



Birtley
House

house&home

The Birtley House Group Newsletter, Summer 2018

Caring Insights
from Sylwia

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Welcome to the latest edition of the *Birtley House newsletter*...

I hope you enjoy reading about some of the happenings over the past few months, and of the people and staff who work so hard to make Birtley such a safe and special place for our dear residents – people like Kevin Jacot and Simon Keeley who, while they may not be employees of ours, are most definitely part of the ‘Birtley Family’. My thanks to them both for their contributions to this newsletter, and for allowing us to experience their incredible talents on a regular basis at Birtley.

I think its fair to say that this year has been challenging for us, although I believe strongly that we will look back at 2018 as a landmark year where we were able to move onwards to a level of service higher than we’ve ever had. Many of you will be aware of our recent disappointing CQC rating which spotlighted the technical deficiencies

Nominated Individual

As a Provider and as a private company, we are required to have both a Registered Manager and Nominated Individual. The latter is a less well understood role that is intended to be the main point



that had been allowed to creep in over the past couple of years. However now, with Sylwia Indycka our new Manager in place, we feel confident that the issues identified by the CQC can and will be fixed and we aim to work towards re-obtaining our Outstanding rating as soon as possible.

We have been recruiting hard and the new faces that have joined our team are enthusiastically supporting Sylwia and Michelle in their commitment to improving standards in preparation of another CQC inspection later this year. All our staff work incredibly hard and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts for their loyalty and dedication. I feel that we have the basis of a truly special team now, one based on honesty, trust and respect for one another, and it is this that makes me excited for the future of Birtley House.

For those interested in the continuing work being done at Birtley Brook, Sinead and myself are hoping that all will be finished in September. The house is looking lovely and it’s been amazing to see such a transformation. Not long to go now, fingers crossed!

Frank Whalley
Managing Director

of contact for CQC and to provide oversight to the quality and safety of the service. These two roles had previously been done by the same person, but we feel that the better structure is to keep them separate in order to provide both an alternative point of contact for CQC and a direct support to the Registered Manager.

I am grateful to the Board, and indeed to Sylwia and Lucy Hubball at CQC for their support in putting myself forward for the role. With this responsibility I intend it to reflect the relatively small scale of our family-run business and to be adaptable to the changing conditions and challenges that we face. I look forward to keeping you, and indeed CQC, up-to-date with how the role develops.

Tim Whalley
Director



Welcome from Michelle

I would like to say a massive welcome and thank you to our new manager Sylwia. I have already formed a good firm relationship with Sylwia and we are very much singing from the same hymn sheet.

It is hard to explain the amount of work that is undertaken daily from all departments to keep the home running and Sylwia has undertaken a massive task and I can already see significant changes in the structure and see a very bright future for Birtley.

I know that the staff are split into departments, but we are very much a team and working together to increase knowledge which empowers staff who then in turn display this out on the floor in their working day.

Emma Abrew has worked tirelessly with me on a recruitment drive to bring new fresh members of the team through the door and we can happily inform that we have now employed a further 7 members of staff which includes 6 carers and 1 RGN. It is always lovely to have new team members and although the induction process is hard work for the inducting members of staff it is rewarding to find confident team members working out on the floor with a happy can-do attitude and we welcome them all to the team.

Fresh starts and change can be daunting but fresh approaches bring a new feel to the workplace and this is evident in the atmosphere within the building. A change also encourages a step-up of pace and encourages personal growth within the staff. The team are building a new future for Birtley and with the knowledge that Sylwia so very obviously has, things can only be on the up for Birtley.

On a personal note, I managed finally to get home in July for 2 weeks and I can easily say that I had a wonderful time. I managed to celebrate my birthday with my mother and my older children, and was treated to a rare sight as well.... the sun! It was glorious being able to sit on the beach and look across to the Isle of Arran and I thought of Mrs Alison Robertson who was an avid fan of Scotland and in particular Arran. I managed to get a lovely photograph of Arran which I sent to Mrs Robertson’s daughter Fiona who was very grateful for the photograph as another fond reminder of Alison.

