

# Help us find a park home near... Northampton



**BUDGET  
£150k**

## Ian and Mary Jesson

**“We don’t need so much space these days and plan to spend much of the year in foreign climes”**

**L**ike many people on the cusp of retirement, Ian and Mary Jesson, both 57, have got big plans. The Northampton couple would like to see the world but need to free up some equity to turn their dreams into reality. The Jessons own a three-bedroom house in a suburb just outside the town centre. Ian, a sales manager at a Northampton shoe company, and Mary, a primary school teacher, hope to give up work in the next two years.

The couple have two grown-up daughters and are looking forward to enjoying their future freedom. Downsizing to a park home would leave them with enough money to fund a Caribbean cruise, an extended trip to Australia and other tantalising travel schemes.

### We want...

‘We’re both young at heart and, while the tranquillity of park life appeals, we’re also after a site with a lively atmosphere. Gardening is an important part of our lives, so a spacious plot with attractive plants and room to grow fruit and veg could persuade us to make the move.’

### We can afford...

‘We could get a decent price for our house as it’s in a good location and we’ve paid off our mortgage. We want something local for about £150,000. We’re considering a number of options including a flat, a bungalow or even a barge. We stumbled on the idea of a park home after leafing through PH&HC in WHSmith.’



## What’s so great about the area?

- ✓ Northampton straddles both Birmingham and London
- ✓ Northamptonshire is home to football, rugby union and cricket sides plus Silverstone motor racing circuit
- ✓ England’s shoe capital: Church’s is in the heart of the town and there’s a Dr Martens outlet shop at the Rushden factory
- ✓ Shops in Northampton, Wellingborough and Milton Keynes

## OUR EXPERT



### ALEX MELVIN

Alex is assistant editor of *Park Home & Holiday Caravan* and regularly visits residential and holiday sites up and down the country.

## HIS SHORTLIST



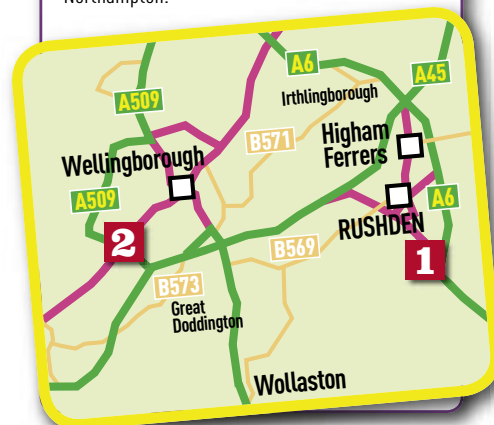
### 1 KINGSMEAD PARK, RUSHDEN

This 81-plot park, bought by Britannia Parks four months ago, is a short walk from Rushden with connections to the A6 and A45.



### 2 WILBY PARK, WILBY

Pretty Wilby Park lies next to a large Sainsbury’s supermarket. It’s also conveniently placed for access to Wilby, Wellingborough and Northampton.



LOCATION 1

# Kingsmead Park

Britannia Parks' latest acquisition, Kingsmead boasts a central location and a fantastic community spirit

Kingsmead Park has seen some big changes in recent years. The attractive site had been one of the country's few family-friendly parks, allowing resident children up until 2005. It was also part of the Kingsmead Parks group, which Britannia recently bought out.

Despite the change of outlook and ownership, Kingsmead has remained popular. Residents can walk into nearby Rushden, the biggest town in East Northamptonshire, in just 15 minutes. It also boasts

good connections to Bedford, Kettering and Northampton, including a bus service which stops at the park five times a day, six days a week.

Although it is just off the main road, it is relatively quiet. It also borders allotments, where residents can grow their own organic produce.

Kingsmead is a sociable park: its most attractive feature, a well-maintained communal green, is often used for park gatherings and parties. It has even played host to a wedding reception!

### Contact details

Kingsmead Park, Bedford Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire NN10 0NF  
 Manager: Gordon Thacker  
 Tel: 01933 312951

### Less than 30 minutes away



#### BILLING AQUADROME

Set in more than 200 acres of beautiful countryside, Billing is not only Northampton's biggest caravan park but also hosts a range of activities including a fun fair, fishing and jet skiing.



#### GREAT SHOPPING

Enjoy the January sales at Milton Keynes, one of the biggest retail areas in the UK. Closer to home, why not visit chi-chi department store Peter Crisp in Rushden, which boasts 15 different stores?



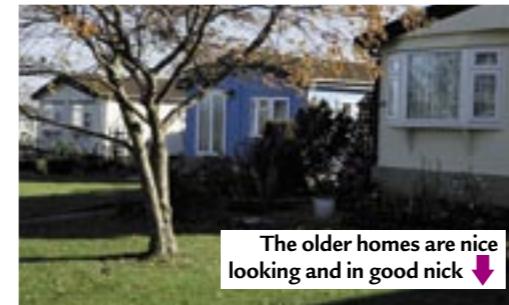
#### ALTHORP HOUSE

Lady Di's final resting place, Althorp House is a beautiful estate that's well worth exploring. With a temple, urn and special exhibition, it's a fitting place to remember the nation's Queen of Hearts.

