



**Royal Star
& Garter**

Care with courage

Spring Connections Newsletter

2026





Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

About us

We provide loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia.

Our Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing offer outstanding long-term and short-break care.

We also run services reaching into the community, including Day Care, Lunch Clubs and a Telephone Friendship Service.



Welcome to Connections...



Spring has arrived and it sees residents enjoying the outdoor spaces at our Homes and looking forward to a summer of celebrations for our 110th anniversary.

Our Patron The Princess Royal wrote to residents back in January, sending them her good wishes, much to their delight.

Read on to find out more about life in our Homes and how we support veterans in the wider community too. We have developed a new dementia care approach and we explore its impact on people in our care on pages 8-9.

Coming up, Dementia Action Week in May and Armed Forces Week in June provide opportunities to join our local communities in marking these events. We will share those stories with you in our next edition.

Thank you for your support which makes a difference to the lives of veterans and their partners every day.



Cally Madden, Editor

VFF's 300th home!

We are delighted to share the news that Benson House in Wallingford became the 300th home to gain Veteran Friendly status, demonstrating the exceptional person-centred care it provides to veterans and their partners.

The Veteran Friendly Framework (VFF) helps providers to offer appropriate support for veterans living in care homes in England. To date, over 2,250 veterans and partners are being supported by the VFF.



George King from Benson House said: "Our team has learned a huge amount about the Armed Forces (and) that there are more veterans out there than we had imagined."

Kathryn Glass, our VFF Project Lead, added: "We're so proud to have supported over 340 homes to date to achieve VFF status and to celebrate this landmark in the programme. It truly is a phenomenal achievement and we look forward to welcoming many more care homes to join the VFF family."



Stories from our Homes



Homes news

Royal pen pal

Residents received a letter from our Patron as we began a year of celebrations marking our 110th anniversary.

In it, The Princess Royal reflected on key dates in our history, including our participation in the 1948 Stoke Mandeville Games – which launched the Paralympic movement – and the sale of our Richmond Home, which allowed for the building of three state-of-the-art Homes. She also mentioned her recent visit to Surbiton



and ended her letter with: “As Patron of Royal Star & Garter, I look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming years and I send you my best wishes for a wonderful celebration.”

Oak trees were also planted in each of the Homes’ gardens as part of the 110th anniversary celebrations.



“

I send you my best
wishes for a wonderful
celebration.

HRH The Princess Royal





Top 20 Care Home award

Glowing reviews from relatives whose loved ones are cared for at our Homes have led to us winning a respected award.

The five-star feedback left on carehome.co.uk saw us named in the Top 20 Small Care Home Groups 2026. The leading UK care home review website said the award demonstrated 'excellence' and reassured families looking for care.

One of the glowing reviews read: "My dad has now been living at Royal Star & Garter for a year and is finding it a wonderful Home. The friendly staff very much treat the residents with respect and as individuals, helping my dad develop physically, emotionally and socially. Just as importantly, he considers it his home and feels safe and happy... It is a friendly Home where the care is wonderful. It gives one hope for the future."

“

This award is a fantastic reminder of why we do what we do.

Shirley Hall, Director of Care & Wellbeing



Stories from our Homes

Residents get together

Veterans from our Solihull Home made a trip to visit comrades in High Wycombe.



Among those who made the journey was RAF veteran Bill, who was born in nearby Penn. He met Ken and, during conversation, the pair discovered they were born just one year and one mile apart.

The Solihull residents spent time with the Day Care team, visited the Activities Room and enjoyed the gardens.

Bill said: "It's long been a wish of mine to visit the High Wycombe Home because I was born in the area. It was lovely to be back on my old stomping ground and I really enjoyed my time talking to Ken, who grew up just down the road from me."

Solihull Wellbeing Coordinator Lorraine added: "We were treated like royalty. Plans are already underway to welcome our friends here back to Solihull. We can't wait!"

Back to class

A 100-year-old from our Surbiton Home returned to her old school – for the first time since WWII.

Maureen visited Tolworth Girls' School 86 years after her education was abruptly halted in September 1939. She was 14 at the time and went on to play a key role in the war effort.



The centenarian shared her memories of school life and WWII with students during the visit in March. On a tour of the school, she spotted a vintage photo of her former headteacher.

Maureen said afterwards: "It's great to be back all these years later. Returning brought back so many happy memories and I thoroughly enjoyed chatting with the current pupils and teachers."

Celebrating couples

Love was in the air at our High Wycombe Home, as we celebrated Valentine's Day.



