



Littlecombe

Retirement living in the heart of the Cotswolds

life

Woodlands opens its doors



ALSO INSIDE:

Dursley – a town steeped in history

Mary Cowley – 101 not out

Pipistrelles' new home

Dursley:



the home of lawnmowers, prize-winning pubs and Harry Potter's step-parents.

Today you see Dursley, home to Littlecombe Park, as a pretty, traditional market town. But there's much more to it than that!

Most history books start tracing Dursley's rise to fame and fortune in mediaeval times, when the wool trade established the riches of many local traders. By 1471, Dursley was deemed important enough to have its own borough status, and great buildings were erected in the centuries to come - the remarkable pillared market house, complete with its statue of Queen Anne and bell turret, dates from 1738.

By 1856 it was a busy engineering town and the new fangled railway connected it to the outside world. The Lister family was one of the largest local employers - their powerful engines in huge demand around the world.

But all things come to an end, and when this part of British engineering lost its customers, the Regional Development Agency acquired Lister's 92 acre site and is pumping new homes, jobs and wealth into the town. Dursley's future once again looks rosy.

Five more fascinating facts:

- Dursley's Old Spot pub was named 2007 CAMRA National Pub of the Year.
- Evelyn Waugh wrote Brideshead Revisited while living nearby at Piers Court.
- Shakespeare is claimed to have worked as a schoolmaster in Dursley during his 'lost years'.
- Edwin Beard Budding from Dursley invented the lawnmower and the adjustable spanner.
- Locally-born JK Rowling named Harry Potter's step family after the town.



Dursley's roots go much deeper than the great mediaeval wool merchants - and the Romans who established many fine buildings. Nearby is an Iron Age hill fort. Dursley has been a highly desirable residence for at least 5,000 years!

At home with the Hawkins

Creating a caring environment for older people is nothing new to Jonathan and Lorraine Hawkins. "We started on the road around eight years ago now," says Jonathan. "Lorraine has a background in healthcare and the hotel industry, I was in finance, and we had the opportunity to take over Ivybank House Residential Care Home in Bath.

"We established our philosophy of care there which made Ivybank hugely popular: we believe in helping people stay as active as possible for as long as possible. Keeping their interests, making new friends, and feeling safe and secure. It's all about giving people independence and dignity - nothing more or less than you would want for yourself."

The Ivybank approach was so popular, indeed, that some residents have actually followed the Hawkins to The Hollies, the Care Home opened at Littlecombe Park earlier this year. "It was a wonderful chance to put everything we've learned over the years into practice," says Jonathan, "using the brand new building as a kind of blank canvas."

But The Hollies was just the starting point. "We wanted to create a village community here," says Lorraine. "Where anyone from 55 upwards, regardless of their age and physical condition, could live for as long as they wanted ... seamlessly moving from the independence of an apartment, to having support discreetly available as and when they required, to moving - if they wish - into the nursing home when they needed more specialist care.

"Above all, we wanted to retain a 'hands-on' approach. Making sure that everything is just right. This is a very personal business, so you'll see us around a lot!"

It's not just Jonathan and Lorraine that you'll see out and about in Littlecombe Park. The couple have three



It's all about giving people independence and dignity

dogs and one of them, Amber the Springer Spaniel, is a regular visitor. The family's collection of animals at their Bath home doesn't stop there. They also have three donkeys - Jess, Alfie and Benjie along with two retired ponies! "We've often had donkeys from Weston spend the winter with us," says Lorraine. "Last year, one came back with a foal. We're very popular every year as we can supply one for the Christmas services. It's like the Vicar of Dibley at our church!"

Lorraine also keeps horses for eventing, while Jonathan is a skilled helicopter pilot in his spare time... and has just started a new hobby as an apiarist. "Just the two hives at the moment," he says, "but they're doing really well and producing some excellent honey. Our local farmer grows his crops organically - so that helps!"

And last, but not least, are the couple's three daughters - all of whom are now well into their college educations and they too are regular visitors.

"It really is a family business," says Jonathan.

A 'grand day' is in prospect for the 18th October when the doors of Woodlands are well and truly opened for the launch event.