I am returning home again in September for 1 week and can do this contentedly, as our residents are all being left in very safe hands!

Michelle Hutchison
Deputy Manager and Head Nurse





Caring Insights from Sylwia

I was born in Poland in a city called Inowroclaw, very well known by tourists for its 'Saltwater Baths' and 'Salt Mines'. Care homes are few and far between in Poland so it was common practice for families like mine to provide in-house care for elderly relatives.

As the eldest of two children, I always remember my Mum allowing me to help by passing her the simple things she needed, such as dressings or fresh sheets. I enjoyed taking my 'Babcia' – my Grandmother - cups of tea and her lunch as well as putting out fresh flowers and pictures my sister and I would draw in her room.

By the age of 5 I knew I loved making people happy and had already decided I wanted to be a nurse so I could help others. The caring nature of my close family shaped my future and inspired my nursing career. Although, when choosing my career path I also liked the idea of teaching and considered studying biology, very nearly a 'whoops' moment I think and I am so glad I chose nursing. I was proud to qualify with my Masters Degree in Nursing in 2004. I then went onto an immediate leadership role in nursing, before coming to the UK in 2006. During my training I enjoyed various areas of nursing but it is the link back to the time with my Babcia which brought me to caring for the elderly. Being able to enjoy the unique wit and hindsight of someone with more life experience than you is a wonderful thing and helping to enable the best life possible for someone gives me such satisfaction.

Generally, in the care sector you become familiar with the performance of other areas both local and national to you. I had come to know Birtley House Nursing Home as a care home and respite centre, seemingly always at the top of its care responsibilities. There is a combination of things here aside from the reputation for high levels of care; the caring family ethos that pours through the home, the agricultural and charity partnerships as well as the clearly well nurtured relationships between



nurses, carers and the residents that all contribute to making this house not only a home but a community. I can honestly say I was ecstatic when the position opened to join this wonderful place. A place where I feel like I have come home.

Whilst I see so much good here I recognise too that there is work to be done, and a fresh experienced pair of eyes is always useful in any organisation. It may highlight the need for a slight restructuring in daily operations, or a change of faces by working towards a more consistent nursing team, and numerous other possible innovations. "Every day is a school day" as they say, and it is my mission to look at the operational structure here at Birtley, review it with a fully person centred approach, and adapt it accordingly to ensure firstly two important things. 1. That residents are receiving the absolute best possible care in any situation, and 2. That the team who will help support both me and Michelle – our Deputy Manager and Head of Nursing - in making this happen are empowered to be responsible in their role, with access to a support structure that works when things don't go to plan.

In the short time I have been here I have witnessed plentiful care given which is in my opinion 'second to none', however there are a few administrative operations that could be adapted to ensure our services can be fully utilised whilst remaining effective. I believe it is important that as I manage your home I remain both transparent and approachable, I aim for the team to always have a clear understanding of their role and receive constructive guidance where necessary, supported also by the mentorship of my fellow leader, Michelle.

Our residents and their families are a vital support network in helping maximise Birtley's potential and ability to deliver a positive overall experience. It has been wonderful so far getting to know all of our residents through the coffee mornings, activity afternoons and of course our more personal one to one encounters. I particularly enjoyed my official welcome evening where residents' families were able to get to know me better and connect with each other. Part of my mission is to get to know everyone well and along with understanding any care needs, come to recognise individual social needs, aspirations, discuss ideas and ultimately open avenues to learn from.

The extra mile that I witness to be taken here by the team to support residents and their families is a paramount focus of Birtley House, and it is so comforting to see in return the support that we receive. I am honestly so pleased to be here with you all at Birtley, and I am ready to offer all my skills and experience to ensure Birtley House Nursing Home is once again recognised at a level worthy of its efforts.

Finally, I would just like to say a huge thank you to everyone for making me feel so welcome. It is always both exciting but slightly nerve racking to start in a new position, but I am already happy here, energised and very much looking forward to connecting with you again in the next issue.