Resident Yvonne met her husband at work. The current Home was built on the site of their offices. The couple married in 1956 and were together until Keith's death in 2023. The great

grandmother reminisced on Valentine's Day: "I miss my husband so much. But being here at Royal Star & Garter, on the very spot where I met my Keith, it makes me very happy. It brings back such joyful memories and I feel a special link to him."

lasting love

The Home also celebrated the 60th wedding anniversary of childhood sweethearts Roy and Patricia by treating the couple to a romantic meal, with flowers and cards. As children, the pair would play in their shared backyard in Sheffield, and Roy remembers pushing Patricia around

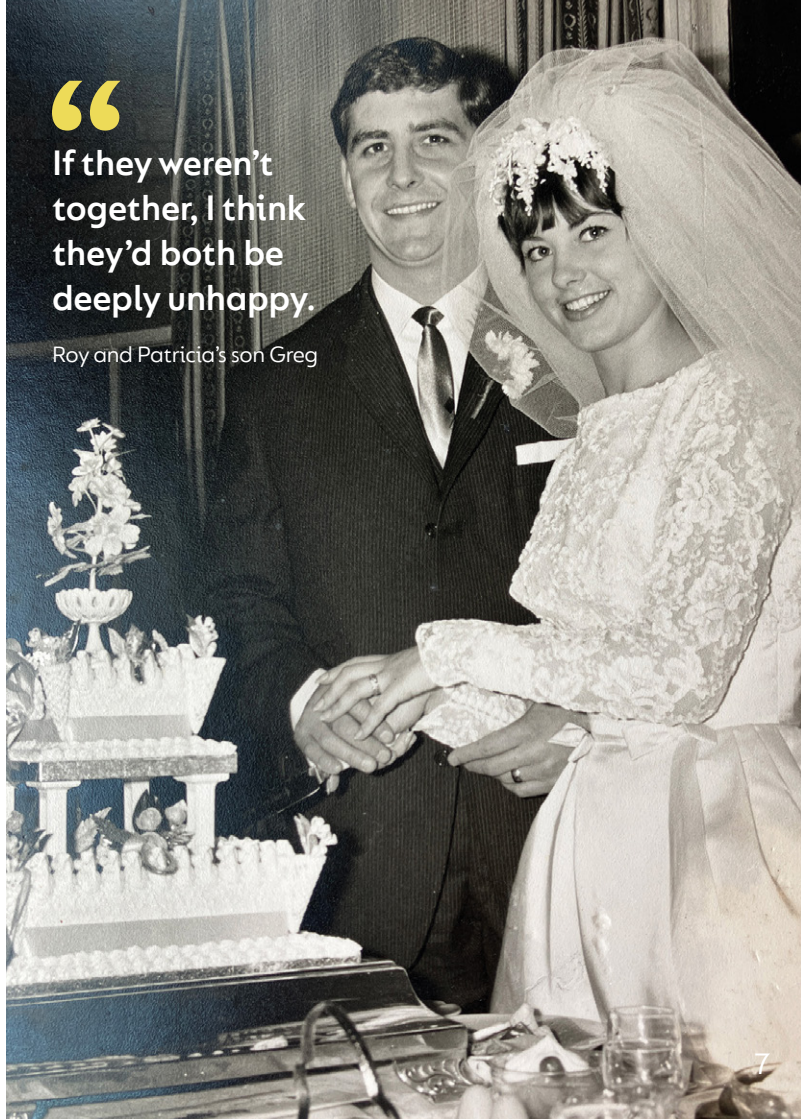


in her buggy. They are now both living with dementia and have been at the Home since 2023. Their son Greg said: "I'm grateful that staff made it such a special day for them."

“

If they weren't together, I think they'd both be deeply unhappy.

Roy and Patricia's son Greg



Living well with dementia



Care feature

We offer our care with love, compassion and understanding, which helps our residents to live well and supports their families too.

Our approach

Of our long-term residents, around 40 percent need our specialist dementia support. We have developed a new approach to include the use of tools and technology, as well as channelling current ideas and approaches to ensure our care is the very best it can be. Dementia Day Care services support veterans from the community, too. We also help relatives who may struggle to accept the changes in their loved one as their condition develops.

Our teams are specially trained in an internationally recognised dementia care framework. This ensures that they understand not only what to do in dementia care but why it matters. They are guided to shape their care to meet each individual's needs.

This new approach requires our teams to adopt a more deliberate way of working where they systematically record observations and engage in reflective discussions to understand behaviour. This prompts staff to question how they care and promotes continuous learning. One team member says it helps them to *'think more about how the individual may be feeling.'*

Supporting family

We know that families are also impacted by dementia and work with them to understand the challenges, to be better prepared to face them and to recognise that their loved one is changing. We help them to focus on the person-centred ethos that sits at the heart of our care, acknowledging their relatives' current

needs, abilities
and experiences.

