

The contents of this Handbook for Residents are due to be updated – a new version will be attached here in due course. As a resident, if you have any questions about your accommodation, or about the St. Thomas's Almshouses site, please contact the Warden or the Clerk in the usual ways. Thank you. (August 2021)

THE HENRY PINNOCK AND VICTORIA AND ALBERT MEMORIAL CHARITY

RESIDENTS HANDBOOK

ST. THOMAS'S ALMSHOUSES GRAVESEND

IMPORTANT

**Please leave this in your
ALMSHOUSE. It belongs
with the property.**

THE HENRY PINNOCK AND
THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MEMORIAL CHARITY

HANDBOOK

FOREWORD

This handbook provides you with information about your licence to occupy an almshouse, about the almshouses and about the Charity and its management. It supplements and explains the rules and regulations, a copy of which you sign when you accept appointment. The Trustees hope that the information that this booklet provides will help you to enjoy to the full your period of residence.

Clerk to the Trustees

The Henry Pinnock and Victoria and Albert Memorial Charity
(Registered Number 210365)

Information for Residents

1. The trust is a Registered Charity administered by a body of Trustees.
2. Almshouses are not subject to the Rent Acts or the general law relating to tenancies. Residents receive the benefit of the homes in accordance with the Charity Commissioners' Scheme for the regulation of the Charity. Residents are required to observe the rules and regulations for the occupants of the Almshouses.
3. Residents are required to make a weekly contribution to the costs of maintaining the almshouses.
4. The Weekly Maintenance Contribution includes the water charges, lighting and cleaning for the common parts.
5. Repairs to the building, plumbing, etc. will be carried out upon request to the warden, clerk or trustees.
6. Residents who are so qualified may claim Housing Benefit from Gravesham Borough Council.

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CHAPTER ONE

History of the Charity and its management

1.1 History

In 1624 Henry Pinnock made a Will leaving certain property at the junction of Windmill Street and King Street for the “better relief and maintenance of such poor decayed people as should from time to time dwell in the ancient parishes of Gravesend and Milton next Gravesend: such dwellings to be forever known as St. Thomas’s Houses”. Further funds were added over the years and in particular the Victoria & Albert Memorial Endowment Funds and the generous Will of Mrs Herda Minnis Shaw. The Almshouses moved to their present site in 1901 and were added to in subsequent years. In 1991 a new programme of rebuilding commenced providing good quality housing stock to improve the service the Charity has been able to provide to the community for nearly 400 years.

1.2 Constitution

The Charity is run in accordance with its governing instrument. This is a Scheme dated 29th June 1982 issued by the Charity Commission. It refers to previous documents, dating back to when the Charity was founded.

1.3 Trustee Body

The Charity is administered by voluntary Trustees. Day-to-day management is carried out by the Clerk to the Trustees and/or the Scheme Warden and Deputy Warden.

1.4 Almshouses (or Homes)

Almshouses are unfurnished dwellings, specially designed with the needs of older people in mind. The aim is to provide convenient and comfortable accommodation in a setting which allows residents to come and go as they please. Almshouses provide security and residents are encouraged to make friends and share a wider social life through use of the communal lounge and other facilities where they are available. St Thomas’s Almshouses have a resident Warden and each home is connected to a call system. In an emergency, such as sudden illness or after a fall, the resident can get help quickly.

CHAPTER TWO Health and Safety

2.1 Health and Safety Policy

The Trustees of The Henry Pinnock and Victoria & Albert Memorial Charity are committed to ensuring a safe living and working environment for all those who have access to the charity's premises.

This commitment has four elements:

- Full compliance with current and future Health and Safety legislation and regulations.
- An assessment of the risks faced by everyone (residents, staff, visitors and agents/contractors) who has access to the Almshouses and appropriate action taken to minimise these risks.
- Provision of appropriate and suitable training and information to ensure that everyone is aware of the risks and knows how to respond. Training should be provided for all staff with a recommendation that a minimum level of health and safety training should be achieved within six weeks of starting in post. There should be a mechanism for annual refresher training, to ensure that knowledge is kept up to date.
- Regular Inspections of the properties and subsequent maintenance programmes that give high priority to health and safety issues. Any defects with health and safety implications should be dealt with in an appropriate timescale. 24 hours is suggested.

When the Trustees are selecting contractors, it is good practice to ensure that they have sight of the contractor's health and safety policies. Trustees should also carry out annual health and safety inspections and risk assessments.

