



house & home

The Birtley House Group Newsletter, Autumn 2014

Independence in Care

Keeping one's independence is a natural human desire. At Birtley House, we understand that most people want to remain in their own homes for as long as possible before moving to sheltered accommodation or a nursing home. At Birtley House we can also relate to that, from a business point of view, as we have been an independent company for over 80 years, and this has in many ways shaped our character and ethos – not being beholden to a parent company means that we can make decisions based on what's best for our residents, not what might look best to a distant Board in terms of profit or returns.



When someone moves to Birtley, whether to the Mews flats or into the main house, it is because there is a reason why remaining in their own home is no longer the best option. However, moving to Birtley House does not mean that they lose their independence. In fact, over the years we have had many residents tell us that they have actually gained more independence by coming here because they now have more opportunities to make new friends and also to engage with

the community again (such as during our Sculpture Garden throughout May, or the Wood Fair in the Autumn). Of course the flexibility and personal freedom provided for all here, whatever their care needs, means that everyone is given the best possible chance to enjoy the facilities, activities and gardens.

Our founder, my great-grandfather Dr Lloyd Driver, was a pioneer in the use of X-rays as an Army Surgeon during WW1 (sadly without anyone then understanding the dangers of exposure to it) and, when he started providing accommodation in his own family home for those with mental health problems in the 1920's, his aim to give his patients a real quality of life together with the best possible care was equally pioneering. I hope he would have approved of our attempt to continue these fundamental objectives.

As you can tell, we are passionate extollers of independence, not only for our residents but for ourselves as a private company. A move to Birtley House can be a positive step towards regaining independence for those whose opportunities for participation in their own community have been reduced. Birtley is a living, thriving community and has been providing a real family home for four generations based on an ethos of personal choice which is the foundation for a continuing sense of well-being and freedom from anxiety and stress.

Frank Whalley, Director



From Matron's desk...

As always, the time seems to fly by here at Birtley - days are filled with providing quality care to our residents, training, interviewing etc, so there is never a dull moment.

The summer has been really kind to us this year and everyone has been able to enjoy a bit of outside-living, with sunshine during most of the events in the grounds over the summer.

We have had a run on Birtley babies in the nursing and care team, with the birth of three due imminently at the time of writing. Senior Staff Nurse Vimla said an emotional farewell to start her maternity leave and she intends to spend a year at home with her baby. Care Assistant Mildred started her maternity leave early in August and she will spend nine months at home. Staff Nurse Orsi will be the last to go on maternity leave and she is hopeful that she can continue working until the baby arrives! We will see as babies don't always come when expected!

We welcome some new staff to the team and hope that they will be happy here at Birtley while we also lose some of our oldest, in terms of years of service, as they go off on new adventures. Michelle Hutchinson has been promoted to Senior Staff Nurse and she will be supporting Rudo in this role. Well done Michelle!

I would like to mention Ola, one of our lead care staff, who is undertaking the Elizabeth Nurse

award at Surrey University; we are really pleased to be involved in this project. Ola is a fantastic ambassador for Birtley at the university.

On a personal level my wonderful Nan, who is a resident at Birtley, celebrated her 103rd birthday and she is still going strong. My oldest son got married this year in May and we had a glorious day at Languish House just outside Petersfield. He was incredibly nervous but everything went smoothly. My Nan was able to attend thanks to Ken (Maintenance Manager) who drove her to the church and reception and Senior Staff Nurse Rudo who attended to her care needs throughout the day. My family were really grateful for the help and support, as she has now managed to attend all her Great Grand Children's weddings.

The staff party, provided by Simon and Caroline, was a great success, so a big 'Thank You' to them for this annual jamboree. Frank and family were unable to attend due to a summer holiday but he would have loved to have been there and wanted the staff to have a great time. Tim was brilliant, – doing most of the organisation and thought up all of the entertainment.

I look forward to continuing on our journey through the year together.

