

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **WW2 @ 80: Veteran remembers mother saying *'life would never be the same again'***

- Residents from The Royal Star & Garter Homes in Solihull, High Wycombe and Surbiton remember outbreak of Second World War
- Moving video features residents recalling the moment they learned Britain was at war
- They were speaking ahead of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of start of the war

Ex-Servicemen and women from The Royal Star & Garter Homes have been remembering the start of the Second World War.

Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, two days after Hitler's forces had invaded Poland.

Now, as the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that declaration approaches, veterans at The Royal Star & Garter Homes in Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe, have spoken about their memories of that fateful day.

The Royal Star & Garter Homes is a Charity which cares for ex-Servicemen and women living with disability or dementia. It was formed in 1916 to care for severely injured men returning from the First World War battlefields and went on to care for Second World War veterans.

### **Solihull resident Joan Sprigg**



Joan was a 15-year-old at the time and remembers hearing of the outbreak while with her parents. She said: *"We learned the very grave news on the radio, that Hitler had given no undertaking that he would withdraw his troops from Poland and Czechoslovakia, so consequently the Prime Minister*

*said this country is now at war with Germany. My mother cried and said, 'life would never be the same again'. My father looked very grave and serious. He served in the First World War and all those memories were very fresh in their minds."*

In 1942 Joan joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) and served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anti-Aircraft Group Command at RAF Uxbridge.

## Solihull resident Margaret Roberts



Margaret's mother was running her a bath when they learned of the war. She was only six at the time, but remembers: *"Someone came to the door – I don't know who it was or what was said but I know my mother came back and she was crying and she called across the next door's garden to the women next door about the*

*news, and for a little while, while my bath water went cold they were very distressed. The actual day itself was a trauma. I can't even remember finishing the bath. There was an atmosphere that things were different and going to be different."*

Margaret's husband Charlie served in the Army.

## High Wycombe resident Peter Chapman



Peter served in the RAF for his National Service and is now a resident at the Home in High Wycombe. He was born in the City of London in 1930 and was nine when Britain went to war. He recalls hearing about the outbreak: *"I was at school, I came back and then we talked about it,*

*but I was only nine."*

Peter soon found himself evacuated and remembers: *"I lived on and off in London because I wasn't very far out of there, and consequently I was able to go backwards and forwards. When the raids were severe, I seemed to pick those days to go back home again! I went through two or three quite severe raids. It was very terrifying, very very terrifying indeed."*

## Surbiton resident Betty Dawson



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Betty was 17 years old on 3 September 1939 and recalls hiding in an unusual place when the air raid sirens sounded that day. She said: *"I was at home in Leeds with my mother and the siren went. We had a big grandfather clock in one of the recesses. She made me stand on one side. I don't know why, she*

*thought we were safe. War had been declared and in no time the siren went."* Betty joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in 1942, aged 20, serving until 1946.

### **Surbiton resident Phyllis Hales**



Phyllis was 17, and heard of the war on the radio with her parents and two brothers. She said: *"I remember sirens going and we were all a bit concerned. We thought there was going to be an air raid. It was something new and we thought that could happen, but it didn't. I was at Home in Acton. We heard it on*

*the radio. I was 17 and I did feel scared. My parents were there."*

At 19, Phyllis decided to take an active part in the war effort, joining the WAAF in 1942. She served until 1946.

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### **About The Royal Star & Garter Homes:**

**The Charity provides award-winning care for military veterans and their partners who live with disability or dementia.**



## MEDIA RELEASE



**The Royal Star  
& Garter Homes**  
Caring for the nation's military family since 1916

The Royal Star & Garter Homes is a charity founded in 1916 to care for the severely injured men returning from the battlegrounds of the First World War.

Today our friendly, state-of-the-art Homes offer a pioneering approach to nursing, dementia and therapeutic care. We have award-winning Homes in Solihull, West Midlands and Surbiton, Surrey. Our third Home in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, opened in April 2019.

We continue to expand our services to reach even more veterans. In 2018, we were able to support 186 residents in our Homes and 36 guests at our Day Care service. We also offer interim care for young disabled Service personnel. We provided 11,700 individual sessions of physiotherapy and speech & language therapy last year to support our residents' health, and over 5,600 places to residents for activities, outings and events, to promote well-being.

We are proud to have enjoyed Royal patronage since our foundation, including that of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II from 1953 to the present day.

**Twitter:** @starandgarter

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**Website:** [www.starandgarter.org](http://www.starandgarter.org)



The Royal Star & Garter Homes is a member of the National Care Forum – the leading voice for not-for-profit care providers. A national perspective may be available from [info@nationalcareforum.org.uk](mailto:info@nationalcareforum.org.uk) or by contacting 02476243619. More details on NCF available at [www.nationalcareforum.org.uk](http://www.nationalcareforum.org.uk).