The Clerk to the Trustees is responsible to the Trustees for health and safety matters in the Charity. However, everyone has a part to play. Anyone who is concerned about a health and safety issue must bring it to the attention of the Trustees as soon as possible. Contact details are within this Residents Handbook.

Slips, Trips and Falls – The Trustees wish to draw your attention to the need to exercise care when using the footpaths around the site in wet, snowy or icy weather. Whilst every reasonable precaution will be taken to keep it hazard free, residents are reminded to use the handrails where provided.

Showers – If a shower is fitted in your home and is not used for a prolonged period of time (on holiday or in hospital, for instance), there is a significantly higher risk to users from inhaling spray containing legionella bacteria when it is brought back into use once more. Please place a plastic bag over the shower head before turning on the water. This can be removed once the water starts to flow and the contents disposed of in an appropriate manner. The intention is to avoid the first water droplets from the shower being inhaled. If you have just returned from a stay in hospital, please ask the Warden to do this for you.

Lifting – The Trustees have a Lifting Policy. The aim is to ensure that if, for example, a resident falls, he or she is not further injured by being helped to his or her feet in the wrong way and that any helpers are not also injured. When this happens, please call an ambulance and explain that someone has had a fall and requires

assistance to stand up again. Ambulance crews are trained in safe lifting techniques and their vehicles carry specialist equipment.

2.2 Call System

You will be shown how to use this when you move in. When the Warden is on duty, he or she will take emergency calls. At other times a member of staff at the Call Centre will respond to your emergency call and summon help.

Please DO use the call system by day or night to get help for a sudden illness or accident.

Please DO NOT

- use the alarm to make normal contact with the Warden
- tie up the pull cords. If you need help it may be out of reach.

2.3 Fire Precautions

The almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. Where a fire alarm has been installed, the Trustees will arrange for a fire drill from time to time and it is in everyone's interest that you should cooperate fully on these occasions, e.g. the Warden will show you the assembly points in case it is necessary to evacuate the buildings, or explain that you must stay in your flat until the Fire Service are in attendance.

When you hear the fire alarm follow the Fire Procedure. If it is safe to do so, please evacuate the building by the nearest route to the fire assembly point. Do not attempt to put out the fire or to collect personal belongings. Stay calm and help other residents to leave the building.

Leave the premises immediately shutting the door behind you.

Please DO ask the Warden

- what to do if the alarm rings,
- what to do if you discover a fire
- how to use the fire blankets provided

Please DO dispose of smoking materials safely

Please DO NOT

- leave pans (especially chip pans) unattended
- leave lit candles unattended or near drapes/curtains
- attempt to fight any fire

Please make sure that you know the location of the Fire Points and can find them in the dark. The Fire Assembly points are as follows:

Bungalows 1 – 3 and Flats 4 – 18 – the car park adjoining Bungalows 1 – 3

Flats 19 – 40 – the car park in front of the Lodge

Flats 41 – 60 and Bungalows 61 – 63 – the car park backing on to the gardens in Pinnocks Avenue.

2.4 Security

The almshouse site has security fencing and electric, key operated gates (for which each resident has a fob to use for access). There is also a voice call system at each gate to enable you to give entry to people *that you know or are expecting*. Please consider the following:

DO keep your front door locked at all times
Use the spy hole and the voice entry system to identify callers before opening the door.

DO NOT allow a stranger to enter the site by opening the gate nor allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity; if you are in doubt please call the Warden, a family friend or the control centre (by using the pull cord)
leave ground floor windows open so that an intruder can gain access
keep cash or valuables in your home

BE AWARE OF bogus officials. Always ask for proof of identity.

2.5 The Master Key

The Warden holds a master key which can open your front door but it will only be used in an emergency or with your permission. You must not fit locks and chains without the Trustees' consent as these may delay helpers in an emergency. The Trustees may be able to advise on alternative security arrangements.

Your privacy will be respected. The Warden has strict instructions only to enter your home:

- if you ask her or him to do so, or
- if you have given permission for work to be done in your absence, or
- in an emergency.

If extra keys or entry fobs are needed you will need to apply to the Trustees stating why they are required. A charge may be made.

CHAPTER THREE

Services Provided

3.1 Wardens

Wardens watch over the health and welfare of residents without interfering with their lives or intruding on their privacy. The Warden or Deputy Warden, will usually speak to everyone each morning through the call system to ensure all is well. This is usually followed by a walk round the estate to see if there are any problems. Where residents do not wish to receive a visit or call every day, they may be asked to sign a form of disclaimer. Where the Trustees feel there would be a risk to the health and welfare of the individual or other residents, they may have to insist that such calls are made.