Karen Williams
Matron/Manager



Birtley enters art competition



Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) is a national charity that helps older people make informed decisions about meeting their housing and care needs. This year, they ran an art competition for the over-60s in nursing and care homes and Birtley entered two of the three categories: The Collaborative Group Work prize in which we entered a photo of the Activities board seascape collage of some sculpture exhibits titled 'Moving on' and The Art and Wellbeing Prize. For the second category, in addition to entering a piece of art work (completed within the last 18 months) the applicant had to state why 'Art is my Therapy' in a maximum of 150 words. Mrs Coe entered an abstract watercolour 'Poppy Field 1914-2014' along with the text:

If my family had been able to afford it I would have loved to go to Art College. With the outbreak of WW2 my interest in art was put on hold – although I did marry an artist! Aged 40 I joined the WI and became involved in arts and crafts, initially making embroidered cards.

After my husband's death, sixteen years ago, I started sketching and painting to give a focus to my day and I started selling my hand-painted cards for charity. My cards usually have a wildlife theme and I sell them in aid of The Brooke Animal Charity, the Community Foundation for Surrey and a Day Centre. In doing so, I am able to help others while filling my day with nature and art, which I have always loved.

My painting "Abstract: Poppy Field 1914-2014" is in memory of those whose lives have been shattered by war.

The competition results were announced on 30th July and sadly neither of the Birtley entries won an award. However, there were 1,600 entries so competition was rather tough. I'm delighted that we took part, and hope that we will once again in 2015.

Janet Hall
Marketing Manager

Life in Activities



The benefits of fresh air, sunshine and beautiful surroundings need no quantifying because we all know them. When the previous Newsletter went to print, we were all looking forward to Spring. Now suddenly, we find ourselves in the middle of Summer, during which we have been blessed with some very warm days and we have tried to make sure that everyone has been able to take the opportunity of enjoying some “outdoor living” whenever possible, so that over the last couple of months the Activity Room Courtyard really has been well used.

Since installing the French doors this courtyard has gradually developed a personality of its own! Since the sculptures from the annual exhibition were removed, the Residents have been contributing to creating rather a special little area. Having bought two attractive plant pots, we involved our Residents, with the help of Emma Browne (Head Gardener) and had a most productive and enjoyable afternoon which included planting up the pots with pelargoniums (Lord Bute) and Spanish lavender. June Sabel and Peter Losson were responsible for these and both pots are flourishing and much admired. June, who has always been a keen gardener, was also on her knees planting thyme and lavender in the gravel. Other planting that took place included a variegated sage and some rosemary – we definitely wanted a scented garden!

We re-sited a little bird bath in the hope that the house martins nesting in the eaves above and the blue tits in the nest box nearby, might use it. There seems to be an atmosphere of tranquillity in this courtyard which has inspired some of our talented artists, namely, Pat Scrase and Jill Perkins, to draw or paint outdoors, and during a recent flower arranging afternoon, when all the flowers were picked from the garden, some residents sat in the courtyard to do their arrangements.

Being such a productive time of year in the kitchen garden, the chefs were delighted when an activity was devoted to the podding of broad beans. This was by request from the residents, I hasten to add, the task was done in record time so that more broad beans had to be hastily picked! Everyone agreed that they really enjoyed helping with this job and that it reminded them of preparing vegetables in their own kitchens. Likewise for our Summer Cookery afternoon, we brought in a variety of soft fruits from the garden, which, combined with some bought pineapple, melon, kiwi fruit and apples, made a most appetising fresh fruit salad, which was then given to those Residents who requested it for supper.



Strawberry Tea in the Rose Garden is an annual tradition here at Birtley and this year was exceptionally special for a couple of reasons. Firstly, we chose the date to celebrate National Care Homes Open Day on 20th June and by chance it coincided with what would have been Simon's mother, June Whalley's 90th birthday. To commemorate her special



day, the family planted an almond tree in the lawn below the Rose Garden – an almond tree because June carried almond blossom on her wedding day in April 1944. We couldn't have wished for a more perfect day weather-wise which meant that most of our Residents wanted to be at this Strawberry Tea party. Our thanks to chefs, Angelina and Magda, for preparing such a delicious cream tea with cake and sandwiches as well. We were also delighted to be able to serve home-grown strawberries which were much appreciated. We should also thank the late-calling cuckoo who helped celebrate the occasion with its own special evocation of summer.

