



This 'Quality Award' park is in the heart of lovely Surrey countryside. New owner, Tom Hartley, has plans to make it even more attractive

# Cudworth Park Dorking

**I**t may sound corny, but it's absolutely true, that Tom Hartley was 'bowled over' when he first set eyes on Cudworth Park. Cudworth is practically unique among parks in having its own bowling green, and this is the main reason why many residents choose

to live there. Tom Hartley, who owns parks in the Midlands, was anxious to expand his operation to the south and was delighted when he received a call from Cudworth's previous owner, Claire Warwick-Pendarves, asking him if he would like to buy it.

Mrs Warwick-Pendarves and her husband, Richard, acquired Cudworth in 1967 but the park had been established before the war. When they took it over there was still one 'horse-drawn' caravan there—but without its horse!

The basic development layout of the double



Left: Tom Hartley, Cudworth's new owner, with his wife, Priscilla and their five-year-old daughter, Stephanie.

Right: this wishing well is one of several around the park which have been thoughtfully constructed to effectively disguise the fire points



garage with a home on either side was decided on from the start and, in 1969, the first new mobile home with services, a bath and w.c. was sold to a gentleman from London who was nearing retirement.

From these beginnings the concept of a retirement village evolved. Mr and Mrs Warwick-Pendarves lived near the park entrance in a bungalow which had its own grass tennis court. This was subsequently converted to a bowling green for the use of residents.

Sadly, Richard Warwick-Pendarves died a few years ago but Claire gamely ran the park for several years but decided earlier this year that the time had come to 'retire'.

When he received the telephone call from Mrs Warwick-Pendarves, Tom Hartley immediately went to view Cudworth, was very impressed and closed the deal quickly.

Since taking over, he has made a few

improvements, removing some old storage sheds from the front of the park which everyone agreed had been an eyesore. He has bought a small pavilion to be used in conjunction with the bowling green and will be siting some high-specification homes which will enjoy views out across the bowling green. As someone remarked, the real enthusiasts can watch a game without leaving their homes! The new park homes are being built to Tom Hartley's specification by Omar and will include top-grade kitchen appliances and luxury bath suites which will be imported from Italy.

Tom Hartley is planning to introduce an electric gate security system at Cudworth and all his other parks and to install CCTV camera recorders. Tom is very aware of the deterrent effect such installations can have and is conscious of the importance of security to mature residents.

The park was one of the first to receive the National Park Home Council's Quality Award when the scheme was launched in 1995 and has received that Award every year since, including 2001. In 1987, Mr and Mrs Warwick-Pendarves purchased the first Cosalt residential for siting on the park and in 1992, when 15 of the 40 park homes sited at that time were of Cosalt manufacture, the park won Cosalt's award for the Most Outstanding Park Development of the Year.

The park is currently licensed for 66 homes and at present there about 60 *in situ*.

Tom Hartley is intent on maintaining and improving the already very high standards established at Cudworth. 'When the entrance development is complete,' he told us, 'it is my intention, through personal determination, effort and dedication, for Cudworth Park to set a standard that other



parks will find difficult to follow.'

The nearest village to the park is Newdigate, about three miles away, which has a very busy social programme and which has, itself, won a prestigious award—The Village of the Year, as judged by the Voluntary Services Council.

Just five miles to the north (towards London) is Reigate, a major town with very good shopping facilities. Dorking, to the west also offers good shopping opportunities as does Crawley to the south. Despite its fairly rural location, Cudworth Park enjoys all mains services, including gas. Bills go direct to residents from the appropriate utilities.