Colour me Edwardian

Creating a stylish retirement development within an Edwardian gentleman's residence has not been without its challenges. "We wanted to recapture its original feel and spirit," says Lorraine Hawkins, who has personally overseen the interior design of Woodlands.

"I've been working with a very ingenious interior designer, Maggie Moulton of Toots Moulton Interiors, and we've used a lot of Laura Ashley soft furnishings and materials, and Lloyd Loom furniture. Their colours are soft and subtle – creating a classy, elegant feel while retaining the sense of comfort."

Look around and you'll be impressed. The companies supplying the furniture and furnishings certainly have been. "They love what we've done here," says Lorraine, "because the context is just so right."

Expect to see Woodlands appearing in some very impressive catalogue shots in the near future!

Join us at the Woodlands grand opening



but in a setting where support and help are on hand when needed."

Converting an Edwardian building that had been somewhat neglected in recent years, back to its former glory, has been a demanding exercise. "Sadly many of the original features were too far gone to retain," says Jonathan. "So we've employed teams of craftspeople to recreate elements such as the wood panelling and the ceiling roses and cornices. We're particularly proud of how the grand oak staircase now looks.

"But while the original owners wouldn't feel out of place here, it's very much a modern building too. The energy ratings are those of a 21st century house. Everywhere is accessible by wheelchair. The six-person lift takes the effort out of going up and down the stairs. And the beautiful open fire in the lounge – as convincing as it is – doesn't need stoking up. It's fuelled by gas!"

What will be on show, however, is just the latest phase of Littlecombe Park. Soon to come will be a further 16 apartments, in an

Rooms with a view

It has long been a local landmark, it was once used for stargazing... and now it's the star feature of Woodlands' prestigious 'Maple' penthouse suite.

It's the famous tower that provides its distinct skyline as well as breathtaking views. But while the first owners would immediately recognise it, a few things have changed in the last 100 years. Because the tower was in such poor repair it has had to be painstakingly restored – timber by timber – by local craftsmen. Even the wrought iron staircase has replacement treads – forged at the same Black Country foundry from where it was purchased over a century ago!



annex building, complete with a well-equipped fitness suite and pool.

"We started with a dream for Littlecombe," says Lorraine Hawkins. "The dream is coming true." Many of those who have played a part in the refurbishment of Woodlands will be at the launch, together with those people who have so far expressed an interest in purchasing an apartment here.

"It really will be time for a glass or two of champagne," says Jonathan, "and I hope everyone can join us for the occasion between 1.30 and 3.30pm on the 18th."

WOODLANDS: "It's going to be a very proud moment for us," says Jonathan Hawkins.

very much a modern building "Along with our design and construction team, Lorraine and I have spent the last few years building up to this moment, creating what we believe is the ideal environment for anyone looking to enjoy an active, independent retirement –



The Hollies: caring, committed, compassionate

Up and running since May of this year, The Hollies Nursing Home at Littlecombe Park has been receiving a steady stream of new residents ever since – many of them local people.

"Visitors are constantly surprised at what's on offer here," says General Manager Charlotte Tily. "We have obviously designed the building to reflect the Edwardian architecture and feel of The Woodlands, giving it a really elegant, spacious feel. But of course, all of the amenities are absolutely 21st century.

"This is a relaxed, happy and homely environment and the fact that the staff enjoy working here so much makes a big difference too. There's a big emphasis on training, so our staff – 25 at present – can continue to improve their skills and promotion prospects."

One feature which has proved especially popular is the ability for couples to be

accommodated. So too is the opportunity for people to enjoy respite and convalescent care there – for as long as needed. Most rooms have wonderful countryside views – many letting out onto the patio – while design aspects such as profiling beds offer comfort for those with mobility difficulties.

However it is the level of care available which really sets The Hollies apart. Each resident receives a tailored package of personal and nursing care, which is reviewed regularly. Residents have the choice of using either the dining areas or room service, and guests are always welcome to dine.

A dedicated Activities Co-ordinator keeps the residents busy with everything from cheese and wine parties and board games through to visits to local places of interest. It all makes for a lively, fulfilling environment. In Charlotte's words, "It really is like one big happy family."