By the time this is printed we shall have already been on our Summer outing to Gill Benhassoune's garden in Guildford. She and Mel have kindly invited us to tea there and places on the mini bus were booked up weeks ago!

As well as the variety of activities arranged and implemented by myself, Carol Downer and Tina Bell, Ann Enticknap organises the very popular monthly Book Club, with a wide range of topics, and the feature film once a month. Other regular favourites are Kevin Jacot's piano recitals (and we are still aiming to achieve that Birtley staff choir!), T'ai Chi with Charles Townsend and Armchair Yoga with Jean Rawlings. Unfortunately, Jean was unable to take her class for a couple of sessions due to breaking her ankle but we were very pleased to see her back in July. Theo our PATDOG remains a firm favourite as does Qweenie our PATCAT, and our thanks to their respective



owners, Claire and Sue for sharing their companions with us all.

I feel I must mention a rather special and unusual occurrence here at Birtley. During the Summer months we have welcomed some new-comers as residents and as a result we now have 5 married couples living here in the Nursing Home. Although having married couples may not be so unusual, the fact that we have as many at one time is a possible record!

Hopefully, we still have several weeks of good weather to enjoy in the gorgeous gardens, terrace and courtyard and the Activities Team will be encouraging you all to do so! We greatly appreciate everyone's participation in the activities, thank you to those of you who have given us some new ideas to try out and for those of you who haven't yet joined us for an afternoon of fun, please do come – you won't regret it!

Caroline Whalley
Director

Garden Views

As usual it's been another busy year so far out in the gardens. The legacy of the incredibly wet winter meant several areas toward the end of the garden not fully drying out until well into the summer, sadly killing many of the plants in the long borders, their roots not being able to tolerate sitting in water for so long. The presence of so much ground water has proved beneficial in many ways though, with incredible amounts of continued growth in the lawns, hedges and many of the shrubs.

In the kitchen garden, the focus has been mainly on mass producing plants and we have had large crops of broad beans, purple sprouting broccoli, kale and asparagus. The winter cabbage, French and runner beans, peas, squash and pumpkins are all growing on nicely and we will be harvesting them in the coming months. New additions include a whole bed devoted to artichokes, two re-shaped beds that will be home to cut flowers for the house and an increase in the stock of asparagus. In the polytunnel the tomatoes have been producing a bumper crop and trials of cucumbers and sweet

peppers are proving successful and we hope to introduce more of these next year. As always Geoff, through hours of hard labour, continues to produce his spectacular sweet pea plants.

The fruit garden continues to produce good crops, despite the presence of rabbits that seem to be finding their way in somewhere and birds getting caught in the netting. The strawberries, in particular, timed their cropping almost to perfection to coincide with the summer tea held in the rose garden. Sadly though, the apples in the mini orchard, after the bumper crop last season, have had a rest this year and whilst some trees have produced fruit, others are completely bare. This isn't unusual as apples can be biennial, so fingers crossed the break will have done them good and next year's harvest will be back to normal.

Early spring saw planting up of the empty beds in the long walk, the weed problem was finally overcome and continued planting through the spring and summer mean these are now full again. The two beds that are now into the third



Autumn 2014



season are looking spectacular and filling in nicely, the plants benefiting from moist, warm soil and this glorious summer we have been having.

Despite the pigs best efforts, the wild flower bed continues to be overrun by Mare’s Tail and we have therefore started to spray it again to try and eradicate this weed once and for all. Unfortunately, it will be several more seasons before we can think about replanting it so, watch this space and bear with us, one day we’ll get it sorted!

This year’s major project will be the development of the daffodil fields at the end of the garden. A new bed has been created in the rough grass, this will be planted up with a mixture of shrubs, bulbs and perennials and have a small stone retaining edge. Closely mown grass paths will then be cut around it and the existing paths levelled off, allowing easy access to this area. Work has begun and will be ongoing through the summer and autumn so we apologise for any inconvenience caused.

