

RHYME AND REASON

Remarkable poet and Honiton resident Stan shares his gift

Stan Gibbs is a resident at Hill House care home in Honiton. We sat down with him to talk about his life, career, and amazing talent for composing poetry.

We first learned of Stan's skills with a pen when he sent in his poem for the Abbeyfield Christmas competition. His entry, fittingly entitled *Don't Be Miserable*, was printed on the inside of our digital Christmas card, perfectly conveying the message that Christmas is a time to celebrate, as he put it, 'with friends from near and far.'

We discovered that this was just the latest in a great many poems that Stan has penned throughout his lifetime, so were intrigued to see where it all comes from.

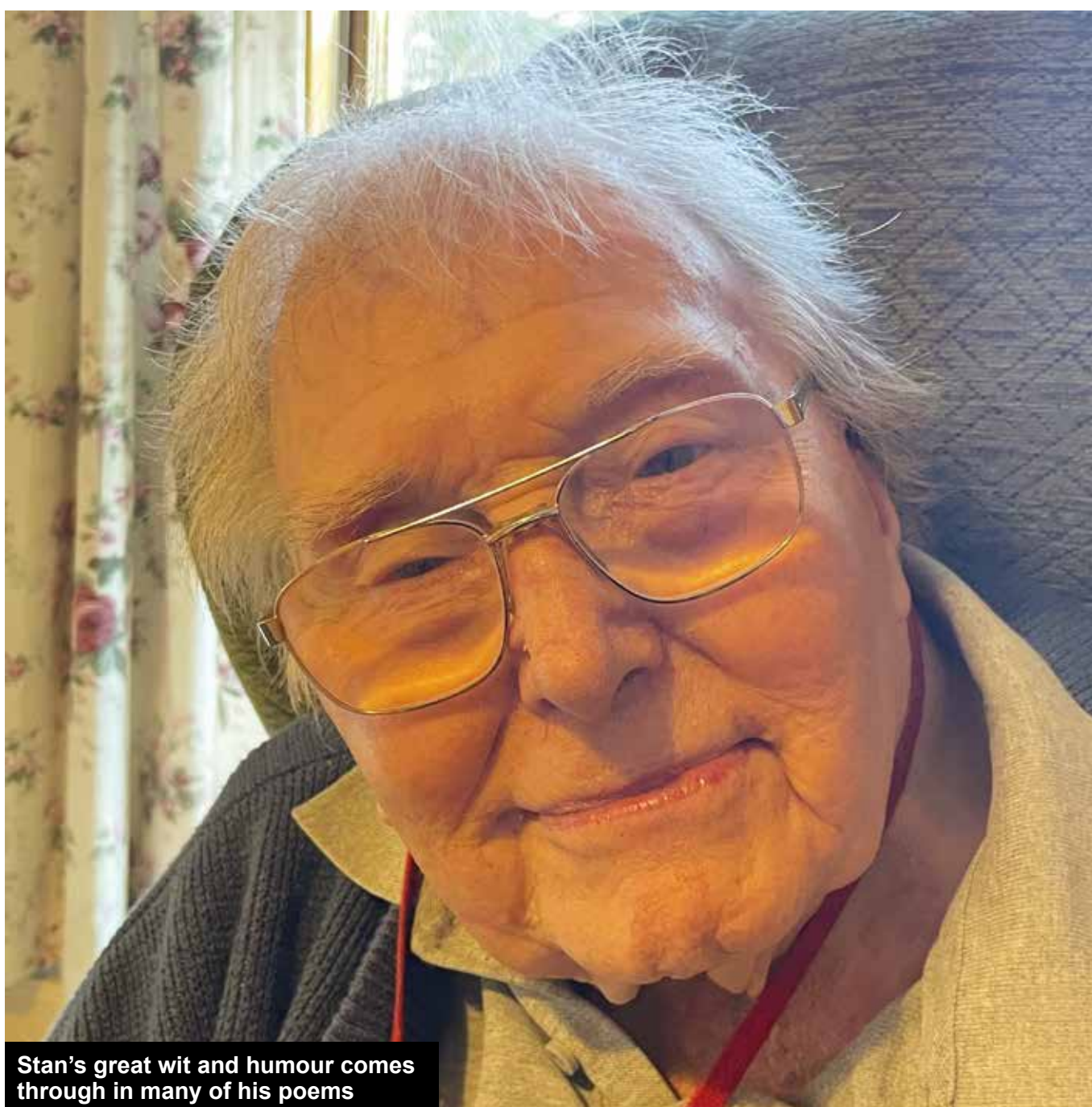
Stan's terrific sense of humour is evident from the start of our interview, and his sharp wit is prevalent throughout his poetry. When confirming his age – an incredible 95 (belied by his boundless energy) – he quips dryly, "the first 94 were the worst!"

Born and raised in Portsmouth, Stan left school at 14 to work at the Fleetlands Royal Naval Air Yard, near Gosport, where his job was maintaining the naval fighters in the repair yard.

"It was a small boy's delight, to work on all those aircraft," he recalls.

"As a yard boy, I only got the back end of every job, but I was lucky to spend a lot of time on the airfield itself.