## Taking a park tour...



We were warmly welcomed to Kingsmead on a cold day! ↓



The older homes are nice looking and in good nick ↓



Kingsmead is very attractive and green ↓



The quality of the homes surprised us: this Homeseeker is superb →



Park manager Gordon shows me the garages for rent ↓



There's plenty of communal parking here →



The communal garden has a handy bench ↓

### 1 Facilities

- ✓ Park manager Gordon Thacker and wife Nora live on site
- ✓ An Asda supermarket opened near the park in 2006
- ✓ A regular bus service visits six days a week
- ✓ Nearby train stations at Wellingborough and Kettering
- ✓ The park has its own street lighting

### 2 Community spirit

- ✓ Regular coffee mornings, cocoa evenings and park barbeques
- ✓ The park boasts an established residents' association
- ✓ Everybody gets on well: a large group was enjoying a day at Eastbourne when we visited
- ✗ No room for a clubhouse or communal hall; residents do not want one, fearing the noise
- ✓ People look out for neighbours, help each other and welcome newcomers

### 3 Park points

- ✓ Kingsmead banned resident children two years ago. It is now an over 50s park
- ✓ Children and grandchildren very welcome for weekends, holidays and longer stays
- ✓ Pets are welcome provided they are kept under control and are not a nuisance
- ✓ Site is bordered by Jubilee Park, a popular recreation ground
- ✗ There is a kids' skate ramp at the bottom of the park

### 4 Living costs

- ✓ Plot fees are charged at £116.55 pcm
- ✓ Council tax (Band A) amounts to £839.18 per year
- ✓ Water is supplied by the park and paid quarterly; sewage to the supplier every quarter
- ✓ Mains gas; residents free to choose own supplier. Electricity by meter outside homes; read quarterly
- ✓ Telephone and broadband available direct from BT

### 5 'Green' qualities

- ✓ Attractive communal green with pretty trees and bench
- ✓ Kingsmead borders allotments which can be rented for just £3 per year!
- ✓ Milton Ernest garden centre six miles from the park
- ✓ Ramblers enjoy walks around nearby Wymington, Podington and local RAF bases
- ✓ Different types of recyclable material is collected from the park on a weekly basis

### 6 Homes

- ✓ Good mix of older and new homes on the park
- ✓ Residents can site homes from all of the leading manufacturers
- ✓ Gardens are immaculately maintained
- ✓ Forty communal parking spaces and garages to rent for £25 a month
- ✗ Not many plots boast their own block paved driveways

### What did Ian & Mary think?

Our concerns... ✗ But we love... ✓

'We could clearly hear traffic noise from the main road; but the park is quiet.'

'Everybody we met was warm and welcoming; particularly park manager Gordon and his wife Nora.'

'We both run cars and many plots did not have their own driveways.'

'The gardens are well looked after and we loved the pretty communal green.'

'Some homes seemed a bit close together so privacy might be an issue.'

'The excellent road access and number of buses and trains available locally.'



Turn over for our visit to Wilby Park...

LOCATION 2

# Wilby Park

This Willbrook Parks site boasts an interesting history, an unusual layout and a prime location

Built on the site of a former lido, Wilby Park certainly makes a splash. While most homes are sunk into the basin of the old Wilby Lido, others are raised above the former swimming pool area creating a varied layout.

The park comfortably accommodates 83 plots, many with attractive gardens. Most plots have a private feel and many are shielded from prying eyes and outside noise by hedges and fir trees.

Wilby Park also benefits from an enviable location. A

huge supermarket, complete with petrol station and café, looms over it. Lucky residents can saunter up to the store in seconds. A handy bus stop, connecting Wilby to a wide range of nearby towns, can be found outside the park gates.

Wilby village, which boasts two pubs and a working man's club, is walkable while Wellingborough (three miles away) and Northampton (ten miles) are easily accessible.

It is a family-run site; Willbrook Parks owns just one other site in Bedford.

## Contact details

Wilby Park, Main Road, Wilby, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 2UL.

Director/manager: Jill and Chris Barney

Tel: 01933 222938/01234 822706

## Less than 30 minutes away

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

There is an excellent bus service which runs to Wellingborough, Kettering, Northampton and Bedford. Wellingborough and Kettering train stations also take commuters to London.

### MOTOR RACING

The UK's premier motor racing circuit, Silverstone - which hosts Formula 1's British Grand Prix every year - is in Northamptonshire while Rockingham speedway circuit is within easy reach.

