



house & home

The Birtley House Group Newsletter, Autumn 2013

Autumn is a Second Spring when every Leaf is a Flower - Albert Camus

Whilst we do not have the ability at Birtley House to actually reverse the ageing process (yet!), we do find that many of our residents experience a “second Spring” through the benefits of warm, genuine care, an active social life with interesting activities and living in peaceful, beautiful surroundings.

We do our best to help our residents to feel young at heart again by maintaining their quality of life. One of the ways in which we do this is by involving the local community and inviting them into the Birtley House gardens and grounds. We find this is a wonderful way for our residents to re-connect to their past days, so we are always keen to host events at Birtley that encourage this. Our Sculpture Garden is the biggest and most well-known of our annual events with some 4,000 visitors over five weeks in May enjoying more than 100 sculptures throughout the gardens. The Surrey Hills Wood Fair held on the first weekend in October draws similar numbers, whilst the Rare Plant Fair in April is also very popular. This year we hosted the launch of an Arts and Older

People Event on 4th September which provided a wonderful way for our residents to enjoy live music, art and dance.

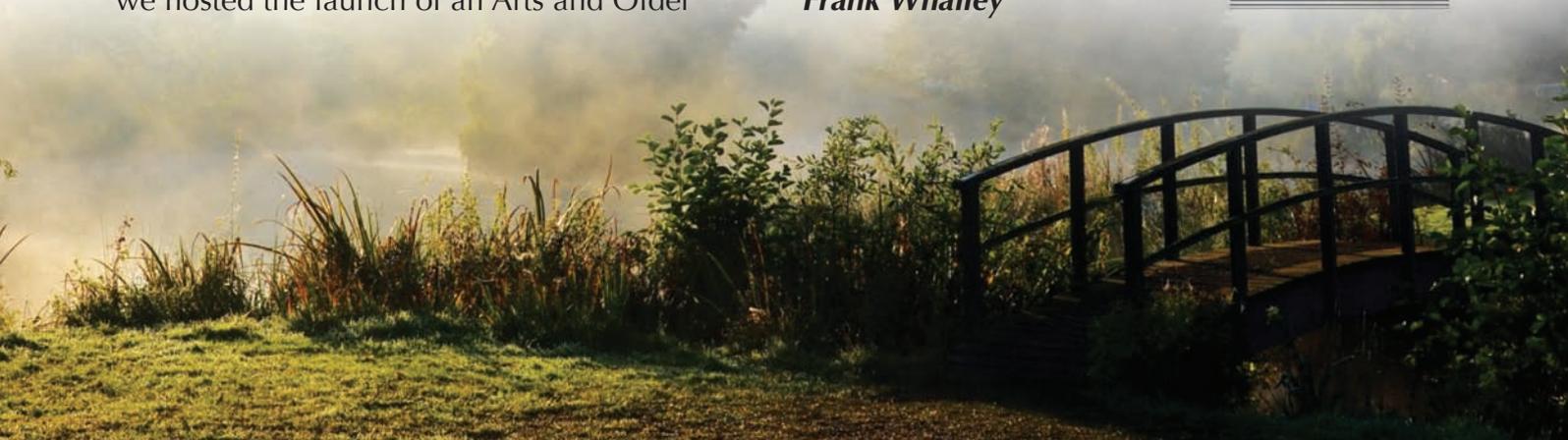
Of course, these events are in addition to the many visits from musicians and groups who give so much joy to our residents during afternoon Activities. We work hard to provide a sense of connection for the residents to the wider community – without which they could easily become isolated. This helps to sustain a ‘positive mental attitude’ which many residents find so rejuvenating.

Talking of being rejuvenated, we hope you like the new-look House & Home newsletter. Hopefully you will find it kinder on the eye and easier to read, but we welcome any feedback you may have!

