

# Connections



**Royal Star  
& Garter**

Care with courage

**Supporter newsletter**  
Summer 2020

Care with courage – Helping you – Life in the Homes



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



Carly and Alf at the piano



## Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

Thanks to you,  
we provide:



205  
veterans with  
residential care



1,300  
sessions of day care  
each year



44,300  
days of residential care  
each year



9,500  
Physio and Speech &  
Language therapy sessions



5,800  
sessions of activities and  
outings

# Welcome to Connections...



...our summer newsletter and an opportunity to keep you in touch with life in our Homes.

At this time of crisis across the world, we wanted to show you how, with your support, we are handling the COVID-19 pandemic in our Homes. Our staff and residents have met the challenges they face with huge resilience and courage. You will see from the stories here how we are still finding joy in life.

Most of the photos were taken prior to the need for social distancing, so you can be reassured that we are following current government guidelines strictly to keep our residents and staff safe.

As well as giving you some insight into how we have been managing COVID-19, we are also delighted to share some of the wonderful and happy moments we have had over the last nine months. For more stories and insights, visit [www.starandgarter.org](http://www.starandgarter.org).



Stay well and thank you for your support,

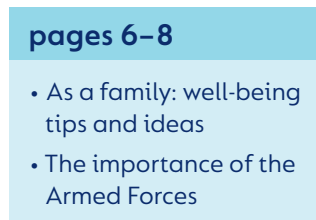
Cally Madden, Editor

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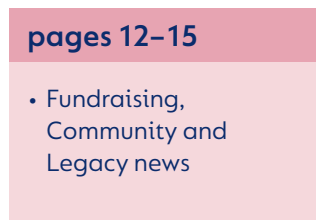
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# Care with courage



Yvette and Brian sharing a joke

Our charity was established to help veterans returning from WWI. Now we are facing another global crisis and must ensure that we continue to provide the same care with courage.

With resilience and dedication, our staff have met the challenge of COVID-19 head-on to ensure that residents are safe, comfortable and engaged.

They have put their personal lives on hold to cover extra shifts, some even slept in for a fortnight to isolate with the residents. They have kept life in the Homes lively, finding little solutions to keep spirits up, such as virtual bingo, tai chi, quizzes, choirs and video chats with friends and family.

Every day staff provide the best care possible - with courage and love.



## Vanessa, Health Care Assistant

“The love and care we show makes it so, so special. Despite what’s happening at the minute I love coming to work. I see the residents, I see their faces light up because we’re here. It’s just lovely.”

## Sophie, Activities

“All the staff have gone above and beyond to keep our residents safe, well and happy. I have, like others I work with, changed roles, so that we can continue to provide the outstanding care we always deliver to our residents.”



## Lee, Physiotherapy & Day Care

“We’ve a great team of dedicated staff ... Our care with courage is delivered each and every day, working together and being flexible, even when working 14 days in a row.”

## Julia, relative

“The staff at Royal Star & Garter are extraordinary. It’s care done with huge courage. Courage just turning up for work every day. Courage at keeping the whole show on the road with no support from families who can’t visit. Courage in hiding their own personal worries so that the residents can stay calm and cheerful.”



# Our residents: living positively



Our residents have met this crisis with courage and calm determination.

Residents have accepted changes to their daily life such as staff wearing masks, smaller, socially-distanced group activities and spending more time in their rooms to keep safe.

They have not hugged their loved ones for a while but are comforted by being with them via video, phone calls and letters. Accepting the situation and thinking of their carers, not themselves, residents even wrote cards and made posies to thank staff on International Nurses Day.



Above: Julie is moved by a Mother's Day photo message from her family. Below: Ann learned how to use an iPad to help fellow residents keep in touch



Residents thanked care staff with gifts



Neville enjoys the sunshine in a virtual trip to the seaside



# As a family



Now more than ever it is important to be aware of our mental health.

As a supporter, you are part of our family and we know that you may be finding life hard. Even if you are on your own, you are not alone, we are all in this together.

Everyone is managing the stress of life under COVID-19 in different ways but one positive outcome has been the kindness of neighbours.

