



AUDLEY COURT
Gracious independent living

Court Circular

Spring 2005

Flete House Gardeners

The famous gardens at Flete House have been open to visitors occasionally for many years. They were created within the Victorian grounds by Lady Mildmay in the 1920s. Looking after them now has been a labour of love for several years for Len Varney.



Len Varney, Head Gardener at Flete House

Len's assistant is the aptly named Rose Wood, who arrived last June and says: "I have never been so happy. There is a really positive feel about the future here, it's a beautiful place, and the staff are a wonderful team."

Rose's early career was in the NHS, culminating in lecturing at the University of Plymouth in Mental Health & Psychology. But she has always loved gardening, and with her husband always had a garden or allotment. Last year she decided to rethink her future, and applied for the job at Flete. As well as working in the gardens four days a week,

she is studying both for the Royal Horticultural Society's General Certificate, with a particular interest in organic horticulture, and for a degree in Natural Sciences with the Open University

During the winter, Len and Rose have been busying clearing all the plants from the Italianate Garden, which is to be totally re-landscaped and restored. In the autumn, they replanted a border with 270 roses, which will follow on in bloom from the magnificent camellias in the grounds. Then there are the listed water gardens, designed by Russell Page in 1925, which are also

in need of refurbishment. There is also a little cottage garden round an old thatched bothy, which they plan to have as a cutting garden supplying flowers for the house.

"In their heyday, there were at least 12 gardeners working in the kitchen gardens and greenhouses alone," Rose added. This part of the gardens, with its magnificent collection of Victorian glasshouses, are now leased to a local couple who run them as a nursery, while the pleasure grounds are open to the public some days in the summer.

"I have never been so happy. There is a really positive feel about the future here." – Rose Wood



Rose Wood, Assistant Gardener at Flete House

Contact us

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Welcome

to the latest edition of Court Circular. The gap since our last has been mostly caused by a period of intense activity in preparing the company for future growth. The new partnership with Raven is explained below as are the first new projects to be part of this new and exciting arrangement.

We are also delighted to welcome Flete House and its residents and staff to the group. Flete is a magnificent house and a worthy addition to the Audley Court portfolio. We are very keen that those of you who would like should visit one of the other projects and I would urge you to consider a trip – you can enjoy similar facilities to those at your own development. Do please let us know if this is of interest.

Of the new schemes in planning, High Royds in the Wharfe Valley, near Leeds, being part of a much larger new village and Mote Park, a magnificent Georgian house and stables

in Maidstone, are particularly notable. However many more are planned.

During this busy time our staff, as usual, have continued to support the company and provide a first class service. We are all very grateful to them.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our residents who have referred friends or family to Raven Audley Court. These word of mouth recommendations account for a large proportion of our new residents and we could not ask for higher praise.

As the company grows we are very anxious to ensure that our existing residents never feel they are less important than they have always been. If you have any concerns do let us know. In the meantime my very best wishes for 2005.

Nick Sanderson
Chief Executive
Raven Audley Court PLC



Flete House

Raven Audley Court has ventured into the West Country. Our new Grade 1 listed mansion, Flete House, in the beautiful South Hams area of Devon, is a wonderful property, standing in over 12 acres of grounds.

The estate was bought by the banking Mildmay family in the 1870s, and the house was then restored by the famous Victorian architect Norman Shaw, incorporating some of the original Tudor and Jacobean features. The Mildmays used it as a great social centre and entertained lavishly, including members of the Royal Family among their guests.

It was turned into apartments in the 1960s, but lately only a handful of the 30 were occupied. Since we purchased the property last year, we have carried out an extensive refurbishment programme. It has been a joy to bring back into full use the elegant public rooms with their superb views and the historic gardens – the water garden is itself Grade I listed. We have planning

permission to convert the stable block into more apartments. It will then be run with first-class facilities including a restaurant, library, billiards room, the use of a minibus and our normal range of activities.

We are very pleased that some of the those already living there have chosen to stay and are buying the flats they previously rented. They will continue to have all their meals in Flete's beautiful dining room. We have started offering for sale the renovated apartments. We hope Flete House will soon be alive again, giving people who love the South Devon countryside and coast an opportunity to live in glorious surroundings in a historic house, without having to worry about its maintenance.



The library at Flete House

Willicombe Park

Residents enjoyed a full programme of events to celebrate Christmas, including a residents' cocktail party and a Christmas carol and music evening.



Christmas decorations at Willicombe Park

We are now looking forward to our usual programme of regular weekly and monthly events, with some special extras.

Events

Regular events

Keep Fit

This takes place every Friday morning with Sarah Domoney.

Quiz Night

This takes place every other month.

Poetry Reading

Once a month there is a poetry reading with refreshments.

Discussion Group

Once a month there is a discussion group followed by refreshments.

Holy Communion

The parish of St James holds a service of Holy Communion here once a month.

Musical Evening

There is a musical evening every other month.

