

Prize Wordsearch

A H U S S A I N N X I I
 T B R E A R L E Y V L M
 H P G N E T U R A A L G
 E P O A I R O F N U I O
 R X O A T B D U P G N W
 T E C H E T W V E H G E
 O O H G O H I O R A W R
 N U W A N R L N D N O L
 I D N S U U L V G E R A
 V A M I O L I N O N T R
 I B K O J A S Y E G H P
 C H P I A B O T H A M N

With England having won the Ashes cricket series against Australia, can you find 10 England cricket captains?

If so, send your completed entry, along with your name and address to:

Prize Wordsearch,
 Basted House,
 Harrison Road,
 Borough Green,
 Sevenoaks,
 Kent TN15 8PB

By Friday 13th November 2009
 The winner, drawn from all correct entries, will win £50.

Name:

Address:

This competition is not open to Russet Homes or Circle Anglia employees, Board members or their relatives.

Last wordsearch answers: FLUTE PIANO GUITAR VIOLIN CELLO TUBA HORN HARP RECORDER TROMBONE

Wordsearch Winner Mrs. I. Smart of Hadlow won the £50 cheque as winner of our previous Wordsearch competition.

Feedback

Why not write to Feedback with any news and views you have that might interest our readers?

Surfing?

Why not visit our website at: www.russethomes.org for more information, news and articles of general interest.

Help with this newsletter

This newsletter is available in translation, Braille, large print and audio tape versions. Please ring: **01732 780999** to request a copy.

Published by:
 Russet Homes Limited, Basted House, Harrison Road, Borough Green, Kent, TN15 8PB

Contact your council

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
www.tmbc.gov.uk tel: 01732 844522

Maidstone Borough Council
www.maidstone.gov.uk tel: 01622 602 000

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk tel: 01892 526121

Dartford Borough Council
www.dartford.gov.uk tel: 01322 343 434



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Request for Translated Information

Name:

If English is not your first language and you need assistance, please tick the appropriate box and send to the address below with your name and address.

Address:

ইংরেজী যদি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা না হয় এবং আপনার সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন, তাহলে দয়া করে সঠিক ঘরে টিক চিহ্ন দিন এবং আপনার নাম ও ঠিকানা সহ নীচের ঠিকানায় পাঠিয়ে দিন।

BENGALI

اگر انگریزی آپ کی صدر زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو مدد حاصل کرنے کی ضرورت ہے تو براہ کرم موزوں خانے پر ٹیک لگائیے اور اپنے نام اور پتے کے ساتھ اسے بھجوانے کے لیے پُر دہاں بھیج دیجیے۔

URDU

假如英語並非你的第一語，而你需要別人幫助，請在適當的方格內作勾記，並在寫上你的姓名及地址後寄往下列地址。

CHINESE

Russet Homes Limited, Basted House, Harrison Road, Borough Green, Kent, TN15 8PB

Russet News

Autumn 2009 Issue 19

The news magazine for Russet Homes residents



Healthy Living Event

Around 300 residents and service users enjoyed an afternoon filled with entertaining healthy living activities in the grounds of our main office at Basted House in Borough Green.

Ivanna Roberts-Cillia our Head of Housing, said: "It has become a tradition each year to invite our tenants to join us to share free

fun packed activities or a great day out. This year we decided to hold it jointly with group partner Invicta Telecare and its service users as we both wanted a healthy living theme. Tenants and service users suggested the theme and were actively involved throughout the preparations and came up with many of the ideas such as the mini Olympics."

Visitors enjoyed dancing and healthy living displays in the

arena, a community chef giving cookery displays on seasonal menus for under £5, Energy Saving Trust car simulator, Skip2Bfit demonstrations, fruit tasting, fun competitions, taking part in a mini Olympics and so much more.

FORUM held a raffle and managed to raise £140 for the charity Demelza, who provide hospice care for children.

Don't forget our Freephone Repair Helpline on: 0800 197 2880



Russet Homes

Part of Circle Anglia

Young people get to grips with the true cost of setting up home...



Russet Homes helped young people get to grips with the responsibility of setting up home and the difficulties many face in finding their first place to live during a training session held at the Children's Centre in East Malling.

Homestart - a charity which helps parents build better lives for their children - asked Russet Homes to organise the session to help young people understand the challenges and expectations of finding and renting their own accommodation.

Marilyn Smith, our Community Investment Manager, said: "Unfortunately many young people think they can just register for housing and walk straight into a property and it's often a real shock to discover it's not that simple. We want them to realise that renting accommodation brings huge responsibilities of tenure coupled with the high cost of household bills and it's a decision that shouldn't be taken lightly."

