



**Royal Star  
& Garter**

Care with courage

Spring  
**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 spring edition, we have some exciting changes to share with you! It is a great honour to welcome our new Patron, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, who has long advocated for veterans. We look forward to introducing her to our residents, Homes and services.**

We have recently completed the merger with Care for Veterans and are delighted to welcome them into the Royal Star & Garter family. Combining our exceptional nursing and dementia care and experience means we can continue to support those veterans and families who need us long into the future, just as your support helps them today.

While we enjoy the warmer days outdoors with more activities and outings, we hope that the spring brings you sunshine and joy. Our residents, families and staff thank you for your generosity.

Best wishes,

Cally Madden, Editor

## Our Patron

**At the start of the year, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal was announced as our new Patron.**

The Princess is admired for her dedication to good causes and her devotion to public work, as well as her long association, affinity and support for Armed Forces veterans. She succeeds her late mother, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, who was Patron from 1953 until her death in 2022.

HRH Princess Alexandra will remain as our President, a role in which she has served since 1964.



Photo courtesy of Jeremy Makinson

“

**We look forward to welcoming Her Royal Highness as our new Patron and sharing our ambitions to support more veterans and their families than ever before.**

Major General Tim Tyler, Chair

# Stories from our Homes



## Homes news

### Welcome to Care for Veterans



We are excited to share the news that we have completed the merger with Care for Veterans, a military charity based in Worthing.

This merger expands the Royal Star & Garter group to four care homes and brings together our existing services, expertise and resources. We will continue delivering the same excellent care provided in our Worthing Home and will work together to do the very best for the veterans and families we care for.



This is a positive step which will offer greater long-term support for the Armed Forces community.



### Amy's 100th birthday

WWII veteran Amy marked her centenary in January.



In 1942, aged just 17, Amy joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, training to operate barrage balloons. She then worked near Hastings as a plotter.

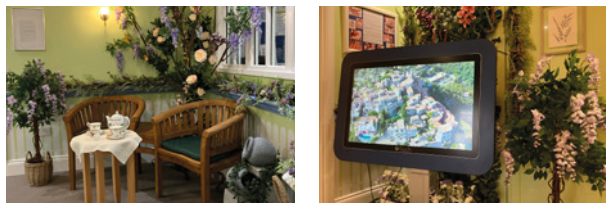
Amy celebrated her 100th birthday with lunch, afternoon tea and a garden room party at our Surbiton Home with her family, including grandsons from abroad. Daughter Kim said: "Mum enjoyed her parties. The Home made it special for her."

## The enchanted garden

**Staff in our Surbiton Home have created an indoor garden, designed to attract and comfort residents living with dementia.**

The garden creates an inviting sanctuary where residents can rest and take a break. Staff understand how important it is for them to have moments of peace. Sensory elements bring the outdoors in, with the sound of running water and cheering birdsong creating a peaceful backdrop, the scent of lavender lingering in the air and flowers bringing the space to life, creating beauty and serenity.

**calm space**



A large tablet plays soothing scenes, such as country drives, offering an escape into a world of tranquility.

**“ I find it very calming.  
I sit here with a smile on my face.**

Resident, Lister floor



# Reaching into the community

## Homes news

We have found that our services in the community impact people in many different ways – often deeply personal and far-reaching.

### Les's story

Our free Telephone Friendship Service (TFS) has already reached 67 veterans and their partners nationally. Volunteers provide conversation, support and companionship.

One user, Les, 64, said the TFS had helped boost his confidence enough to publish his autobiography in 2024. The Falklands veteran praised the TFS for “giving him his voice back.”

His memoir covers his time as a nurse on the hospital ship SS Uganda in 1982, treating burns casualties. Les developed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and has been unable to work for the past four years, leaving him depressed.

He said the TFS was a catalyst to bring meaning back into his life: “It has given me confidence, it certainly gave me the confidence to write my book.”



“

Having someone to talk to, bounce ideas off and have a chat with, gives me comfort and support. It gives me companionship.

Les, Falklands veteran and TFS user



## Romayne's story

Our Lunch Clubs welcome veterans and their partners from the community

into the Homes to enjoy meals, activities and companionship. Last year we supported 119 veterans or partners. Movingly, the service is helping one widow to grieve.

Romayne is a Lunch Club volunteer at Solihull. She says the service has helped her adjust to life following the death of husband Paul, who was a resident.

"I used to come to visit Paul regularly with our Labrador, Bella, and when he died in 2022 I really missed my visits to the Home."

Romayne was encouraged to stay in touch and, when Lunch Club launched in 2023, she decided to join in. She said: "I like meeting people and spending time with them. I really enjoy my role because I feel like I'm helping others. Lunch Club has helped me grieve. I've found coming

back to the Home, and being with people who knew and loved Paul, helps me greatly. I always look forward to it."

**For more information, go to**  
**[www.starandgarter.org/our-lunch-clubs](http://www.starandgarter.org/our-lunch-clubs)**

**shared memories**



**“** I missed the friendships I'd developed with residents and staff. Royal Star & Garter felt like family, it's as simple as that.  
Romayne

# Home is where the art is



## Art feature

**Our Wellbeing programme helps residents to explore new skills and revive old ones.**

Artist Anne has been painting all her life, inheriting her passion from her mother. Anne, who is living with dementia in our Surbiton Home, has an easel set up in her room and enjoys spending time painting the view from the window and family portraits.