Special events

There are two special talks scheduled.

Tuesday 1st March

Jackie Simmons is going to talk about her time as a 'Tiller Girl', which will be followed by a buffet lunch.

Tuesday 8th March

Evelyn Enis and friends will give an informal talk about their time as trainee nursery nurses at St Christopher's.

Hollins Hall

We had our Christmas cocktail party early in December this year, as so many residents wanted dates in the dining room for their private celebrations with their families and friends. Just before Christmas, we had a much-enjoyed festive coffee morning with visits both from the children of Hampsthwaite Church Choir who sang carols to us, and from Father Christmas.



Tai Chi classes at Hollins Hall

Events

Regular events

Keep Fit

Every other Tuesday with Steve.

Quiz Night

On the first Wednesday of the month followed by a light supper.

Coffee Morning

Every Wednesday we have a coffee morning.

Get Together in the Bar

In the bar on Thursday evenings with Doug or Helmut.

Brunch

Helmut cooks brunch on the first Saturday of each month.

Fish and Chip Suppers

Every other Friday, Helmut cooks fish and chips, which is delivered to residents at home.

Sunday Lunch

This is a carvery once a month.

Fish Friday

Fish Friday is a buffet lunch held once a month.

Poetry Reading

Once a month there is poetry reading with tea in the bar.

A new series of lunchtime lectures will also start soon.



Flete House

After all the disruption of the autumn, we were delighted to be back in our dining room for a series of festive meals, especially as they included some of Maureen's wonderful desserts. Before Christmas, we had a visit from a representative of Gables Farm, accompanied by some delightful kittens, who talked about the work of the farm in re-homing unwanted cats and kittens.

Events

We will shortly be announcing a programme of events and outings for the Spring and Summer which will include a financial seminar, a talk on antiques and a theatre trip.

Our Homes are a Blueprint for Success

Our two impressive developments in Harrogate and Tunbridge Wells have been such a success that we are looking to expand our concept of quality housing for retired property owners across the UK.

Audley Court is going into partnership with Raven Mount PLC, owners of Swan Hill Homes and a company renowned for its sympathetic listed building conversions.

Our aim is to be able to offer more people the opportunity to live an independent, secure and comfortable life in lovely surroundings but with versatile care and support available when needed.



Left to right: Nick Sanderson, Anton Bilton and Bim Sandhu

Nick Sanderson, founder and owner of Audley Court, and Anton Bilton, Chairman of Raven Mount PLC, are joining forces to form a new company, Raven Audley Court, which will specialise in the development of quality housing schemes for older people. Together with Raven's Chief Executive Bim Sandhu, they plan to create a UK-wide portfolio of centres, building on the success and distinctive skills of the two companies.

Their new developments will be based on the style now familiar to Hollins Hall, Willicombe Park and now Flete House residents: beautiful, well-kept grounds with a mix of cottages, apartments and bungalows grouped

around impressive central houses which have a restaurant, inviting public rooms, a fitness suite, swimming pool, guest rooms, provision for visiting beauticians and hairdressers, experienced care and support staff, security and maintenance people.

The Raven Audley Court ethos is "gracious, independent living" and the new company plans to develop many further projects over the next few years.



The swimming pool at Hollins Hall

Anton Bilton says: "Over one million similar properties have been built in the United States and yet in this country older people are still struggling in their own homes or moving into outdated care homes. We feel Raven Mount's development expertise, combined with Nick's experience, can help lead the way forward."

Nick Sanderson adds: "I have been looking for the right partner with whom to develop the concept, someone with financial depth, skill and expertise. Raven Mount has shown it can carry out complicated refurbishments to award-winning standards and I very much look forward to working with Anton, Bim and their team."

"We feel Raven's development expertise, combined with Nick's experience, can help lead the way forward." – Anton Bilton



A Willicombe Park bungalow



Dining at Hollins Hall

Staff News

We are well ahead of the CSCI (Commission for Social Care Inspection – the government watchdog) requirement that by 2008 all 50% of our staff should be trained to NVQ2 standard or above. At Willicombe Park, we have almost reached that target. Joyce Pring, our Head of Care, is now working towards NVQ4 – the Registered Manager award. She has been interviewed and approved by CSCI – an in-depth process that will soon be required of managers nationally.

At Hollins Hall, our Head of Care, Marianna Sanchez, has successfully completed NVQ3 – the Assessors Award. Marianna, who has been working at Hollins for four years, has been assessing Dawn Bussey and Jennifer Bussey for their NVQ2 awards. They have passed their practical tests and are now waiting for verification.



Left to right: Lucyna Palka and Bogna Witambrska

New Faces

We welcome two new members of the staff to Hollins Hall. Bogna and Lucyna are both from Poland and are now undergoing their initial induction and training, before starting to work towards NVQ2. "Both girls speak good English, and are fitting in very well," says Marianna. They arrived at the beginning of December and are sharing an apartment in Lodge Court. They soon found their feet and started to explore the locality and nearby Harrogate.

