



**Royal Star
& Garter**

Care with courage

Autumn
**Connections
Newsletter**

2024





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 and High Wycombe offer outstanding residential care.

We have launched new services reaching out into the community, including Day Care, Lunch Clubs and a Telephone Friendship Service.



Welcome to Connections...



September is a month of change, as we look back on an exciting season of international sporting events, including the Olympics and Paralympics, to which Royal Star & Garter has an important link. This summer also saw us

welcome new friends to our Homes with the roll out of our latest services, including Day Care and Lunch Clubs.

We are now planning for cosy indoor activities, harvest festival and, of course, Remembrance, which is a time of reflection for our veterans. We are privileged to support the Armed Forces family and your generosity enables us to care for them in their time of need. We are also able to demonstrate the importance of our work to ministers and military leaders, thanks to your support.

From all of our residents, staff and volunteers, we wish you a happy autumn and winter.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cally'.

Cally Madden, Editor



The Paralympics... and us

In 1948, to coincide with the London Olympic Games, consultant Dr Guttman launched the 'Stoke Mandeville Games' with an archery competition, pitting their team against Royal Star & Garter. We were successful then and in 1949. This was the first recorded competition between disabled athletes and the forerunner to the Paralympic Games.



Residents took part in

22,935

Wellbeing sessions & outings in 2023

Stories from our Homes



Our President's 60th anniversary

This year, we are proud to celebrate the 60th anniversary of our President, Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra.



When the Princess became President in 1964, she was already well acquainted with our work. Her grandmother, Queen Mary, helped to establish our

charity in 1916 to care for the severely injured young men returning from the battlegrounds of WWI.

In a special message, the Princess said that Royal Star & Garter has always been close to her heart, and always will be. She has enjoyed her many visits to our Homes – first at Richmond, and later at Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe – and she looks forward to spending time with residents and staff.

“

I was genuinely impressed by the thought that has gone into this Home. It is fitting to the provision of care to our veterans.

Air Marshal Clare Walton

RAF trailblazers

Pioneering servicewomen meet.



Resident Cynthia Fowler, the first female RAF Air Commodore, swapped stories with Air

Marshal Clare Walton CB KHP, the most senior-ranking woman in the Air Force, when she visited High Wycombe in March.

D-Day commemorations

The 80th anniversary of D-Day was marked across our Homes in June.

Our residents, including those who served during WWII, took part in commemorations on 6 June, which included lighting a Lamp of Peace and a two-minute silence.

They watched live coverage of the UK national services from the British Normandy Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer. Together they remembered the courage and heroism of those who took part in the D-Day landings, which laid the foundations of the Allied victory in WWII.

Shirley Hall, Director of Care & Wellbeing, said: “Our Homes have residents who lived through D-Day and remember the events surrounding that time **brave sacrifice** 80 years ago vividly.

It is important for our residents and our staff to honour the bravery and sacrifice of those who took part in the D-Day landings. I’m glad we were able to do that.”

“

I didn’t know Roy was involved in the landings at the time, but I didn’t fear the worst, I expected the best.

Resident Mary on her husband’s D-Day experience



Stories from our Homes

Homes news

Surbiton Day Care

Day Care is now running in all three Homes, following its launch in Surbiton.

The service has proven popular since it started in May, with a growing number of people attending. Among them is Sadie, who said: “It’s lovely here. I’ve enjoyed meeting other people and taking part in activities.”

Home Manager Helena said: “We know there is demand for Day Care so we’re looking forward to welcoming more members of the Armed Forces community through our doors.”

See www.starandgarter.org for details of our new services.



High Wycombe’s birthday

Our newest Home marked its fifth anniversary in April.

Staff and residents celebrated with a party featuring the king of rock n’ roll, Elvis impersonator Gary Roman, who had everyone dancing and singing along. Members of the team who have worked there from the beginning were also recognised for their commitment.

Since opening in 2019, the Home has been rated Outstanding and the best in Buckinghamshire by inspectors from health watchdog, the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Melody, whose mum is a resident, said: “We have been incredibly blessed to find Royal Star & Garter.”



Remembering Cyprus

Resident Richard served on the Mediterranean island during the conflict 50 years ago.



RAF pilot Richard was stationed in Cyprus when it was rocked by fighting between Greek and Turkish communities in 1974.

Richard worked in administration at the evacuation centre, helping to repatriate British citizens. He had

joined the RAF in 1950 and served for 27 years, rising to the rank of Squadron Leader.

The 92-year-old great-grandfather said: “It was a time of great uncertainty for people living in Cyprus.

I imagine the British community felt a great relief

returning home

to escape the island and return home. People were very grateful to us for helping them escape what was essentially a war zone.”

“

The majority of the British community flew home in RAF aircraft.

