

# Connections



**Royal Star  
& Garter**

Care with courage

Supporter newsletter  
Spring 2023



# About us



**Royal Star  
& Garter**

Care with courage

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 care. We help those who have had the courage to serve our country to live happy, fulfilled lives.



**In 2022, your support helped us to:**

- offer almost 4,000 physiotherapy opportunities to support residents' health, mobility and wellbeing;
- provide 98 veterans and partners with specialist dementia care;
- continue our new Wellbeing Programme which provided 8,600 opportunities for individual residents to engage in activities and outings.

**Looking forward we will:**

- continue our trial supporting people in their own homes;
- restart our Day Care service in Solihull and High Wycombe and launch it in Surbiton;
- roll out a veteran-friendly framework that will help provide additional support to veterans living in care homes across the country.



# Welcome to Connections...



## ...our Spring newsletter and a peek into life in our Homes.

Residents and staff are looking forward to some wonderful, sunny days and the chance to spend more time outdoors enjoying our recently spruced-up gardens and balconies.

Thanks to your generosity, there are lots of summer activities planned to support our residents' wellbeing. Of course, they will be joining in the celebrations for the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III with street parties and music, bunting and cake.

We are also celebrating an outstanding CQC rating in High Wycombe, our newest Home, see page 4 for more about this.

In this edition, we meet some alpacas, find out about food in the Homes, and read some tips on prompting conversations with loved ones living with dementia.

Our residents, staff and volunteers send their very best wishes for a joyful summer of celebrations.



Best wishes,

Cally Madden, Editor

## King Charles III



As we celebrate the coronation of His Majesty King Charles, we reflect that in our 107-year history we have enjoyed visits by many members of the royal family. Queen Mary, our founder, visited our Richmond Home, as did our late Patron, Queen Elizabeth II. Our President, HRH Princess Alexandra, last visited in November.

In 1982, the former Prince of Wales visited the Richmond Home. HRH Prince Charles served in the Armed Forces and swapped stories with veterans. The residents were delighted to meet him and have a chat and a joke.

We look forward to sharing pictures of our coronation celebrations in the next issue.

# Stories from our Homes



From four-legged visitors to keeping a promise, there's lots going on in our Homes.

## CQC outstanding



Our High Wycombe Home has been rated outstanding following its first Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection. The healthcare watchdog judged the Home to

be outstanding in four of the five areas tested. Hazel Roberts, CQC Head of Inspection for Adult Social Care, commented, "Other services can look to it as an example of the high standards of care people should expect."



“

**Coming face-to-face with an alpaca was great fun!**

Vera, RAF veteran

## Creature comforts

Our residents love visitors – of all sorts! Exotic creatures from bullfrogs and arachnids to birds were brought to the Solihull Home by Animals in Hands mobile zoo.

In Surbiton, Hugo and Finley were made a fuss of and fed carrots during a visit from Mortimer Alpacas. Wellbeing Coordinator Suzie said, "They brought a lot of happiness to the Home."

The outstanding rating places the Home in the top 4% of providers in England, according to CQC figures.

Our Surbiton Home was also visited by the CQC at the beginning of the year and inspected in two of the five areas.

In this inspection, the Home retained its good ratings in both the Safe and Well-led categories, and its outstanding rating for Care.





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I was amazed at just how talented some residents are at the Home, their paintings were beautiful.

Lucy Freud



## Marking Remembrance

Celebrated artist Lucy Freud led painting classes for residents as we marked Remembrance.

Daughter of the famous artist Lucian Freud, Lucy is now a regular volunteer at our Surbiton Home, leading the popular classes. She was impressed with our talented residents, and highlighted the impact art can have on wellbeing: “Painting focuses the mind and is very meditative, and I could see that with the residents during the sessions.”

On Remembrance Sunday, veterans from Surbiton and High Wycombe attended the National Service at the Cenotaph. Services were held in all three Homes on Armistice Day. In Solihull, residents also visited the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, where they laid a wreath.



## A promise kept

'Star Moves with Ken' was a well-loved exercise class in our Surbiton Home, led by Army veteran and former fitness instructor Ken (left). His simple, seated exercises were aimed at improving residents' mobility and boosting their mental and physical wellbeing.

Sadly, Ken died just before Christmas but the Wellbeing Team had promised him that they would keep running the class in his honour – and they have. Wellbeing Coordinator Sarah said: “The classes meant the world to Ken. He loved them and he was so good at them. He looked forward to the classes and so did the residents who took part. This means his legacy will live on, I think he'd be happy to know that.”



# Praise from VIPs

We are proud to have welcomed some distinguished visitors to our Homes.

In November, Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra officially opened Surbiton's revamped gardens.

The Princess, who has been our President since 1964, sat and chatted with residents before viewing the renovated outdoor areas.