Best wishes,

Sylwia Indycka
Manager



Garden Review *Summer 2018*

As I'm writing this, we are now into the 14th week of the heatwave and still have no sign of any rain. It's safe to say that if you were visiting for the first time, you'd be forgiven for thinking you were on a safari rather than walking around the green and pleasant Surrey Hills. With the lack of moisture our soil here is now predominantly sand, leaving the lawns dry, brown and crispy. Even the toughest of plants have begun to show signs of severe stress, most surprising the Buddleia which usually grows anywhere and yet sadly it seems to have given up.

It all looked so promising back at the start of the summer. The wet winter, followed by a warm snap in April meant everything was rapidly growing, and we were struggling to keep on top of things, particularly the mowing, with grass almost growing before our eyes. Now the mower is confined to the shed having not been needed now for the entirety of June and July!

Despite the odd wilted plant here and there the formal beds and borders still look pretty, as you would generally expect in our



gardens, it seems everything is gamely fighting on. The only area to really suffer has been the Rose garden, early blooms have long since gone and a second flush has been scarce due to the lack of moisture in the soil. I am pleased however, that the usual demands of weeding seems to be a thing of the past.

Out in the kitchen garden with the help of the HALOW group we have successfully managed to keep our crops healthy, meaning the kitchen has still enjoyed plentiful amounts of asparagus, peas, broad beans, beetroot and strawberries as well as courgettes, onions, runner beans, French beans, gooseberries, currants and tomatoes. Potatoes, raspberries and pumpkins are still to come.

One major source of concern has been the evaporation from the pond. With no rain to top the levels up and the shallow side getting dangerously low we've had to resort to filling it with hoses. The top pond has always suffered with leaks and has been turned off for a while now. However, it's all been cleaned out, the worst of the silt removed from the channel and Simon has done a great job in fixing the leaks. It's now back on and the water is flowing once again, the trickle of water over the rocks a calming sound as you walk down through the herbaceous borders.

So as the mercury tops 30 degrees for the 10th consecutive day I'm off to offer a little prayer to the rain gods that sooner rather than later they can treat us to some nice gentle drizzle for at least a week, months ago I never imagined that the thought of a nice cool, cloudy, drizzly day would fill me with such joy! I'm sure I'll soon be welcoming what Autumn brings.

Best wishes from myself, Sam and all at HALOW and we hope to see you out and about in the gardens.

Matt Miller
Head Gardener



Around the world with Harrison Catering



Since Harrison Catering Services' formation in 1994, the organisation's ethos has always been to create healthy and delicious food from fresh, quality ingredients.

The organisation enjoys providing exceptional dishes from around the world. Food preferences continually evolve so Harrison ensures it is always ahead of the curve and ready to meet the demands of sophisticated, discerning and well-travelled palettes.

Catering to many culinary tastes is an opportunity for Harrison chefs to use their creativity and experience, they are well equipped to deliver a diverse range of

dishes from around the globe. Dietary habits can be heavily influenced by a number of intrinsic factors, culture and origin alone no longer determines what type of food an individual prefers.

Harrison chefs research different cultures, regions and food trends before they set about menu design and pass on their learnings to the wider organisation. Once new dishes have been developed, Simon Wheatley, Chef Manager for Birtley House works closely with Caroline Whalley, our Director and Head of Activities, to ensure his menus which include the latest trends and culinary creations, are both suitable and adaptable for residents.



Simon explains the nostalgic potential of variation in food:

'It's really important to help residents settle in to their surroundings and Harrison Catering sees food, wellbeing and nutrition as an important aspect of the all-round care package. An international menu provides variety and helps create a stimulating and engaging environment for residents. Creating foods from around the world means there is always something new to look forward to, it can remind a person of somewhere they have travelled to and summon good memories shared with friends and family.'

Special international theme days are enjoyed and make lunch or supper an especially exciting occurrence. Birtley House recently held an Indian lunch where Simon created a delicious Chicken Tikka Balti with onion bhajis, various chutneys and naan bread. This was followed by a cardamom flavoured kulfi, a dessert which has similarities to ice cream in taste but is richer and denser in appearance.

