



**Royal Star
& Garter**

Care with courage

Winter
**Connections
Newsletter**

2025





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 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...



Happy new year! We hope you enjoyed the festive season as much as our residents did.

This year, we will continue to expand our services to help even more members of the Armed Forces community and that will include a potential merger with another military charity. (See panel, right.)

We love sharing joyous stories of life in our Homes and new services, which demonstrate the impact your generous donations have. However, it is also important to tell you about some of the challenges that residents experience on their journey into care and we do that in our feature 'Coming home'.

Please know that your support has given our residents hope and comfort at the start of a new year and this message comes with their warmest wishes for your wellbeing in 2025.

Best wishes,

Cally Madden, Editor



Care for Veterans

We have agreed to progress towards a merger with the Armed Forces charity, Care for Veterans.

It runs a home in Worthing, caring for ex-Service people and their families who live with disability, neurological conditions or dementia. This will enable both charities to share expertise and provide a more effective service to the veteran community of all ages.

Chair of Royal Star & Garter, Major General Tim Tyler CB, commented: "I am delighted to be working with Care for Veterans with a view to bringing its home, residents and staff into the Royal Star & Garter family."

“ A merger will leverage the expertise of both charities to the benefit of veterans and their families in need of care.

David Williams, Care for Veterans (above left) with Andy Cole, Royal Star & Garter

Stories from our Homes



Homes news

Churchill's plotter turns 105

Our oldest resident and WWII veteran, Kay, celebrated her 105th birthday at our High Wycombe Home, where she enjoyed a special party with family.



Kay served in the WAAF and worked as a plotter at RAF Uxbridge during the Battle of Britain, tracking enemy planes on maps. Senior officers would observe intently from the gallery above. Sue, her daughter, said: "Mum remembers on several occasions Winston Churchill looking down on them, his



'face wreathed in cigar smoke'. I'm glad she's now at Royal Star & Garter, which provides such loving care to our veterans."

Solihull Home wedding

Recreating a happy day.



Resident Val was disappointed when ill-health stopped her attending her grandson Harry's wedding to Megan. So the Wellbeing Team supported the family to recreate the celebration in the Home so that Val could share it. Her daughter Debbie said: "This second wedding with Mum means the world to all of us."

“
Mum remembers Winston Churchill looking down on them, his 'face wreathed in cigar smoke'.

Sue, Kay's daughter



Summer holiday Iraq veteran Stephen, 37, enjoyed a memorable getaway in the Lake District.

Stephen, who was injured by a mortar bomb whilst serving, returned to Calvert Lakes for the second year running, with his carers Valdas and Phil, and friend Paul.

Calvert Lakes offers adventure breaks for people with disabilities. During his trip, Stephen enjoyed canoeing and catamaran sailing, hiking, cycle rides, boccia and swimming. The cost of the trip was met by Help for Heroes. Stephen later said: "It was so nice to be back in the Lakes. I had a great time."

action man

“ I’m grateful to Royal Star & Garter and Help For Heroes for helping make this happen.

Stephen, Army veteran



Stories from our Homes

Ken's lucky escape

Army veteran Ken recalled how, 80 years ago, a pint of Guinness saved his life.



Ken had been given a day pass while serving with the Royal Engineers in Antwerp, Belgium, on 16 December 1944, when he narrowly avoided a tragedy which claimed the lives of hundreds of people, including Allied servicemen.

He was intending to spend the day at Cinema Rex, but heard The 21 Club was serving draught Guinness. With the toss of a coin, Ken and his friends made a last-minute decision to head to The 21 Club. While he was there, a German rocket struck the cinema, killing 567 people.

Ken said: "The chaps had no chance, they were annihilated. We just thanked our blessings, but for the toss of a coin and a pint of Guinness, we'd have been dead. I was 18 at the time, and now I'm 98. The more I think about it, the more I realise how lucky I was."



Supporting veteran staff

We are renowned for the care provided at Royal Star & Garter. Now we've received recognition for the outstanding support we provide to the veterans who work with us.

We have been awarded the MoD's Employment Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award, acknowledging our exceptional support and advocacy for the Armed Forces community and veterans' employment.



Recently retired Kevin served in the Navy before working with us in

the Wellbeing Team for seven years. He praised us for the ERS Gold Award, and said: "I think it's well deserved. It's recognition and an endorsement of everything we do here. Coming from a Forces background myself, I am very aware of what an honour and a privilege it is to work with and for our veterans."



Strike a pose

We put on a special show to coincide with London Fashion Week.

The glamour-filled event at our High Wycombe Home starred resident Carolyn, who worked for some of the world's biggest haute-couture houses in the fifties and sixties.

She was crowned Fashion Queen of Great Britain in 1958, and went on to model for French fashion houses, including Chanel and Balmain. Carolyn later appeared on TV and she would also regularly attend London Fashion Week.

Knowing just what a big part fashion played in her life, staff at the Home set up Carolyn's Boutique, which displays clothes, shoes and accessories from her wardrobe, outside her room in the dementia care family.

“

Through these types of activities, we help residents maintain a sense of self, supporting their emotional wellbeing and quality of life. Reggie, Home Manager

classic style



Coming home



Homes feature



Here are the stories of some residents who struggled in their own homes but had the courage to find support and comfort in ours.