Wardens also look after the buildings by reporting to the Trust's property managers any requests for repairs or maintenance. If there is a problem with your flat the Warden should be advised so that this can be logged for a repair to be carried out.

In an emergency the Warden will call for help on your behalf and notify your family and friends. At other times the Warden will help you to arrange for health care or social services such as Home Care or Meals on Wheels.

Wardens do not provide personal care themselves, or fetch shopping or prescriptions, except in emergencies. However, they will advise you how you can get the help elsewhere.

The Warden is on duty Monday to Friday and the Deputy Warden at weekends and each work seven and a half hour shifts covering such times each day as they will advise to you. Please respect their off duty time and privacy in her/his home. During off duty hours pull cord alarms go through to the Call Centre.

3.2 Communal Facilities

The Lodge or Common Room is for the use of the residents. It is for you and your neighbours, in discussion with the Warden, to decide what sort of activities you wish to arrange. There may be a residents' committee to do this. The Warden will give help and advice if asked and should be kept informed of future plans as the Warden is responsible for the building.

A laundry facility is available for emergency use. Each block of flats or bungalows has a drying area. Please consult the Warden about their use.

3.3 Repairs and Decorations

The Trustees are responsible for both the external and internal repairs and decoration to your home and the communal parts. Please report all necessary

work to the Warden, who will arrange for it to be carried out. You will be consulted in advance about arrangements for redecoration. You will be informed when the work will start and how long it is planned to take. Workmen will not be allowed to enter whilst you are out unless you have agreed to satisfactory arrangements. An exception will have to be made if an emergency arises or access is required to rectify an urgent problem. Please do not let anyone into an almshouse, or give them access to the site, unless you know who they are; when in doubt, call the Warden.

3.4 Insurance

The Charity insures the buildings but not your home contents.

Please do not keep more cash in your home than you need for your day-to-day expenses. Please put the rest in a bank or building society. Do not ask the Warden to take care of money for you as she/he is not allowed to do so.

3.5 Television

For residents over 75 years old the television licence is free. Those over retirement age and below 75 years old may be entitled to a concessionary television licence (currently £7.50). If so the £7.50 will be collected by the Warden.

There are restrictions on TV aerials. There are communal aerials on the site so that you will only need a Freeview box or Freeview ready set. Aerial sockets for connection are in each flat or bungalow. No satellite dishes are allowed. Please be considerate to your neighbours in the use of TV's, radios, stereos and musical instruments.

3.6 Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your almshouse clean. If this is difficult, please tell the Warden who will help you arrange for cleaning help.

You are responsible for cleaning the inside of the windows in your almshouse; if you cannot do so safely please contact the Warden. The Trustees employ a window cleaner who cleans the outside of all windows.

Cleaning of the Lodge and Common Room is also arranged by the Trustees. The cost of this may be included in your Weekly Maintenance Contribution.

3.7 Gardens

The gardens have been laid out for the benefit of all residents. All the garden work is carried out by contractors employed by the Trustees. Residents are allowed to have potted plants in the areas immediately outside the front of the properties but these must be kept properly maintained and must not limit access to the windows to allow for cleaning.

3.8 Training

When you take up the appointment and move into your almshouse the Trustees will arrange training to cover:

- Action to be taken in the event of fire and other emergencies.
- Operation of all equipment in your home including call systems and central heating.

Further training will be given from time to time to update you.

3.9 Call System

A helpline connects the resident to a call centre which is manned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It will handle emergency calls for health, police and fire when the Warden or Deputy Warden are off duty.

CHAPTER FOUR

TERMS OF OCCUPANCY

4.1 Letter of Appointment

You will have a copy of the Letter of Appointment, which you signed when you were appointed as a resident. As a beneficiary of an almshouse charity you are not a tenant, but the Trustees cannot ask you to leave unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as when you cease to be an eligible beneficiary of the charity or you do not comply with the terms of your Letter of Appointment (see “Moving Out” section 4.9). You have agreed to pay a Weekly Maintenance Contribution that includes an amount for services provided. You must be prepared to accept the provisions of Supporting People services and the installation of a call system as conditions of occupancy.

4.2 Relatives and Visitors

The Warden cannot take the place of your relatives or friends. We hope they will give you just the same support as they would if you were living in ordinary housing. With their help and co-operation, and support from Social Services if necessary, we hope that you will be independent for as long as you wish.

Your home has been specially designed as sheltered housing for older people and is not suitable to accommodate extra people. If you wish to have a relative or friend to stay for a night you must seek the Trustees’ permission in advance. We need to know who is in the almshouses for safety and security of the whole community. You need to remember that you are responsible for your visitors at all times.