It’s been a long hard summer so far, and at times it seemed all we were doing was an endless cycle of mowing, edging and weeding. However

the hard work has paid off and, although I’ll never go as far as saying everything is under control, we certainly are on top of things. For the time being at least, thoughts of raking up huge piles of leaves are well at the back of our minds.

From all the gardening and estate team we hope you continue to enjoy the grounds and you are having a great summer. We look forward to seeing you in the coming months when the gardens will be putting on the autumn displays and despite the cooling of the temperatures, the hard work will be keeping us warm.

Matthew Miller
Deputy Head Gardener



Woodlands

autumn update



Geese

The 12 geese have been something of a mystery. We have had in the region of 100 eggs, some of which have found their way to the breakfast table. However, others, which appeared to be fertilised were simply left to go cold by the sitting goose. It was put down to inexperience, not only on their part, but I must admit, this is my first time looking after domestic geese and I thought that they might have a bit more integral goose knowledge! We now have eight rapidly growing goslings which will become part of our orchard grazing regime.

Pigs

Earlier on in the year we conducted an experiment in the garden. For a long time the Gardening team have been plagued by Mare's tail. Horsetail or Mare's tail (*Equisetum arvense*) is an invasive, deep-rooted perennial weed that will spread quickly to form a dense carpet of foliage, crowding out less vigorous plants in beds and borders.

Last year, both Emma and Matt had asked about 'Bringing in the Pigs' and we decided to try this approach, establishing a run on one problem area. Our two work experience lads, Sam and Ryan, helped to bring up the pigs from the woods, catching the four pigs was not as hard as you might think; as soon as the pig pellets come out you can get close enough to scratch them behind the ears, belly and even get both hands on them if you're quick enough.

The pigs enjoyed their new home and rapidly started chewing their way through the invasive weeds. The Mare's Tail spreads via its roots called rhizomes. They are very fine and whilst the pigs eat everything visible, it will take much more work to get rid of the Mare's tail for good.



Coppice

Following on from the last newsletter, I informed you of the re-coppicing that was taking place down in the woods of our very much overstood Hazel, Alder and Chestnut stools.

It's taken some serious protection, as every deer and rabbit has decided that there is nothing more delicious on an early June morning than a big mouthful of freshly grown hazel! Even the 6ft high deer fence isn't enough of a deterrent, as the Roe deer seem to be able to clear it. Not bad for an animal that is only 75cm at the shoulder.

We have 'grown on' some of our own sweet chestnuts which will be planted when they are big and strong enough. At the moment they have been brought up to the safety of the vegetable garden. So far, so good!

Bird Ringing

You might recall a visit from David Ross last year when he gave a talk in Activities on bird ringing. He has been coming over to Birtley during the spring to ring the young Blue and Great Tits nesting in the 60 or so boxes located throughout the woodland. Ringing birds is essential if we are to learn about how long they live and when and where they move, questions that are vital for bird conservation. Placing a lightweight, uniquely numbered, metal ring around a bird's leg, provides a reliable and harmless method of identifying birds as individuals. The baby birds can't be rung until they are large enough and the feathers have started to form – until they become what is known as 'in pin'. The parents don't seem to mind and have a friendly chirp whilst the process takes place.

Charcoal

The kiln has been lit several times this summer, as some of you may have smelled. On all occasions except one, we had a fantastic load with many bags of charcoal taken and put up for sale in reception. This charcoal is sustainable and made from our own wood taken from carefully selected trees within the woodland.

The kiln is very big and takes several people to help load it. Sam and Ryan were on hand again to get extremely mucky and a new volunteer, Iain Delaney, a detective looking for some healthy outdoor work, was kind enough to give us the benefit of another strong back for a day.

The finished product is still on sale for £6 a bag. Just ask at reception.



Rabbit Problem Solved

The Gardening team have been faced with more rabbits entering the vegetable plot. Many vegetables had gone missing but that

mystery has now been put to rest, as it appears the culprit was Tina from Activities all along. I understand many of the residents have been podding the broad beans (a request in Activities) hence the mad dash to get more on this early July afternoon. Case closed!