Frank Whalley



Birtley House



Resident Activities



I am very happy to say that the “refreshed” Activity Room seems to have pleased everyone! With greatly improved lighting, new flooring in the Dining Room area, newly painted walls and a large new built-in cupboard, we are almost there! As I write, the porch for the French doors opening out to the inner courtyard are nearing completion and when that happens, we plan to have a special afternoon to celebrate this new feature, which I am sure will enable everyone to use this outdoor space far more. The Activities Team are enormously grateful to all those who have been involved in this project, enabling the afternoon activities to continue as far as

possible, without having to change venue, which has been much appreciated by us and of course, the Residents.

We are all conscious of the benefits of regular exercise and as well as two sessions a month of Gentle Exercises to Music, and a monthly T'ai Chi class run by Charles Townsend, we are planning to trial Armchair yoga. This will be led by Jean Rawlings who is no stranger to Birtley as she covers as our relief Aromatherapist when Val Hutton is away. Jean has recently qualified to teach this form of exercise which we hope will appeal to many of our Residents. Even if you've never done Yoga before, please at least come and try!

As Music seems to be everyone's favourite pastime, we recently started inviting Kevin Jacot to come here once a month, with the aim to form a Residents' and Staff Choir. Maybe the word “choir” was a little off-putting, as to begin with we noticed that a lot of the staff found a reason why they couldn't come to the 20 minutes required! Last month we emphasised that it was “just a sing-along” with much better results! It was wonderful to see about 14 members of staff thoroughly enjoying themselves under the competent leadership



of Kevin. Hopefully this is the start of greater musical things to come! Whilst on this theme, I must mention a most successful afternoon recently entitled "Let's Make Music". We gave everyone an instrument – drums, tambourines, bells, triangles, etc. and with carefully selected music to accompany us, we all played along with great gusto! I shall never forget the energy and enthusiasm shown by Helen Stacey as she beat the rhythm on the large African drum, perfectly in time and loving every minute!

Following on from a very successful and happy outing to The Refectory in Milford last Winter, we decided to plan a return visit this Summer. This time we were able to sit in the gardens and enjoy a delicious tea. We usually have no difficulty in filling the mini-bus but a few extra cars were needed this time.

Our Saturday Cinema continues to be well-attended and Ann Enticknap works hard to source appropriate and enjoyable films for everyone, although naturally this is a hard task as everyone has differing tastes in this field of entertainment. So Ann would welcome any suggestions for future films. We were all very impressed with Peter Losson's recent fascinating talk and slide show on countries he had visited to experience



eclipses of the sun. It is wonderful when someone with a particular interest wants to share it with others in this way.

All of us on the Activities Team, Carol, Tina, Ann and myself, would like to thank everyone for their continued support, encouragement and enthusiasm for the Activities Department where we always seem to have a great deal of fun!

Caroline Whalley



Day Club

Anyone interested in coming to Birtley House for a few hours to enjoy companionship, the gardens, lunch and the afternoon activity followed by tea, should contact us to make an appointment for an initial assessment by either our Matron, Karen Williams or her Deputy, Kim Edwards. At present we can be flexible with choice of days although in the future this may change. There is always a wide range of activities to cover a variety of interests.

Chair-Yoga

We are delighted that Jean Rawlings, our former Aromatherapy therapist, will be starting chair-yoga sessions for our residents. This is likely to become a popular and regular activity for our residents – whatever their ability.

'After working as a massage therapist for many years, I am delighted to have the opportunity to

bring this wonderful new therapy to new clients. Chair-based yoga challenges the usual perception of yoga. Postures are adapted so that those with restricted mobility can enjoy all the benefits of mainstream yoga and the exercise is both fun and beneficial to mind and body. There is an emphasis on good breathing practice and self-awareness and everyone is encouraged to work within their own ability, listening to their body'.

Jean Rawlings

From Matron's desk...

