

EDITORIAL

Self-congratulation can leave an uncomfortable feeling, but there are occasions when it is justified and this is one of them. In this issue we celebrate Noel Shuttleworth's achievement in setting up the ECA 40 years ago. He did not come from a property background but, disregarding the housebuilders' conventional mindset, he created a whole new way of life for many retired people. He and his partner Christopher Thornhill are to be congratulated!

The political shenanigans continue with the snap election in June adding another surprise result, just as Brexit negotiations got underway. Cognatum Property report that sales of properties coming on the market in the first half of the year were similar to last year, but the property market in general has reacted with some hesitancy to the political and economic uncertainty.



Julia Gough

In May Julia Gough replaced Jeffrey Gaines as a resident non-executive director of Cognatum Estates. Julia is a great supporter of the Cognatum way of life having lived with her husband at Church Place in Ickenham for the past eleven years. She taught in London before moving to Cheltenham where she became a magistrate, latterly mainly working in the family court. She then moved to a cottage on the Helford River in Cornwall for a few years before moving to Ickenham. With ten grandchildren, she now describes herself as 'a peripatetic, trouble-shooting grandmother!'

New homes at Stuart Court

The Cotswolds Property Company is on target to hand over the first of the seven new two and three-bedroom properties at Stuart Court, Minchinhampton, before Christmas. Built in Cotswold stone, these will be light and airy energy-conscious homes with triple glazing, underfloor heating and heat recovery systems.

The owners of the new properties will enjoy the management service and the wonderful grounds of Stuart Court, which was built just over ten years ago. Prices start at £685,000 and sales information is available from Cognatum Property.

An illustration of the development can be seen on the Property page.

NEWS IN BRIEF...



A Bee Orchid – An *ophrys apifera* was recently spotted in the wild flower meadow at Churchfield Court, Giron. The orchid is tiny with an intriguing flower that our Garden Adviser Charles Gilchrist describes as somewhat swollen and shaped like a brown and yellow bee. Originally pollinated by a small bee attracted by its shape, the plants are now self-pollinating, as the particular bee concerned is extinct in England. Its conservation status is unclear as, whilst it is thought to be relatively rare and protected, it may be on the increase in some parts of the country.

Back to the ARHM – A year ago the Cognatum board made the decision to rejoin the ARHM (Association of Retirement Housing Managers), reversing an earlier one to move its

A toast to *The English Courtyard Association*

40 years ago Noel Shuttleworth and Christopher Thornhill bought their first site at Manor Farm in Pewsey – The English Courtyard Association and a new era in retirement housing was born. The venture was the brainchild of Noel who, when looking for a home for his widowed mother, had found that there was nothing suitable for retired professional people.

It was a landmark moment recognised by property reporter Jeremy Gates two years later as the project was nearing completion, when he wrote in the *Daily Express* in 1979: 'A new venture in an almost deserted part of the housing market is being launched this week by a group that describes itself as *The English Courtyard Association*. The association is an elegant title to describe an operation which older house buyers have been awaiting for years; top quality, compact, low-maintenance cottages for retired folk.' It should be remembered that at the time there were none of the now ubiquitous McCarthy & Stone schemes so the ECA was breaking entirely new ground, for which over the next decade they were showered with architectural, landscape and housing awards.

Manor Court, designed by Paul Gibson of the Sidell Gibson Partnership, was strongly influenced by the beautiful Elizabethan almshouses of nearby Froxfield. The 24 cottages and apartments were built in spacious grounds bordering the River Avon, around an open courtyard in warm red local brick and clay tile with low stone mullioned windows. They set a new standard of luxury with well proportioned rooms designed for downsizers' furniture, plenty of storage space in the roof, and everything needed to make life easier and more comfortable. Other features included a communal guest suite and laundry, and an office and accommodation for an estate manager couple whose role was to be 'a good neighbour'.

The Manor Court model proved popular and has stood the test of time with its emphasis on attractive architecture and high standards of landscaping. Internally the properties have demonstrated their flexibility as customer tastes, technology and market trends have moved to more open-plan living.

allegiance to the ARMA (Association of Residential Managing Agents). Following a recent compliance audit by the ARHM, Cognatum Estates' application has been approved.

Cognatum has also joined the Retirement Housing Group, which works to promote retirement living and help shape government policy. Stephen Ladyman, former Minister of State for Transport, chairs the group.

Rethinking retirement – Earlier this year MBA students at Warwick Business School undertook a short research project for Cognatum looking at the retirement housing market, industry trends and how Cognatum should position itself. Their research included interviews with members of the Residents Advisory Panel and industry experts.