"During the war, before D-Day, we used to get up early in the morning to count the Americans flying out in tight formation to the continent, and then we'd wait to count them back in. We could tell how much of a toll it was taking because of the cartridges they fired before landing, which were colour-coded to say whether they had any dead or wounded soldiers on board. Unfortunately, we saw a lot of red for the dead, and yellow for the wounded.



Stan's great wit and humour comes through in many of his poems

"However, even in wartime, there were some amusing incidents. The Americans needed a lot of space on the airfield to take off and land, so us Brits we were all picketed down one end. One day, one of the American planes flew back in without almost any control. It went the whole length of the airstrip and nearly slid into our aircraft. When it came to a standstill, the front came down and all the airmen tumbled out, and we yard boys all

piled in to see what was wrong with the plane.

"We couldn't believe what we saw: a load of ham sandwiches wrapped in white grease-proof paper. Our food always came wrapped in last week's News of the World, so this was new to our eyes, and we hadn't seen ham for several years. So, of course, we stole their sandwiches – a small price to pay for nearly getting run over by their plane!"

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

I hope this issue of the Voice finds you well, and that you are enjoying the spring sunshine.

Our cover story for this edition features Stan, a resident at Hill House, who entertains us and his fellow residents with evocative poetry based on events in his life. We are always keen to uncover the hidden skills of our residents – they are often the stories that are the most inspiring, interesting, and thought-provoking. I encourage all those who have a special talent to share their story with us for future editions of the Voice.

You will also discover in this issue some fantastic examples of the tremendous advantages to be gained through community engagement, a central Abbeyfield value. There is news about community lunch clubs and coffee mornings springing up in a couple of our care homes, helping us reach even more people. You can also find out how our residents are using their skills to help those less fortunate; how recruiting committed volunteers can yield magnificent results for the services you provide; and some great examples of how introducing animals to your house or home can have a therapeutic effect.

Finally, I would like to highlight this issue's Resident Engagement section, which touches on the work of our National Residents' Panel. The panel meets regularly to discuss the services we provide, influence how we work, and review our performance, helping us to better meet our residents' needs and fulfil our obligations to the Regulator of Social Housing. We would love to expand this panel so that it can be truly representative of all our residents, and I would encourage any residents who are interested in finding out more about how we work, and helping us to improve our services, to join. You can find out more information on page six.

I hope the coming months bring more good weather, and I look forward to our annual Abbeyfield Week celebrations in June, when we will have the opportunity to rejoice in all that makes Abbeyfield a great place to be.

With best wishes,

Paul Tennant CEO, The Abbeyfield Society
Follow Paul on Twitter @CEO_Abbeyfield

AVONDALE COUPLE CELEBRATES 70TH ANNIVERSARY



Mary and John were married in 1954

Mary and John Clarke, from Newport, have celebrated their 70 years as husband and wife with a party at Avondale, the sheltered housing scheme where they are both living.

Mary, 90, and John, 95, were joined by friends, family and staff to enjoy an excellent buffet and a fabulous Platinum Anniversary cake, made by Housekeeper Lynn Walsh.

The couple met purely by chance in 1953 at a dance hall in Ryde. John went to hang up his coat in the cloakroom where Mary was working that evening, and they have both described the moment that they set eyes on each other as love at first sight.

The relationship blossomed during the rest of the holiday, culminating in John proposing to Mary, and they were married in Nottingham in March 1954, which they cite as their most romantic moment.

Mary and John have made lots of happy memories since, and together they have raised their three sons, Paul, John Jr and Alun.

John had a successful engineering career, retiring in 2002. In April 2015 the couple decided to move to the Isle of Wight, where Mary is from, and took a room at Avondale in June 2023 in order to enjoy their later years worry-free.

When asked about the secret to the longevity of their loving relationship, Mary and John said that it was founded upon "happiness, understanding each other, and having both common and separate interests."



Celebrating 70 years with a Platinum Anniversary cake





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BOOKS FROM THE NOOK

Halcyon House in Formby has installed a community book swap, which has kept the supply of reading material for the residents flowing, enabling them to explore new titles they have previously been unable to access.

With a medley of genres, from gritty crime novels to futuristic science fiction and laugh-out-loud comedy, residents and people from the local area are welcome to take out a book, replacing it with another from their collection.

The book swap, located just outside Halcyon House, is the secondary location of the home's on-site library, the Squirrel's Nook, and provides the opportunity for visitors to discover a wider range of books to read at their leisure. To offer fresh options, books in the book swap are often exchanged for items from the main library.

Resident Freda Gore said of the new installation, "It's been brilliant being able to get

a new supply of books whenever I need one."

Designed by activities coordinator Liam Brown, and constructed by two volunteers from the neighbourhood, Harry Wells and Paul Farrell, the book swap was officially opened on World Book Day, becoming an instant hit. Those who attended the opening were treated to homemade cakes and free bookmarks advertising the Squirrel's Nook, and the home has also produced badge packs available for £1.



Resident Margaret Bruce adds some books



Halcyon House produced badge packs and bookmarks to promote the Squirrel's Nook



Three residents launched the book swap

CARNARVON HOUSE VOLUNTEERS BRING THE "JOY AND LAUGHTER"

Carnarvon House sheltered housing scheme, in Burton Joyce, is fortunate enough to benefit from the services of some exceptional volunteers who go the extra mile to enhance the residents' quality of life.