The Caribbean night was a resounding success and a delicious array of flavours was created. Lime and coriander seabass, jerk chicken skewers, coconut marinated tiger prawns and Jamaican bean rice all helped set the scene and created ambience in the dining room.

Simon is looking forward to providing many more themed events and international dishes. These are exciting times for the food industry and Harrison Catering will continue to offer traditional flavours as well as embracing the opportunity for new, exciting flavours and dishes using authentic ingredients.



Activities focus on *FUN!!*



When planning the monthly Activities programme, fun is what we consider to be the main ingredient for a successful activity. Having fun is simply too important to ignore which is why we are only too happy to learn that the laughter coming from the Activities Room can be heard by other residents, visitors and staff, so we hope that as “laughter is the best medicine”, participating in the daily activities will help to make everyone’s day more enjoyable and meaningful. Joyful pursuits are what makes us feel alive, engaged and connected which is why we explore all kinds of different options for having fun, and no-one is too old to benefit from it! Fun is a very powerful and beneficial way of preventing loneliness, depression and helps to keep our minds alert.

No two months are ever the same in the Activities department and without doubt we can tick the boxes each month for incorporating many different categories that are vital for well-being and happiness. Variety is essential for both the organisers and participants so although certain activities might be included each month, they would always be implemented differently and imaginatively each time. Residents are encouraged to come to activities, but it is entirely their choice and we would never force anyone to join in.

Certainly, everyone had a fun evening at the recent Summer Caribbean supper with the tables and room colourfully decorated, a choice of delicious food, fruit punch to drink, as well as some dressing up in exotic shirts and dresses by both Residents and staff. Funnily enough this party was held on the hottest day

of the year so we definitely felt as if we were in the Caribbean! Another link with that part of the world, meant that our Residents enjoyed a wonderful violin recital by a very talented young musician, Dan Hodd, who Simon & I had met while holidaying in Nevis earlier in the year. Dan travels the world over, performing in hotels and restaurants, and we knew that he would be a popular performer at Birtley. He was indeed a success and gave a wonderful recital of ‘Music around the World’. Hopefully he will return for another recital at the end of the year.

It is probably true to say that music is the most consistently popular activity amongst our Residents, and the monthly visit by Kevin Jacot is always guaranteed to bring fun especially as staff are encouraged to come to the sing-along towards the end, just for the sheer fun of it! No auditions are required and judging by the smiles on everyone’s faces, it is clearly enjoyed by all!

Fun is possible even with the simplest activities as can be seen looking at the mouth-watering tartlets in the photo and some of the other activities that have taken place during the past few months.

The annual Strawberry Tea in the Rose Garden towards the end of June, was definitely a fun afternoon with a record number of Residents attending. With vintage crockery, a sumptuous tea produced by Simon Wheatley and his team in the kitchen, Birtley strawberries, Pimms, elderflower and tea to drink, it was indeed a memorable Summer activity.

Having experienced the hottest temperatures for many years, our reminiscence afternoon of ‘Oh! I do like to be beside the Seaside’ seemed very apt. Songs, poetry, ice cream, buckets & spades, and many other beach related items, stimulated memories of past holidays, reminding everyone of the fun they had!

Carol, Tina, Ann and I would like to thank our Residents for their enthusiastic and positive participation and for their encouraging comments about the activities that we arrange each month, and we will endeavour to keep adding that especially important ingredient called FUN!

Caroline Whalley
Director



Music is *my life*...



We are lucky enough to have some fantastic relationships with some impressive local talent here at Birtley, meaning each month we can put together an exciting itinerary for our residents. Many of our entertainers will then return due to popular demand, one favourite being Mr Kevin Jacot our talented musician. Kevin began working with us over 8 years ago. He plays various instruments and also sings. The time spent here means he gets to know many residents individually and he can then play to their tastes in music. He is excellent at reading the crowd and adapts his performance based on the mood of the day, whether it be to play more peaceful music or hold a more interactive session with upbeat energy.

We asked Kevin to tell us a little about himself and what a lifetime of music has meant to him...