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's housing team explained how the housing waiting list and choice based letting scheme operates. Young mums discovered having a child does not automatically entitle them to accommodation and sometimes they are better off staying at home living with parents until they are ready to handle the responsibility and costs involved.

The advantages of attending the Tenancy Training Programme at the YWCA and how it would put them in a better position to secure accommodation were also highlighted.



Young residents take litter problems into their own hands

Ben McCreasey and Jade Watson, aged 10, took the problem of litter around Priory Walk in Tonbridge into their own hands.

Armed with black sacks they set about picking up any rubbish found on the pathways and parking areas. They even asked the local corner shop keeper if he wanted the rubbish cleared from outside as it is a local hotspot for youths who often leave litter behind.

Jade said: "I was fed up with people's comments about the litter so we decided to do something about it."

Well done to Ben and Jade!



St Augustine's celebrates its 10th Anniversary

Residents at St Augustine House in Tonbridge enjoyed an afternoon of celebrations to mark the sheltered housing scheme's 10th anniversary.

Family and friends joined the residents aged between 54 and the grand old age of 99. Amongst the guests were seven tenants who have lived at St

Augustine House since the scheme first opened in 1999. Past and present visitors enjoyed a running buffet and a delicious cake made by John and Mary who are friends and regular visitors to the scheme. One resident, Jean Milton had family join her stretching over four generations, the youngest being her great granddaughter aged three.

You said... **we did!**

Wilson Road – Barrier

Higham Residents Association contacted us on behalf of local residents to say that the garage area we own in Wilson Road was continually being obstructed by local school traffic and at times residents were unable to get to their cars.

As a result we installed a lockable barrier and provided garage users with keys. Since the installation there have been no further reports of access problems and we were thanked by the Higham Residents Association on behalf of the residents for the work that was undertaken.



Contact the Council

If you encounter problems with the following, your council may be able to assist...

Pest Control

provide treatment for rats, mice, wasps, fleas, bedbugs, cockroaches and brown tailed moths.

Bulk Refuse

provides a service for collection of bulky items including wardrobes, mattresses, beds and sofas.

Charges may apply for both these services. However the service will be free to those residents in receipt of a number of means tested benefits.

Dog Warden Services

responsible for promoting responsible dog ownership, dealing with micro-chipping, fouling, lost and stray dogs, dangerous dogs and noisy dogs.

See the back page for contact information for your council.

Residents brush up



A new art club started by residents aged between 60 and 97 living at Frome Court in Tonbridge is helping them to brush up their artistic talents and learn new creative skills.

Set up with the help and support of scheme manager, Sherrie Macklin, the art club has become so popular it now attracts many local residents living outside of the scheme.

Sherrie said: "Many of the residents had never painted before and have been amazed at what they are capable of. They quickly got to grips with the different brushes and paints just by watching and picking up tips from more experienced painters. It is something that everyone can join in, even those with mobility problems or poor eyesight. One lady who finds it difficult to see manages to colour in with the

help of a magnifying glass and images outlined in extra bold ink."

Art materials including canvas and paints are paid by money raising activities at the scheme such as tea and lunch clubs.



Work starts to build new homes for local people

Marion Cole, President of Russet Homes joined the Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling to help lay the first brick at a new development to offer 79 affordable new homes, for both rent and to first time buyers.

The occasion marked the start of building work with development partners Crest Nicholson at the former Hugh Christie School site. This development is supported by the Homes and Communities Agency and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

The new properties will offer 13 two bed apartments and a

mixture of two, three and four bedroom houses. Each will be built to a high specification and energy efficiency to meet Sustainable Homes Code Level 3 standard helping residents keep energy bills to a minimum.

Keith Andrews, our Managing Director, said: "This exciting development represents our first major development in Tonbridge and Malling since joining Circle Anglia and most importantly fulfils our promise to meet the challenge to secure new social housing within developments planned for the region."



Georgina stays active at 100 years

Not many people can say they remember what it was like during the First World War, but Georgina Jeffery certainly can. Georgina has just celebrated her 100th birthday with a big party arranged by her family and friends.



Still enjoying an independent life in her flat in Tonbridge, Georgina is proud to tell her friends about the new flush floor shower we have recently installed for her.

Bathing had become increasingly difficult for her and she needed to be helped getting in and out of the bath so she is

thrilled with her new adaptation to her bathroom.

Georgina told us: "I can't believe what a difference my new flush floor shower has made; it has given me independence and dignity and made my life so much easier."

It just goes to show you're never too old to stay active or try out something new!

If you are having mobility problems at your home contact our Stay Active team on 01732 781985 who will offer advice and make arrangements for any adaptations aids you may need.

50 golden years together



Double celebrations took place on the 4th of July as Gill Hollands enjoyed a party for her birthday and Golden wedding anniversary with husband Phillip and around 45 friends and family.