Our Chair, Major General Tim Tyler said: "It was an honour to welcome Her Royal Highness to the Home. The garden has already been put to good use this year – it is a great place to help support residents' mental and physical health."

Other visitors included Sir Ed Davey. The Liberal Democrat leader and MP for Kingston and Surbiton was a guest at our Surbiton Home. He said, "Royal Star & Garter is one of the most amazing care homes I have ever visited."

We also welcomed Professor Deborah Sturdy, the Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care in England. During her High Wycombe visit, she spoke to staff who were studying Nursing courses. Professor Sturdy said: "I recognised a commitment at the top to grow their own staff and to invest in individuals."



# Our military family

## We are grateful for the support of our military family.

Personnel from neighbouring RAF High Wycombe have been regular visitors to our Home, and we are one of the station's chosen charities of the year.

New Station Commander, Wing Commander Jenny Dennis, visited and spoke to veterans, including resident Air Vice-Marshal Neville. She said: "I'm speechless with what I've seen and really impressed with the support that veterans have."

In March, eight RAF High Wycombe members helped staff tidy our outdoor spaces. Flight Lieutenant White said: "We are



pleased to be supporting Royal Star & Garter as our local charity. I'm grateful that the wonderful staff are taking such good care of those who have served their country."

Our Solihull Home hosted a 'Battle of Britain' lunch. Officers from the Army and RAF, and members of the Defence School of Healthcare Education at Birmingham City University, enjoyed sharing stories with residents over a delicious meal.

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The military connections here spark off memories for Dad... I'd never heard some of his Army stories until he came here.

Resident Bob's son



## Charity cab

Our Surbiton staff and the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans helped resident Connie attend a Liberation Day parade.

Connie, who is a WWII veteran, has been attending the services in the Netherlands for many years.

Home Manager Helena said: "Visits to the Netherlands to commemorate WWII have been such an important part of Connie's life for more than 40 years. I know she missed them during lockdown, so I'm delighted we are able to work with the Taxi Charity to ensure she can return. It means the world to her."



# Talking tips for dementia



Chatting promotes connection but it can be challenging when a loved one lives with dementia. Here are some of the ways we support conversation in our Homes.

## Their reality

Everyone's experience of dementia is unique. Our staff use both their training and their emotional intelligence to enter into the reality of the person living with dementia, since they cannot come back to our 'reality'. Staff know that getting frustrated if a resident can't remember something or repeats themselves will only make them feel anxious and isolated.

"Just spending time together is important. If you chat, take things at their pace, empathising and being patient, calm and good-humoured, however hard it is," says Dementia Care Manager, Lisa-Marie. "Join them in their moment and acknowledge that things may be confusing. Remind them they are safe and loved.

"Have a plan B to distract someone if they become distressed," she advises. "We do something soothing, like walking in the garden, listening to music, or sharing photo albums, to bring the resident back to wellbeing."

## Conversation prompts

Reminiscence is an important tool in dementia care and can help with conversation.

"We use memory boxes, which are colourful shoeboxes full of little prompts such as old-fashioned sweets to share, old scent bottles, photographs, postcards, and beloved trinkets. We find that they stimulate conversation and aid reconnection," says Iuliana, Dementia Care Manager. "Each resident has memory boards, boxes, life-story books and personal musical playlists. We use these to invite storytelling, to connect to residents and learn about their life experiences."

## "I want Mum!"

"One of the challenges we face is when a resident asks for someone who has died, such as their mother," says Lead Nurse Yuriy. "Reminding them that a loved one has died may cause them to relive the pain of finding out. They are asking because they feel a certain way. Calling for your mother often indicates the need for comfort.

"We validate those emotions by asking about how they are feeling now, or what that person was like, how they made our resident feel, and gently guide them back to wellbeing. A hug or holding hands are just as important. The need to feel loved is paramount."



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Join them in their moment and acknowledge that things may feel confusing. Remind them they are safe and loved.

Lisa-Marie, Dementia Care Manager



## Chat at the table

Mealtimes should be a time for socialising and pleasure. Sharing a meal with your loved one is a useful way to tempt someone to eat because they may mirror your actions. Staff and residents in our Homes eat together to foster that comforting feeling of family meals, and staff may use conversation cards to prompt chat at the table.



### Conversation tips

- If you are chatting to someone sitting or using a wheelchair, come to their eye level.
- Give them time and space to respond.
- They may lip-read, so speak slowly and enunciate, make sure you are somewhere quiet.
- If they have sight impairment, use hand-touch or descriptions.
- Making a memory box together is fun and prompts storytelling.
- Use photos to explore where they take your loved one.
- Objects in someone's room or home are often specially chosen and full of meaning so invite them to tell you about them.
- Direct questions such as 'Remember when...?' may feel challenging. Begin by talking about your own story or experience so they can join in.
- Try using a gentle invitation to chat, using the acronym TED to prompt you:
  - T**ell me more about...
  - E**xplain what it was like to...
  - D**escribe how your...