It was for the local Choral Society performance of Mendelssohn's Elijah where I was first volunteered to sing solo at the age of 6, much to the concern of my friend sat beside me in the audience, but this sudden confidence and thrilling enjoyment meant my passion for music was born.

Having lived in Kenya where my father worked as an Agronomist, I grew up in a culture of appreciating the choir and music. I'd always put myself forward for solo parts. As a 7 year old, I remember singing

the part of Oliver for the local Amature Dramatic group. I loved musical expression and it meant so much to me to be able to perform.

On returning to the UK I was put in for an audition at Kings College Cambridge and was interviewed by the late Sir David Willcocks. Although he liked what he heard from me, I was too old (even at 9) to become a chorister there and so, on his recommendation, I became a chorister and enjoyed a wonderful musical education at St Michael's College in Tenbury Wells.

St Michael's was founded by an eccentric Victorian by the name of Sir Frederick Arthur Gore Ousley. He had noticed that the standard of choral singing in the country was far from thriving and so, in the middle of the Hereford countryside, he built a choir school to train future organists and singers. Legend of his time Sir John Stainer was a pupil there back in the 1850s. Ousley was also an avid collector of manuscripts and managed to obtain pieces from musical geniuses such as Byrd and Tallis. If you look in the front of a Watkins Shaw edition of the Messiah, you will find a reference to the conducting score used by Handel, which was also in the collection. Once a year these special pieces of history were brought out of the strong room safe and laid on the snooker table for us to study. What joy it gave me to see the original hand of all those church anthems I knew so well.

In my young adult years I accomplished both the piano and the violin and was granted many opportunities to sing in various choirs. I still use a violin which was made for me by my father. I took this instrument with me on a gap year to Munich where I worked in a hotel to give me a complete change of industry experience, the violin of course made an appearance. This work managed not only to improve my German, but I managed to master the 10 mile cycle ride home after enjoying the monastery beer gardens and plentiful amounts of their finest Closter Andechs brew.

I went back to my studies, first at St Mary's Hospital medical school which I loved but unfortunately the exams were far less kind than I anticipated. My passion for singing rose again and from this I built connections which allowed me to perform in many of London's cathedral and church choirs, and my proudest moment yet; singing for Her Majesty The Queen and Princess Margaret. Another 'pinch yourself' moment was when I was invited to sing 'Jail House Rock' with Sir Cliff Richard whilst he was celebrating his birthday with his friends at his own house.

Later I joined Surrey University and began studying one of their Tonmeister and music courses. Again I loved the practical but not so much the studying and found myself putting more energy into singing and performing in concerts.

Upon graduation I moved on to study a PGCE which qualified me to teach as a primary school teacher, through which I was able to re-live my love for school plays including my favourite classics 'Oliver' & 'Joseph' as well as teaching art, languages and music.

Down the line I found myself working in the Guildford Boots pharmacy department and one regular duty was to do prescription runs for surgeries and care homes. I discovered some nursing homes had a piano, and then once again I found myself back in the music business, and my relationship with Birtley was established.

I am fortunate to have enjoyed a varied career so far but it is one which has always brought me back to music and I now focus entirely on this. I can't express the enjoyment I get out of enriching the lives of the people I get to share it with, whether it is through running choirs such as The Hart Male Voice Choir, singing groups, giving individual lessons or performing recitals in various care homes. I feel blessed not only to meet so many lovely people each day, but to be able to share the gifts given to me through glorious music to help bring joy.

***Kevin Jacot
Musician***

Q&A

with Simon Keeley

Tell us about your background and how you came to work with carving stones?

I wanted a career that combines my love for creating art and history. Often my work is created from Historic inspiration, which in turn influences my design choices. After a few years of qualifying as a stone mason, I learnt all the skills necessary to become a proficient Stone Carver on a 3 year course in London. My early commissions were for Westminster Abbey and the Worshipful Company of Skinners, later on in my career a large low relief carving of healing plants for a historic facade on Harley street, London.

What is it that appeals to you about working in the woods?

Inspired by nature too, working in the woods is a perfect location for peaceful hours focusing on perfecting carvings and letter carving commissions.