Tonbridge born and bred Gill and Phillip first met at a tennis court in the sports ground. But it wasn't love at first sight and they did not fall for each other until they met up again several months later. Phillip proposed just before leaving for national service and they married on Gill's 21st birthday. What a present!

Gill has made and decorated cakes for every occasion for the past 25 years for many grateful local people and so naturally baked one for her own Golden wedding anniversary.

Gill said: "It doesn't seem like we have been married for 50 years. I wouldn't part with Phillip for all the money in the world, he means everything to me."

We wish them many more happy years together.

FORUM FOCUS

FORUM



FORUM Meeting The next FORUM meeting is on Tuesday 22 December and the Annual General Meeting of FORUM is on Tuesday 13 October. Meetings are held at Basted House and start at 7pm. If you wish to attend a meeting please contact Melanie McAdam on 01732 780999 ext 2716.

Garden Competition winners

FORUM has announced the results of its annual gardening competition. As ever, the competition was fierce with many fantastic gardens.

The overall winners this year were Mr and Mrs Lawford of East Malling. They also won a prize for best back garden and were runners up with their front garden. They won a cup and vouchers worth £95.

Residents' gardens in the north and south of the borough were judged over two days in July. Judging was carried out by FORUM members and Terry Shead of Brookside Garden Centre.

The winners were presented with their prizes at an awards evening at Kings Hill Community Centre. The prizes were presented by Councillor Sue Murray, Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling.



The other winners were:

Green Garden

1st Miss Cook, East Malling

Front Garden

South

1st Miss Hurley & Mr Webb, Higham

North

1st Mr Mace, Ditton

Back Garden

South

1st Mrs Chick, Trench, Tonbridge

North

1st Mr & Mrs Lawford, East Malling

Hanging Baskets/Containers

South

1st Miss Hurley & Mr Webb, Higham

North

1st Mr Chevis, Ryarsh

Vegetable Patch

1st Mr Cruse, Shipbourne

Water Feature

1st Mrs Calverly, East Malling

Community Garden

1st Mrs Randall for Frome Court, Tonbridge

New Here

1st Mr Maltby, Brook Street area, Tonbridge

New Entry

1st Miss Cook, East Malling

Children's Vegetable Growing Competition Winner:

Harriet Cruse, Shipbourne



“Angel” wins good neighbour award

Karen Bone, described by her neighbour as an “angel”, has been chosen by FORUM members for this summer's Good Neighbour Award.

Karen, who lives in Barming, was nominated by her neighbour Michelle Skivington who said: “Karen quite truly is a lifesaver – she has saved my life at least four times.”

Michelle has had some major operations and serious illnesses over the last few years, during which time Karen has been a major help to her and her family. As a

result, Michelle added: “Karen is more than my friend and neighbour – she is an angel. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for her. She is a lifesaver.”

If you would like to say a big thank you to a very special neighbour or neighbours, please contact Melanie McAdam, Resident Involvement Officer, on 01732 780 999 for details and a nomination form.

Mystery Shopping

Below are the results of the mystery shopping that took place between March and April 2009. The mystery shoppers were residents who volunteered and were given training to help with their role in testing the quality of what we do.

If you would like to be one of our mystery shoppers please contact Melanie McAdam on extension 2716.

	Telephone	Letters	E-mails	Visits	Total
Satisfied	5	1	4	3	13
Dissatisfied	0	0	1	1	2
% Satisfied	100	100	80	75	89



Don't lose your voice!

From August to November, your council will be renewing the Register of Electors. If you want to vote at the next General Election you will need to be registered. Look out for the information form that your council will send you.

See back page for contact information for your council.



New handbook out

Our new tenant handbook has been published and some of you may already have your copy. It is packed with useful information and advice on your home and your tenancy.

If you don't yet have a copy, please remember to ask for one when you come into your regional office. Alternatively, if you have a home appointment booked, please ask the visiting officer to bring a copy of the tenant handbook out for you.

Evictions

We do not evict people without good cause but sometimes it is necessary to protect those who stick to their tenancy agreement. Here are the evictions for May to July.

EVICTON DATE	WHO	WHY
May	single woman, Larkfield	rent arrears
June	single man, Snodland single woman, Borough Green	rent arrears rent arrears
July	None	

If you are evicted for arrears or anti-social behaviour, we won't rehouse you and it is very unlikely that the Council will either, even if you have children.

Performance update

April to June 2009

In each issue we give you information on our performance.

We use Key Performance Indicators - a set of industry standard measures to monitor how well a range of services are doing.

Collecting rent

For every pound in rent due to us, we collected 95.4 pence.



