

Connections



**Royal Star
& Garter**

Care with courage

Supporter newsletter

Winter 2024



Welcome to Connections...



**Royal Star
& Garter**

Care with courage

...our Winter newsletter and a chance to see our work in action.

Happy new year from all of our residents, staff and volunteers!

In this edition, we take a look at some of the wonderful work, experiences and projects funded by your generosity. On the next page, our Director of Fundraising has provided an insight into how your donations support our work and keep the joy flowing throughout our Homes. You help to create the magic we see there every day. Read about it in Stories from our Homes and our live music feature on pages 4-7.

We have launched some significant new services which are having a real impact on veterans across the country. Find out more about them on pages 8-9.

You can also read about a soldier whose lifelong support for other veterans lives on through gifts in his memory on pages 10-11.

We would really love to receive any feedback you have about Connections. Please write to me at the address on the back cover or email cally.madden@starandgarter.org



Best wishes,

Cally Madden,
Editor

In 2023, we launched the following services:

- Lunch Clubs in each of our Homes and a national, free Telephone Friendship Service;
- Day Care in our High Wycombe Home;
- A new Veteran Friendly Framework, which aims to tackle loneliness and deliver improved health outcomes for veterans in care homes across England.



New-look Connections

This year, we are making some changes to Connections, by increasing the editions to three and changing the size. This is aimed at keeping you better informed, while ensuring we remain cost effective.

What won't be changing is the quality of what we share, with the same engaging stories and insights into life in our Homes and our developing new services.



“

I can't thank you enough for your continuing support and the incredible loyalty you have shown to our work over the years.

Caley, with resident Ena



Thanks to you...

We have driven forward our plans to support more people than ever before. This has seen us progress with a number of new services, including Lunch Clubs, which can provide a lifeline to lonely veterans living in the local community around our Homes. We have launched a free Telephone Friendship Service which has enabled us to support more veterans and partners, regardless of where they live in the UK.

In October, we launched our new Veteran Friendly Framework, which has seen us working in partnership with others, including the Royal British Legion, to enable better support for veterans living in care homes that do not have a specific military focus. See page 8 for details.



It has been wonderful for me to spend more time in our Homes, connecting with our residents and staff again. Having the chance to hear their stories, and to understand their experiences, is something I love most about walking into our Homes. We know this is something that our supporters also enjoy hearing about.

It's been a really challenging few years for everyone but we continue to be blown away by your generosity. It makes a huge difference to our work and enables us to plan for the future so that we can support more veterans and partners than ever.



I will leave you with some lovely words from Greg, the son of two of our residents, the Elliotts (see photo left), who expresses his thanks better than I can: "You're not just looking after my parents, you're looking after a much wider family of people and giving them peace of mind, affecting their mental health and helping them to be happier. **Your support has a huge ripple effect.**"

Caley

Caley Eldred,
Director of Fundraising

Stories from our Homes

Solihull award

The outstanding dementia care at our Solihull Home has been recognised with a Team Award.

Coinciding with World Alzheimer's Day in September, the award celebrates nursing excellence in care.

Deborah Sturdy, the Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care, commented: "One of the great things about my role is celebrating colleagues who go above and beyond to deliver exceptional care. It is no mean feat to achieve this award."

Solihull Home Manager, Jamie, paid tribute to his staff, saying: "This award is recognition of the brilliant work we do to support people living with dementia here in this Home."



Special birthdays

Ena, our oldest resident, celebrated her 105th birthday in September.

Ena (above), who lives in High Wycombe, enjoyed a party with other residents, laid on by staff at the Home. Ena has been a widow for nearly 80 years, after her husband was killed by enemy fire while fighting in Belgium in 1944.

The other Homes have been celebrating too. In Solihull, WWII veteran Elsie, who served in the WAAF, had her 100th in October, as did Bet in Surbiton. Irene (below), who also served in the WAAF and survived the Blitz, had her special birthday in November. "I had a wonderful day!" she said.





