



**“If I have one complaint,” said a relative of one of the residents of St George’s Park retirement village, “it’s that I can never get hold of my mother. She’s always doing something!”**



by Roger Linn

I had done my homework, so I knew that St George’s Park was set in 250 acres of beautiful Sussex countryside and I anticipated that the standard of the purpose-built apartments would be very high. What I had not considered was that after only two years or so, the community would have formed its own active identity so quickly. And ‘active’ is the key word here. As a resident, there’s plenty to do if you’ve a mind to. Maes Court, the

community building at the heart of the village, offers a range of facilities including a mini-supermarket, an attractive bar/bistro and restaurant, a library, a games room, a hairdressing salon, a therapy suite and a gym. So much for everyday living. Many other functions are arranged by the residents themselves – from the film club to the summer boules competitions.

As I was being shown round, I noticed a list of February’s activities pinned to the notice board. It included a candle-lit Valentine’s Night dinner, the forthcoming visit of the Ditchling Players, Mah Jong, painting classes and much more. This may be a retirement village, but there doesn’t seem to be much retiring going on!

When I asked Philip Smith, Marketing Director at St George’s, what he was most proud of amongst the many awards won by the development over the last two years, he surprised me by saying “it’s the warm community spirit which has developed amongst the residents.” Of course a sense of community is very important. Most retired people rightly prize their independence – not the same thing as isolation – and a great strength of the village is that, whilst no-one is ever pestered to ‘join in’, nobody need be alone if they don’t care to be.

Small wonder then that the development is so popular. Now, roughly half way through the project, over a hundred apartments have been sold and are occupied and many of the apartments in the Birch



Official opening in 2007 with HRH Princess Alexandra, KG, GCVO and Bishop Kieran Conry.



Above:  
Stylish restaurant/bar area  
Left and below:  
Village grounds are a great scenic walk.



Above and inset left:  
Relaxing in superb  
surroundings.

Walk section, which is due to be completed in June, are already sold or reserved. Spacious, light and thoughtfully designed, each two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment is a stylish example of how good modern design can be. With a median price of around £350,000 you certainly get a good deal for your money and, if you are buying off-plan, there is a wide range of options available, such as three different ergonomically designed kitchens, different worktops, floor and wall tiling. The buildings, too, display the same attention to detail with covered entrances and carpeted halls.

Augustinian Living who own the development do seem to have thought of everything, although I dare say the residents' committee helped with some suggestions, such as the ongoing programme of concerts and lectures in their own concert hall. There is a regular minibus service to Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath and group outings to popular

## “Warm community spirit amongst the residents”

destinations like the theatre or cinema. Nor do residents need to keep cars as these can be hired from the pool for as little as an hour. Safety is particularly important in a community such as this and here, too, nothing has been left to chance, with monitored 24 hours a day CCTV coverage of the whole area.

When St George's Park was voted the UK's 'Best Retirement Development in 2008' in the prestigious

*What House?* property industry awards, one of the judges commented: "The bar for retirement villages has certainly

been raised. Here, residents can enjoy their retirement in the manner that best suits them." It seems to me that St George's Park is not just a well thought out retirement development, managed and maintained to the highest standards, but a vibrant social environment in which life can be lived to the full. ■

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