Are there any stone making experiences that really stand out for you?

Carving a half life-sized Saint Peter statue in Portland limestone for a niche that had been empty since the time of Henry 8th. The commission was funded by a lady who left money to St.Peter's Church, in Cockfield near Bury St.Edmonds. The funny thing was the lady loved ducks, on the unveiling, the parishioners placed a metal duck sculpture at the feet of the completed St.Peter Statue.



What's your favourite piece ever produced?

I loved the large gargoyle I carved in Portland limestone. I am always hopeful that I will gain future gargoyle commissions.

Stone masonry for arts is an unusual but appreciated skill, do you have any advice for someone thinking about getting into it?

My 'Taster day' stone carving once monthly courses that I run on the Birtley estate in my Woodland Workshop will give an absolute beginner a grasp of how to use the tools and create a low relief carving in just one day. On my website - 'www.simonkeeley.co.uk' the courses are listed on the '[Teaching and Workshops page](#)'

What's your most enjoyable part of creating your work?

All stages - research, drawings, clay model, roughing out stone, refining the main form, finding and refining smaller forms, finishing using rifflers and various grades of wet and dry papers. Completion and approval.

Is there anything large, special or significant you would really like to make but haven't yet?

A very large dragon would be fun, a full sized horse and life sized lion.

Simon Keeley MA
Stone Carver
www.simonkeeley.co.uk



Inspired by Nature

So many of our residents over the years have found the natural beauty of Birtley, its estate and surrounding countryside to have a calming and relaxing effect. This has been proven elsewhere to have a really positive impact on health and well-being. That this is so is evidenced by the number of trees planted in memory of former residents by families who genuinely felt that Birtley had become their parent's home.

In 2010 we took in one of our youngest ever residents. Angela Peterson Barnes was only in her 50s but severely incapacitated and we arranged for Room 19 to have special adaptations to meet her needs. Her husband Martin was very attentive, and we soon realised that the natural world was hugely important for her as he arranged a bird box with a fitted camera to show live pictures on the screen of her computer.

After she passed away in 2017 Martin told us she had wanted to leave us something to enhance the natural world she so loved and we agreed that some bat boxes would be good as the wildlife survey that was done in 2009 had identified some 7 different species and a recent viewing has added an 8th to the list. A couple of weeks prior to writing this, 5 substantial bat boxes were delivered and I am currently erecting these at weekends (they need to be located at least 12-15 feet up in trees in suitable locations - so if you see me perched precariously up a long ladder with a heavy concrete box in my arms you will know what I am up to!). To date I have put up 2 in trees up the drive and another up at the western end of the garden. The last 2 are planned to go in trees along the edge of the wood near the lake which is a key hunting ground for the bats. I will try and monitor results and report back in due course.

Simon Whalley
Director



An International Afternoon at Birtley



In early August Birtley House were honoured to be chosen as host to the Mayor of Waverley and her German ‘twin town’ Mayor, Dr Alexander Saftig from Mayen-Koblenz, Germany. Twin towns since 1977, the Waverley Mayor Cllr Denise Le Gal aimed to show Alexander some of the best working communities that Surrey had to offer, as well as introduce him to best practice in the care sector. It turned out that Denise had previous involvement in care homes and what we offer here at Birtley is close to her heart.

Welcomed by Chairman Simon Whalley in the drawing room amongst residents and staff, an introduction to the history of Birtley House took place and an overview of what we hoped to be able to show throughout the afternoon.

From there the tour began, the party headed out to the rose garden which is always a welcoming environment. Then walked on through to the kitchen garden where we were able to show our many fruit & vegetable beds, whilst explaining the weekly work that the Halow Group do with us. The guests were then introduced to the Halow group and their ‘Cook & Grow’ team

who had chocolate brownies at the ready for us to sample. The brownies were so good that the Waverley Mayor even went home with the recipe. Whilst some were enjoying the homemade cakes, regular Birtley volunteer Tessa Johnson managed to exchange in German conversation with the German Mayor, who was delighted to discover her ability.