Mary Cowley: 101 not out

The Hollies has its first centenarian. Mary Cowley, who followed Jonathan and Lorraine Hawkins from Ivybank Nursing Home in Bath, is proving a lively resident. "She's in good health and great fun to be with," says Activities Co-ordinator Frankie Lappidge, "and swears by her daily two glasses of sherry as the secret to long life.

"For her 80th birthday she took a hot air balloon ride and for her 90th rode on Concorde. For her 101st we had an entertainer in and Mary was a real star – flirting outrageously with him!" "I love my room here and like listening to Daniel O'Donnell," says Mary. "He's my favourite – and a couple of years ago it was a great thrill to see him in concert."



A new home for Pipistrelles



Littlecombe Park is not just a home for people. There are badgers, deer, rabbits, squirrels, a fox and two cubs living here

too... and a thriving colony of Pipistrelle bats.

But to see the bats you'll have to venture a little way from the house. They are very shy creatures and will stay well clear of humans. They themselves are also proud new house owners, having been re-homed as part of the redevelopment of Littlecombe Park. "Their old habitat was removed," says Jonathan Hawkins, "so we have created a new 'old' rustic building for them where they can roost and breed in the summer months."

In winter they'll be putting their feet up – literally – in a disused underground reservoir. For anyone keen on nature, bring some binoculars around dusk in the summer, make your way down to the stables and you're in for a treat.

Did you know...

- Pipistrelles are the smallest and most common bat in the UK.
- They can live anything up to 16 years.
- They are between one and a half and two inches long, and it would take 150 of them to outweigh a bag of sugar!
- They have darkish red fur on their backs and light brown undersides. Their ears, nose and wing membranes are blackish brown.
- They come out to feed around sunset to hunt moths, gnats and other small insects - consuming up to 3,000 insects in a night.
- They tend to fly about 15 – 30 feet above the ground.
- One male can have his own harem of up to 10 females.

Out and about around Littlecombe Park

Littlecombe Park is brilliantly located for a whole array of interesting places to visit. Here are just a few suggestions for events coming up this autumn.

DECK THE TREES WITH... FESTIVE LIGHTS

Christmas comes early to Westonbirt Arboretum. No sooner has autumn completed its glorious decoration of the trees in all their russet finery than they are decked out with thousands of festive lights for spectacular evening visits.

This fabulous collection of trees and shrubs is just a short drive away. Go along any Friday, Saturday or Sunday evening between 28 November and 21 December from 5.00-8.30pm (last entry 7.15pm) and rekindle the Christmas spirit on a magical stroll along the famous mile-long illuminated level trail. Wrap up warm and toast your hands on roasted chestnuts, sing carols with the local choirs and sip a little mulled wine.

Admission prices: adult £7, concession £6, children £3. **More information:** 01666 880220

www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt

DOG AND DUCK

How do you catch a duck using a dog? While (normally!) Slimbridge Wetland Centre is keen to protect our feathered friends, on Sundays in October, November and December at 2pm reserve wardens James Lees and Millie will demonstrate the ancient art of catching ducks using a dog as a decoy.

Star of the show is Millie the black labrador – and don't worry, no ducks will be harmed in holding this event. In days gone by ducks were caught for the pot

but at WWT they now use this method for catching ducks safely for monitoring and ringing.

More information: 01453 891900

www.wwt.org.uk/slimbridge

SPOOKY GOINGS ON AT BERKELEY

Nearby Berkeley Castle's main claim to fame (or, rather, infamy!) is as the prison where King Edward II was brutally tortured and murdered by his captors in 1327. So who knows whether he will be one of the ghosts who will be making their presence felt on 24th October when the 'Most Haunted' historian, Richard Felix, holds a ghost hunt.

At last year's event a phenomenal amount of paranormal activity was recorded, so if you want to see if that's going to be repeated, be there from 6.30pm – 1am. Tickets cost £15.

More information: 01453 810 303

www.berkeley-castle.com

For further information and enquiries about Woodlands at Littlecombe, please call us on 01453 546183 or email us at info@littlecombepark.com

Alternatively, visit our website: www.littlecombepark.com

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