

A COPY OF THE FULL TEXT OF MY LETTER - BUT
WITHOUT THE FIVE SNAPS WHICH I ENCLOSED.
(SEE PAGE 44 OF THE NOVEMBER ISSUE).

To the joint editors.

THE NEWS CRICKET CLUB AND SECRET GARDEN.

I was fascinated by the glowing account of this club's activities over the years (in "The News" October.)

What a pity it was published soon after the birthday party at their ground (and making use of The Secret Garden)-(SG) which produced their music at such a terrific volume that it was offensive to some of us, Victoria Park included, at about ½ a mile away! It went on relentlessly until about 1.30A.M on the Sunday morning. Apparently some villagers were invited and two parish councillors attended.

So much noise sent out a message that respect for others was not high on their agenda. We await a public apology from the organisers.

The reference to the parish council kindly allowing overspill parking on the SG overlooks the agreement that the club will only park on the SG when the club's ample land around the walled garden is full up (apart from the small badger setts area) and the new village car park is also full up.

Insurance has to be borne in mind too.

The SG was never intended to be a car park and some of us went to great trouble to clear the now grassed part, to be sure of a recreation ground owned by the villagers, although many opposed it at the time and never helped to clear it or pay for it. It was a chance of a lifetime to get a piece of land for the village instead of having to ask permission from landowners or having our children playing close to the houses in the park, causing annoyance.

The parish council was later able to buy the Parkfield, on the rates, to avoid the difficulty of finding the money as happened with the SG.

The cry then went up, by those who had not contributed in any way, to sell the Secret Garden to pay for the grass to be cut on the Parkfield (the money would have soon run out)

Ownership of the Secret Garden carries with it the legal right of way up the Garden Road and along the top of it to the entrance to the SG. (The old gate post is still there). The public have no rights (only permission under Byelaw 8) on M.O.D land, and their Byelaws make it clear that the M.O.D can turn us all off their land at any time. (Cricket club please remember Imber tenants!)

And just supposing the M.O.D got planning permission for housing on the walled garden! Right from the purchase of the Secret Garden it was necessary to prevent any rights of way being claimed over it which would seriously devalue the SG if the village decides to sell it and buy another piece of land nearer the village.

Houses were planned for other ranks soldiers around the Secret Garden by the army when the SG was bought for a school by the W.C Council. However the army decided to demolish the Erlestoke camp so the houses were never built.

If planning permission could be got for this 1.44 acres- even for only one house (like The Grange by Cows Hollow) the money from the sale could be used to convert part of the church to a "village hall" and enough left over to buy another piece of land in the park if available.

The erection of a gate has been agreed by the parish council to control access, but a gap will be left for walkers and disabled persons' mobility scooters.

Thank goodness there were no Health and Safety inspectors when we cleared the SG helped by our children using slashers, choppers, reap hooks, wire cutters, grubbers, -and bucketsful of sweat!

Risk assessments? - We all survived and are immensely proud to have transformed a wilderness into a village treasure.

So protect our Secret Garden and use it for recreation.

Well I was asked to write about the Secret Garden and opportunity only knocks once.