

Two of a kind!

Park home pair **Elaine and Keith Rainbird** were in the same year at school, dated each other at 18 and have just celebrated 50 special years of marriage! We celebrate their story...

Elaine and Keith Rainbird have a great partnership that started from a chance meeting at a cousin's wedding reception. Although they had been at school together, they hadn't seen each other for a few years. At the reception, Elaine unwittingly poured a drink that she didn't like into Keith's unattended, and half-drunk, pint of beer. When Keith realised that Elaine was the culprit he demanded a date as penance! Elaine had liked Keith because he was pretty 'sporty' – nothing to do with his good looks or personality!

At the time, Elaine was a keen rock 'n' roll dancer, often attending events at the local palais where she could enjoy the live bands. Keith jokingly says that Elaine could hardly fit in seeing him around all her social activities!

Keith lived up to his sporty image; a keen rugby player at school and a talented young footballer. In fact, he was due to sign for the junior team at Tottenham Hotspur Football Club but, sadly, a leg injury scuppered that dream. However, Keith did continue to play football at amateur league level for many years, and also coached some adult teams.

Starting out

On leaving school Elaine started work at Bellings as a junior secretary, working her way up to secretary for the assistant accountant. The company recognised her virtue and efficiency as she worked there in various capacities (part-time through motherhood) for 20 years!

In fact, after a short spell at the Stock Exchange, Keith also joined Bellings to train as an accountant and worked there for seven years until he qualified.

Elaine and Keith married several years after the 'spiked drink' event! They are very fortunate to have three children: Mark, Helen and Greg, and eight grandchildren.

Home number one

It was a real struggle to buy their first home but in 1965 they found an end-of-terrace house in Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire. It cost £2,150 and required £150 deposit, which was a big challenge in those days.

That first house was the first of nine homes they have since owned! They have always lived in Hertfordshire and have

bought all different types of houses – upsized, downsized, large houses and bungalows, old and new! The motivation was what fitted their circumstance and desire at the time.

One constant throughout is Elaine's natural flair for interior design. She has always had the capacity to see through what is currently in situ and has the imagination and ability to create a whole new concept and personal stamp for a place.

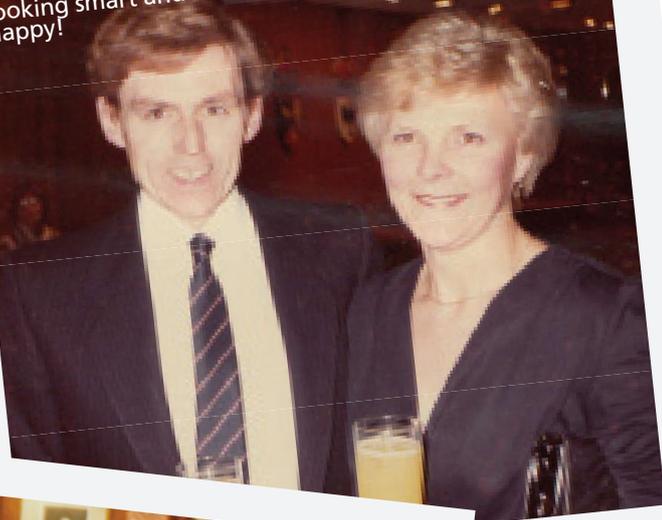
She also has the design skills needed for garden landscaping, but is quick to concede that it is Keith who does the work and who has created some fabulous and interesting gardens over the years – some very large and time consuming!

Home number nine

Home number nine is on Takeley Park, near Bishops Stortford. Park homes had not really been on their agenda at the time of purchase, but when they decided to sell their bungalow, it sold so quickly they were under a bit of pressure to find somewhere!

By chance Elaine saw an advertisement in the local newspaper for an open day at

Keith and Elaine looking smart and happy!



The couple celebrate Elaine's 60th



ABOVE: Keith and Elaine's fabulous park home

Takeley Park and encouraged Keith to visit.

They were thrilled to be able to buy a home and choose different aspects to suit their requirements. As it happens, they really liked the internal layout, but opted to extend the home a further four feet to increase the lounge to 23 feet and gain further space for the two double bedrooms located at the other end of the house.

What is appealing is that the home has separate spaces. By that I mean there is a separate hallway, lounge, dining room, study, kitchen, utility, bathroom and bedrooms; of which one has an en suite.

Elaine and Keith have lived at Takeley Park for three years now. The site has about 168 homes, but they live in a cul-de-sac of eight that has a little community of its own. Most of the neighbours moved into their homes at around the same time so good friendships have been forged. They have met for birthday bashes, meals out together – all sorts!

Their plot is 72ft x 55, so Keith's gardening expertise and graft is still much needed! They are lucky that they overlook playing fields from the rear of their home, too.

'We want snug floors'

Elaine often feels the cold. They invested in wall insulation but were still aware of cold floors in the home. Keith researched underfloor insulation and read up about Park

Home Chassis Services (PHCS) and the company's bespoke SnuggerFloor underfloor insulation.

Elaine said: 'We had Dave Foale, director of PHCS, visit us and we instantly felt comfortable. Not only was he very knowledgeable, but he took the time to listen to us. In fact, all the staff we have met are lovely! The installation team was polite, explained the order of the day and took the time to answer any questions and explain things.'

The verdict?

Prior to the installation, Elaine described the awful cold feeling they had around their feet.

She explained: 'I always had to wear booties to keep my feet warm, but now I don't need them! We are really pleased we had PHCS SnuggerFloor installed. The floors feel warmer, the home gets warmer more quickly and stays warmer for longer.'

Social and active

Elaine and Keith are now settled at Takeley Park, but they still meet up with old friends. Elaine belongs to a Women's Club in nearby Thorley and attends once a week. It is an independent group but still has a proper committee. They enjoy quizzes, talks on a range of interesting topics and much more. Elaine also socialises with a couple of friends and enjoys trips to the local theatre.

Keith also is active – unsurprisingly! He still undertakes some accountancy work on a private basis, which affords flexibility and some income. Just two years ago, he took up ashtanga yoga, too. This is not for the faint hearted – it is known as 'power yoga' and, at 73, he is an inspiration! He now attends classes twice a week and, other than the teacher, he is the only man in the group! Keith also has one-to-one sessions with a personal trainer twice a week. He finds keep fit uplifting and it makes him feel good.

Plans for 2017

I asked Elaine and Keith what they had planned for the coming year. They love

taking short breaks, particularly in the UK with Warner's at its adults-only leisure hotels.

The garden has been a little neglected and needs some more work.

The patios and pergola are all in place, it's just the flower beds that need tidying up. Elaine explained: 'The only trouble is, when the weather is great, that's when we want to be out and about, rather than toiling the land!'

Hoping for a healthy year!

Having unfortunately suffered some ill health over the last couple of years, the couple's love and support for each other has provided the strength for them to heal and, thankfully, go forward to enjoy a really healthy and energetic 2017.

Now where did I put that yoga mat?

In a nutshell

By chance Elaine and Keith attended an open day at Takeley Park that resulted in them buying a fabulous two bedroom luxury park home.

They have made new friends on site and, as they moved locally, they have been able to retain regular meet ups with old friends and frequent old haunts still.

Elaine and Keith had PHCS SnuggerFloor underfloor insulation fitted because they had a 'dreadful feeling of cold around the feet'. The system has made a huge difference and the home is much warmer.

PHCS SnuggerFloor is the leading underfloor insulation system.

For further information on Park Home Chassis Services Ltd, please call 0333 456 3056/ 0118 984 3107 or email info@parkhomechassis.co.uk. Alternatively, please visit www.parkhomechassis.co.uk.