If you are struggling, there will be someone to support you with shopping, medicine collection, or even a friendly chat. Your local council has a list of volunteers and neighbours who can help.

- If you are feeling anxious or lonely pick up the phone. Call Silver Line: 0800 470 80 90 or Samaritans 116 123
- Try tips from: [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/)
- For practical information and advice call Age UK: 0800 169 65 65

Our priority has been to ensure our staff and residents are safe and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), infection control, regular testing and transport to work have been key to this.

Like many of us, they have faced huge challenges emotionally. Sharing feelings of anxiety or fear are key to mental well-being and staff have been encouraged to talk to their colleagues or reach out to the professional counselling on offer. They also receive advice on health and welfare alongside practical tools like accessing key worker cards and other benefits.

We live and work as a family and do everything we can to support our staff. However, it is their courage and strength that enables them to care with the compassion the residents deserve. They know a mask can't hide smiling eyes.



# Tips from our residents

Our residents have lived through many hardships and difficult times in their lives and have shared some tips to help you stay positive.



## Keep busy

Residents suggest: knitting, singing, bathing, reading, watching TV and exercise, with or without music! RAF veteran, Bernard advises: "I try to walk in the garden when the weather allows it. When it's in bloom it's a beautiful place."



## Exercise

Residents enjoy sport, dancing and daily exercise. Alf, an RAF veteran, says: "I went to physiotherapy and they taught me how to walk again. I used to be in a wheelchair and I felt terrible. But I can walk and dance. It's fantastic!"



## Stay in touch

We all know how special you feel when you get an unexpected call. From setting up Skype to making a simple phone call, you'll make someone else's day as well as your own. Or write a letter, send an email or text message. Keep in touch!



## Waste not, want not

For the wartime generation, wasting food is incomprehensible. Our residents know all about getting creative with leftovers. Top favourites are: bubble and squeak, bread and butter pudding, pies and a lovely bowl of soup. So grab a pan and have a go.



## Love your music

Take time to listen to a favourite song each day and, especially if you are feeling anxious, sing along to regulate your breathing and put a smile on your face.



## Be patient

We can find life under lockdown a bit trying with the ones we love most. Harry explains: "The mantra I give as a married man is: the one with the most sense is the one who gives in first. And I've been married 69 years!"

# Our Armed Forces

## Meet our new residents

1. Brian served in the Army during the Troubles
2. Flo drove RAF airmen to their planes in WWII
3. John served as a Grenadier Guard at HM The Queen's Coronation



Our Armed Forces are as critical today as they were during the World Wars.

As a charity for military veterans, we are mindful of the work the Armed Forces do to keep our nation safe and functioning, especially in times of crisis.

In addition to defence duties, the military have come to the aid of the nation during the pandemic, adapting their skills to a wide range of issues. The Armed Forces supported the NHS in developing the Nightingale Hospitals, distributing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), creating and operating testing centres, providing logistical support to the government, deploying an aviation taskforce to support remote communities, assisting in repatriation and supporting overseas territories, and offering expertise in planning, logistics and operations.

Closer to home, Royal Star & Garter has always had a strong connection with the Armed Forces: military nurses train in our Homes and we welcome visitors from local bases. Meeting the crisis head on, RAF High Wycombe immediately offered its support to us and has been driving equipment between our Homes to ensure



Warrant Officer Emma Kerslake with Harold

that our residents have everything they need. Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir Nicholas Carter, spoke at one of the government's COVID-19 briefings in April. He referenced Captain Tom Moore's NHS fundraising walk as an example of how all of the Armed Forces, veteran and serving, step up to support the collective national effort. Captain Moore's walk has epitomised the sense of service and duty which is ingrained in the military and which we see in the courage and resilience of our own residents.

“ We've learned a lot about the resilience we need to drive our world... [the] military does provide the nation with its resilience.

General Sir Nicholas Carter,  
BBC Radio 4, May 2020



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# Official opening of High Wycombe



Above: The Princess and the Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher  
Below: Tim Tyler introduces HRH to 101-year old Ena and Home Manager Chelle



Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra officially opened our High Wycombe Home in February.