After a group photograph to mark the special occasion we moved on through the fruit trees to head down to our Bee keeper, Hans Weijman. You may guess by his name that Hans has German connections, and he also conversed in German, meaning Alexander enjoyed a real insight into the production of honey, the activity of the bees and how to manage their hives.

From there it was back up the picturesque ‘Long Walk’ to the house where out on the front terrace, our partners from the Surrey Hills Enterprises had set up stalls to showcase their work. Each stall made exchanges with both Mayors who handled their work and learned a little about the classes they teach and their involvement with our Birtley society.



Representatives were Ruth Wheeler who showcased impressive woodcrafts, Rosanna Gethin who provided a varied range of her unique leather goods and information on her classes, as well as Damon Kimpton from ‘Edge of the Florist’ and Clare Nelson and her stall from the Surrey Sculpture Society, a huge focus for us earlier this year when we hosted their sculpture exhibition in our garden – residents of course gained free access to the event. Mark Lebus, Ambassador for the Surrey Hills Enterprises was also present to give an overview of the background of SHE and their important work that takes place to encourage our thriving community.

We then went down to the woods to meet our local woodland artisans Mervyn Mewis & Chris Linford. There, the Mayoral parties (as well as myself) were able to enjoy a lesson in handmade chairs from Mervyn, who demonstrated on his machinery how laborious and time consuming the tasks of handmade organic product can be, injecting a real appreciation on our behalf. It was so interesting to hear and witness how to work

on carving a piece of wood in a way (chairs in this instance) that ensures you show its beautiful grain in the most natural front possible. Chris then demonstrated his bowl-turning pole lathe skill, again demonstrating the efforts and detail in the work. Both craftsman teach their skills at Green Wood Works, Mervyn specialising in the regeneration of woodland hence his involvement in our very own ‘Birtley Woods’. Mervyn is also skilled in making and then playing a range of medieval in style, wooden musical instruments, made by using Birtley woodland supplies. Having witnessed the skill that went into the production of handmade chairs on that day, we are now very much looking forward to Mervyn’s next visit to the house to hear him play the home made instruments.

To finish, the Mayors and their parties found themselves faced with a vast selection of tea and sandwiches, where generously Alexander exchanged gifts with Simon. Before departing they were able to choose from some of Birtley’s home made jams to take home, currently Gooseberry Jam, Red Currant Jelly and of course Honey.



The wonders of *Birtley*

At the point of putting this Newsletter together I was only 1 month into my journey with Birtley House, and although I had a very good idea of all the different dimensions of the business, I hadn't begun to imagine how many lovely discoveries I would make. It's no secret that Birtley has a strong commitment to care in everything it does. Coming from a luxury retail background I know that every minor detail matters and it is often the finer details that will create the overall impression of the business. It has been a joy to discover that the community we have here is bubbling with activity, from productions in the woodland to the wider community, local charities, involvement from schools and back to the day-time activities for residents. There is plenty of creativity here which has ensured that so far this journey has been interesting to say the least.

Felicity, Sylwia and myself, all relatively new, all took the time to appreciate the gardens and also spent a little time discovering histories in the house. One of my favourite discoveries was 'Liberty' the Birtley Cow, an anagram of Birtley, made originally for the Surrey Hills Cow Parade two years previous to our arrival here. This particular cow is painted in strong bright colours and patterns, many of you will have seen it sat beside its friend in the parkland. What I love about it is the fact that at night time, with the aid of a u/v light, you can see it glow with a completely different design from luminescent paint that you cannot see in the daytime. There is also a mirror on the base to show the pond creatures and fish painted on its belly as if it were crossing a stream.

I was delighted to discover the fruit and vegetable patches in our gardens and that we are reducing

our carbon footprint by generating our own energy, with our integrated wood boiler system – something which Birtley pioneered back in 2008. I have also enjoyed learning from Simon Whalley about some of the aged trees here, and how certain trees need to be able to grow to encourage other species and our wildlife to flourish. The Birtley bird list now totals to 99 different species of bird including the very rare such as bittern and osprey and the seldom seen such as water rail. This list is exclusive to birds that choose to visit our home, and not counting birds we have introduced from time to time such as Peacocks, rare Pheasants and Black Swans. Just when I thought there couldn't be much more, I discovered the apple orchard. Not only have Birtley made their own cider from their lovely cider apples, but they are now working on another project, their very own Birtley Apple Brandy (styled on the Calvados of Normandy). What a nice treat that will be for recipients down the line!