Sarah Selby, the daughter of a resident, is one such volunteer who helps to arrange regular coffee mornings, to which the wider community are invited.

Sarah says, "Residents expressed their desire for a greater choice of activities post-pandemic, but they were still understandably apprehensive about going out. We agreed that coffee mornings, that people in the village could come to, would be a nice idea.

"They are always well-attended and are still popular with both the residents and other older people in the neighbourhood."

Sarah collaborates with fellow volunteer, Sue Keefer – also the daughter of a resident – on these monthly coffee mornings. While Sarah advertises the coffee mornings in the village, bringing lots of friendly faces through the door, Sue is always happy to help with serving the drinks and greeting visitors.

Sue says, "I enjoy talking to the residents and having a laugh with them! It's nice to provide some company and it is very rewarding knowing that the residents enjoy the coffee mornings and spending time with me."

Christine, who lives nearby, is a recurring attendee at the coffee mornings, which provide her with an opportunity to socialise on a regular basis.

"These events are necessary for people who live on their own," she explains. "I'm 92 and I will always come whilst I am still able to. It's a reason to get up in the morning."

John, another guest, added, "It's always nice meeting up with folks. There is a nice village community spirit, and it gives you the opportunity to connect with friends.

"The Carnarvon House coffee mornings are one of the bonuses of living in Burton Joyce."

Sarah and Sue also help to ensure that residents can retain their independence, often volunteering to accompany them to local events.

Sarah also makes sure that all the information that prospective residents might



Sarah and Sue accompany residents to a variety of local events

need is readily available. By regularly updating a folder containing the facts and figures older people and their families would need when considering Carnarvon House as their new 'home from home', Sarah helps them to make an informed decision.

Senior House Manager, Tricia Hopcroft, says, "This is an amazing initiative and deserves a huge thank you.

"Both Sue and Sarah bring so much joy and laughter to the house, and all our residents and staff really look forward to seeing them."



➔ RHYME AND REASON (CONTINUED FROM COVER)



Stan met his wife Marion at a dance hall in Exeter

“One of the bonus of being stationed at Fleetlands,” Stan continues, “was that you could learn to fly a glider for free. A lot of us who worked on the airfields did it and it was almost part and parcel of the role. I enjoyed it enormously, especially when you hit a good thermal, and it was a good way to forget about all the terrible losses.”

Stan became a sergeant and spent 29 years in what he calls “the PBI – the poor bloody infantry”, taking the opportunity to travel the world to places including Ireland, Hanover and Hong Kong.

However, it was nearer to home, in Exeter, that he met his wife of 40 years, Marion, at the Rougemont Hotel dance hall.

After the army Stan remained in Exeter and attended an engineering training course, following which he went to work for Hardinge metal cutting tools company, where he stayed for nearly 50 years.

When it comes to his spare time, Stan has always followed

“I’ll regularly read my poetry for the other residents, and I’ll even sing when they let me!”

Portsmouth F.C. and still loves to watch the football matches when he can. “Although,” he confesses, “my favourite sport was probably drinking beer!”

“I was also quite an accomplished douser,” he adds, “and I picked up a few of the ley lines down in Devon. Marion and I also spent much of our time breeding Abyssinian cats.”

However, it is Stan’s poetry that tells the story of his life best.

“I started to realise that I could write poetry when I noted down things that had happened to me. When I joined the infantry, I used

to jot down what I was doing every day, so it was easy to remember, and then I began to put my memories into verse.

“For example, I was unfortunate enough to lose my left leg, but one thing I’ve learned over the years is just to take life as it comes along. So, I came to terms with it, and I wrote a poem called Munching Leg about one of the prosthetics I received.