4.3 Absence from Home

If you go away for any period please inform the Warden in case an emergency arises in your absence. Should you decide to return home earlier than expected please also advise the Warden. Please tell the Trustees and get their agreement if you plan to be away for more than 28 days.

4.4 Consulting Residents

The Trustees will hold meetings from time to time to discuss the running of the almshouses with you and your neighbours. You can also talk to a Trustee in private by asking the Clerk to the Trustees to arrange this. Consultation with the residents about the day to day running of the charity’s almshouses is a form of participation which will benefit all concerned. Trustees welcome the residents’ views on matters affecting their quality of life at the almshouses.

The Trustees will consult you:

- Before any work is done on your almshouse (except in an emergency)
- Before making changes to the communal facilities, including the gardens
- Before anyone enters your home

4.5 Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)

WMC is due each Monday in advance. The WMC is collected by another Housing Association on behalf of the Trustees and they will contact you about the methods of payment available. If you receive Housing Benefit, arrangements can be made for this to be paid directly to the Charity's appointed agent. You will be given a minimum of one month's notice of any increase.

The amount you pay covers part of the cost of running the almshouses and includes:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Warden's salary
- Insurance
- Upkeep of the gardens
- Cleaning of the communal areas
- Call system
- Security systems

4.6 Housing Benefit

If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have little or no capital you will almost certainly be entitled to Housing Benefit to help you with your housing costs. To claim Housing Benefit you should ask for a form from the Housing Benefit Customer Services of Gravesham Borough Council. If you do have some additional income to your basic retirement pension you may still be entitled to some help with housing costs. Again forms to claim this are available as above.

The Warden or Deputy Warden will help you if you are unsure of your entitlement or need help in completing the form.

4.7 Electricity and Gas Meters

Neither the meters nor their locks and fittings may be altered without first asking the Trustees' permission. If the supply is disconnected for any reason, please tell the Warden or Clerk immediately.

4.8 Moving Out

If you wish to move from the almshouses you must give the Trustees written notice of at least 4 weeks. During this notice period you will be liable for your WMC payments even if you have already moved out. Residents or, in the event of death, their personal representatives are responsible for the WMC until the premises are cleared of personal possessions and the keys and fobs are returned.

In certain circumstances the Trustees may ask you to find alternative accommodation. These are:

- You do not comply with the rules set out in your Letter of Appointment or elsewhere. These rules are made for the benefit of all residents. Please comply with them.
- You are no longer qualified to live in the almshouse. It is possible that your circumstances could change to make you no longer eligible. For example you could win or inherit a significant sum of money.
- You may no longer be able to look after yourself even with the help of your family and Social Services. There may come a time when this is putting the other residents at risk or putting too great a burden upon the Warden.

The Trustees will only set aside the appointment (ask you to find other accommodation) as a last resort, after a fair process of investigation and warning. They will give you as much time and help as possible to find alternative accommodation.

4.9 Re-Housing

Residents who wish to change their accommodation within the complex may apply to the Clerk for the matter to be considered by the Trustees.

The Trustees may require you to move to another of the Charity's almshouses when major repair work is being carried out. You will be given at least three months warning.

4.10 Gifts and Legacies

It is the Trustees' policy that no-one involved in the running of the charity should accept any gift or legacy from a resident. If you wish to donate anything to the charity please contact the Clerk to the Trustees. All such matters will be dealt with confidentially.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL INFORMATION

5.1 Council Tax and Water Charges

Each resident is responsible for paying his or her Council Tax and the metered water, gas, electricity and telephone charges. You will be told how to pay and about available benefits.

5.2 Alterations to your Home

Residents are not allowed to make any alterations to their almshouses nor to the electrical fittings. Although the Trustees will arrange for periodic redecoration of each almshouse, residents are permitted to re emulsion walls if they so wish. Wallpaper must not be hung. The basic carpet provided in each almshouse must be retained although a resident is permitted to lay another carpet on top of it. Safety flooring is provided by the Trustees in the kitchen and bathroom. This must not be replaced or covered over.

5.3 Pets

Pets, other than small caged birds, are not allowed. Caged birds must not become a nuisance to other residents. Please tell the Warden about arrangements you have made for the care of any bird if you are away on holiday or become ill.

5.4 Parking of Vehicles

Some car parking spaces are provided within the complex but none are allocated. Please do not park other than in the marked parking spaces or allow your visitors to do so, as they may block the way for ambulances or fire engines in an emergency. Non-residents can not park their cars overnight.