## Help

Supporting someone who lives with dementia can feel distressing and isolating. Remember that you are not alone and there are organisations that can help. Contact Alzheimer's Society or Dementia UK for more information.

# From the kitchen, with love



## Mealtimes are joyous, sociable occasions in our Homes, thanks to our caring kitchen staff.

Enjoying delicious, nutritious meals in good company is an essential part of the outstanding person-centred care we deliver. A great deal of love and attention goes into the food we serve each day in our Homes.



This is no mean feat when you're cooking food for dozens of residents, each with complex nutritional and care needs. The talented chefs and caterers from Signature Dining work with our care staff to understand the needs of each individual, producing healthy, tasty and nutritious meals.

Our Director of Care, Pauline Shaw, said: "We know that food can be linked to memory, social occasions and emotions, and that it can bring enjoyment, socialisation and dignity. That's why we do everything we can to make mealtimes enjoyable."

Chef Manager Rida is always happy to take a personal request and cook delicious meals using Surbiton residents' cherished family recipes. He has also been known to provide a fine-dining experience for them. When an RAF veteran requested steak, a food which doesn't feature often on the menu because many struggle to eat it, Rida cooked the meal at the resident's table in the dining room.

Rida explained: "It's a lot more work but I feel happy when I see them enjoying the food. We offer them everything that we can."

In High Wycombe, Chef Manager Marcin makes sure any resident celebrating their birthday has the meal of their choice. The team also makes bespoke birthday cakes. Marcin said: "It's all about making



their special day even better. It means a lot to them, so it means a lot to my team and me that we can do this and make them happy."

Some residents have specific care needs requiring texture-modified food, and our kitchens offer puréed dishes. Solihull Chef Manager Paul said: "There used to be a stigma attached to puréed food, mixed together and blobbed onto a plate. I think it is uninspiring and degrading. Here, our



puréed food is served with dignity." Individually piped items and vibrant colours encourage people living with dementia to eat.

Because nearly every meal served in the Homes can be puréed, residents on these diets often eat the same as the others so they feel included. Paul added, "By serving it puréed the way we do, the residents maintain dignity. It still looks like a meal, it still looks and tastes like the food everyone else is eating."

“

I feel happy when I see them enjoying the food. They deserve to be treated like this because of what they have done for their country.

Rida, Chef Manager





# Making a Will



## Jackie, our Legacy Manager, explains why an up-to-date Will is important.



The thought of making a Will can be a daunting one if you're not familiar with the terminology, not to mention the fact that it will be tucked away

until you die. However there is great peace of mind once it's done.

It is really important that you have an up-to-date Will as it's the only way you can ensure that your specific wishes are carried out after you die. It will be easier for your Executors and family to sort your estate at a sad time.

If you die without a valid Will then it is said that you die intestate. Should this happen, all of your property, known as your Estate, would pass to your closest next of kin. Usually this is your spouse – so your wife, husband, or civil partner – and possibly children.

Where you live with your partner but are not married or in a civil partnership, or if you have children from another

relationship, or stepchildren, or other relatives by marriage, it's important to remember that they would not receive any of your estate if you were to die intestate. If you have no blood relatives at all, everything will go to the Crown.

It is recommended that your Will is reviewed every five years or so as circumstances change, such as marital status or births and deaths, that may change your beneficiaries.

You can see how important it is to have a valid Will, so that the family or friends or good causes you care about can inherit from you should you die.

### What could be in your Will?

- **Leaving individual items** such as jewellery, furniture or pictures, to someone specific.
- **Your funeral arrangements** indicating the type of service you'd like, any religious requirements, music, burial or cremation and where your final resting place will be.
- **Arrangements for dependants** such as children or even pets.
- **Appointing Executors** who are the people or organisation responsible for carrying out the terms of your Will following your death.
- **Leaving a gift to a charity** to support a cause that is close to your heart.

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**What happened to me happened to hundreds of others... I was just a very ordinary soldier who was very lucky!**

Arthur, referring to his part in France's liberation



## Benefits

- Making a Will is the only way you can be sure that the people and causes you care about most will benefit when you die.
- No matter how old you are, you should make a Will to ensure your wishes are clear and can be followed exactly.
- Making a simple Will need not be long-winded or expensive, and many charities, including Royal Star & Garter, offer their supporters the opportunity to make their Will for free. There are several ways to write or update your Will and Royal Star & Garter recommends that you consult a solicitor or a Will-writing expert to ensure that your wishes are properly carried out.