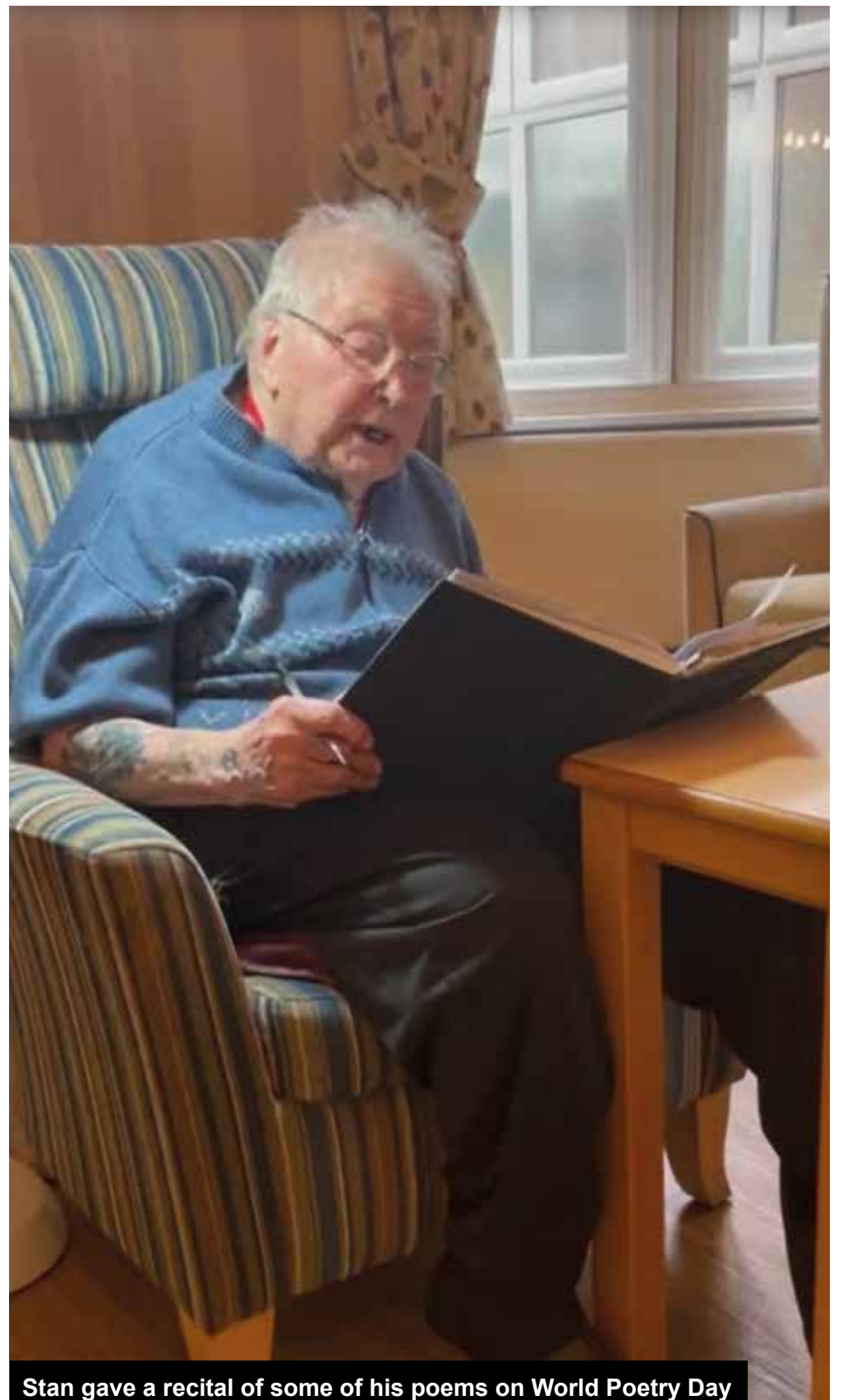
“I have written about 60 poems altogether and I’ve published a book with some of them in. Others have been printed in the local newspaper, The Express & Echo.”

Stan is also keen to share his

work with his fellow residents.

“I don’t write so many new ones now,” he says, “but I often give recitals for the others here. I did one recently for World Poetry Day in the lounge, and I’ll regularly read some over lunch for the people I sit with. I’ll even sing when they let me!

“I’m very comfortable living at Hill House and I especially like the building itself. It’s a very old 16th century house and I love the fact it’s rooted in history. The garden is also beautiful, and I have made a few very good friends. As the saying goes, you can tell a man who loses by the company he chooses!”



Stan gave a recital of some of his poems on World Poetry Day

We are delighted that Stan has kindly given us permission to print excerpts from some of his poems.

*'We (The Promise)' was written when Stan's wife,
Marion, passed away.*

*It was in the year of '69
When first you changed your name to mine -
You, the Devon Darling, and I, the Hampshire Hog.
We didn't have much money as we viewed uncharted seas,
But enough to pick the wind up, I'm certain, you and me.
I laughed and said: "It frightens you and me,
But look at us together, the gods have made us free,
And when we're viewed together, now you and I are we."
We've been together now for 40 years and it doesn't seem too much,
And there ain't a lady living in the land that I'd swap for my
dear old dutch.
I'm grieving for her going and the days are long and grey,
And the best of me went with her when the gods took her away.
But I must trust the potter - who is my name for my god -
For he married us together, she my Devon Darling, and I the
Hampshire Hog.
Almost 50 years ago I swore we'd never part -
A statement that was made from the bottom of my heart.
Married or immortal, I know it sounds absurd,
But with the potter's help I will try to keep my word.
If you are merely resting, or in eternal sleep,
The Hampshire man is coming for his honest word to keep.*

**Stan wrote 'Peace in our Time' about
the noisy neighbours at his house on
King Street, Exeter**

The toilet light switch cracking down,
the flushing of the loo -
I know before my neighbours
what they are going to do!
Oh the creaking, squealing,
rolling is not the rising of the dead,
Just my neighbour upstairs
slipping lightly into bed.
One night when I was slumbering,
I was woken with a start.
I was hot and cold all over and
I feared for my old heart.
Was some beast a-growling?
For I heard a mighty roar!
Was it my neighbours juddering,
shuddering, opening his drawer?
Subdued motors pulsing, thumping to and from -
Have the Martians really landed?
No, my neighbour's heating's on!

**'Munching Leg' was written about a
prosthetic leg Stan received in 2014**

It was six inches too long and four inches too wide!
With raised humps and bumps all over its sides,
It lay in the box all shiny and bright -
A sinister thing, why it might sting or bite!
I showed it to Harry and I showed it to Jack,
"Tis a terrible thing, you should send it right back."
I glanced at the index and it said veg or meat,
And it opened one eye and looked at my feet!
So I shut down the lid and secured it tight,
For fear of the thing getting loose in the night.
Says I to the postman, "There's been a mistake,
This package was meant for the zoo's private gate!"
So they carried it off and I'm lucky, thinks me,
To know that it's safe under stout lock and key.
I was told in the morning that things were not quiet
And down at the zoo there had been a small riot.
It seems that an expert who knew what to do
Tried to fix the device to a big kangaroo!