The Hollins Hall concept was quite new to them, as in Poland older people live with their families as much as possible. However they think it is a wonderful idea, and are much impressed by the independence of many of the residents, even the very oldest. "The rest of the staff are so friendly and helpful, we are really loving it here," they say.

Cooking for the love of it

Spencer Winter has been chef at Willicombe Park for over seven months, and is really enjoying cooking for the residents. In his last post, he was managing a large team and so he spent much of his time on paperwork, training and administration.

Spencer is a family man, with three children, and he finds he can combine looking after the kitchen at Willicombe Park with being a hands-on father.

Our new developments

Raven Audley Court is hoping to start work soon at the Grade II listed former High Royds Hospital in Menston near Leeds. Raven Mount are planning to develop it with 550 homes, shops, offices, sport facilities, surgeries and a school.

At the centre of the scheme, 83 Audley Court units will be built within and around the original buildings. This will be the first time Audley Court has been integrated into a new mixed use development, and it could be a first for any major housing development in the UK.

Mote House, Maidstone, a magnificent Georgian mansion, is in the centre of Mote Park. A planning application for up to 65 homes here will shortly be submitted.

As many of you know, the group already have a planning application for 73 homes in Sevenoaks, Kent, on land adjoining the Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve. This is such a special site that the scheme is having to be revised. The group are now looking at other possibilities in different parts of the country, from Scotland to the south coast.



Favourite recipe

Haddock Monte Carlo

From Mrs Levett of Willicombe Park

Ingredients to serve 4 – 6 people

450 – 675g smoked haddock fillets
225g tomatoes
pepper

Sauce

25g butter
25g flour
150ml milk
150ml single or whipping cream
50 – 75g grated gruyère cheese
salt, pepper and mace

Prepare

Skin the haddock fillets and lay in one layer in a well buttered shallow baking dish. Skin, de-seed and dice the tomatoes and scatter over the fish. Season with pepper only. Pour the sauce over, sprinkle with grated cheese and bake uncovered in a moderately hot oven (190C/gas no 5) for about 20 minutes. Brown under the grill as required.

Sauce

Melt the butter, add the flour and cook for 2 – 3 minutes over moderate heat, stirring. Draw off the cooker, wait for the sizzling to cease and add milk and cream. Bring to the boil, whisking with a wire whisk, and simmer for 1 – 2 minutes. Season with pepper, mace and very little salt.

It should be a fairly thick coating sauce, as some moisture will come out of the fish during cooking.

Flete's wonderful Centenarian



Belated birthday greetings to Lady Milverton, who celebrated her 100th birthday on 18th December. She had planned to have a big party for all her family and friends at Flete House, which has been her home for 26 years,

but as we were still in the midst of renovations, this took place at the Old Chapel Inn, near Bigbury on Sea, which is run by her grandson. It was apparently a great success with friends from far and wide, including a lady of over 90 who flew over from the Caribbean for the event. Just before Christmas we were able to have our own party for her in the drawing room.

Lady Milverton is the widow of the 1st Lord Milverton, who was Governor of Fiji, Gambia, Jamaica and finally Nigeria shortly before independence. In her long married life she travelled widely and remembers the first flying boats.

At home she is still very active and entertains her many friends. Twice a week she attends art classes – since she retired she has become skilled with both charcoal and pastels, working from life models and with still life.

We all wish Lady Milverton many more happy birthdays at Flete House.

Book Review

'A Short History of Nearly Everything' by *Bill Bryson*

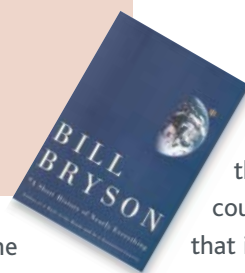
Reviewed by C. M Wray of Hollins Hall

'A Short History of Nearly Everything' is exactly what the reader gets in this fascinating book. Five hundred and fourteen pages packed with easily-absorbed facts, written in Bill Bryson's racy and humorous style – not to report that it is flippant and that 'it swims past our eyes', not at all!

He starts by thanking the people who showed him such forbearance when he repeatedly asked the question "Would you explain that again?" It is precisely

that question, coupled with the Bryson humour, that makes the book easy to read.

There are hundreds of references to questions about space – for instance, "How old is the planet?" To the reader he asks, "Do you know how old the planet is? No, you don't!" According to U.S. News & World Report 1997, the consensus is about 13.7 billion years. Phew!



At the time of the 'Big Bang' the universe was "something you could hold in your hand", but after that initial half-second it expanded to 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 times bigger, according to the New Scientist, March 31st 2001 ('The First Split Second').

It also changes the way you think about yourself. Bryson's travelogue of science is teeming with such intriguing facts and is absorbing stuff, providing you with "A concise history of nearly everything." My advice is to get on and read it!