Families are offered

Dementia Friends sessions, promoting understanding and empathy, while also creating a support network.

family care

Who shapes our work?

We invite residents living with dementia, staff and families to join working groups. These drive new ideas and improvements that enhance the daily lives of both residents and the people who use our wider services. We also collaborate with the Royal British Legion's Admiral Nurses to further enhance our approach to dementia care.

This work creates better pathways, more personalised care, and provides earlier diagnosis and support.



“

People pay attention to Dad and they celebrate his long, successful career. It gives me a level of comfort that I can trust implicitly how his life is here. I don't think Dad can receive better care.

Norman's son Andrew



“

Good dementia care isn't just about meeting needs, it is about assisting people to live well with dementia, and using skill, compassion and imagination.

Shirley Hall,
Director of Care
& Wellbeing

Norman's story



RAF veteran Norman (top left) lives with dementia in our High Wycombe Home. His son Andrew is based abroad but sees or calls his dad often. Norman takes part in activities and outings, including a special visit to the Officers' Mess at RAF High Wycombe where he was stationed at Strike Command. Although he's retired, he was the most senior officer there so everyone saluted him.

Andrew said the Home's close links to the Armed Forces has a big impact on his dad's wellbeing. "He's living with Alzheimer's but simple things like military decorations provide a level of familiarity for him. There's a camaraderie between the residents and staff that is very powerful."

The power of giving

Legacy news

A gift made in your Will today impacts lives tomorrow.

We provide outstanding care that recognises the unique needs of veterans and their families. By leaving a gift in your Will, you can play a vital role in helping us reach more people.

Your generosity now could support a veteran in the future to regain mobility after a stroke or help someone with dementia to live well.

These gifts help fund 24-hour nursing and dementia care, delivered by expert teams who prioritise wellbeing and independence. They also support our welcoming Homes, where residents enjoy tailored activities and physiotherapy to support them in living with purpose.

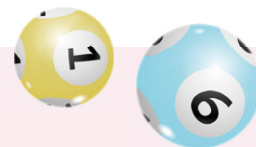
Gifts also enable us to run vital community services. Day Care and Lunch Clubs provide great food, friendship and social connection, while the Telephone Friendship Service offers regular calls to veterans who may feel isolated.

People leave gifts for many reasons but every one makes a lasting difference to our veterans.

For more information on gifts in Wills or our complimentary Will-writing service, contact legacies@starandgarter.org or call **020 8481 7674**



Lottery fun



Everyone's a winner!

Join our lottery for just £1 per week and you could win an amazing top prize of £25,000! Playing our lottery helps raise funds so we can keep providing loving, compassionate care.

To find out more information visit starandgarter.org/lottery or call 0370 050 9240

A chat with Geoff



From our residents

In this feature, RAF veteran Geoff, who lives at our Surbiton Home, tells us what matters to him.



Geoff joined the RAF in 1946 and served as an electrician, based at the RAF School of Photography.

“

I'm making a new life. It's brilliant, it's great. I couldn't have survived without Royal Star & Garter. Here is the best.

Geoff, resident

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Life goes by very quickly. And the older you get, the quicker it goes. So my advice would be to make the most of it. Savour every day. Have a positive attitude.

How can veterans today be better supported?

I think today its more difficult for veterans to transition from Armed Forces to civvy life. It didn't seem to occur so much in my day. I think the government should do more to help veterans if they require it. Some people need help readjusting to life after the Armed Forces. I think they can be supported better.

If you could change one thing, what would it be?

Nothing. I'm happy with my lot, I've had a hell of a life!

What are you most proud of?

I really hit the jackpot when I got posted to the RAF School of Photography. It changed my life, it gave me an education, it got me flying, it sorted out my life completely. So I didn't feel a boy lost, I had somewhere to go. I was very glad it was the RAF School of Photography I was at.

What matters to you?

I think people should be more accepting and understanding. You want to get through life causing as little trouble and damage to others as possible. The actions that people do nowadays don't always follow that. You can't believe in something and that is the only course we all follow. You have to keep an open mind, there's so many ways of looking at a problem and you must accept other people's points of view.

Best foot forward



Southborough High School students raised £1,800 for our veterans.

The pupils, including those from its Combined Cadet Force, undertook the 10km Winter Walk route through London in January.

Southborough High's teacher Dan Edwards said: "Our students say their regular visits to the Home are the highlight of their week, and residents have said how much joy they get from them too. It's inspiring to see the compassion and mutual respect develop between the young and old."

To join events or fundraise for us, please visit:
starandgarter.org/how-you-can-help/fundraising

Our friendly team is here to help.

020 8481 7674 (Monday to Friday 9am-4pm)

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