You can find out what happened next to Stan's munching leg and read some more of his poetry on our website at abbeyfield.com/blog.



RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

National Residents' Panel



The Abbeyfield Living Society (ALS) is committed to delivering high quality services and supporting our residents to make choices about their life. We also want our residents to help us make choices about our business. The Regulator of Social Housing has stated that landlords must give their residents opportunities to influence and be involved in shaping their services and monitoring the performance of their landlord.

We want to improve how we engage with our residents and listen to what you have to say. We have been working with a few residents over the past few months and have now established a National Residents' Panel. The panel is a new venture for ALS, and

we are excited about its future and how we will work together to help improve services for our residents.

The panel have met twice so far, and they have discussed how we can help our residents to access digital services, and our Resident Satisfaction Survey. They have indicated they want to look at how we communicate with our residents and to develop a residents' network, to help people to share experiences and support each other.

The panel meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 2pm on Zoom.

Can you get involved?

- Are you interested in helping to improve Abbeyfield services?
- Would you be interested in learning a little more about how Abbeyfield works?
- Do you like meeting new people?
- Do you have a little spare time?
- Are you happy to share your opinion?

If you have answered yes to these questions, we would love you to join our panel! We hope it can be representative of all Abbeyfield residents and that it will play a role in helping us to ensure we are listening to them.

To find out more please contact resident.engagement@abbeyfield.com or call Justin on 07553 424367.

YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS!

You will have received a Resident Satisfaction Survey in the past few months. Thank you to all residents who have returned a completed survey.

Our annual satisfaction surveys are a valuable opportunity for us to find out what we are doing well and what we can improve on.

We will publish the results from the survey later in the year along with an improvement plan, with the actions detailing what we will do to improve our services based on your feedback.

Please don't forget that you can contact us at anytime with your comments and feedback via feedback@abbeyfield.com.



CHICK OUT THE NEW ARRIVALS

Two of our care homes took on some new temporary residents of their own – albeit a lot smaller and fluffier than their usual ones!

You might associate chicks and ducks as supporting characters from the ubiquitous

'90s sitcom Friends, but Westall House and Pratt House's springtime hatchlings were certainly the stars of the show for residents and visitors alike. Feast your eyes on their new adorable, feathered friends.



After being excellently taken care of by staff and residents, the chicks and ducklings have now been rehomed to local farms.

MISTY THE THERAPY DOG GIVES RESIDENTS A PEDIGREE EXPERIENCE

Residents at Abbeyfield House care home in New Malden have been enjoying spending time with a seven-year-old Staffordshire Bull Terrier called Misty.

Misty is a therapy dog, whose handler Chris is a volunteer for the charity Therapy Dogs Nationwide (TDN), who arrange one-off and regular visits from therapy dogs to a wide range of places supporting vulnerable people.



Misty is very well behaved when she visits

Every Wednesday, Misty visits Abbeyfield House to spend time with the residents. For some, it stirs up memories of when they used to own dogs as pets.

One resident, Charles, says, "Misty is a lovely dog. Seeing Chris make her do all the tricks she can is really enjoyable to watch. Having had dogs all my life, it is great to have one come to visit us. Misty reassures me and makes me calm, just like my own dogs used to."

Abbeyfield House activities coordinator, Jay Ward, believes that Misty brings unparalleled benefits for the residents.

He explains, "I have seen how the residents' mood improves when they see her. They especially enjoy feeding her carrots. We are very lucky to have Misty and Chris come to the home and be with our residents."

For Chris, she enjoys making a difference to the lives of the older people that Abbeyfield supports.

She says, "For me, as the therapy dog

handler, I love to see the smiles on the faces of the residents, staff and visitors, and the joy that Misty creates. It is the most rewarding experience, and I am very proud to be a volunteer for TDN."



The residents love to spend time with Misty



SPEEDWELL COURT IN THE COMMUNITY

We always like to hear about how our houses are reaching out to help older people in their local area, as well as their own residents. We were invited to Speedwell Court care home, in Southampton, to hear about their community-focused projects.

A free monthly community Lunch Club has been running at Speedwell Court since September 2023 for people living with dementia and their carers. The home, which offers both residential and dementia care, provides a three-course meal and the opportunity to talk to people in similar circumstances of living with, or having a loved one living with, the disease.

One visiting couple we met at the Lunch Club were Carolyn and her husband Ian, who had been recommended to attend by Andover Mind, a Hampshire-based charity supporting people living with mental illness, dementia and other cognitive impairments, as well as their carers. Ian was diagnosed with dementia two years ago.

"This is the second time we have attended the Lunch Club," said Carolyn. "We enjoyed it so much last time that it has quickly become a must-attend event for both of us.

"It allows us the opportunity to relax, and it is nice to see lots of familiar faces from last time. Both Ian and I have made some new friends and it is good to know that everyone here, visitors and the staff, know what we are going through and are willing to listen and offer support if they can."

Christine has been regularly attending with her husband Geoff, also diagnosed two years ago, ever since the community Lunch Club was set up.

"It's the little things and attention to small

details that make this a special place for us," she said.