“

I never thought I'd actually attend the service at the Cenotaph. It was an amazing experience.

Ken, Army veteran



Remembrance

This is an important and poignant time for both residents and staff.

Services took place in each of our Homes, while some residents, relatives, staff and Governors attended the National Service at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday.



In Solihull, residents also attended a service at the war memorial outside St Alphege's Church, while at a Remembrance Sunday event in Kingston, our Partnerships Manager, Halani, laid a wreath.

Stephen's adventure holiday

Resident Stephen enjoyed a memorable break this summer, supported by our Surbiton staff.

The 36-year-old Army veteran spent four days at outdoor activity centre Calvert Lakes, in the Lake District, accompanied by our Healthcare Assistants, Sam and Phil.



Stephen, who suffered life-changing injuries from a mortar bomb attack while serving in Iraq in 2007, took part in activities including swimming, bike rides, canoeing and catamaran sailing.

Calvert Lakes provides adventure breaks and holidays for people living with disabilities. Stephen commented afterwards, "I'm very lucky that Help for Heroes paid for this, and that Sam and Phil from Royal Star & Garter were able to come with me. Thanks to both charities, I've had the best time ever!"

The magic of live music



Our residents always enjoy a song and a dance, and love the immediacy of live performances.

The power of music plays a crucial role in our model of care. Its ability to boost wellbeing and social interaction, stimulate conversation and memory recall, reduce stress and pain, and improve physical health, are all well documented.

Live music holds a special appeal for our residents and performances are guaranteed to bring joy. Our Wellbeing Teams arrange music appropriate to an event or to meet a specific need. That might be booking steel pan bands for our Summer Carnivals or military bands and local school choirs, which help to maintain familiar links and promote intergenerational friendships. Performers specialising in vintage music hold special appeal, stimulating nostalgic memories for residents.

In Surbiton, Scott, an Elvis impersonator, is a frequent visitor because he makes Air Force veteran Lily very happy. Wellbeing Coordinator Lesley explained: “Lily absolutely adores The King. Scott usually dedicates a number to her, and it’s a joy to see how happy it makes her.”



Solihull Wellbeing Coordinator Lorraine said: “With live entertainment, you see a real interaction with residents,

which is fabulous. The performers chat to them, they dedicate songs to them and they hold their hands. Residents will get up and dance and make special requests.”

In High Wycombe, Wellbeing Coordinator Natalie said: “There’s something special about live music. The residents are more involved and more invested. It is lovely when they sing along and dance or tap their hands and feet. It creates a special connection and takes them somewhere.”

Surbiton resident Anne loves the communal aspect of live music. She said: “It’s nice to all get together for it.” And Erica, whose father lives at Solihull, said: “Dad’s face lights up when singers come in. And I can’t believe how many entertainers the Home invites to perform, it’s amazing!”



The feel-good factor works both ways and performers tell us that they benefit from the shows too. Busker Archie regularly sings for our residents in Surbiton: “At

Royal Star & Garter, I feel I’m singing to people who are really listening and appreciate what I’m doing. Some residents come up to me after I’ve finished and say they enjoyed the performance, which means the world to me.”

“

We really enjoy arranging for performers to come in. As well as entertaining our residents, they create a joyous atmosphere, helping people to connect through a shared love of music.

Emma, Wellbeing Coordinator in High Wycombe



Residents' Hit Parade



Here are some of the most frequently requested songs in the Homes. Performers are delighted to cover them and encourage our residents to sing along.

1 Sweet Caroline, Neil Diamond

2 Delilah, Tom Jones

3 A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square, Vera Lynn

4 Oh what a beautiful mornin', Gordon MacRae, Oklahoma!

5 My way, Frank Sinatra

Veteran Friendly Framework

A survey* by the Royal British Legion reports that 25% of military veterans 'often' or 'always' felt lonely or socially isolated. Almost 70% said these are issues in the Armed Forces community.