5.5 Doctor

The name of your doctor must be given to the Warden or Clerk so that help can be obtained in an emergency.

You have every right to see your doctor, nurse or other carer alone, and to keep your medical affairs entirely to yourself if you wish. However, if you do have a chronic health problem, you may feel safer if the Warden knows about it so that sensible action may be taken in an emergency. Anything you tell the warden will be kept confidential.

5.6 Emergencies and Sickness

If you are ill or in difficulties, the Warden or Trustees or the Out of hours warden call service will make every effort to get in touch with relatives, friends, the doctor, ambulance or social services on your behalf.

To make it possible to act quickly, the Warden or Trustees will need a note of the names and addresses of your nearest relatives or friends and of your doctor. Please let them know about any changes of address or telephone numbers of your relatives, friends and your doctor.

Please make sure that the Warden is notified if you are ill. This is particularly important if you are going into hospital or returning home after admission.

If you have a disability or become disabled while living in the almshouse, it may be possible to obtain equipment or to make alterations to your home to help you live an independent life. Ask the Warden or Clerk about this. Please do not make any structural alterations to your home (e.g. fitting a stair lift) without the Trustees' permission.

5.7 Personal Problems

If you have any personal problems over money or any other matter and you have no relative or friend you feel able to consult, the Trustees will be glad to give whatever help or advice they can. Let the Warden know if you wish to see a Trustee at any time.

5.8 Wills

You are strongly advised to make a Will. If you wish to leave personal property to a relative or friend a Will is essential. Please tell the Warden or Clerk where the Will is kept and who is the executor.

A solicitor is the best person to help you make a Will, and if you require assistance in finding one, we suggest you contact the Local Citizens Advice Bureau.

5.9 Rubbish

All recycling and rubbish should be put in the appropriate large bins, in the bin area. All kitchen food waste and any personal waste should be securely wrapped before being put into the communal bins. The Warden can help with any questions about disposal of rubbish.

The Council refuse collection of the communal bins is on _____ each week.

5.10 Stopcocks

The water stopcock is

The gas stopcock is

These should only be turned in an emergency.

5.11 Location of Electricity Mains Switch and Switch Panel

The electricity mains switch and the trip switches is to be found.....

CHAPTER SIX

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

6.1 If you have a complaint or a problem has arisen which cannot be readily solved by a discussion with the other party or the Warden for example, the following complaints procedure should be adopted.

6.2 Under the Housing Act 1996 all almshouse charities which are, or were, Registered Providers with the Homes and Communities Agency (HACA), have a regulatory obligation to maintain a Complaints Procedure. It is recommended good practice for all almshouse charities to have a Complaints Procedure available to residents and this is set out below.

6.3 Many people are reluctant to complain. Your Trustees can only resolve problems and improve the service they offer, if you speak up when things go wrong. Set out below is a procedure to be followed if any resident wishes to raise a complaint in connection with the occupation of his or her almshouse or about services provided by the charity relating to the almshouses.

- Minor matters, such as small maintenance items, should be referred to the Warden when they arise. They will then be logged in with the Trustees' building managers for repairs to be put in hand. If you feel that there is delay in attending to the repair please contact the Warden again or write to the Clerk.
- If the Warden is unable to resolve minor matters, or if there is a persistent problem with loud noise or matters affecting health and safety, the resident should refer this to the Clerk to the Trustees or the Trust Chairman. You should be prepared to put your complaint in writing at this stage. The Trustees wish to emphasise that all communications about complaints will be treated as confidential.
- If the Clerk is unable to deal with your complaint satisfactorily, or, if you have a complaint about staff employed by the charity, other residents or a serious breach of health and safety regulations for instance, you have the right to put your complaint in writing to the Chairman, with a formal request for it to be considered by the Trustees at their next meeting. You will, if you wish to exercise that right, be entitled to attend when your complaint is being discussed, accompanied by a friend or professional advisor.
- Trustees must write to the resident to advise of the action taken to resolve the complaint and to notify the decision made.
- As the charity is a Registered Provider, if you remain dissatisfied following consideration by, and the decision of, the Trustees, you have the right to take your complaint to The Independent Housing Ombudsman whose address is: 81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN. Telephone 0300 111 3000, Fax: 020 7831 1942, info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk .

6.4 When writing to the Ombudsman please state your full name and address, telephone number (if any) and also set out the details of your complaint. The Ombudsman will only be able to consider a complaint if he is satisfied that the charity's own Complaints Procedure, as detailed above, has been fully exhausted and that it falls within his jurisdiction.