"We attend other events put on by other organisations and care homes locally, but Speedwell Court is our favourite, and they really go above and beyond to make the experience as enjoyable as possible.

"One time when we came there was fish and chips served, and my husband always has his with salad cream. Unfortunately they didn't have any at the time, so he had to go without. However, it was very touching to see that, when we came back the following month, salad cream was waiting for us on the table in case Geoff or anyone else might want it.

"It's those extra elements and the general friendly atmosphere that helps to make everyone comfortable, and it means that the community Lunch Club is an opportunity to form a small community and forge new friendships, as well as to enjoy some great food.

"Speedwell Court is definitely somewhere we would consider living, should we find it difficult to cope on our own."

Justine Owen is the Customer Relations Manager at Speedwell Court who organises the lunch.

"It is lovely to hear everyone laughing away in our café," she says. "We know how physically and emotionally difficult caring for a spouse with dementia can be. Projects like ours not only provide an outlet, something different to enjoy, company and a change of scene, but also help our visitors to know that they are not alone and ultimately that there are people who care.

"We pride ourselves on being a community-focused care home," she adds, "and on holding this event and others like it every month. Our relationship with Andover Mind and other



Ian, who attends the lunch club with his wife and carer, Carolyn, stayed to enjoy the singing group

organisations goes both ways – people in the community, potential future residents and their loved ones, experience what we can offer, and we can provide the space and infrastructure to hold these sorts of events that help to support their service-users."

The lunch was followed by a singing group, which most of the Lunch Club guests stayed for, and they were also joined by many of Speedwell Court's residents and staff, as well as the residents' family members.

Margaret, a resident, was joined by her daughter, Lorraine, for the singalong to some old favourites. After a rousing chorus of Neil Diamond's *Sweet Caroline*, Lorraine said, "We both love coming to these musical afternoons. It helps to cheer us both up.

"It is wonderful to see everyone coming together to have a good time. It really does feel like a little family here, which helps everyone to feel right at home."

MARJORIE'S MEMORIES

We met with another of Speedwell Court's residents, Marjorie Fagg, to talk about her association with Abbeyfield before she moved in.

"I was on the committee of the first Abbeyfield house to open on the Isle of Wight," she says, "which was managed by the Abbeyfield Shanklin Society.

"My husband, Alec, was a member of the Rotary Club in Shanklin and a local council accountant by trade. He was asked to join as treasurer by another Rotary member, to which he agreed, and somehow or other I

got dragged in! I held a secretarial role, taking minutes at meetings mostly.

"For me, the whole ethos of Abbeyfield is very special. I was fortunate enough to meet Abbeyfield's founder, Richard Carr-Gomm, at an anniversary event we held. He was a very pleasant man, and I was inspired by the story of how he set up the organisation.

"The care he demonstrated back then, I am pleased to say, remains at the heart of Abbeyfield. His original values are still prevalent, and I can feel how important they are as a resident now."



THE FIRS KNITTING GROUP ON A MISSION TO HELP OTHERS



The Knit & Natter group have knitted over 300 blankets

A knitting group at The Firs independent living complex in Sherwood has been working with charity Inner Wheel – the women’s arm of Rotary – for over 10 years.

During this time, its members have been hard at work knitting blankets and baby

jumpers that are given away to people in need around the world.

The Knit & Natter group is run by General Assistant at The Firs, Margaret Hampson. She says, “We all look forward to Knit & Natter with tea and biscuits every Thursday. Usually there are between 10 and 15 residents attending.

“Not all of them will knit but they are very welcome to come for a natter!”

It is clear that the residents also benefit. One resident said, “The Knit & Natter sessions are the highlight of my week. I find it therapeutic and relaxing, and it helps to keep my hands busy and flexible.

“It’s also very rewarding, knowing that we are coming together to help people all over the world.”

The nearby Inner Wheel Mansfield Club has been taking what the group have made – so far, over 300 blankets and countless jumpers – and including them in their baby bundles, which are then given to the Nottingham Police Convoy, who distribute them to war-torn countries.

The donations are gratefully received and make a huge difference to those to whom they are given.

Inner Wheel’s Rosemary Wilson said, “Thank you for your beautiful blankets and jumpers. They have been included in the baby bundles we make up, which then make their way to Africa.”



Margaret Hampson and resident Angela showing off their handiwork

NEW MALDEN COFFEE MORNINGS PROVIDE SUPPORT NETWORK FOR RELATIVES

Abbeyfield House care home in New Malden has hosted its first coffee morning for residents’ family members, creating an invaluable support network for people who have a loved one living with dementia or a similar condition.

Attendees have the opportunity to meet others who also have a relative living at the home, over a cup of coffee and a slice of cake, to share experiences and knowledge, and to gain a better understanding of what their loved ones are going through.

Activities coordinator, Jay Ward, says, “We hope the sessions will enhance the visiting experience for residents and relatives alike. The ability to share feelings and knowledge can be a great learning opportunity and help people to achieve a greater understanding of the challenges our residents face. We hope

this will help them to better interact with their family member when they visit.

“Hearing from others will enable them to develop a better idea of what to expect in the future, and how the care that their loved one requires might evolve.”

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive following the first few coffee mornings held earlier in the year.

