

Expanding empire

Despite the gloomy economic outlook, one family-run park operator, with more than 50 years' of park home experience, has managed to buck the trend and remain buoyant. We meet the man behind Tom Hartley Park Homes

Recession? What recession?' says Tom Hartley. Mr Hartley is a renowned name in two separate industries with successful businesses in the motoring and mobile home worlds. He founded and established his luxury and high-performance car operation in the early 1970s and now shares ownership with his two sons, Tom Jnr and Carl.

The same is also true of his second business, Hartley Park Homes, which is now well into its third generation of Hartleys. Tom Snr is the second of that generation and joined the family business in the early 1980s (although the first generation dates back to the 1960s). The third Hartley to get involved in the park home operation is Tom Hartley Jnr and his first residential park, Brookfield Park, set in the heart of the Peak District, currently has new and previously-owned homes for sale.

Over the past 30 years, the park home industry has seen many changes especially during the recent post-2008 property boom. Mr Hartley has witnessed many new names enter the industry, borrow heavily to fund ambitious park purchases and, ultimately, fail because of the current recession. In Mr Hartley's view, this has been good for the industry. He said, 'It's a healthy thing in as much as it identifies the established and

reputable names that have the experience and the knowledge to succeed in the current business climate. It has also helped to clear out some of the cowboys.'

Mr Hartley goes on to say that he has never relied on borrowing or any type of financing in any of his businesses. 'I have always re-invested profits,' he said. 'I believe this is the reason why we have been able to expand and occupy the strong position we are in today.'

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Mr Hartley owns both leisure and residential parks in Surrey, Hertfordshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire. But he's not a man to rest on his laurels: Mr Hartley recently expanded his already impressive park portfolio by acquiring a park in Welling Garden City, Hertfordshire. This park will be developed as a boutique site because of its size and close proximity to the capital.

Occupying a sought-after location just 20 miles from the centre of London, the new park

is also close to the jewel in the Hartley crown, his flagship park, Cudworth, in Reigate, Surrey. Cudworth Park is one of the country's premier park home estates and is well known for its bowling green and clubhouse; both extremely popular with residents. There are currently a couple of homes for sale at Cudworth – prospective purchasers should contact Mr Hartley on the below number.

There will also be a new leisure development at Spring Cottage Park, in Derbyshire, in 2012. This park is within walking distance of the Hartley head office and sister park Swainswood Leisure.

Also in the region is Bridge House Park, positioned on the borders of Derbyshire and Leicestershire. It is set in rural countryside and will be sensitively developed to the highest of standards for luxury lodges. Swainswood is already very well established and extremely popular. It is the only five star lodge development in Derbyshire rated by the local Tourist Board. Lodge owners at Swainswood were recently celebrating the completion of its own on-site spa centre too. With luxury lodges for sale from as little as £59,950, there's never been a better time to snap up a lodge!

Mr Hartley added, 'Swainswood has been a very

exciting development over the last couple of years and demonstrates the success of the name Tom Hartley. Where others have failed in recent times with new developments, we have succeeded. This luxury lodge development is set in the heart of the National Forest, it's open all year round and is close to 85 of the most popular attractions in the UK. What more could you ask for?'

Mr Hartley is eager to continue to buy quality parks in the Midlands and the South although as we were going to press, we were informed of his recent acquisition of a park in a desirable area of Yorkshire, which he is very excited about.

It would appear that the Tom Hartley dynasty will continue to grow in 2012 and continue to offer customers and home owners both quality service and excellent value for money. ●

INFO

For more information on any of Tom Hartley's parks, please visit www.tomhartleyparkhomes.com or call 01283 762762.