**Loneliness and isolation in the Armed Forces Community, 2018*

We have launched a new project to benefit veterans living in non-military care homes.

The Veteran Friendly Framework (VFF) tackles loneliness and isolation by providing resources to care homes to better support their residents. It will deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes for over 25,000 former members of the Armed Forces in England.

Of 15,000 care homes in England, only 20, including Royal Star & Garter, offer specialist support to those who served in the Armed Forces and their partners.



Resident Michael, who served in the RAF, commented: "VFF will provide support to thousands of veterans living in non-military care homes across the country. This is something I really value at Royal Star

& Garter, and I'm delighted that other veterans will benefit from this."

The VFF is a two-year collaboration between Royal Star & Garter, the Royal British Legion and NHS Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance, with funding support from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. This project supports our aim to reach even more members of the Armed Forces community.



Care homes that are interested in VFF can go to: VeteranFriendlyFramework.org.uk or call Kathryn on 07425 326070.

Telephone Friendship Service

“

An act of kindness will always be returned.

John, service user



This new, free service sees trained volunteers call veterans and their partners for a chat in their homes.

It provides support and a friendly voice to someone who may be feeling lonely or isolated. Volunteers say they benefit from the experience too.



Tiffini (left) is the Telephone Friendship Service Administrator and enjoys coordinating volunteers and the people using the service in this multifaceted project. The service is not bound by geography and people come from all over the country. Each person is carefully matched with a Telephone Friend (the volunteer) to ensure that they will enjoy a good relationship. By building a profile of both parties, Tiffini often identifies an affinity, such as a shared love of art.

Our Telephone Friends are checked for safeguarding purposes and are fully trained to ensure that they know how to help the veterans they speak to. They also receive support from Tiffini as calls can sometimes be emotionally challenging. Issues covered include mental health, illness and financial worries.

Often, people are on their own and having to cope without any other support. Tiffini describes how the service can initially



provide quick, targeted advice but the calls have a greater impact on veterans and their partners in the longer

term. The service has already been widely recommended by people using it, their relatives and healthcare professionals. One person was signposted to the service by his hospital. They were concerned that he could feel very isolated when he returned home and may need the additional support the service offers.

Telephone Friends also benefit from the calls, citing it as a rewarding volunteer experience that gives them a sense of responsibility and enables them to give back to society.

What people say

“It is nice to know there is someone out there.”

“I found the service very professional and friendly at the same time.”

“Many thanks for all of the great talks we’ve had, they are inspiring and motivating.”

To use the service or to volunteer, email: telephone.friendship@starandgarter.org or call 07425 348105

In memory of Harry

When a loved one or friend dies, inviting gifts in their memory is a meaningful way to celebrate their life.

At the memorial service of Brigadier Harry Everard in September 2023, his wife Eunice kindly invited donations to Royal Star & Garter in his memory.

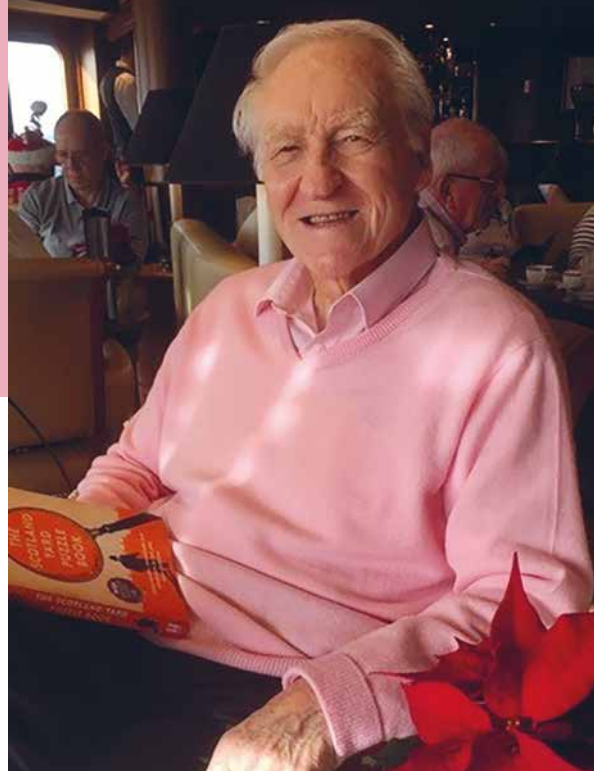
Harry spent 37 years in the Royal Engineers (RE). From his commission in 1947 to his retirement in the early 1980s, he had a long and distinguished military career, serving as a Royal Engineer all over the world.



