



Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Landmark birthdays at Royal Star & Garter

Two residents have celebrated milestone birthdays at Royal Star & Garter.

WWII veteran Joyce Greathead marked her 105th birthday at the charity's Surbiton Home on Wednesday 6 May, and the following day (7 May) Barbara Bale turned 100 in Solihull.

Both spent their special days with family and friends at the Homes.



Figure 1 Joyce enjoys her 105th birthday at Royal Star & Garter

Royal Star & Garter is a charity which provides loving, compassionate care and support to veterans and their families living with disability or dementia, from Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing. It also has services reaching out into the community, including Lunch Club, Day Care and national Telephone Friendship Service.

Joyce was born in London in 1921 and at the age of 21 joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), where she trained as a Wireless Operator. She served for three years until 1946 at bases including RAF Westcott and Hinton-in-the-Hedges. Now a great-grandmother, she recalls: "I was sometimes stationed in the Tower Control where the operator kept in touch with the pilots while they were training – they were learning how to map-read and fly across the country. At other times I was working in wireless headquarters."

Joyce demobbed in 1946 and worked in a bank. It was there that she met John, and the couple married in 1952.

She moved to Royal Star & Garter in 2025. She spent her birthday with family and friends,



Joyce was a Wireless Operator in the WAAF during WWII



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including her son Richard and daughter Jill, at the Home.

In Solihull, Barbara was treated to a live concert and tea party with cake, arranged by staff at the Home. Among the guests were Barbara's family and close friends, RAF and Army Nurses and Healthcare Assistants from the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Solihull Mayor Annette Mackenzie.



Army and RAF Nurses and Healthcare Assistants from Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) at Queen Elizabeth Hospital were at Royal Star & Garter in Solihull to wish Barbara a happy 100th birthday and present her with a beautiful bouquet

Barbara was born in Yardley, Birmingham in 1926, and was 13 when war broke out. She recalls on one occasion the windows of her home being shattered during a German air raid while the family sought safety in an Anderson shelter in the rear garden.

During WWII, Barbara had met Bill, who was a pilot in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm, and the couple married in 1950. Sadly, Bill, who was a teacher at Solihull School, died suddenly in 1969 while on a trip with pupils to Naples.

Later in life, Barbara spent a lot of time volunteering - at the visitors' shop at the National Trust's Packwood House and at the Age Concern shop in Solihull. She also volunteered with Meals on Wheels and at nursing homes.

Barbara first came to Royal Star & Garter as a Day Care guest before becoming a long-term resident in 2020.

Armed Forces Nurses and Healthcare Assistants from the RCDM are regular visitors to the Solihull Home, joining in activities and chatting to veterans.



Barbara, aged around 20

Royal Star & Garter is welcoming new residents to its Homes. For more information on this, Day Care and the other services it offers, or to work for the charity, go to www.starandgarter.org



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About Royal Star & Garter

Founded in 1916, Royal Star & Garter provides care, support and friendship for veterans and their families so that they can live well. The charity delivers nursing and dementia care through Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe, and now in Worthing, having recently merged with the military charity Care for Veterans. It also offers a range of services reaching into the community, including Lunch Clubs, Day Care and a national Telephone Friendship Service.

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Royal Star & Garter
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