Richard, RAF pilot



Animal therapy

Homes feature

Therapy animals bring joy to our Homes and improve residents' wellbeing.

Research shows that stroking animals has many benefits. These include stimulating memories, which is especially good for residents living with dementia. It may also reduce blood pressure and even help with pain management. Enjoying time with furry friends can also soothe



magic touch

residents, reducing their anxiety and promoting an improvement in mood.

Natalie, our Wellbeing Coordinator, explains: "We have many residents who live with dementia and are unable to speak, who struggle to interact with staff. When these animals arrive in our Home, we notice a change in their personality, sharing a completely different interaction with these animals. I find it so lovely to see."



How animals help us

- 1. Relieving anxiety and stress:** Just a few minutes' stroking or playing with an animal can lower levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, in the body.
- 2. Increasing happiness:** As cortisol levels decrease, serotonin increases, helping us to feel happier.
- 3. Lowering blood pressure:** Both the soothing repetition of strokes and the soft feel of fur or feathers help to lower blood pressure.
- 4. Tackling loneliness:** Animal visitors and pets can help to prompt conversation and reminiscence.

All visiting animals come from registered organisations which have their wellbeing at the heart, or they are brought in by their owners. See www.petsastherapy.org



“

I love animals of all kinds especially when they come to visit me. When I touch them, it feels so soft and gentle and that makes me so happy.

Mary, with Midnight the owl



Research shows that patting and stroking animals has many benefits.



“ I can be a bit wary of some animals, but it feels better when they visit here as they are all so friendly so I'm more confident.

Peter meeting Prancer

“ I always enjoy Poppy's visits – she makes me smile and laugh.

Bob, Poppy's no.1 fan



Meet Shirley

Our Director of Care & Wellbeing, Shirley Hall, talks about her first impressions of the Homes and her role.

“Before I joined last December, I read all about the charity. I saw the testimonials and the CQC reports and I knew the Homes would be amazing. But, to be honest, you have to see it for yourself to appreciate the extraordinary work that staff do. Their dedication is second to none. They do everything they can to support our veterans and their partners.

“We are constantly looking at ways we can widen and improve the service we offer to the Armed Forces community. Being innovative is part of the DNA here, and it was one of the things which attracted me to this role. I love technology, how it can be



used in the care sector, and how we embrace it. I always leave our Homes feeling motivated, energised and engaged.

“When I go to conferences, people come up and say how much they admire our work. We’re pioneering and we innovate, and they want to learn from us.

“Having qualified as a nurse in 1987, I have extensive experience in the NHS, which I was then able to take into my work in the medical charity, housing and social care sectors. This has given me a more grounded overview of both health and care which I am able to bring to this role.

“My experience in setting up and running new services is already being put to use here, where Lunch Clubs and the Day Care service have recently launched. I’m also really excited to explore what more we can do for younger veterans.

“It’s a really exciting time to have joined and I love being part of the Royal Star & Garter family.”



A chat with Yvonne



From our residents

In this feature, we invite a resident to tell us about what matters to them. Here we talk to Yvonne.



Yvonne is a resident in our High Wycombe Home, which has a special connection for her and her husband Keith, who was an

RAF veteran. She enjoys activities and socialising with other residents, and welcoming her beloved family into the Home.

“

I think there should be more care homes that are like Royal Star & Garter.

Yvonne, resident

What advice would you give your younger self?

Give it your all. Do your best in life. You don't want to have regrets.



Which story do you love to tell about yourself?

I was a filing-room girl at Broom & Wade engineering company and my husband was a draftsman. I used to walk through the office and he'd obviously got his eye on me. We went to a Christmas party and he asked me to dance with him. The next night I went to another party and my husband gate-crashed it so that he could dance with me. From then on we were together. Broom & Wade was on the site that this Home was built on!

How could today's veterans be better supported?

I think there should be more care homes that are like Royal Star & Garter. I think the demand is there and a lot of people could benefit from a home like this.

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

It's difficult to answer because I think the world's in a mess. There are lots of things that need to be changed!

What are you passionate about, and why?

I'm passionate about my family. I have three children, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. I can remember when each one was born.

Christmas cards

Charity news



Beat the rush and support our veterans.

We have chosen some wonderful festive designs for you this year. We aim to be as cost-effective as possible, so we have also created a Bargain Pack of 30 cards (mixed designs) for only £9.75!

This pack is exclusively online at www.charitycardshop.com/starandgarter

We have also redesigned our virtual gift cards so they can be given all year round, not just at Christmas. There are some beautiful designs for you to choose from. Use the web address above to get your cards and gifts sorted in one go!

Our friendly Supporter Care Team is always on hand to help.

020 8481 7674


Monday to Friday 8.30am-4pm

www.starandgarter.org/contact-us
supportercare@starandgarter.org

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