

Even a Ford Cortina can't spoil the view! The park may have changed but the outlook is still as lovely



How the approach to the park used to look in days gone by



Road to success

We explore the history of an exciting and ever-changing park group with a range of interesting sites

The bright blue and canary-yellow livery on the transporters used by Griffin Transport was an eye-catching sight on Britain's trunk roads and fledgling motorway network in the 1960s and 1970s.

Operating between the north-east of England and the south coast, Griffin regularly ferried caravans from Pemberton's and Willerby's factories in Hull down to all the major holiday parks in the West Country and points east.

That transport business was run by Philip Griffin. In 1963, with his father, Cuthbert, he had purchased Pine View, a residential park home estate near the villages of Ampthill and Maulden in Bedfordshire.

It was in a bit of a state, quite old and rather run down. But the Griffins recognised Pine View's potential and set about drawing up a plan to redevelop and modernise the park.

Wedding bells

It was not long after this that Philip met a young lady by the name of Jacki. Romance blossomed and in 1968 they got married.

Home for the married couple was a bungalow in Staines, Middlesex, and soon there was the patter of tiny feet, those of a son, Adam. He was followed by a brother, Aaron, and, much later, a sister, Kate.

Jacki was a mathematician by profession and

Info

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in the early days of their married life worked as a computer programmer. But the increasing demands of Griffin Transport led to her giving up that job in order to devote her time helping to run the business, which quickly expanded.

Looking for a change, in 1974 Philip and Jacki purchased Firs Park near Petersfield in Hampshire. They decided to wind down the transport operation and focus instead on the residential park home estates.

Like Pine View, Firs Park was in need of modernising and upgrading. The Griffins, Cuthbert, Philip and Jacki, duly pitched in with an extensive development programme.

'I remember drawing up a new layout plan for the park using some graph paper, a pencil and a rubber,' Jacki told me, with a laugh. 'There were no computers and CAD then,' she added, referring to the time-saving



Above A Griffin Transport lorry, the Griffin family's maiden business

computer-aided design systems which have become common now.

'In those early days, I used to have to work out electricity bills for the individual park homes using a book of logarithms to make the calculations,' she recalled.

Early memories

I asked Jacki what other memories she had of those early days.



Above A row of static caravans from a bygone era! So much has changed in the park home world since the introduction of the Mobile Homes Act in 1983, including plenty at Pine View

'There were 22 homes at Firs Park,' she recalled, 'all Stately-Albion Blenheim and Woburn models.'

'One was a 20ft x 20 but most measured 26ft x 20ft – you didn't get 40ft and 50ft homes then.' Further expansion followed. Orchard Park close to Chieveley on the Berkshire Downs was purchased in 1977 to be followed by Hillcrest near Solihull in the West Midlands in 1982. A year later Orchard Park was extended, with the addition of 21 plots. Then, in 1986, Wildwood near Cirencester and Orchard Park at Twigworth, both in Gloucestershire, were added to the group. The same winning formula was used for all: redevelop, modernise, improve and upgrade. The most recent addition, in 1997, was Blunsdon Abbey near Swindon in Wiltshire. Sadly, Cuthbert Griffin died in the 1990s.

It was at about this time, in the late 1990s, that the Griffins' son, Adam, started working full time for the business. He had been employed part time as a young man but then went on to travel and do various other things.



Above The cars and the homes look appropriately vintage at Pine View!

Philip retired two years ago and Adam is now very much involved. With a little help and support from Jacki, he manages the parks, with younger son Aaron also involved. But time moves on.

Golden event

Last year Pine View Parks celebrated its golden anniversary, 50 years during which there have been significant changes, not just to the park but also in people's rising expectations of residential park homes.

With the business in safe hands, Jacki herself is now thinking about retirement. It will be an opportunity perhaps to spend more time with their six grandchildren, aged between two and 13. As they enjoy retirement, Jacki and Philip can look back on what is, by any standards, a success story. Pine View Parks, a business which they launched and developed, has grown just like Topsy.

From simple beginnings, a single park with a couple of dozen plots overdue for redevelopment, it has flowered into a seven-strong chain of residential estates. Those are home to around 1,000 residents in almost 600 park homes, all in pleasant, rural settings, offering 21st century state-of-the-art amenities.

Modern world

Cream on the jam is an exclusive new development of seven homes at Blunsdon Abbey offering all the modern luxuries that one would hope for in a secure community providing a new and better lifestyle for the retired and those over 50.

As a success story, it's a long way down the road from those bright blue and canary-coloured transporters of the 1960s. 🌸

How much..?

IN 1963:

- The average house cost £3,160
- A pint of beer was 8p
- The price of a gallon of petrol was under 60p
- The average UK salary was £1,086
- A season ticket to see Manchester United FC cost around £8.
- A small family car was about £500
- The price of 20 cigarettes was just under 25p
- Going to the cinema cost around 15p



Back then...

IN 1963:

- Push-button telephones became available.
- President John F Kennedy was assassinated.
- France vetoed the UK's application to enter the European Economic Community, fore-runner of the European Union.
- Martin Luther King delivered his 'I have a dream...' speech (below)



- Yugoslavia was created.
- The Beatles recorded their debut album *Please Please Me*
- The Dartford Tunnel opened.
- The first episode of *Dr Who* was broadcast.
- The Beeching Report, which led to huge cuts in the rail network was published