

47 years as Clerk (1978-1925).

It's not quite 50 years since I was officially appointed Clerk, but my involvement with Hedger's began by preparing the Accounts for the years 1976 & 1977 (they'd got a bit behind), and I'm still a trustee, so maybe I can claim a retrospective tenure of 50 years.

I have been reflecting on all the changes I've witnessed over the last 50 years, not least in the format of the Accounts. Back in the 70s, the Managing Trustee kept the ledger in a red leather-bound notebook, and the Warden collected the maintenance contributions each week in cash. As the charge was just £1 per week until 1976 and then only went up to £2 pw, her burden was not too heavy. Now everything is transferred from bank to bank electronically; we engage a Bookkeeper (MS Books), and we also boast a brilliant Hon Treasurer who keeps her masterly eye on the various complexities in accounting and scrutiny which have developed over the years. SORP, Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, the Support Grant which came and went

In 1976, Hedger's had relocated to Guildford just over 10 years before and could proudly be called 'new' and 'modern'. Yet there was no central heating, no insulation, no double glazing, and everyone had to cook on a Baby Belling. Water was heated by back boilers in the fireplaces, which had to be stoked up with coal. I'm glad to say that over the years we have managed to install gas condensing boilers, radiators, secondary glazing and plenty of insulation in the roof space. Residents have long been allowed to bring in their own cookers. The coal bunkers disappeared and allowed extra space in the kitchen for fridges or washing machines. Walk-in showers have replaced the baths.

The alarm system has also undergone quite a few changes in my time. Once it was a row of bells in a passage in the Warden's house, then there was voice communication via radio signal on hand-held equipment and the BT landline. Now the signals are picked up from pendants via transmitters and mobile phones to and from a monitoring centre somewhere in Norfolk.

Trustee meetings have changed too. In the 70's we met in the Managing Trustee's house twice a year, were treated to a sumptuous lunch and then sat down to an hour's business which dealt with finance and appointments, not much more. The MT looked after everything else. If she had a question, she would write to the Charity Commission on a postcard and would often get a reply on a postcard too. Now we have a Garden room on site in which we can meet, but there are Zoom meetings and many emails and WhatsApps in between. The Warden is present to update us on the welfare of each resident and business includes a lot more administration: policies, budgeting, maintenance, legal stuff, constant updating and checking on compliance.

A new broom sweeps clean, but an old broom knows the corners. We have said 'Goodbye' to the family trustees and an amazing team of 'hands-on' local Trustees full of new ideas have taken over. I shall be hanging on as a trustee for a bit to deal with those corners while trying to get to grips with some of the new ways – e.g. the filing system. No more filing cabinets or folders in slings. Everything is now put on Dropbox, to be opened and shared between all the trustees, ready at their fingertips. One of the first things the new broom did last year was to clear out the garage. Rather a lot of superseded items had accumulated there, in case of need. I fear that one of them may have been a Baby Belling from the 1960s.

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