Bee-keeping

The Guildford Bee-Keepers now have eight active colonies in Birtley Gardens and the honey is coming on very nicely so far. Regular visits take place most Saturday afternoons when the rain is not spoiling the fun.



Maintenance is a must and Matt is seen here running the gauntlet with as much protective gear as possible when he had to strim around the hives. He survived and the suit did its job, so I think it's a good idea that he sticks to it from now on. I've only been stung twice this year and I'm quite happy to keep it that way.

Will keep you posted on more news from the woods in the winter edition of the newsletter.

Theo Trambinas
Woodland Ranger



The Sculpture Garden 2014

Our annual sculpture exhibition has become an important date in the creative arts calendar, attracting 150 exhibits from 50 professional and amateur artists from all over the UK and Ireland. The preview evening/official opening was cold but thankfully dry and attended by 250. Everyone enjoyed looking at the exhibition but equally as popular were the delicious canapés which had been prepared by Angelina, Rachel, Magda and Suree. The exhibition was opened by renowned sculptor, Ian Campbell-Briggs MRBS who gave a talk on the History of Garden Sculpture Exhibitions in Britain. This year Ian installed 'Juno' at G-Live in Guildford, which was commissioned by Guildford Borough Council to commemorate the 2012 Olympic torch relay through Surrey.

We welcomed film crews to the exhibition and it was very exciting to have Surrey TV, an on-line TV channel, film their entire programme from Birtley. In addition to interviewing Simon and filming the exhibition, they took the opportunity to interview actress Jenny Seagrove and a representative from the David Shepherd Foundation – using Birtley and the sculpture as a backdrop. ITN Care News, on behalf of the National Skills Academy, also filmed here

during the exhibition and the film crew couldn't believe that this was a nursing home with the Producer saying: "I would like to thank you and all the staff who made yesterday's filming such a success. If we were helped by a sunny day, it only reflected the sunny disposition and positive attitude of everyone we met".

As always, our intrepid Mrs Coe sold her handmade cards in aid of the Community Foundation for Surrey. The money she raised (£388.53), in addition to the donations from members of the public visiting the exhibition, raised £3,215 for the Birtley House Community Fund. One group we have always supported with our fund is the GAMBIT group of blind and partially sighted who, once again, had a happy morning here viewing the exhibition. Sunday 18th May was a magical afternoon – with glorious weather and two local children's choirs, Music Kids and Minor Chord, singing in the gardens, much to the enjoyment of the many residents who came to listen. Barbara Keene, who runs the Guildford GAMBIT group, kindly organised that afternoon as well as a Capella harmony group, In Accord, in which Barbara sings, that entertained us with many old favourites.

This year we were able to offer refreshments every day, courtesy of WB Events, who had to make a seemingly endless supply of delicious homemade cakes. As always the grounds looked wonderful throughout the exhibition and many visitors commented on the improvements they have noticed year-on-year, with one sculptor saying they were the best gardens she had ever visited! With the exhibition over for another year, the gardens are once again tranquil, with only the patches of dead grass left as a reminder of the hectic month of May.

Janet Hall, Marketing Manager



Dates for your diary

Arts for the Elderly: Tuesday 16th September

Highlighting the importance of Arts for older adults, this event, which is organised by Surrey Arts, will be held in Birtley Parkland. Once again we will be welcoming residents from Surrey Care homes and day-centres and this year the main activity will be making a labyrinth! Further details in the September Activities Programme.



World's Biggest Coffee Morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support: Friday 26th September

Please encourage your family and friends to support our efforts to raise funds for this vital charity which gives people facing cancer the support they need to feel more in control of their life, from the moment they are diagnosed, through treatment and afterwards.

- Birtley House Drawing Room
- 10am – 12noon

- Entrance: £3 (to include coffee and homemade cake/biscuits)
- Raffle with wonderful prizes

In 2011 (the last Macmillan Coffee morning held at Birtley) we raised £585 – please help us exceed that total.