Kim Simmons, the daughter of a resident, was among those who attended. She said, “It was so lovely to attend a coffee and cake morning with other family members. It gave us all the perfect opportunity to get to know each other, to empathise, and to share our thoughts and worries in a calm and relaxed atmosphere.

“It is such a good idea to do it on a regular basis and I am looking forward to attending again next time.”



The coffee mornings provide a safe space for relatives to discuss their experiences

Jay will be running a coffee morning every month. “I am hoping we can encourage more of our residents’ relatives to attend future sessions,” he says.

“It’s not just open to family members either. We are a community home, so we’d be happy to share the benefits of our coffee mornings with people from the local area as well, if they would like to attend.”



PUPPY LOVE FOR WINNERSH RESIDENTS



Abbeyfield Winnersh resident, Rhona Nightingale, has been enjoying joining in with the guide dog training

What could be better than spending time with an adorable puppy?

Well, that's exactly what residents at Abbeyfield Winnersh care home have been doing, thanks to a new partnership with the charity Guide Dogs.

Gibson, a five-month-old German Shepherd-Golden Retriever cross, has been visiting the home every other week to supplement his training to become a full-time guide dog. Gibson is accompanied by Sophie, a Puppy Development Supervisor for the South-East, and his owner Rakesh, who will have Gibson for just over a year before he moves on to more training with Guide Dogs.

One of the residents, Rhona Nightingale, is thrilled to be able to get to know Gibson.

"I love being involved in the guide dog

training," she said.

"I had a friend who had a guide dog, and it was the most amazing dog I've ever had contact with – although my dogs were also very well trained too! I've noticed Gibson is very obedient and will make a great guide dog in my opinion."

Gibson is in the early stages of controlling his excitable puppy ways, learning to greet people on command, settle again and not jump up, and he is also working on his recall. The residents and staff at Abbeyfield Winnersh all agree that he is already a lot more disciplined than most puppies.

Rakesh believes that a care home is a great environment for Gibson to start his training, so he can get used to being around new and unfamiliar people, as well as different

noises, and Abbeyfield Winnersh activity lead, Charlotte Richardson, has been organising Gibson's visits for the home.

Charlotte said, "Our residents are benefitting enormously from the experience as most of them love animals, especially dogs.

"More importantly, it will hopefully give them a great sense of purpose and pride in helping to train a guide dog. They do such a life-changing job."

Care Home Manager, Sue Smart, added, "We are delighted to support with the puppy training.

"Gibson has brought much joy to our residents, all of whom are living with advanced dementia. His visits support with their social interaction, anxiety, and sensory needs, and they are also so beneficial for those residents who are nonverbal.

"We like to do our bit for the local community and see this as a great way forward. We are planning to have a summer party and, as dogs are so instrumental here – with families bringing their own dogs in and our regular visits from a Pets as Therapy dog – our party will have a dog theme and an agility course as part of the day."



Gibson is just a puppy but is already very well disciplined

PUZZLE PAGE

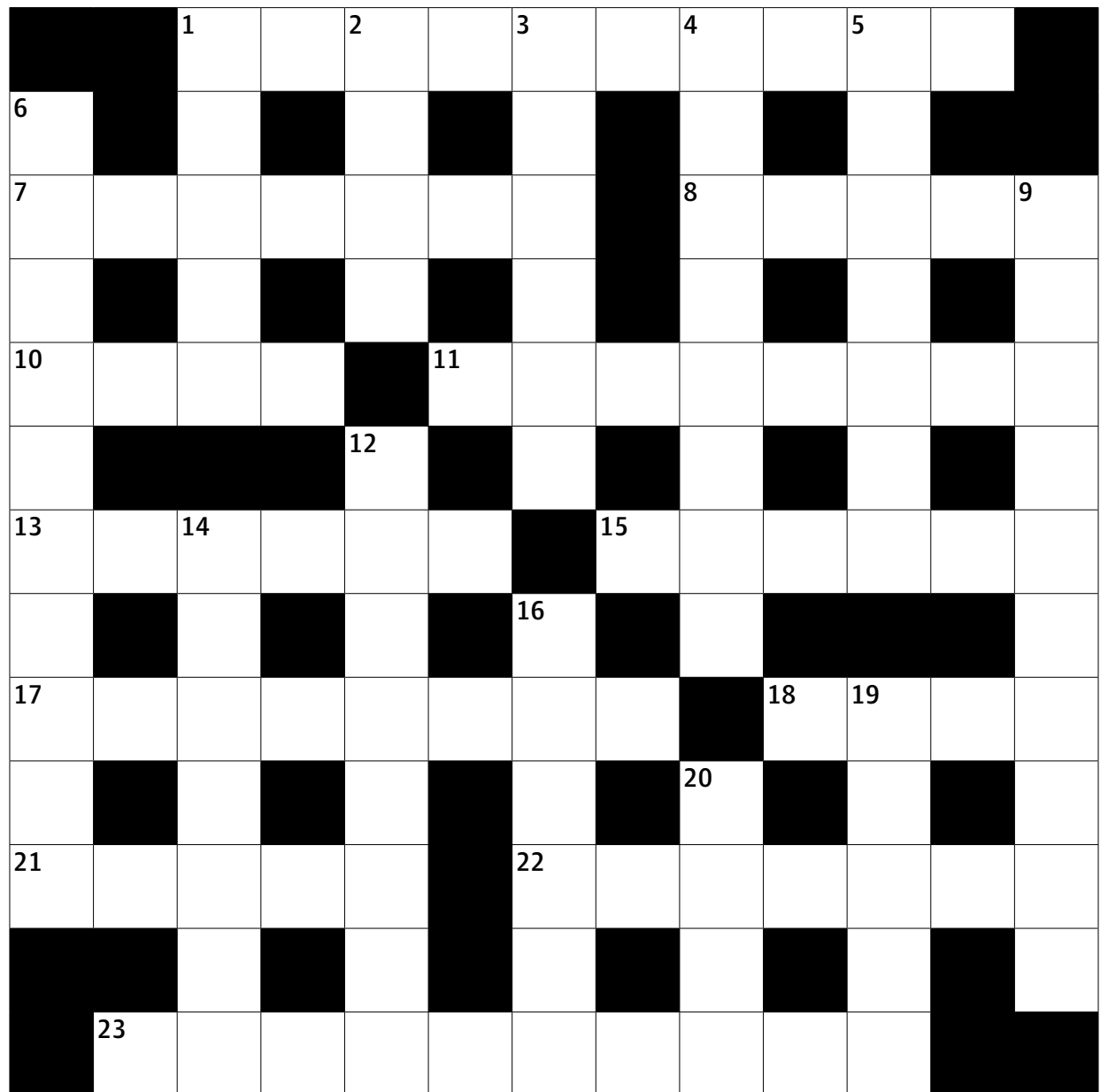
CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 African capital (5,5)
- 7 Bewilder (7)
- 8 Spurious (5)
- 10 Salacious (4)
- 11 Cut of meat from a sheep (4,4)
- 13 Daffy - bird (6)
- 15 Alter (with an intention to deceive) (6)
- 17 Mysterious (8)
- 18 Food thickener (4)
- 21 Honour received for achievement (5)
- 22 Soft suede leather (7)
- 23 Advancing of a claim (10)