They provided a stimulating report which concluded that Cognatum had a distinctive and highly valued brand. It suggested that in promoting the company, Cognatum needed to emphasise the independent lifestyle, the personal estate management service, and the quality of its locations, which are close to good restaurants, cafes and transport links. Customer service should be focussed on the notion of independent choice and ways in which Cognatum can facilitate customers' options, but not choose for them.

A further 36 developments followed on, spreading the influence of the ECA across the South of England, along with several developments in the Midlands, Cheshire and one at Castel in Guernsey.

In 2008 the ECA agreed a merger with The Beechcroft Trust, a company set up by Henry Thornton and Guy Mossop that shared its values and ethos, forming Cognatum (which means 'bringing together'), a new not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. This increased the number of estates to 60 and provided a platform for taking Noel's inspiring vision into the future.

The story of The English Courtyard Association is told in *The Best Kept Secret of Retirement* by Noel Shuttleworth which is available from Amazon.

Residents Advisory Panel – The Residents Advisory Panel (RAP) met in May. The panel provides an effective sounding board and source of advice on activities, policies and processes. The eight members of RAP meet twice a year in Wallingford; anyone interested in joining should contact the chairman of the panel, John Lavin. Appointments are normally for a three-year period.

At the May meeting alarm call procedures were discussed together with the role of the estate manager in an emergency, looking at how to achieve the best response and reduce non-emergency use. The panel also expressed a strong interest in supporting sales through Cognatum Property. It saw the involvement of this specialist agency in marketing as the best way to protect property values and to ensure that buyers are well informed about the lifestyle they were moving into.

Autumn Meetings – The programme of annual meetings with budget presentations starts on 26 September and continues through to early November. Cognatum directors will chair these and there will be refreshments and an opportunity for discussion before the meetings. This year Savills' recent estate condition surveys are likely to be of particular interest as these are being used as a reference point for longer-term maintenance funding.



Noel Shuttleworth at the Summer Garden Party held at St. Luke's Court, Marlborough

EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY FOR THE 55+ WITH SECURITY AND EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE, MANAGED WITH INTEGRITY

There are signs this year of a slowdown in the general housing market due to the stamp duty changes, uncertainty around Brexit and the snap general election, which increasingly has affected our buyers who need to sell to buy. Prices in the first half of 2017 have continued to rise steadily. However, this is uneven with hot spots such as Berkshire and Wiltshire, and cooler ones in the South-west making these areas very good value and more attractive to buyers.



Our research shows that two-thirds of our buyers tend to move from further afield and most use the internet, and so our property marketing is focussed on regular advertising in the national newspapers such as the *Telegraph*, on the internet, and sometimes in regional magazines.

We are now launching the sale of seven stylish new properties at Stuart Court, Minchinhampton, which should be ready for occupation by Christmas.

For a brochure of the new development or details of all the properties for sale, please contact us at property@cognatum.co.uk or 01491 821170.



Stylish new development at Stuart Court, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire

Seven contemporary and energy efficient properties in the beautiful grounds of Stuart Court, within this popular and idyllic village. There are five three-bedroom houses and two apartments.

£685,000 - £925,000



19 Lyefield Court, Emmer Green, Berkshire

Next to Reading Golf Course and overlooking the 'Mediterranean garden', a two-bedroom ground floor apartment with garden terrace.

£425,000



14 Barton Farm, Cerne Abbas, Dorset

A two-bedroom cottage with conservatory and small garden, a short walk from the centre of the village. The Cerne runs through the meadow.

£275,000



7 Herringcote, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

In a popular village with an historic abbey, a three-bedroom cottage with a south-facing conservatory, in a garden square.

£375,000



11 Hayes End Manor, South Petherton, Somerset

Built in honey-coloured Ham stone around a beautiful former farmyard, a two-bedroom cottage with extensive views east across a meadow.

£275,000



3 Northfield Court, Aldeburgh, Suffolk

In this beautifully windswept and unspoilt town, and just a short walk from the beach and shops, a two-bedroom timbered cottage.

£350,000



10 Bluecoat Pond, Horsham, Sussex

This two-bedroom first floor apartment has a spacious sitting room with a lovely sunroom overlooking the courtyard gardens.

£385,000



14 Church Leat, Downton, Wiltshire

Built on the site of the village tannery, a two-bedroom riverside cottage, flint faced, with a bedroom balcony looking onto the Avon.

£375,000



5 Wye House, Marlborough, Wiltshire

A three-bedroom first floor duplex apartment with a large living room, in a Grade II listed property, looking out over a formal garden.

£650,000



15 Berrow Court, Upton on Severn, Worcestershire

An immaculately maintained two-bedroom cottage with extensive views over the Ham towards the River Severn. The garage has loft storage.

£270,000