

Team spirit!

Brian and Mai Sirrell are great advocates of park home living – they share how making the right choices pays dividends!

Brian and Mai Sirrell have lived at Middletown Residential Park, in Welshpool, Powys, since 2000 when it was mainly a caravan site with just four park homes. Now it's developed for 34 park homes with design input also coming from Brian.

Brian first heard about Middletown Residential Park from Tony Bywater, the MD of Salop Leisure who own the site. Tony and Brian had known each other when they were both football referees and Tony was aware of Brian's engineering background and capabilities. Brian consequently helped contribute to planning the layout of plots, driveways, infrastructure for utilities, and parking areas, all to meet with council legislation.

Brian grew up in Shrewsbury, in Shropshire. He was a sporty child, representing his county at youth level at both football and athletics. He played football right up to his 40s! After which he became a referee, spending his last nine seasons at Lilleshall, Newport, where the National Sports England youth team played. Not one to name drop (although we are!), Brian worked alongside up-and-coming players such as Sol Campbell, Nick Barmby, Michael Owen and also with the late Sir Bobby Robson.

THE PROPERTY LADDER

Mai and Brian met in 1955 when he was on home leave from the army (Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineering) and Mai was working at Shrewsbury hospital as a nurse. Married in July 1958, they enjoyed only three days of honeymoon in Llandudno before Brian was beckoned back to Reme and the para regiment to be stationed in Cyprus, and didn't see each other again until March 1959!

Brian and Mai got an early start on the housing ladder, if not in a slightly unorthodox way! They had found a wonderful four bedroom Welsh stone cottage located where Mai was born. There was no mains water, a pump and well set within a quarter of an acre of gardens and the price negotiated at £750!

The mortgage was only forthcoming, however, on the proviso that after



ABOVE: Brian and Mai on their wedding day on 12 July 1958

completing his time playing football for Machno United, Brian would play for Bettws-y-Coed, which was the Bank Manager's team!

Later, Brian and Mai moved back to Shrewsbury and they started to downsize once their three children, Karen, Jeanette and Kelvin, had left home.

But it was in 2000 that Brian was experiencing difficulty walking. Up until then, aged 64, Brian was running eight miles a day for pleasure. A change in pace was a bitter pill to swallow.

It was at Tony Bywater's suggestion about park home living that Brian and Mai could identify with the benefits of a one level, low maintenance home set in an admirable sized plot and idyllic surroundings. They purchased their first park home, a single unit, designed to their specification.

ACCOMMODATING CHANGE

Two years later, however, Brian was given the shattering diagnosis of Guillan Barré Syndrome (CIDP), a rare and serious autoimmune disorder.

As it became more apparent that Brian was to be wheelchair-bound, they sold their park home and bought a larger one to go on site.

Brian and Mai designed this also to facilitate his changing needs such as wider access areas and wet room.

An inspiration to all, Brian has remained upbeat. As part of his involvement in planning the site, Brian helped sell the park homes and therefore got to know residents in the first instance.

Over the years Brian and Mai have made many friends and have enjoyed many social events within the village and park site community.