She said, “I didn’t go to art college, but I did go to evening school, and I’ve been painting all my life. It’s an enjoyable pastime, but I wouldn’t say it’s relaxing – it can be infuriating! But when it turns out well it’s smashing!

It’s lovely when people say nice things about my paintings because I can be my own worst critic and often don’t see it myself.”

In High Wycombe, staff recently held an exhibition featuring the work of resident Michael (far right), an Army veteran who served for 31 years. He took up painting and sketching soon after retiring in 1982, and is self-taught. Over 60 pieces of art, made before

and during his time at the Home, were displayed, drawing praise from fellow residents and staff. Michael is now living with dementia, and his daughter Sarah said, “Painting and sketching has been such an enjoyable and therapeutic part

## creative joy

of my dad’s life. I love the fact that at the age of 94 he is still encouraged to be creative and stay connected to his earlier life.”

Brian, (right) 91, served in the Royal Artillery for his National Service, and comes to our Solihull Home for Day Care. He has been sketching all his life and, 30 years ago, started making ceramics and



figures from metal ingots. He was also a keen photo-journalist, with articles

published in several national magazines. Brian said, “I come to the Home because of all the activities – the entertainment, exercise and of course the crafts. Even though I’m the ripe old age of 91, I can come here and still do the things that I love and that I’ve done for many years.”



“

I love painting, and I'm very happy to be able to continue my hobby here.

Anne, Surbiton resident



Natalie, the Wellbeing Coordinator who helped to arrange Michael's exhibition, said, "We know that participating in arts & crafts activities and beloved pastimes can improve overall wellbeing and quality of life for older people, and people living with dementia. That's why it's such an important part of the care we provide."



# Paul's gift to us



## Thanks to gifts in Wills, we are able to offer our exceptional care.

Legacy pledger Paul's career ended abruptly after 30 years in the Army, when he failed a hearing test. "All the bangs and explosions had taken their toll on my hearing. I was 47."

Paul supported our work long before becoming a resident. In 2006, he pledged a gift in his Will to us. Then in 2022, when diagnosed with ataxia, he moved to our Surbiton Home, where he enjoys musical activities. We are proud to support Paul and grateful to him for his gift, which will help assure our care for future veterans.



## Introducing our new lottery



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 veterans and their partners when and where it's needed most.

To find out more information visit [www.starandgarter.org/lottery](http://www.starandgarter.org/lottery) or call 0370 050 9240

## What Gifts in Wills can do

Recent projects in our Surbiton Home, supported by legacy gifts, include:

- **Garden renovation**  
The garden is now more accessible to residents, including a wheelchair-friendly nature trail.
- **The cafe-bar lounge**  
This has been transformed into a welcoming, comfortable multi-purpose room for residents and their loved ones to socialise in and enjoy activities.
- **Breathing building**  
The Home has automated ventilation to regulate the temperature and reduce air-conditioning. It is now more environmentally friendly and cost-effective to run.
- **An enchanted garden**  
This sensory, immersive indoor garden offers a safe and soothing space for residents living with dementia.



For more information on gifts or our complimentary Will-writing service, contact [legacies@starandgarter.org](mailto:legacies@starandgarter.org) or call 020 8481 7676.

# A chat with Bill



From our residents

In this feature, we ask one of our residents what's on their mind. Here, Bill tells us what matters to him.



Bill was a Navigator in the RAF, where he served for more than 30 years, attaining the rank of Squadron Leader.

Previously a farmer, he now has great concerns for our environment.

“

**I think the Home is absolutely marvellous. I've never met such a caring group of people in all my life.**

Bill, veteran



**What advice would you give to your younger self?**

I should have believed in myself more. I wish I had more confidence and had gone for a permanent commission in the RAF a lot earlier than I did.

**How could you personally have been better supported as a veteran?**

I've never felt the need to be supported but I welcome veterans' organisations that are out there that can support people who require it. I think the Veterans' ID is a good idea, because my other ID, such as passport and driver's licence, have expired.

**What are you most proud of?**

I'm very proud of my time in the RAF, and in particular for winning a prestigious navigation competition in 1963. And I'm very proud of my family and my sons.

**What are you passionate about?**

As someone who loves gardening, nature and wildlife, I'm passionate about the environment and looking after it. I'm very concerned about this business of climate change and global warming. No one seems to be doing anything about it, and we're heading deeper into trouble. When you think about the changing weather patterns we're experiencing now, it's a bit frightening, and I worry it will only get worse.

# Fundraising friends



## We've been busy working with our community friends to raise funds.

In January, pupils and teachers from Southborough High School took part in the 10km Winter Walk through London and raised £2,850. Pupils have been visiting our Surbiton Home as part of their Young Leaders Award.

February saw the Birmingham International Tattoo raising over £8,100 to support our work. The annual event has donated more than £140,000 to us as its chosen charity since 2007.

### Find out more:

[starandgarter.org/how-you-can-help/fundraising](http://starandgarter.org/how-you-can-help/fundraising)

**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](http://www.starandgarter.org/contact-us)

[supportercare@starandgarter.org](mailto:supportercare@starandgarter.org)

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**Royal Star & Garter**

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