springboard for his excursions abroad, is now a trustee of MBG, which resulted in this reflective account of his recent visit to Gunjur.

'I turned 80 in August and am now travelling as though there is no tomorrow. I have bought a flat in Cape Town to stay in three or four times a year. I have the "love of Africa" bug.

'I had travelled in a dozen or so countries in Africa, so my first visit to Gunjur as a new MBG Trustee was not entirely novel.

'The searing sun, bustling dusty towns and shanty villages and the brightly

dressed women were familiar. I was to stay with an ordinary African family in their compound.

'I am ashamed to say that in the first 48 hours I found myself thinking: "I'm not a celebrity but please get me out of here" No running water, flushing loo, electric light, drawers or hanging space. A thin patchwork foam mattress on a vast bed that collapsed under me at 1.15am on the second night. The not-so-hot food. A cockerel outside my net window – his raucous and unpredictable squawk from 3.15am onwards piercing the other sounds of an African night.

'A maxim that I try to heed is: "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it." So on day three of my visit I did just that. I reasoned, we are all human beings on this planet and as an accident of birth they are Africans and I am European reared in different circumstances though no fault or merit. Poverty and wealth are only perceptions.

'The genuine sincerity of our greetings and meetings with the Gunjur people at all levels warmed my heart, not least their obvious love for immediately recognized "Doctor Nick", the founder MBG Director, due to retire after 33

EDITORIAL

This issue features our Garden Adviser Charles Gilchrist's ideas for garden renewal, which he rightly views as a continuous process – rather like painting the Forth Bridge, but much more rewarding.

John Lavin responds to some issues raised at the Autumn Budget meetings and we have a personal travelogue that encourages us to reflect on Western lifestyles and the implications of inequality for global security.

On the back page, Cognatum Property report strong and vibrant interest in properties marketed in 2015, with 117 properties changing hands, most through our agency, which provides a dedicated and professional service.

AUTUMN ANNUAL MEETINGS

Whilst the focus of these meetings was on budgets, along with local issues, there was discussion on a number of common themes:

Many owners are keen to see Cognatum Estates develop an environmental strategy, encompassing energy efficiency, reduced water use, rainwater capture, photo-voltaic roof panels, vehicle charging facilities and recycling.

Cognatum's new MD, John Lavin, will bring forward a strategy in 2016 and report back on progress at the annual meetings.

Concerns were expressed about building contractor performance and the value residents place on the estate management service. John is putting in place alternative systems to improve our contractor supervision and focus more resources on contract management. This will enhance standards and deliver a higher quality of workmanship.

Cognatum will also continue to develop the role of the estate manager, encouraging and supporting them to respond to queries and make decisions locally.

Whilst the annual meetings were well attended, other arranged meetings in the year were less popular. In 2016 a Spring Forum will be arranged by operations managers to review the previous year's expenditure and to discuss priorities for the next year, but it is proposed that the formal summer event held last year will not be repeated in 2016. The main meeting will remain the autumn budget meeting which will be chaired by a director of the company.

News in brief...



Alan Clark (centre) with Henry Thornton and Guy Mossop

Alan Clark – Alan retired at Christmas after an association of over 30 years, first as a banker with Hill Samuel funding new retirement projects and then for the last 17 years as a non-executive director. Chairman Henry Thornton thanked him for his invaluable contribution over the years and for being such a loyal supporter of The Beechcroft Trust and latterly Cognatum Estates.

Residents Advisory Panel – Two new members joined the panel in 2015, Graham Francis and Allister Langlois. Graham moved to Berrow Court and is a retired educationalist, former Mayor of Marlborough and now a town councillor in beautiful Upton upon Severn. Allister lives at Les Blancs Bois, our estate in Guernsey. He is Deputy Chief Minister on the island and, among several other government posts, is also Social Security Minister.

years and 61 visits. Countless traditional hugs for him, an outstretched hand and a smiling "You are welcome!" for me, the newcomer. The many children of my compound's family running to greet me on returning home at day's end.

'I learned that the African name they had given me is "Father Ebrahim" and when I left I had the honour of being presented with a specially made caftan in purple cotton. It was a truly sad parting, mollified by reassuring "my" family that I would return one day.

'You can read elsewhere about the achievements of the Marlborough/Gunjur link. I have written here only about the warmth of an African welcome and kindness because these are the abiding images from my ten days in Gunjur. Smiling black faces with dazzling white teeth, sparkling eyes and an embrace that is physically and emotionally strong. True family and community love and respect for old age. Those are the memories that I shall treasure. How right Willy Brandt was to make his profound report.'

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2015 was another successful year for Cognatum Property with the number of properties sold up nearly 40% compared with 2014 and the average price 14% higher. Cognatum Property achieved a 70% overall share of the

resale market. This performance underlines the benefits of the in-house sales team combined with the dedication of the estate managers promoting their estates.

Peter Walton, Head of Sales reports that 2016 is already showing promise with a strong pipeline of sales agreed and, far from sitting on its laurels, the sales team expects prices to continue to increase in a strong market thanks to a general shortage of top quality retirement property.

For details of all properties for sale please visit our web site or telephone 01491 821170.



12 Framers Court, Lane End, Buckinghamshire

A brick and flint two-bedroom house in a large village high in the Chilterns with lovely walks down the Hambleden Valley, twinned with Saint-Pierre-d'Oléron, on the island of Oléron in southwestern France.

£410,000



6 Turnpike Court, Ardingly, West Sussex

A two-bedroom penthouse apartment, with lift and stunning roof terrace. The village has a weekly country market.

£425,000



10 Timbermill Court, Fordingbridge, Hampshire

A three-bedroom first floor apartment with balcony, in a bustling market town on the edge of the New Forest.

£390,000



5 Mytchett Heath, Mytchett, Surrey

A two-bedroom house with a conservatory, in beautiful wooded estate gardens, close to the Basingstoke Canal.

£399,950



5 Hildesley Court, East Ilsley, Berkshire

In the heart of racing country and a historic village on the Berkshire Downs, an attractive two-bedroom cottage overlooking the village pond.

£250,000



18 Atwater Court, Lenham, Kent

In the 'Garden of England', an immaculate two-bedroom cottage with views over gardens and just 50 yards from good local shops.

£325,000



6 West Allcourt, Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire

At the highest navigable point on the Thames, a stone built first floor two-bedroom apartment overlooking a wildflower meadow.

£350,000



26 Ashcombe Court, Ilminster, Somerset

A two-bedroom cottage, built in mellow honey-coloured stone, in a charming country town, surrounded by beautiful countryside.

£275,000



16 Home Farm, Iwerne Minster, Dorset

On the edge of the Blackmore Vale, a modern two-bedroom first floor apartment in a barn conversion, with a balcony and parkland views.

£279,000



19 North Mill Place, Halstead, Essex

A wonderful setting in the grounds of an old mill on the Essex/Suffolk border, a large two-bedroom cottage with a sun room.

£295,000