Shortly after buying the park, Tom and Priscilla went there to discuss with residents the arrangements for a garden competition



Right: the final of the bowls competition in progress and, inset, Tom Hartley presenting the cup to the winner, Bill Wood, with runner-up Harry Chambers on the left



Bessie and Harry Chambers. 'Joining the bowling club was the best thing we ever did,' Harry told us



Bowling and ballroom dancing are the two interests of Mr and Mrs Steer, and both provide good exercise



Park manager, Raymond Beard with his wife, Margaret. Another keen bowler, Raymond also enjoys local fishing



which Tom has planned for summer 2002. The winner will receive free rent for a year, or a holiday to the same value. Both Tom and Priscilla commented on the wonderful reception they received from the residents and the excellent community spirit they found on that day.

On the day of *our* visit, the final of a bowls competition was in progress. This was very closely contested and Tom Hartley presented the winner with a new trophy—the Tom Hartley Cup—which will be competed for each year in future.

The first winner of the cup was Bill Wood (an appropriate name for a bowls champion!) who has lived on the park for about ten years and has won competitions several times—but was nevertheless very pleased to be the first holder of this particular trophy. He described living at Cudworth as the best move he had ever made. 'Bowls is the only thing that gets us out,' he said. 'We are all retired and there are about 20 bowlers living on the park.' Like many of his fellow residents, Bill only took up bowls when he moved to Cudworth but is now an enthusiast. 'What do you do in the winter,' we asked? 'Rest up!' was Bill's reply.

The runner-up in the final was Harry Chambers. 'I love being out in the country,' Harry told us, 'and the park is so friendly and security is excellent. My wife Bessie and I have never looked back since the bowling club started in 1989. We started to play in 1990 and since that time have never taken a holiday in the bowling season!'

Raymond Beard and his wife Margaret moved to Cudworth about 12 years ago. At that time Raymond was working as an engineer for Dan Air at Gatwick, so a home at Cudworth was very convenient. When Raymond retired in 1994, Richard Warwick-Pendarves asked him if he would be willing to take on the job of part-time manager on the park, and this arrangement has continued under Tom Hartley's ownership.

Another keen bowler, Raymond also enjoys fishing and told us that there are plenty of nice lakes around.

Margaret finds the park's location quite convenient. Newdigate, about three miles away, is the nearest village and has a doctor's surgery, post office and general store. About three miles east of Newdigate, at Hookwood, there is a Tesco supermarket

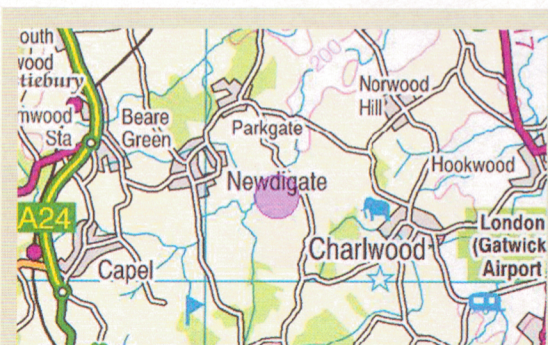
Single units and twins blend attractively on the park. Bottom of page: the sign which confirms Newdigate's success in the 'Village of the Year' competition

and Sainsbury's is in Crawley, to the south.

Comparative newcomers to the park, but not to park home living, are Mr and Mrs Steer, who moved to Cudworth two years ago. They had previously lived on a park home estate in Kingswood but were anxious to move farther into the country. This they have achieved but, as they said, they still have shops and towns close by, plus access to the motorway network and both Gatwick and Heathrow airports.

Yet more keen bowlers, Mr and Mrs Steer also enjoy going dancing (ballroom and Latin American) in Dorking.

We were impressed with the appearance of this lovely park, the relaxed atmosphere (apart from the friendly rivalry on the bowling green!) and the pride which Tom Hartley displayed in owning it. He is hoping to acquire more quality parks in the south of England in future.



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## Information

The address of Cudworth Park is Burnt Oak Lane, Newdigate, Dorking, Surrey RH5 5BL. Further information about Cudworth, or other parks owned by Tom Hartley, can be obtained from Tom Hartley's head office at 159 Moira Road, Overseal, Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE12 6JD (☎ 01283 762762).