The Surrey Hills Wood Fair: 4th and 5th October

Once again Birtley will host this fantastic weekend for all the family with a wide range of activities for all ages

- Birtley Parkland: 10am – 5pm
- Entrance: Adults £7.50 on the gate or £7 on-line in advance, under 12s free

Further information:
www.surreyhillswoodfair.co.uk

*Janet Hall
Marketing Manager*

Legal Eagle Comes for Afternoon Tea

Writing your will and minimising your inheritance tax liability is complicated, so we asked Sally Ashford, Legal Director of Charles Russell's Private Wealth team for her view on the most important things to think about.

Sally told us: "Lots of things can change between signing your will and your death and it is a good idea to read your will periodically to ensure it meets your wishes. Changes to a family tree can make a big difference. For example if there has been a birth or marriage in the family you might want to change the split of your estate across your children. Similarly a child's divorce might make it sensible to put in place mechanisms to protect that child's inheritance."

We asked Sally about what to consider when leaving your loved ones something in your will and she explained: "If your wealth fluctuates significantly, perhaps because of medical bills or unexpected costs and your will contains substantial cash legacies, then those inheriting a percentage will lose out while those to whom you have left legacies receive the same amount. So you do need to check that the level of provision you have made for your beneficiaries is appropriate."

Sally also advised "there are regularly changes in the law to watch out for too - the introduction of the transferable nil rate band for inheritance tax can now make previously common tax planning measures unnecessary and your will may need to be updated to be most effective. A change in your circumstances does not necessarily mean a whole new will is required however – sometimes a simple codicil is sufficient."

After a death, beneficiaries also have tax and succession planning tools at their disposal. Sally told us about deeds of variation - convenient for allowing beneficiaries to re-direct their entitlement to someone else if they want to perhaps pass funds down to younger generations without incurring inheritance tax consequences for their own estate. Charitable

giving under a will or deed of variation can enable people to benefit causes close to their hearts and reduce the tax burden on an estate too.

We have invited Sally to join us for afternoon tea here at Birtley House so you can ask her questions about difficult issues or have a private conversation, all free of charge on **Tuesday 30th September from 3-5pm**. If you would like to book a private appointment with her then contact (Rachel@birtleyhouse.co.uk or 01483 892055) who will book you a slot between 3 and 4pm. Otherwise drop in and see Sally from 4pm and ask her advice. If you can't make it but would like to contact Sally anyway, feel free to drop her a line on Sally. ashford@charlesrussell.co.uk.





Transforming the image of care

The widespread prejudice against residential care which sees it as a service of last resort rather than an opportunity for quality of life for older people is constantly reinforced by negative publicity. This continues despite evidence from regulators that standards in residential care have been steadily improving in recent years. Services are having to respond to increasingly complex needs leading to the purpose and benefits of residential care becoming much more difficult to identify (or cost) with any clarity.

As Des Kelly, Executive Director of the National Care Forum, wrote in the Guardian recently “The reputation of residential care will only improve when there is a modern vision focused on outcomes for people using these services and improvements to their quality of life.” This vision needs to encompass not only the ethos of care and its perception but also the reputation and prestige of those working in the sector.

The ethos of care will only change when the corporate sector recognizes that ‘care’ & ‘profit’ are not synonymous. Profit is ultimately not sustainable where care is subordinated to the need for quick returns and where community interaction is considered a distraction. The change of attitude amongst those in the health sector to the professional

development of quality care is also slow to grow. However, the incentive to integrate care and health services is leading to new initiatives that will help break down the barriers and encourage better communication.

Birtley has always focused on building both an ethos of community connection and training for all staff with promotional pathways that provide opportunities for building confidence and professional skills. This will provide a basis for development of additional expertise that the health sector can utilise to shorten or prevent hospital stays. As a step towards this we have been supporting the development of a training programme under the overall badge of ‘Elizabeth Care Education and Learning’. The University of Surrey, in partnership with 360 Forward, is currently running the first module and we have one of our Birtley team, Lead Carer Ola Szychulska, embarked on this. Ola is greatly enjoying the course which could, with additional modules included, lead on to a nursing degree. We are very proud of her commitment and determination to succeed with this. We are looking to build on this with additional training activities in the future which I hope to be able to outline in future newsletters.