Dear Residents

I can't believe that the summer has gone so quickly. And what a lovely summer it has been. It has been great to enjoy the outside space together during this time. The staff have certainly enjoyed joining you outside for tea and conversation and the fact that we have been able to take people out in the grounds to gain from all the positive health benefits of being outside in the sunshine has had a positive effect.

By now you will all have met our new GP Dr Rintilla who has settled into the role here at Birtley well. He is enjoying getting to know you all and has shown his interest in health promotion and prevention.

We have now collected all the information and evidence that we need to submit our Gold Standard Framework portfolio. This has now been sent to their central office for marking. Once they have done this in September they will arrange a visit. We can expect a visit in October and at this point the examiners may ask for residents feedback. I am really hoping for an excellent outcome and will be calling on some of you to speak with the examiners.



The staff are also enjoying joining you for the singing sessions with Kevin Jacot and hope maybe we could do some carols over the Christmas time together.

I wanted to share with you some personal news. Both my sons will be getting married in the near future, my youngest son Michael will be getting married on the 19th of October this year at Headley Church, so it is all systems go at the moment with last minute preparations. My eldest son Nicholas is getting married on the 9th of May 2014 at St Lawrence's Church in Petersfield. They are both very nervous preparing their speeches, so any helpful wedding suggestions gratefully received.

Karen Williams

Qweenie

My name is Qweenie and I have been visiting Birtley House once a month as a PAT (Pets As Therapy) cat since April. I am making lots of friends there by sitting on people's laps and letting them stroke me while my owner Sue Collingwood talks to them. Many people there used to live with cats and miss them (I can understand that!) and like the opportunity to remember them and talk about them while they stroke me. I love people (especially men!) and if anyone visits my owner at home I always make a beeline for them and cuddle up to them as I know that really they have come to see me! I am thoroughly enjoying my 'job' but I have to admit that it makes me very tired and as soon as I get home I curl up in one of my beds (yes I have various depending on my



mood) and sleep for the rest of the day. If you haven't been lucky enough to meet me yet, please tell a member of staff and they will let me know to look out for you.

The visits are usually on the first Monday of the month from 4pm.

Pride in Place

Although pride can be a destructive emotion, especially when used to denigrate others less fortunate, it is difficult to decry its potential in building confidence and helping create a sense of worth. We have always encouraged all those who work at Birtley to feel proud of what they have achieved. We also hope that all our residents feel part of an extended family and are proud of what has become their own home. Certainly from the lovely comments made at the recent Residents' Meeting it would seem they do and we are enormously grateful for their approbation and encouragement.

There is a greater challenge still to come however – we need to encourage the wider community to re-evaluate their attitude to older citizens; to help them recognise that getting old is not a relic of the past – it is their future. Communities need to work together to find new inspiration to better resource care services for the elderly. We need to develop the connection between places like Birtley House and the community around us and foster a sense of pride that good care is flourishing and provide exemplars for others to emulate.

We are looking at a number of initiatives at present to address these issues from different perspectives. One follows on from our

presentation to the Arts Council in London and we have helped establish a consortium of care and arts organisations in Surrey to bid for a three-year project to bring a wonderful range of arts experiences to older people. This project with the title 'Pass It On...' has been promoted with an event here at Birtley on 4th September and an annual celebration is planned with a major event in our grounds each year. Events like our Sculpture Garden will be strongly featured but many other care homes are joining in with carers' choirs (leading to a concert at the Albert Hall) and many other activities. Live streaming of major concerts and other performances to care homes, plus visits by the musicians; artist in residence opportunities and training in art participation for activities staff are all among a host of ideas emanating from both the care sector and many of the leading arts bodies in Surrey. We think this has a huge and exciting potential to re-vitalise attitudes to care.

I am not ashamed to say I am proud to be involved in this – but I am much more proud of all those who work so hard to make Birtley a place that others recognise as providing a lead in this field.