The Princess spent time talking to veterans as she was taken on a tour of the Home, dropping into a pizza-making session in the dementia care lounge, and later visiting the activities room, where a group was sketching still-life.

Princess Alexandra said: “The new Home is an extremely impressive new addition to the charity. May I offer my congratulations to all those involved in its conception, construction and opening, which has been a huge task over many years. I’m sure that the residents will enjoy all the excellent facilities available in what is most importantly their home.

“I wish all the staff and volunteers well in this wonderful new building and look forward to the charity opening more services for veterans in the future.”



# Homes news

Before the pandemic, the Homes were as vibrant as ever, with visitors, events and outings bringing joy to residents' lives.

## Footballers' support

Fulham footballers Kevin McDonald and Cyrus Christie paid a surprise visit to Iraq veteran and die-hard footie fan Stephen in Surbiton.

Scotland international McDonald said: "When you consider what Stephen's been through it's an honour to meet him." Stephen said afterwards: "I had no idea they were going to turn up. I'm feeling very grateful. It was amazing."



Shortly afterwards, Stephen was thrilled to be a guest of the club at Craven Cottage.



“

It's a superb CQC report and a remarkable achievement, but we won't be resting on our laurels, we'll always push to be the best we can be.

Cheryl Harbourne, Home Manager

## Outstanding!

Our Solihull Home is rated one of the best in the country by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The Home received 'Outstanding' in the five tested areas: Safety, Effectiveness, Care, Responsiveness and Leadership. It retained the overall Outstanding it received in 2017.

Amanda Lyndon, CQC Interim Head of Inspection for Adult Social Care, said: "We saw an exceptional service offering very high standards of care. People's individual needs were met by caring and compassionate staff, supporting positive outcomes. An 'Outstanding' rating is the result of considerable hard work."

# VE Day 75th Anniversary

Amy was in the WAAF on VE Day. She said: “We went on a victory parade. It was jolly good.”



Residents, many of whom have vivid memories of WWII, commemorated the 75th anniversary of VE Day on 8th May.

In Homes bedecked with bunting, residents enjoyed cake and fizz, music and dancing. The celebrations were supported by ABF The Soldiers' Charity, who helped to cover the costs.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Robin Bacon, ABF's Chief of Staff, said: “We wanted to do our bit to boost morale at this trying time and to help bring a smile to as many veterans' faces as possible on VE Day.”

Residents joined in with the national sing-along and the Nation's Toast to the Heroes of World War II, where they raised a glass to say thank you to those who gave so much.



“

I was crossing the Indian Ocean from Mombasa to Colombo. We were four hours on and four hours off so not a great deal of celebration.

Harry was serving in the Navy on VE Day



“

We went into town, there were jollifications and flags were going up and church bells were ringing and there was more or less a street party.

Sue, Harry's wife, recalls VE day as a student in Cheltenham

# Fundraising challenges

COVID-19 has raised financial challenges for all charities, with the loss of income from fundraising events and increased demands for equipment such as PPE and greater staffing costs.

Determined to support veterans during this crisis, here's how some fundraisers responded.

Our Chairman, Major General Tim Tyler, took part in the 2.6 Challenge and raised over £4,800 for us. Tim's challenge saw him row 175 miles, the distance between our three Homes. He commented: "Despite being difficult, it wasn't as tough as a long shift [in the Homes]. Caring with courage is what our staff do all day, every day."

Other 2.6 Challenges included staff member Nadia and family walking 26 miles and the Royal Star & Garter fundraising team doing a 26-minute dance-athon.

Before lockdown, the Charity Adventurers started their 190-mile hike between our three Homes. Army Sergeant

“

Now more than ever we need your support. So many challenges can be done safely at home, so please show your care, compassion and empathy for our veterans. Get creative, think virtually and challenge yourself to raise money for Royal Star & Garter.

Caley Eldred, Director of Supporter Engagement



Tim Tyler's 2.6 Challenge



Left: Hamaad, Nadia and our youngest fundraiser, Maryam  
Right: The Charity Adventurers reach Surbiton

Greg and his friend Pete covered the distance of five marathons over five days and raised over £700. They will be doing the final part of their journey from Surbiton to High Wycombe at a later date.

