



**Royal Star
& Garter**

Care with courage

Autumn
**Connections
Newsletter**

2025





Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

About us

We provide loving, compassionate care and support to veterans and their families 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...



In this autumn edition, I'm delighted to introduce our guest editor Michael (left), an RAF veteran and a resident in our Surbiton Home. We invited him to join us as part of our project which

aims to give veterans a platform to share their thoughts.

Michael and his friend Derek share opinions and stories in 'A chat with...' overleaf. Then read on to see how we celebrated the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day and the residents' stories we shared. We also wanted to offer some insight into the impact of our wider work and how reaching out into the Armed Forces community benefits more people.

We hope you enjoy reading all about Michael, life in our Homes and the difference our work makes, thanks to your support.

With very best wishes from our Royal Star & Garter family,

Cally Madden, Editor

Hello

I'm delighted to be guest editor of Connections and part of the Veterans' Voice project. I used to work in communications so I'll enjoy revisiting my skills.

Now, to tell you a little about how I got here. As a gangly youth, I was called up for National Service to the RAF and, in 1956, I found myself on a steam train leaving London. I was all on my own with my belongings, ready to start the next part of my life.

At the time, my service felt like the worst experience but, looking back, it set me up for life. As I had left school at just 15, National Service saved my days. When I came out of the RAF I was a man.



I came to the Home in 2020 after several falls. I wanted to feel safe. It was Covid so I was in quarantine. That might sound difficult but it gave me time to accept how life had altered permanently. I like it here and the staff are fabulous. I look forward to sharing with you more about the Homes and Royal Star & Garter's work.

Best wishes,

Michael, Guest Editor

A chat with Michael & Derek

From our residents

We asked guest editor Michael to chat with his friend and fellow RAF resident Derek about life – both in their Home and beyond.



“

Live life as fully as you possibly can.
You have to be doing things to make
those lovely memories.

Michael

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Michael: Live life as fully as you possibly can.

Go travelling because there will come a time when you're not going to be able to do that. You have to be doing things to make those lovely memories. Look after your folks too – they need to be looked after just as you yourself will need to be cared for one day.

Derek: I'd agree with that!

What are you passionate about and why?

Michael: I'm absolutely passionate that everyone is made welcome here and looked after. I regard them as part of my family, as close as that.

Derek: I don't like prejudice. I ran a factory with 35 staff and learned a lot about people.

How did you feel when you came here?

Michael: If I can't be at home, this is the next best place to be. I do believe that very much. It does feel like my home. I could never get round my garden at home but I can here!

Derek: For me, it was strange and quite overwhelming. I came downstairs, they showed me my dining table. Michael and Paul were there and welcomed me, they gave me a few tips. They took me in and helped me a lot.



How could veterans today be better supported?

Derek: It would be nice if they set a limit to what veterans had to pay for care but I think it's too costly, unfortunately.

Please share a story about yourself.



Derek: I was about five when the war started in 1939. We lived near the Thames. I was outside with my grandad, a keen gardener who had a wheelbarrow. I was having

a ride in it down to his new allotment, when an aeroplane came over. Next minute I saw a black thing

dropping from the aeroplane.

Suddenly I'm under the wheelbarrow with my grandad

lying over the top of it. The bomb went off on the other side of the river.

Michael: In 1956, I got posted to Dover to report on civilian aircraft. There were fears that Stalin was intending to catch us out. I was on night watch and there was a blip on the screen, coming in quickly. I reported it to headquarters and soon eight Hawker Hunters had been scrambled. When they neared the object, they saw it was a new Comet jet airliner, being flown in from Cairo by its engineer. People weren't happy, there was lots of bad language flying about!

close call



“When I came out of the RAF I was a man.
Michael

Stories from our Homes



Homes news

As the nation commemorated the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII, our residents celebrated the historic victories in style.

VE and VJ Day celebrations



Victory in Europe (VE) Day on 8th May saw the Homes bedecked with bunting and buzzing with street parties, live music, fish and chips, and ice cream.

Some residents attended the service at Westminster Abbey, where The King and Queen and other members of the royal family chatted with them. Army veteran Howard from High Wycombe said: "The King stopped and asked about me. I was very proud to represent the charity." Solihull resident Margaret added: "William and Catherine were

royal encounter

one seat from me, I couldn't believe it!"

There was also media interest in our residents. The BBC interviewed two WWII veterans, Amy of the WAAF and Army veteran Ken.



There were further celebrations in our Homes for the 80th anniversary of Victory over Japan (VJ) Day on 15th August, when residents shared their memories of the War finally ending.