Simon Whalley

Birtley Estate

I am delighted that the garden has been enjoyed more this year than for a long time, and not just because the weather has been kinder. I put this down to a combination of beautiful borders, the improved paths, some intrepid residents and an increasing use of the outside spaces for staff training and meetings, and I am very grateful for all the hard work that goes into maintaining and improving the grounds as you will read about in Matt Miller's garden review later in the newsletter.

In another article, Theo Tramblinas, our Ranger, updates us on a successful first experience with livestock this year and tells us about a growing momentum behind his efforts to engage the local community, schools and businesses in all we are doing on the wider estate.



Personally, I'd just like to hint at some of the many exciting developments afoot in BBE as we continue to search for ways to bring additional income to the business by expanding the productive side of the estate. Look out for our homemade charcoal, our preserves, honey and of course the cider for which a bumper crop of apples bodes well for our first pressing this autumn.

Tim Whalley

Garden Views



Despite a very slow start to the year, the cold, drab early weeks of summer suddenly gave way to flaming July. Although it was good to finally see some proper summer weather after several years of let downs, the extreme temperatures brought problems out in the garden. Watering has been a constant concern and our light sandy soil, even with a generous mulch of farmyard manure, soon became dry and dusty.

It has been a very good year for fruit and we have benefitted greatly from the advice and teaching we've been receiving from Chris Levett, who is a fruit expert at the Farm Advisory Service Team. Despite being several weeks late, we got our first real pick of strawberries that were moved two years ago into new raised beds, a few being mislaid during the picking process! The new raspberry canes have started to ripen and the gooseberries and red and black currants have produced bumper crops. Both the orchard apples and espaliers are also dripping with fruit, which has been thinned leaving less fruit but of better size and quality. A new addition to the fruit garden has been a raised bed at the end of the fruit cages which is now home to several blueberry bushes.

It has been slow going so far in the vegetable garden with many vegetables coming into production several weeks later than usual due to

the poor early season weather. The runner beans, courgettes, cabbages and peas, along with all the soft fruit, have been put to good use by the kitchen staff who have made delicious seasonal dishes for us all to enjoy.

On the landscaping front, David has now finished the retaining wall at the end of the rose garden. I'm sure many of you will have noticed that the existing wall had very little in the way of solid foundation and was gradually crumbling away. It has been a fantastic year for the Wisteria, with more flowers on it than I have ever seen. Due to the cold spring the flowers were late in blooming which meant they came out after the danger of frost had passed. The new herbaceous border is filling in nicely and the three empty beds, that have had the season fallow in order to



Summer 2013

get the perennial weed problem under control, will be planted up in the new year.

It is encouraging that we have received many positive comments about the garden this year. However, we are always striving to improve things further, so if you have any comments or

suggestions for changes and improvements please speak to a member of the gardening team. We hope you have enjoyed the gardens during the summer and look forward to seeing many of you out there in the coming months.

Matt Miller, Deputy Head Gardener



Birtley Cider Orchard



All is looking good in the cider orchard (touch wood). A new rabbit proof fence has been erected around the perimeter and the huge mound of waste soil at the top end has been levelled and will soon be planted with wild flowers and shrubs to attract birds and bees - the latter helping to pollinate the trees, the former predated on the bugs and beasts that will inevitably turn up. We also have 12 geese (courtesy of Maddy's Mum) who are helping to

keep grass and weeds under control. The annual operation of tying down the branches horizontally has been completed. This surprisingly enjoyable task involves lashing all the major branches down so that, as they harden off, they should stay parallel to the ground. This we are told, will make them produce more fruit.

As the trees are now in their 3rd growing season, fruit production is beginning in earnest. This year has been all about getting the trees as healthy as possible and despite a few losses things are looking good, thanks in part to liberal handfuls of Growmore every month. We have bought our first bits of processing kit, though it'll be a few years before we are up to full production. This year's fruit will provide an opportunity to test it out and perhaps even produce a few pints of Birtley House Cider.