Down

- 1 It points the way (5)
- 2 Fool (4)
- 3 Carnal (6)
- 4 Sudden higher birth rate (4,4)
- 5 VIP (3,4)
- 6 Look to see that letters are correct (10)
- 9 Informer implicating many people (10)
- 12 Taunton is its county town (8)
- 14 Rich seafood soup (7)
- 16 Semi-precious diamond-like gemstone (6)
- 19 Ringo (anag) (5)
- 20 Airs (anag) (4)



SUDOKU: MEDIUM

1	5		2		9			4
	4				6			
				4			6	3
	7					8		6
6								5
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4	6			8				
			6				7	
8			5		1		4	9

HARD

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	3		5				4	
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8								
	5				7		1	
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60 SECONDS WITH LOIS ROGERS

Sheltered Housing Manager, Isle of Wight

How long have you been working for Abbeyfield?

I have been working for Abbeyfield for over 30 years. I loved my first job as a part-time Relief Housekeeper so much that I decided that I would like to become a live-in Manager/Housekeeper, an opportunity which I accepted in Cowes. I have since taken on managerial roles at other houses in Cowes, Bembridge and Southampton, before becoming a Senior House Manager.

With the more recent geographical restructuring, I now manage the houses in Newport, Bembridge, and the two in Cowes.



What was it that attracted you to Abbeyfield?

I started my career as a care assistant and then progressed to deputy matron at a residential care home, so I knew that my heart was in caring for older people.

It was important for me that Abbeyfield invests in services and staff. I have enjoyed the staff benefits and extensive training programme that Abbeyfield provides, and I was glad of the chance to achieve my Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care.

What is a typical day for you?

I don't think that there is ever a typical day, but my role is varied. Any day could include checking in with staff; addressing any resident issues; attending meetings; meeting deadlines; dealing with contractors; compliance checks; answering emails; letting rooms; marketing; organising activities and special events for residents; and updating the Service Improvement Plans.

What in your opinion makes a good housing manager?

A good housing manager should be understanding, flexible, knowledgeable, kind, and honest. They should be able to display all the Abbeyfield values. Remaining calm, seeing the bigger picture and not being afraid to ask for help are also important abilities and, from my increasingly varied experiences, I have learnt the value of the supportive structures of policies and procedures in place.

What is the best part of your job?

I love the variety. I also get a great deal of satisfaction knowing that I have tried my best and achieved a good standard of work, and it's nice when we receive compliments from residents, their families, friends, and professionals. Time, effort, encouragement and support given to the people we work for, and with, and the general public builds trust and respect, strengthens relationships and

promotes Abbeyfield.

I believe we have the right people leading our key teams across Abbeyfield, giving me confidence in my role.

What are the biggest challenges that you face?

Recent challenges have included filling our rooms and recruiting high-quality staff.

Dealing with resident's mental health, conflict, and communicating with a resident regarding a personal matter are always tough, as is good time-management in a demanding role.

What are you looking forward to at your houses?

I am looking forward to more collaboration with my staff and volunteers. I am pleased that my resident volunteer is joining the National Residents' Panel that will help shape Abbeyfield and give our residents a voice. I would like everyone with whom we come into contact to believe that Abbeyfield is a wonderful place to live and work.



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Company No 574816
Homes England No H1046

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

	A	D	D	I	S	A	B	A	B	A	
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