**To find out more or to request a free Will-writing guide, please contact the Legacy team at [legacies@starandgarter.org](mailto:legacies@starandgarter.org) or call 020 8481 7676**



## Remembering Arthur

Arthur Ogden was a long-time supporter and became a resident at our Solihull Home in 2015 after the death of his beloved wife, Irene.

After ensuring that his family and friends were taken care of, Arthur pledged a gift in his Will to us. Gifts in Wills are a valued part of our income, and it takes exceptional people to touch the lives of others when they are no longer here. Generous gifts like Arthur's enable us to plan for the future and continue to provide outstanding care to veterans and their partners so that they can lead happy, fulfilled lives.



Army veteran Arthur was a driver in WWII. He saw active service in Europe and Africa, where he fought at the Battle of El Alamein. Born in 1921, he enlisted in the Middlesex Yeomanry as a boy soldier, aged 17, with his father's permission. He served for seven years. In 2018, he was awarded France's highest decoration – the Légion d'honneur – for his contribution to the liberation of the country.

Arthur died in 2020 but his memory lives on in the gift he has left to support our work.

# How you can help



## Fundraise for us

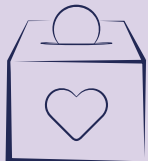
We rely on our supporters' generosity to help provide the care that we do. There are many ways to help.

## Join our community of fundraisers

Every year, we need to raise significant funds to cover the cost of our care. Luckily, our supporters find many imaginative and fun-packed ways to raise money for us.

Have you considered a spring-clean sale of your unwanted goods to help you de-clutter while raising funds for our residents? Coffee mornings are a great way to get friends together to eat cake (and raise money of course). Skydiving and fire-walking are optional...

Sports and active events benefit both your body and our veterans. Why not join us for Natural Wander in 2023? This sponsored walking event will include new ways to engage in adventure while getting fit. We would love you to join us again. More details coming soon on our website: [www.starandgarter.org/Natural-Wander](http://www.starandgarter.org/Natural-Wander)



For ideas and tips or support with your challenge, get in touch with our team by emailing [community@starandgarter.org](mailto:community@starandgarter.org)

## Have your say

We would love to know more about the type of events you, your family and friends are interested in. Maybe you would enjoy the challenge of a 5k walk, a half marathon, or a sponsored bike ride or swim?

Help us to understand your preferences by completing our questionnaire. It's easy to do and will only take a couple of minutes of your time. **Simply scan the QR code below using the camera on a mobile or go to [bit.ly/events-survey23](https://bit.ly/events-survey23)**







## Birmingham International Tattoo... Great to be back!

This was the first time it has been held since 2019. Residents and staff from our Solihull Home enjoyed the event.

We were one of two charities benefitting from the two-day military spectacular, which raised over £8,400 for us. The Tattoo has supported us since 2007, raising more than £126,000 towards our work.

A team of volunteers, including our staff, Warwickshire and West Midlands Armed Cadets Force, and Co-op Funeralcare branches in Wednesbury and Wednesfield, all helped fundraise and run a stall.

Tattoo Producer Norman Rogerson MBE said: "It is a privilege to support Royal Star & Garter again and help the invaluable work they do for veterans and the military family."

## Christmas cards (oh yes!)

Tucked inside your autumn issue of Connections will be our Christmas card catalogue, packed with special offers. Be sure to look out for it as there will be money-saving offers and stunning new designs.



## Tim's best foot forward

Our Chair, Major General Tim Tyler, is always willing to support our residents.

Earlier this year, he finished a 12-month fundraising challenge on his cross-trainer. Tim had set himself a 1,000-mile goal, but ended up covering 1,200 miles, inspired by work our staff do in the Homes.

It's not the first time Tim has stepped up for Royal Star & Garter. Previously, he took part in a rowing-machine challenge, covering 175 miles.

Between these two challenges, our Chair has raised nearly £5,000 for us. **Well done, Tim!**

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We ask all our staff to go that little bit extra for our residents so this is my bit extra. I try and get on the machine as often as I can to raise some money.

Major General Tim Tyler, our Chair

# Here to help

## Connections newsletter

We hope you enjoyed reading Connections. We use this newsletter to show how your generosity helps our residents. We always make sure that we produce it as economically as possible.

Please let us know what you think. Email [cally.madden@starandgarter.org](mailto:cally.madden@starandgarter.org) or write to her at the address below.

There are several ways to keep in touch. Our friendly Supporter Care Team is always on hand to help.

**020 8481 7676**

Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

[www.starandgarter.org/contact-us](http://www.starandgarter.org/contact-us)  
[supportercare@starandgarter.org](mailto:supportercare@starandgarter.org)



To help our planet and reduce costs, we'd love to be in touch by email. If you would like to receive our Connections newsletters in this way, please email us at [supportercare@starandgarter.org](mailto:supportercare@starandgarter.org)

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