

park *people*

When a mod met a rocker...

Marian and Ron Gillings have faced some big challenges in life, but as soon as they moved to Orchard Park, in Langley, Berkshire, their heads hit the pillow and they slept more soundly

No longer does Marian Gillings go to bed with knots of worry in her stomach. Since moving to Orchard Park, Marian and her husband Ron say every day feels like a holiday: one that's 'reminiscent of a bygone caravan holiday, but ten times better'.

Marian explained: 'Park home living is a different way of life.'

'We feel safe and are very fortunate to retire and relax with such lovely people around us.'

EARLY YEARS

Marian and Ron met when they were just 14 and 16 respectively. Marian had grown up on a council estate in Dulwich, in south-east London, and Ron had just returned to live on the same estate with his mother after he and four of his siblings had spent their whole childhood in an orphanage.

In contrast to Marian, Ron recalls a fairly happy and caring upbringing with 32 children in a 'cottage', with a cottage mother and father. Chores had to be done prior to school and homework had to be completed, but he looks back on this period as one with pleasant memories and happy holidays.

Unfortunately, Marian and her sister experienced a sad childhood and were under watch for cruelty to children.

When Ron – the new kid on the block – returned to the estate he would ride around on his Lambretta and the girl who turned his head was Marian...

FINDING THEIR WAY

Marian left school at 15 and promptly got the sack at the end of her first week of employment! However, her next job at Myers – the bed manufacturer – was much more successful.

She spent several years there as an addressograph operator. It was Marian's first taste of financial freedom and she regularly participated in girls' nights out with her



ABOVE: Ron and Marian tied the knot in 1968, when Marian was just 19

friends and colleagues.

On leaving school, Ron worked in several factory machinist roles, in addition to being a van driver and a lift engineer. Marian and Ron both share a strong work ethic and, throughout their lives, they have worked hard to improve their financial standing.

Their childhood romance blossomed and the couple married in 1968 when Marian was just 19. Their daughter, Clare, was born several years later.

When Marian and Ron married, they were intent on getting their first home together and enrolled with a new scheme called 'Ideal Home'. The scheme didn't continue for long, but it was available to young married couples whereby, if they

spent £200 on furniture, living accommodation would be found for them. This resulted in a flat in East Dulwich, but their dream starter home was soon marred by unsavoury neighbours.

SNAKES AND LADDERS

At the time, Ron was commuting to work each day from East Dulwich to Colnbrook, in Slough. It made sense for Marian and Ron to enrol on the council list for that area and, eventually, they were fortunate enough to get a house in Langley.

In those days there was a really good community spirit on the estate; a great place for little Clare to grow up and forge close friendships. In due course, Marian and Ron were able to buy the home and they lived there for 32 years.

Over the years Marian and Ron invested a great amount of money and effort into making their home and garden special. They both worked; Marian sometimes held down three jobs at a time!

Her favourite job was working with children with special needs and, if she had her life over again, she would have always worked in this gratifying field. Sadly, this role came to an end with redundancy. In fact Marian says she's also been made redundant by the grandchildren as they are growing up and not so needy of nan any more!

The culmination of a few things prompted Marian and Ron to consider park home living. Two years previous to them selling their house, a new neighbour moved in next door, which completely changed the dynamics of the environment. The neighbour and boyfriends brought with them objectionable, loud and aggressive behaviour. This resulted in Marian and Ron being unable to enjoy their outdoors and an escalating anxiety to live in the house. Ron had also just been made redundant from his ten-year employment with Tefal and decided to take early retirement.



ABOVE: The Gillings have fond memories of caravan holidays, like this one in Cornwall

“Marian and Ron can’t compliment the PHCS team enough, describing them as polite, friendly, respectful and knowledgeable.”



ABOVE: Young love! Ron was just 16, while Marian was 14 when they met



ABOVE: The childhood sweethearts have enjoyed a fantastic life together

A NEW BEGINNING

Ron had two wishes: one, to live in a park home; two, to live in the south-west of England. Both of these were initially non-negotiable with Marian. She didn’t like the idea of pitch fees and there was no way she was moving to an area away from friends and family. It was after they stayed with some friends in a park home that she started to warm to the idea.