Matt Miller

Birtley Pigs

As some of you may of have heard we now have pigs in the woods which are used as a method of bracken control. The pigs root around in the soil and eat the Rhizomes (roots) of the bracken which means they will not spread or grow back next year.

The reason for getting rid of the bracken is that it out-competes much of the native flora for



sunlight. The pigs are helping to restore a balanced habitat in the wood and conserve the wild flowers that are present here at Birtley.

Wildlife Update



The wildlife in the garden and surrounding estate continues to be in abundance.

It seems to have been a great year for butterflies, and bees have also benefitting from the warm weather feeding off the nectar rich plants, and helping with pollination. The buzzards are always a welcome site, circling high above the gardens on the warm air currents. Kestrels, Sparrow Hawks and every so often the spectacular Red Kites are also regular visitors.

Theo Trambinas

RideLondon Surrey 100

Although I've been a keen cyclist for many years (in fact I don't remember a period of my life when bikes were not a major part of it!) I've always known that one of the big achievements that I needed to be able to mentally tick off is to complete a 'Century' – riding 100 miles in a day. On 4th August this year my opportunity came to do this on the inaugural RideLondon-Surrey 100 when I completed it with my colleagues from the Cranleigh Cycling Club, along with 16,500 other cyclists.

It was an early start from the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park where we had to be by 6.30am which meant a logistical nightmare to ensure we got there in time, beginning with my alarm going off at 2am! But once we set off, the joy of riding the entire way on closed roads was wonderful, and we made good progress down to Surrey where I was met at Forest Green by Sinead and my sons, Feargus and Joseph, for a very welcome mental boost and a re-stock of jam sandwiches.

Once the long, painful grind up Leith Hill was completed, only Box Hill remained before the 40 or so miles back into London, at which point



the increasingly large crowds cheering us on was quite an emotional experience, and one I'll never forget. Finishing on the Mall in front of Buckingham Palace was something very special, and I am very proud to have competed in the first of what the organisers want to make into the cycling equivalent of the London Marathon. I'll definitely be doing it again next year, hopefully to make big in-roads into improving on my time of 6 1/2 hours.

Frank Whalley



Birtley Blog

Our website www.birtleyhouse.co.uk has been enhanced to include a blog. 'What on earth is a blog?', you might think!

The word stands for 'web log' and they're effectively an online journal. So, put simply, a blog is a website or, in our case, pages on a website which stores and displays information in chronological order with the most recent 'post' (entry) at the top of the page. Our blog will complement our quarterly newsletter and the

news items which are already loaded onto our website. The blog will be updated on a regular basis and will cover all aspects of life at Birtley. This could range from updates from the gardening team, how the pigs are getting on with clearing the undergrowth in the woodland or plans for improvements in the home e.g. the recent building work in the Activities Room, to information on forthcoming events or any new initiatives we get involved in. We could extend this to information and news submitted by our residents.

It will take a while for the blog to develop its own style. If you have any ideas for posts on our blog please send them to janet@birtleyhouse.co.uk. Remember too that you can add comments on existing blog post - please do so, even if it is just to say you enjoyed reading it! Your comments and input are important to help us provide you with the type of information you'd find interesting.

Janet Hall



Events Update

The Sculpture Garden

Many may feel that holding a major sculpture exhibition in the grounds of a Nursing Home is rather unusual and yet, now in its 5th year, the Birtley House Sculpture Garden goes from strength to strength with some 150 exhibits this year in a wide range of media, by 54 sculptors from across the UK.

Our initial aim was to attract in the local community to an event which would be enjoyable for all ages and especially to our residents. Our residents and staff love the extra 'buzz' created firstly by the arrival of the sculpture followed by the continual flow of visitors over the five weeks of the exhibition. Many of our residents enjoy a daily walk or trip in a wheelchair around the grounds and this enjoyment is enhanced by the added interest of the exhibits. If the weather is too cold or wet for a walk then there are the indoor pieces to enjoy – the exhibition offers something for everyone.