# Virtual fundraising tips

Think outside the box to come up with fun ways to engage family and friends in a spot of fundraising – virtually.

## Virtual quiz:

Host a pub quiz night and charge your friends an entry fee... suggest they make a further donation for every drink or snack they have during the quiz.

## Found a pound:

While you are doing a clear out, donate any coins you find to us. Pockets, drawers, sofas and the car often conceal hidden treasure which you can convert into valuable funds.

## Hair-raising:

Donate the money you are saving from the hairdressers or ask friends to sponsor your beard, hairstyle or colour change.

## Crafter-noon tea:

Gather friends and family on Zoom, Skype or WhatsApp to share a giggle and a cuppa while you knit, sew, flower arrange, paint or even bake. Ask participants to donate the cost of their materials.

## Donate your birthday:

You could give us the money you are saving on not going out, or ask friends and family to make donations instead of gifts.

## Online cookery demo:

Invite friends to donate a fee to cook along with you as you demonstrate your best dish. Send them a link to watch you making your recipe and a list of ingredients. They could do a demo too.

# Thank you for your support



From the start of the pandemic, communities around each of our Homes have been offering their support. Partnerships Manager Sophie explains how.

Due to visitor restrictions, families were unable to bring in toiletry supplies for residents and staff were not able to bulk buy them. So we put out an appeal and the local community responded dropping off toiletries, treats and notes of support for the residents.

With staff doing longer shifts, local food suppliers sent takeaway meals and goodies, helping our residents and staff to feel a strong sense of community support.

Suppliers and local sewing groups provided PPE to help ensure the safety of residents and staff. Schools and local fundraisers also found many impactful ways of supporting us including writing letters and organising virtual events.

To everyone who has offered their support, our residents and staff are truly grateful.

## Minibus appeal

Thank you for supporting our minibus appeal. The buses support outings and activities across all three Homes. More recently they have been used to take staff to and from work to avoid the risk of infection from public transport.



KT Scrubbers for Carers Emily, Phoebe and Lottie making scrubs and storage bags, supported by a donation from the Kingston Rotary to help purchase materials

Our Letters with Love appeal inspired children to send drawings, showing their empathy with the residents



Delicious food was generously donated by local people and organisations. Here, fish and chips keep our Homes fuelled

# A gift in your will

Gifts in wills are an important and valued part of our income. It takes exceptional people to touch the lives of others when they are no longer here. Here is the story of one such person.

Over thirty years ago, we were contacted by Mr Wilkinson to notify us of his mirror will with his uncle, Mr Vaughan. This provided for a generous gift of their entire estate in the event of both their deaths. They had a long-standing association with the military and Mr Vaughan served in the Military Police throughout WWII in both Italy and Austria.



Mr Vaughan, Italy  
December 1943

So began a long and close correspondence that spanned many years, during which Mr Wilkinson kept us informed of his personal circumstances. We provided advice and support where appropriate, finally agreeing to become his Executor. Sadly earlier this year Mr Wilkinson (who survived his uncle) died but his memory lives on in the extraordinary gift he has left to support our work.

Royal Star & Garter is a member of the National Free Wills Network, which offers free will-writing services to our supporters. You can write or update a simple single will (or mirror wills with your partner) with participating solicitors local to you.

To find out more about leaving a gift in your will or using our free will-writing service, call 020 8481 7676 or email [legacies@starandgarter.org](mailto:legacies@starandgarter.org).

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**Birmingham International Tattoo**  
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# Your donations

**Our Spring Raffle winners are now online.** Go to [www.starandgarter.org/raffle](http://www.starandgarter.org/raffle) to see if you're one of the **lucky winners**.

Royal Star & Garter has been following the government's COVID-19 guidelines, which has led to a significant number of staff in our Administration office working from home. After some initial delays to processing donations, we are now able to safely access the office. We apologise for any inconvenience caused. If you have any concerns please contact us.

## Here to help

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

**020 8481 7676**

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

[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.

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