Now, Marian wouldn’t swap their park home and its environment for all the tea in China! They started looking at Orchard Park and, upon seeing the fifth home on site, they knew it was ‘the one’. Beautifully presented with the requisite windows at the front of the home, they promptly put in an offer. They viewed it on the Wednesday, put their house on the market on the Thursday and, the following Monday, it was sold. Something tells me it was meant to be!

Marian and Ron moved onto Orchard Park in August 2017.

The move has been a stunning success. Marian can breathe freely again, the knots of anxiety have dissipated and they have their own space and privacy – no loud music, traffic or parties!

That’s not to say Marian and Ron aren’t sociable! They have joined the residents’ association and thoroughly enjoyed the collective Christmas festivities, fish and chip suppers and generally mixing with the friendly residents. Orchard Park is located at the end of a lane, which embraces you with a sense of tranquillity, and there are plentiful country walks in the neighbouring fields.

LET’S GET BUSY

Predictably, Marian and Ron have not rested since moving in! Ron often meets up with friends and old work colleagues. He is a massive Chelsea Football Club fan and is a regular supporter at Stamford Bridge, along with friends.

He is often seen walking around in his Chelsea hat. Marian, on the other hand, has no time for football!

While the inside of the home is in good condition, Marian has got to grips with the outside garden area. The front has been dug out, areas bricked, walls jettied, turf laid and planting tubs are at the ready.

A SIGH OF RELIEF

Remarkably, Marian and Ron’s park home is 37 years old! As so often the case, many park home owners spend lots of money on transforming and modernising their homes, but neglect to consider the impact this has on the chassis and supporting structure underneath the home.

With aged homes, the supports and chassis will suffer from rust corrosion and, without attention, this will increasingly weaken in strength. Furthermore, any extra weight imposed on the home puts an additional burden on the supporting structure, which may not be sufficient for the new load.



Ron and Marian outside their park home, standing on the plot of land intended for their new garden space



In a nutshell

- Park home living has afforded Marian and Ron the space and tranquillity they longed for.
- Marian and Ron found a site near where they were living so they were close to familiar places, friends and family.
- Marian and Ron commissioned PHCS to refurbish the underside of their park home to prolong its strength and security.
- They cannot praise the work and professionalism of the PHCS team enough.
- **For further information on Park Home Chassis Services Ltd, please call 0118 983 107 or 0333 456 3056. Alternatively, you can email info@parkhomechassis.co.uk or see: parkhomechassis.co.uk**



ABOVE: Marian and Ron adore their grandchildren Holly and Ella

Fortunately, Marian had the foresight to have the underside of their park home checked. She said: 'We were recommended to ask Park Home Chassis Services (PHCS) to conduct a full inspection under our home. We have nothing but praise for PHCS.

'The surveyor was polite and thorough and provided us with a detailed written report of everything.'

Marian and Ron weren't shocked that the underside hadn't been maintained properly and so PHCS carried out a full chassis refurbishment. PHCS removed the surface rust, applied a rust inhibitor paint to the chassis, tightened the coach bolts and re-supported the whole home with PHCS's acclaimed hot-dip galvanised supports.

Marian said: 'The home feels a whole lot better now! Everything feels tighter. PHCS has also improved the dip down the centre join of the home no end. It has given us complete peace of mind knowing the work has been professionally carried out by PHCS



ABOVE: Proud Marian and Ron on daughter Clare's wedding day



ABOVE: Marian and Ron, complete with Chelsea FC gear, on their verandah

and that the home is now safe and secure.'

Marian and Ron can't compliment the PHCS team enough, describing them as polite, friendly, respectful and knowledgeable. Marian said: 'They didn't stop for tea breaks, just got on with the work, but we could have a laugh with them, too!'

TO DO LIST

Now that Marian and Ron are settled at Orchard Park, they feel they can start to make plans.

Never really affording or prioritising holidays, they are now treating themselves to ten days away in Lanzarote, plus booking several coach holidays.

Ron has always aspired to a cruise for the two of them, so that ambition is now off the wish list and on to the 'to do' list for 2019!

They have also booked for PHCS SnuggerFLOOR underfloor insulation to be installed shortly in readiness for a cosy autumn and winter.

Just a few short years ago, Marian and Ron didn't know which way to turn, as they faced a daily living nightmare. Now, all of that unpleasantness has become a distant memory and they can fully relax at Orchard Park in their special home, with the space and privacy they had been craving. It's all theirs and nothing is going to spoil it!