Empty homes

Our target is to relet empty homes within 25 days. During this period, the average time to relet empty homes was 24.5 days. Ensuring empty homes are let speedily reduces rent loss and allows people to move more quickly.



Gas servicing

We aim to have a valid Gas Safety Certificate for every home. We have them for 99.7% of our homes. Your safety is of primary importance to us. Our aim is to ensure all our properties that require annual servicing visits have this done. We rely on your co-operation to be able to do so but will take action including legal proceedings and measures to recoup our costs where access is unreasonably denied.



Home repairs

In 92.5% of cases, you told us that the appointment made for home repairs was kept. Our target is 95%. We aim to complete 98% of emergency repairs on time. During this period you told us 99.4% were on time.



Customer contact

Our target is to answer all correspondence within 7 working days. We managed to achieve this 99.6 times out 100.

We aim to answer all telephone calls within 5 rings (or 10 seconds). We achieved this 83 times out of 100 although 97% were answered within 30 seconds. While the great majority are answered quickly, we want all callers to be confident that their call is important to us and will be handled without any delay.



Receipt winners

Repairs Winners

April

Miss Ross and Mr Draper
Willowmead

May

Mr & Mrs Seamer
Gorham Drive

June

Ms Hall
Saltings Road

Gas Winners

April

Ms Roberts
Shipbourne Road, Tonbridge

May

Mr & Mrs Sowten
Waveny Road, Tonbridge

June

Mrs P Bates
Tyne Road, Tonbridge



Got a good idea?

Would you like to be in with a chance to win £50?

Do you have a great suggestion on how we can improve our services?

Maybe you think there is a new service we could provide, or a way we could save money or energy.

If so, why not come into either our Tonbridge or Larkfield regional office, or call us and ask for a Tenant Suggestion Scheme form.

This is what Mrs Tann of Kings Hill did and she won a prize. Her suggestion was that Swale Heating could provide residents with information on gas safety and the importance of regular gas servicing.

Her suggestion was selected by members of FORUM.

Learning opportunities extended

We are really pleased to announce that the arrangement we have had with Kent Adult Education in 2009 is to extend into 2010. This means that all residents will continue to be entitled to sign up for a course and we will pay 50% of the cost, up to a maximum of £100.

Any resident under 19 or over 60, or anyone in receipt of certain benefits may be able to claim even more discounts.

A number of residents have already signed up for various courses including computing, counselling, psychology, jewellery and flower arranging. To see what courses are on offer, why not visit www.kent.gov.uk/adulted or call 0845 606 5606 to order a brochure. Brochures are also kept in the local libraries.

When you have chosen a course, please ring Melanie MacAdam, Resident Involvement Officer, on 01732 780 999.

Service Excellence Awards

The Service Excellence Awards Scheme continues to go from strength to strength, recognising outstanding service from members of staff of Russet Homes.

We are pleased to announce the monthly award winners for May, June and July 2009 as:



May 2009 –
Victoria Ward,
Assistant
Surveyor, based
at Mears' offices



June 2009 –
Jean Leeds,
Income Recovery
Officer,
Tonbridge



July 2009 –
Corinne Heale,
Verification
Officer,
Tonbridge

These award winners will be put forward along with the other monthly winners as candidates for the Employee of the Year, to be announced later in the year. All the award winners have demonstrated a real commitment to service excellence and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

HOMEOWNER NEWS

for shared owners
and leaseholders.



New homes at Mount Nod

We are pleased to announce the availability of contemporary one and two bedroom apartments set in the picturesque village of Greenhithe, just five minutes from Bluewater. The apartments are in woodland landscaped gardens with views over the Thames estuary.

All apartments come complete with fully fitted kitchens including gas hob, electric oven and extractor hood, and fully

fitted carpets throughout. The two bedroom apartments have en-suite bathrooms and some ground floor apartments offer garden areas whilst some top floor homes offer river views. Prices from £35,000 for a 25% share of a 1 bedroom home and £42,500 for a 25% share of a 2 bedroom home.

For more information please contact Alex Rivers, Marketing Officer on 0845 304 1007 or visit www.circleanglia-yourhome.org



Annual Open Evening 2009

In July we held our annual open evening for leaseholders and shared owners and over thirty people came along – our largest ever attendance. Three of our board members also came.

Visitors heard a presentation on our new build schemes for shared ownership and the work being done to make sure that service charges are as accurate as possible for potential buyers. We recognise the importance of knowing what outgoings will be for low cost home owners. There was also a discussion about our new repairs contractors, Mears, and how the change may affect homeowners.

Residents also had the opportunity to talk to people from our maintenance, finance and leasehold departments and chat to the board members present.

The feedback from the evening was very positive so we will be repeating the event next year.