



Building work continues at Strawberry Hill House!



Since our last Newsletter, we are pleased to say that the building work at Strawberry Hill House has been progressing well. We are thankful for the good weather, even during the winter months, with little time lost due to inclement weather.

The major job of building the retaining wall was completed in the autumn of 2016. The foundations were laid, and brickwork on the lower ground floor commenced in January, followed by the upper ground floor in March, and the first floor brickwork was completed in May. The contractors are currently constructing the roof, and we hope that the building will be watertight by the end of June!



We are receiving a considerable amount of interest in the development. Some apartments are reserved, but we still have both one and two bedroom apartments available to purchase. The individual apartment plans are shown on our website, but please do let us know if you are interested in a particular apartment, or would like any other information about Strawberry Hill House.

We have listened carefully to concerns raised regarding the purchase pricing and exit fees. As a result of this we are working closely with Wellers Law group to address these concerns and provide various purchase and rental options. The Trustees remain committed to providing a fair and equitable scheme which benefits all parties.

Autumn Fayre

Make a note in your diary of our Autumn Fayre which will be held (G.W.) on Saturday 11th November 10am – 2pm at Mayfield Village Hall, East Sussex TN20 6BD. Join us for tea/coffee, cakes and further updates on Strawberry Hill House, including details of our **Open Day!**

Harold G Jempson - Founding Trustee



Many of you will know that sadly our founding Trustee Mr Harold Jempson passed away on 17th December 2016, after several months of ill-health. We would like to thank all friends for their kind messages and support. It was Harold's vision to commence the Oak Tree Homes Trust, and it was his desire that Strawberry Hill House be a 'haven of rest' for the elderly. We are thankful that he was enabled to see the building work begin. It is the desire of the remaining Trustees that the project be continued to fruition, and we seek your help, support and prayers to enable us to do so.

Harold was able to attend our Autumn Fayre on 12th November 2016, and wished the following statement to be read on his behalf. For those unable to be present we felt many would be interested in what he had on his mind.

Dear Friends

12th November 2016

It is with deep gratitude unto Almighty God that it can be recorded today that the new building at Strawberry Hill has been commenced and the building works are on schedule. We very much acknowledge the support and forbearance of friends over the 10 years which has passed since the local home had to close.

On a personal note, I am much cheered that the Lord has spared my life to see the project proceed thus far. May He be pleased to make it a haven of rest for elderly friends in their latter years.

The first years were spent seeking to negotiate to buy an existing home in Tunbridge Wells. For one reason or another these efforts were not successful. The Oak Tree Homes Trust was formed in 2010 and from then on we visited a number of plots in Sussex and Kent.

By this time it was very impressed upon our minds that with new government regulations relating to care homes this type of operation would just never be viable, unless we could provide in excess of 40/50 beds. A project on these lines would be cost prohibitive, with estimates running into multi millions pounds.

At this juncture – it seemed impossible to continue. It seemed our hope was gone.

The changing emphasis in the care sector, to providing care and support in individuals own homes for, turned our minds towards considering building apartments that were modern, energy friendly, purpose built, including the most up to date facilities such as fitted kitchens and bathrooms, but with the ability to be adapted for those advancing in years. This with the ability to purchase added services such as care in the home as required seemed to be the way forward. Having noticed how elderly friends wished to stay in the same communities in which they had spent most of their lives – the idea of small-community based self-contained apartments in strategic areas was born.

Soon after this, my wife and I had the opportunity to attend Southhill Chapel (Bedfordshire) Anniversary Services when the minister taking the services closed his remarks with the words in Jeremiah "Go buy the field" which at that time was just what met our case. (Ed :it was at this time the Trustees were pondering whether to purchase Strawberry Hill – a parcel of land at the end of Broadwater Down, Tunbridge Wells.)

Against all men's advice the land was bought. The company owning the land was in receivership and negotiations had to be done by a Bank in Paris. There was no property on the land as it had had to be demolished – it was nothing but a field. The sale was completed in early 2013.

Well, here we are today by the grace of God. Many times we have felt how are we to continue – however, the building work as you have heard has commenced. The scheduled completion date is late 2017. Thus far all expenses have been settled with contractors, consultants and advisors. We greatly appreciate your continued support, both prayerful and practical.

With my best wishes and sincere thanks to you all.

Harold Jempson