His first posting abroad was in 1953 in Korea, where he was a Troop Commander with 12 Field Squadron. Postings followed to Germany, Kenya, Bahrain and the Gulf, where he became Chief Royal Engineer Land Forces in 1969 on his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel.

For many units at that time, the relentless routine of garrison duties made a nine-month tour of the Gulf into a challenging and arduous experience. Thanks to Harry, a variety of projects were introduced that allowed serving tradesmen to hone their skills, keeping them busy and giving them a chance to have extended periods outside the camp.

In Bahrain, the projects Harry and his staff arranged for the Squadron were varied and testing. These projects gave the soldiers a real sense of purpose and boosted



their morale, when they may otherwise have been homesick for their families.

As a soldier, Harry reached the rank of Brigadier when he returned to the UK in 1978. He then retired and joined Glaxo as Head of Administration for ten years.

He was a great all-round sportsman and was the President of several Royal Engineers sporting societies. He also played rugby for RE Malaya.

Harry was very interested in the support and care of service men and women once they had left the Armed Forces, and he was a loyal supporter of Royal Star & Garter for over 20 years. He also generously remembered our charity with a gift in his Will.

Support from Harry and his family has helped us to reach more veterans and their partners, both through our residential care and through services in people's homes.



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We are deeply grateful to Harry and Eunice for their kind support and generosity, ensuring that veterans and their partners living with disability and dementia get the care they so richly deserve.

Jackie, Legacy Manager

Celebrate your loved one's life

There are lots of ways you can give in memory.

By phone:

Call us on 020 8481 7676



Donate online:

www.starandgarter.org

By post:

Please make your cheque payable to Royal Star & Garter and send your donation to:

In Memory
FREEPOST RTHJ-SYLZ-EEZB,
Royal Star & Garter,
15 Castle Mews, Hampton, TW12 2NP

Make sure you include the name of the person you would like to remember with your donation and provide your details so we can thank you.

If we can claim Gift Aid on your donation, please let us know. This makes your gift worth an extra 25% and is of great help to our work.

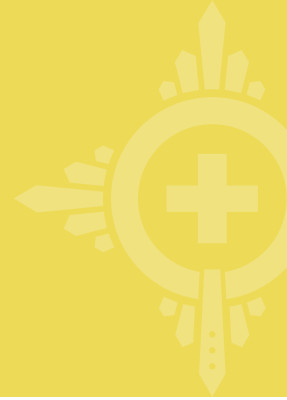


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The best part of working for the In-memory and Legacy team is the opportunity to learn the fascinating life stories of our supporters. For me it puts our work into human context.

Anna, In Memory Assistant

A gift in your Will ensures veterans always have a home. If you'd like more information on gifts in Wills or our free Will-writing services, please phone 020 8481 7676 or email legacies@starandgarter.org



The Birmingham International Tattoo

Join the 2024 military festivities at the Resorts World Arena on 10-11 February. For a weekend of unforgettable performances by British and international military bands, purchase your tickets on the website: bhamtattoo.com/2024-bands

£1 of every programme sold goes towards supporting our residents.

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



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

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