When it comes to the daily practices here, one of my favourite things to do is document the residents' enjoyment in whatever is on schedule for that afternoon. To re-iterate what Caroline said in her activities feature this time round, there is a lot of fun to be had and I have most certainly found that. Immersing myself in the house and with the residents whenever I can, has been a fantastic way of appreciating how incredible this place really is, and I am so excited to keep on discovering new things about the place, its history and especially all the wonderful people who live or work here.

Kerry Holloway
Group Marketing Manager



NEW *Collaborations*

Birtley House is delighted to be supporting the CWC. There is a real need in this community to help those in the care industry who may need a financial helping hand, in order to keep doing their essential work. We asked Alex Ramamurthy – founder/chairman of the CWC to tell us a little about the charity and what exactly it does, so that you can understand our appreciation of the CWC and why we support what they do.

The Care Workers Charity (CWC) was founded in October 2009 with the objectives of supporting people who are, or who have been, employed in the care sector by relieving poverty and sickness through hardship grants.

An analysis of CWC's grant applications has demonstrated the daily challenges faced by our nation's passionate care staff; from bereavement or bankruptcy, through to poverty, domestic violence or life changing illness.

Take Lauren for example, who had to reduce her hours as a care worker after fleeing domestic violence with her son and moving into an unfurnished property. With nothing in savings, Lauren explained that she "felt failed and let down after approaching local authorities for help" but being signposted to CWC by Turn2Us gave her hope in her time of need. To ensure Lauren could live independently, CWC awarded a grant to pay for a cooker and carpets to provide a home that Lauren now describes as a "safe place and a castle that my son and I have so much pride in". Watch Lauren's full story.

Until now, these committed individuals have had little access to the support their hard work deserves when facing financial hardship, and this is where CWC proudly aims to make a difference.

Alex Ramamurthy, said "Care workers throughout the UK go above and beyond the call of duty to support those in need of care every day. However, it is often too easy to prioritise the care of others over themselves, and that's where we can step in and provide extra support. On behalf of CWC, I would like to thank Birtley House for joining our Supporters Club, alongside some of the biggest names in the care sector such as HC-One, Care UK and Barchester Healthcare."

You can find out more about the CWC via their website at www.careworkerscharity.org.uk



Staff News & other bits...

For those who have left the Birtley team recently to explore new horizons, we wish you all the very best and thank you for your time with us.

Welcome to the Birtley Team

We have lots of new staff to introduce, most especially our new Home Manager Sylwia Indycka. Welcome also to Kerry Holloway (Marketing Manager); Daniel Wickens (Care Assistant); Maya Pun (Housekeeping Assistant); Desta Gadore (Senior Care Assistant); Kimberley Hunt (Care Assistant); Aime Hopkins (Care Assistant); Samantha Knight (Care Assistant); Lucy Mintern (Care Assistant), Debbie Napper (Care Assistant); Yas Ghaemi (Care Assistant); Kudzai Ncube (Care Assistant). We're thrilled to have you on board so a very warm welcome to everyone!

Promotions/Changes to role

Receptionist Kasia Waduge, now has a dual role as she has taken on extra responsibilities as HR Assistant to Emma Abrew, HR Co-ordinator.

Birtley Babies

Congratulations to Lauren Edwards who has given birth to a baby boy named Leo.



As you know at Birtley we are huge supporters of the Cancer research foundation Macmillan. We will of course be hosting our coffee and cake 'afternoon' with Tombola on **Thursday 27th September at 2.30pm-4.30pm**. All are welcome and we look forward to seeing you there.

Please contact Kerry Holloway at **Kerry.h@birtleyhouse.co.uk** for further information or to make a donation.

The next edition will be Winter 2018.

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Birtley

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