Ill health, loneliness and mobility issues are all emotive drivers for making the difficult decision to come into care. Accepting care can often be even harder for someone from a military background.

Our Director of Care & Wellbeing, Shirley Hall, helps support some of the assessments we make before people move in with us. She understands the feelings involved: “Recognising that a loved one needs care is one of the hardest decisions a family has to make. Seeing a relative – who was once strong and independent – in need of care is intensely emotional. There may be a sense of guilt on behalf of the families. Often, health and wellbeing concerns force the issue.

“We respect the journey each person has had to make to come into our Homes. We do our utmost to ensure they are comfortable, loved and content and, after all the heartache, that they feel they have

made the right decision and enjoy their life with us.”

After Squadron Leader Richard (right) was widowed, his health declined. Daughter Ness explained: “Dad would often not see anyone day to day. When he arrived at Royal Star & Garter, he was very ill, incredibly poorly. I don’t think we’d have him here still without the Home. But within a month he was back to his old self. To have him here

loving life

as he is now... He’s engaged, he’s got a social life, he’s laughing again. My family is so happy with how Dad has come back to health since arriving here.”

Margaret (right) has lived at the Solihull Home since 2024. Her son Mark said: “Mum’s health wasn’t good. I feel such relief because I was getting calls telling me Mum had just fallen over. Now I don’t have to worry about her care, and life is a lot easier.”

“ I can’t say enough about this place. The care is amazing.

Mark, Margaret’s son



“

It is a beautiful Home with caring souls who look after her. It's the perfect match for my Mum, I know that she is happy there. This has been an incredible comfort to me.

Carol, Connie's daughter



Connie (above) served in the WRNS and is described by her daughter Carol as “an adventurer who loved to learn about different cultures, their customs and history.”

Resident Connie now lives with dementia. Her granddaughter Shelly explained, “The pandemic hit her hard. She was not cooking, washing or eating and you could see she was deteriorating. She was clearly struggling to look after herself. She was having more falls and I was desperate. She was just too old to look after herself. We knew she needed 24-hour care. There's no way she would be alive right now if she hadn't moved in to Royal Star & Garter – things had got that bad – but now she's making new friends. I'm so relieved that she's found a home here. It was a big move for her, but she trusts me to do what's best for her, and it's perfect that she's here.”

Leaving a gift in your Will

Legacy news



Have you ever wondered how you could benefit your favourite causes after you die? Legacy Marketing Assistant, Louiza, talks to us about the impact of Gifts in Wills.

Gifts in Wills account for around a quarter of our income and make an enormous difference to the care we provide. Most importantly, they enable us to plan for the future.

The impact of donations we receive from our supporters is far reaching, allowing us to expand our care services to veterans and their partners in our Homes and in the community. Your gift could help provide anything from medical equipment to Speech & Language therapy to assist with swallowing and communication.

We recently launched Day Care and Lunch Club services for veterans in need within the local community, as well our free Telephone Friendship Service. It's a really exciting time for me to watch our services develop, as they are needed now more than ever. Your support enables us to do this work.

It's generally recommended to review your Will every five years or after a significant life event. We're delighted to offer our friends and supporters the opportunity to write or update a simple Will, free of charge, to help with this, with no obligation.

Whether it's a specific amount or a percentage of your estate, your lasting legacy will have a significant impact on our work.



To request a free Will-writing guide (pictured above) or to find out more, please get in touch. You can contact me at legacies@starandgarter.org or call 020 8481 7676.

A chat with John



From our residents

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



John spent his National Service in the RAF, before training as an engineer. Being generous and kind matters to John. Inspired

by Scouting since boyhood, he led his own troop in later life and believes the Scouts' way of helping others is important.

“

I feel like I have the best of both worlds here at Royal Star & Garter.

John, RAF veteran



What advice would you give to your younger self?

I don't think I'd do things much differently really, I've had a good life with a nice family who were a joy to bring up. I miss my wife, that's the only bad thing, but apart from that it's been pretty good. I count my blessings, so maybe that's the advice I would give my younger self.

How could veterans be better supported?

Coming to Royal Star & Garter is the first time I've used my Armed Forces connection. I think National Service interfered with a lot of people's lives. So maybe veterans could be better helped finding work after leaving the Services. I think of veterans without a family, and how that would affect them. I'm sure they would feel lonely and that's something that should be looked at.

If you could change anything about the world, what would it be?

I'd like to end wars. War is so futile. People just seem to go into things without realising what they're doing, and the consequences of what they're doing.

What do you think of life here?

I'm very impressed. The staff take care of me very well. I like it because if I want to mix with other people I can, and if I want some time on my own, I have my lovely room.

New year, new us

Charity news



We are bounding into 2025 with some brand-new fundraising opportunities!

Every year, we need to raise over £5million to support the cost of the care we provide – and together we can do this. To find out more about some fantastic opportunities to help you raise money, see our events page:

starandgarter.org/how-you-can-help/fundraising

If you want to explore ways to push yourself, we are now a listed charity on ultrachallenge.com. We also receive donations from the spectacular Birmingham International Tattoo in February, so buy your tickets from bhamtattoo.com/tickets to support our veterans.

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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