### HORSE RACING

Fancy a day at the races? Why not visit Towcester Racecourse which hosts 18 National Hunt meetings from October to June. It has recently benefited from a £7.5million cash injection.

## Taking a park tour...



We liked the layout at Wilby - it felt spacious ↓



Manager Jill Barney explains how things work at Wilby →



Wilby has lots of unusual gardens with windmills →



Wilby seems like a jolly park and Jill's a very friendly lady ↑

## Homes for sale



This 36ft x 20 Donnington (1978 model) is currently available for £120,000. It is a spacious three-bedroom property with an eye-catching garden. A similar detached bungalow in Wilby village would cost you around £165,000, a saving on the park home of £45,000.

... and even a zebra! →



Plots are very well laid out ↓



And homes are a good size ↓



Time to survey the scene before taking our leave! ↓

## What did Ian & Mary think?

Our concerns... ☒ But we love... ☑

'The road surfaces are a bit bumpy and careworn but at least we know they're being fixed.'

'Owing to the layout, most plots have a lot of space and much needed privacy.'

'There seemed to be a lack of organised social activity at the park.'

'The gardens were very well looked after.'

'The local village is quite small.'

'It's in a handy location, near our family.'

'The supermarket is just a stone's throw away.'



Now find out which park is our favourite...

### 1 Facilities

- ☑ Visiting library and other mobile services
- ☑ Wilby village boasts two pubs and a working man's club
- ☑ A large supermarket, with petrol station and café, adjoins the park
- ☒ Park managers live in Banbury, Oxfordshire; a 45-minute drive from the site but can be contacted by phone

### 2 Community spirit

- ☑ It's a quiet park and most residents keep themselves to themselves
- ☑ Everybody gets on but people don't live in each other's pockets
- ☑ Wilby is an extremely safe and secure site
- ☑ Many residents enjoy a pint and a meal at the local pubs, The George and The Horseshoe
- ☒ There is no park residents' association or social clubs

### 3 Park points

- ☑ There is an over 40s age policy but Wilby's oldest resident is an impressive 90 years old!
- ☒ Cats are permitted but dogs are not allowed
- ☑ No resident children although visits are always welcomed
- ☑ The park boasts 83 plots and there are currently no plans for expansion
- ☑ Road resurfacing work began last summer and should be finished next summer

### 4 Living costs

- ☑ Ground rent is £90.46 per month
- ☑ Council tax Band A, which amounts to £805.08 per year
- ☑ Households sent itemised monthly bills including gas and electricity charges
- ☑ LPG gas by the bottle; no mains supply. Electricity is metered and paid for individually
- ☑ Water is metered and paid for as consumed

### 5 'Green' qualities

- ☑ Very green park with lots of pleasant conifers and neatly trimmed hedges
- ☑ Recycling bins are collected every week
- ☑ The park is flanked by allotments owned by the local church and a farmer's field
- ☑ On other side, there's a sports field - great for quiet walks
- ☑ Nearby Overstone Lakes is a beautiful spot for a leisurely ramble or a picnic

### 6 Homes

- ☑ There's a good selection of homes of all ages on this park
- ☑ Mix of homes, although local manufacturer Tingdene is particularly well represented
- ☑ There's plenty of communal parking space on the park
- ☑ Many plots boast lovely, private gardens perfect for relaxing in



# We just had to choose...



## Kingsmead Park

“We’d never actually visited a park site before and were very impressed with Kingsmead and Wilby. In the end, we chose Kingsmead because it’s a lively park in a great location.”

### Our favourite bits



✓ The gardens were pretty and a manageable size. Ian was impressed by the cheap allotments at the back too.



✓ We loved the green. We could imagine sitting there soaking up the sunshine on a hot summer’s day.



✓ The residents were really friendly while Gordon is good fun – a great character.

### What does Alex think?

To the uninitiated, visiting a park site can be something of a revelation. It was great to see the Jessons’ surprise and interest after a productive day at Kingsmead and Wilby. Both sites have lots going for them

and stand out for different reasons. I think they plumped for Kingsmead because it’s a bit more intimate. However, family-run Wilby also has lots of character and charm.



### Other parks we considered

#### Blisworth Park

This Charles Simpson Organisation park is located in a charming village close to Northampton. We considered paying a visit but the Jessons were more interested in other areas.

#### Overstone Lakes

Overstone, a residential/holiday park hybrid, boasts a lakeside club, tennis courts and outdoor swimming pool. As the holiday side predominates and few residential properties come up for sale, we gave it a miss.

#### Acorn Park

This small but picturesque park would appeal to many. However, the Jessons did not want a Kettering base. It also allows resident children, which put our couple off.

#### WANT TO BE OUR GUINEA PIG?

Looking for your perfect park and want our help? Write to us at Help Me Find A Park Home, Park Home and Holiday Caravan, IPC Media, Leon House, 233 High Street, Croydon CR9 1HZ.