Entrance to the exhibition is free but we encourage donations to the Community

Foundation for Surrey (CFS), which we support via the Birtley House Community Fund, and this year we raised a total of £2,883.88 which includes an amazing £469 raised by Mews resident Mrs Coe from the sale of her homemade cards since the beginning of the year and during the exhibition.

On one evening there was a private viewing of the exhibition with a drinks and canapés reception for the guests of Charles Stanley stockbrokers, including many supporters of the CFS one of whom was actor Bernard Cribbins and his wife, Gill (pictured above with Mrs Coe).

Care Homes Open Day

Our next community event was the ECCA initiative of the Care Homes Open Day on 21st June when we took the opportunity to twin that event with holding a Strawberry Tea in aid of Breast Cancer Care (BCC). Our residents always enjoy a Strawberry Tea during June so this year we invited in the local community to join them and were delighted to raise £200 for BCC.

Celebratory Event for Older Adults

On 4th September we hosted this event which was being organised by Surrey Arts. Some of you may remember attending the Seated Dance event last year – this event built upon the format of that.

It was a day of workshops, performances and demonstrations in dance, music and craft specifically designed for older adults across Surrey. It also marked the launch of three new Surrey Arts projects. Quite a few of our residents have attended and joined over 90 elderly people from homes and day centres across the county.



Surrey Hills Wood Fair

The annual Wood Fair will be held on 5th and 6th October. With 100 exhibits this provides a wonderful day out for all ages: Wood boilers and stoves, chainsaw sculpture, pond-dipping, coppice crafts, apple pressing, local food and drink, horse and carriage rides – you can even get your dog micro-chipped for free.

Janet Hall

People News

Welcome

Maddy Hounsham joined Birtley House in April taking up the role of Group Management Accountant. We are delighted to welcome her to the Finance team. Theo Trambinas took up the interesting and unique role as Ranger for Birtley Brook Estates in April. This is a new role that involves looking after livestock, managing the fishery, assisting in the management of the woodland and the cider orchard and supporting the garden team at busy times of the year. We also welcomed two new Staff Nurses, Sally Bourke on a part-time basis and Lorraine Bain on a 'bank' basis. Fennie Knight, Jane Kovari, Louisa Peacock and Anita Mubaiwa joined us as Care Assistants and all are settling in very well as part of the care team.

Goodbyes

Best of luck for the future to the following staff who have now left Birtley: Paula Richardson (Housekeeping), Charlotte Wilmshurst (Chef). Aga Szczegodzinska (Senior Care Assistant), Katarzyna Szewczyk (Care Assistant) and Karolina Danielewska (Care Assistant) resigned from Birtley House in July and and Richard Gilbert (Senior Care Assistant) resigned in August - best of luck to them all.

Promotions & Role Changes

Carole Fulker was promoted to Lead Carer in April and Dawn Critchell was appointed as Care Supervisor. Dawn's post is a new role which is working extremely well and providing valuable support to the nursing and care team. Both Kasia D L Waduge & Hanna Kalinska have been promoted as Senior Care Assistants. Rudo Rumveye, who has been working at Birtley House since she was a student until she became a fully qualified UK Nurse, was promoted from a 'bank' Staff Nurse to a part-time Senior Staff Nurse in April. These recently promoted staff members have taken on their additional responsibilities very well and are proving deserving of their promotions.

There is a recent re-structure in the Admin Department with Natalie Blake, who was Head of Finance, assuming the role of Administration & Finance Manager. Gill Benhassoune has been promoted to Group Assistant Accountant and Administration Supervisor. Carolina Castro will continue her role as Lead Administrator giving admin support to the Directors, Senior Managers and HODs and will continue to provide invaluable support to Janet Hall in terms of Marketing, IT and Events. Julie Jenkinson who initially came to Birtley as part-time receptionist is settling-in well in her new role with her recent appointment as PA to Matron.



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Birtley House