“

**We didn't
fear the
worst, we
expected
the best.**

Mary, speaking
about Roy's
time in the
Navy during
WWII



On VJ Day, we
shared a story
about Mary
(above), who is
101 and living in

our Surbiton Home. Her boyfriend
was serving in the Navy on an escort
ship in the Indian Ocean. In 1944, Roy
had a week's leave before the D-Day
landings, so the couple got married.
Roy survived the war and the couple
enjoyed 70 years of marriage. Mary's
belief that Roy would safely return
never wavered.

The difference we make



Our work

We are committed to providing outstanding care and support that recognises the needs of veterans and their families. Here are some of the ways in which our work is having an impact on their lives.

In our Homes

- In 2024, we supported **270 veterans and their partners** in our Homes.
- We met the specialist needs of **115 residents living with dementia**, offering care and meaningful connections.
- We offered **31,800 wellbeing sessions**, including places on group outings, in exercise classes and across a wide range of activities, arts and music.
- We improved the mobility and comfort of residents by providing **1,700 sessions of one-to-one physiotherapy**.

Day Care & Lunch Clubs

Our popular Day Care and Lunch Clubs fully relaunched in all of our Homes. Recent feedback showed that those people attending felt a sense of community and support.

- **72%** of attendees rated our Day Care service as excellent with **92%** very satisfied with the support provided.

“

The staff here are fabulous. They are five star and the care is ‘wow’! It’s a culture that’s in the Home.

Guest Editor Michael



514 veterans and their families were cared for across all of our services in 2024

- **Emotional support and wellbeing** were identified as the main benefits.
- The services also help with the **smooth transition** to respite and long-term care.

In the community

Telephone Friendship Service

This important new programme has helped us increase the reach of our support. In 2024, we connected with veterans and partners including people **as young as 40**. We provided guidance on a range of issues affecting veterans including **poverty, housing, finance and mental health**.

- **85%** of users said the TFS improved their wellbeing.
- The service received an **80% satisfaction** rate.
- **75%** of people reported they felt less lonely as a result of their regular contact with a TFS volunteer.



67 veterans used our TFS, providing them with consistent, compassionate support through our dedicated network of 30 volunteers

1,750 hours of TFS support were provided in 2024





Veteran Friendly Framework (VFF)

Designed to support veterans and their partners living in other care homes, the VFF has continued to grow, with funding from partners, trusts and foundations. It has now reached more than 200 care homes,

helping over 1,880 veterans and their partners who tell us they feel better supported.

- VFF **increases staff understanding** of veterans' needs.
- It improves wellbeing and **creates greater social connections**.

Care for Veterans

As a result of our merger with Care for Veterans, we have extended our reach with a fourth Home, based in Worthing. This means we can support **a further 60 veterans and their families**, and provide **wellbeing and multi-therapy services**, as we do in our other Homes.

While we remain separate charities until we achieve full integration, we are providing vital fundraising support to them. We are proud to share some of their achievements over the last 12 months:

- Nearly **2,000 physiotherapy sessions** were provided.
- **360 individual wheelchair adjustments** improved independent movement.
- Over **260 specialist sessions** helped with swallowing problems.

It is only with your help that we can achieve this level of impact for the people we support.



87% of care home managers rated their experience of the VFF as very positive

Below: Meet Care for Veterans' resident John, with Magda the Physiotherapist



Free Wills Month

Legacy news

During March and October, we are offering people aged over 55 the chance to write a Will for free.

Many charities offer to cover the solicitor's fees to write a simple Will. While there is no obligation to leave a gift to that charity in return, this income is vital to support their work.

Last Free Wills Month, 44 supporters registered with us, including Joan and her partner, Steve, through the National Free Wills Network.

Joan said, "I have never had a Will before, so I wanted to make sure I had one in place. I wrote my Will with a solicitor over the phone. Sometimes I have difficulty getting to places, so it made me feel more comfortable being in my own home. Although it's difficult to discuss death, writing a Will is a good thing to do."

Joan's daughter Emma said: "Knowing Mum and Steve have prepared their Wills and everything's in place has brought us great peace of mind."



To find out more about Free Wills Month or for details of our free Will offer, contact the Legacy team at legacies@starandgarter.org or telephone on 020 8481 7676

Dragon boat fundraising

Community news



The Royal Yeomanry Regimental Association raised over £800 for us at the Kingston Dragon Boat Race.

The team was led by Sargent Chris Smith, who said, "We had an amazing time and we all discovered the joy of dragon boat racing."

Join our lottery fun

For just £1 per week, 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

www.starandgarter.org/lottery or call 0370 050 9240



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

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Royal Star & Garter

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