Simon Whalley
Director

10 years an employee

The years rush by and in August I'll have worked for Birtley for 10 years! Also celebrating 10 years of service this year are Margaret Newlands, Tim Whalley and Carol Downer. Such longevity of service is not unusual at Birtley, and several staff (Ann, Robert, Geoff, Rachel E, Mary, Tony, Rachel H, Pam, Sue K as well as Simon and Caroline) have worked here a great deal longer than 10 years – the current record (excluding Simon) is 23 years!

Looking through the old copies of our Newsletter (I launched House & Home in September 2005) it's incredible to see how much the House, grounds and the business as a whole have evolved during that time.

In 2004 the Whalley family bought Albury Park Mansion which was being divided up into retirement flats. I was employed to market those flats in addition to Birtley Mews, to oversee the company IT and to run Events at both sites. Both Tim and I were employed by Historic House Retirement Homes Ltd (Albury Park) and had little involvement in the Nursing Home at that stage. The Nursing Home had a welcoming, but rather formal feel then, with our matron dressed in a navy-blue dress and a starched white cap. The grounds were well kept, but several areas hadn't been developed and the woodland remained largely untouched.

2006 was a year of great change: Albury Park was sold; Birtley House Group Ltd was registered and Tim and I transferred to that Company; Frank started working at Birtley as a full-time member of the Board; the development of the gardens, especially the kitchen garden, took on new momentum and the range of Birtley preserves was launched. We held our first major Event which aimed to bring in the local community to enjoy our grounds and to spend time with our residents and staff – the family fun day was held in aid of St. Anne's Hospital in Liuli, Tanzania, one of Bramley's special projects.

During October 2007 major building works started which led to the development of the 'West Wing'. Outside walls were sand-blasted to reveal the mellow local bargate stone beneath; the Orangery dining room was built and knocked through into the newly refurbished Drawing Room; a new glass-sided lift was built; the entrances to the main house and the annexe were linked by a glazed walkway; the second floor was developed into three apartments, while on the first floor there was another new apartment. On the ground floor, next to the Orangery, a new office provided additional desk space; finally the former maintenance store was converted to house a new wood-fuelled boiler! Throughout all the long months of the building work it was 'business-as-usual' at Birtley and the Housekeeping team did an incredible job keeping all the inevitable dust and mess under control. During the summer we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the registration of the Nursing home in great style with a 1930s-style concert (pictured below are Caroline and Simon, suitably attired), a tea dance, hog roast and family fun-day. It was the first major fundraising Event for the Birtley House Community Fund (administered by the Community Foundation for Surrey) which had been launched earlier in the year. The first project we supported with the fund was the GAMBIT group of blind and partially sighted who we still support and who have become great friends over the years.



2009 was the first year for our now annual sculpture exhibition, The Sculpture Garden, which runs throughout the month of May with over 150 sculptures. The exhibition serves to bring in the local community and is enjoyed by residents, staff and visitors alike.

The 10th anniversary of the opening of Birtley Mews was celebrated in August 2010 with a special lunch for residents and their families in the Mews dining room and adjoining courtyard. In October, Birtley House hosted the first Surrey Hills Wood Fair which has become a popular annual event. At the end of the year our new Physiotherapy facility opened.

In 2012 the Queen celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, the summer Olympic games were held in London while at Birtley we celebrated the 80th anniversary of the registration of the nursing home: a celebration tea, complete with a brass band for our residents, who were joined by some locals who were celebrating their 80th birthdays in 2012 and three former Birtley Matrons.



In addition, there was an evening drinks party for relatives of former residents and local friends. With the demand for apartments overtaking their availability, office staff in the West Wing office moved over the road to the Great Barn in Birtley Courtyard, while the old office was developed into a new apartment overlooking the rose garden. In September, Birtley hosted the first Surrey Arts for the Elderly Event which has become an annual fixture with residents from Care homes in Surrey and Day Centres joining our residents for a morning of cross-functional Art. In April 2013 we hosted our first Rare Plant fair, again now an annual event – the one scheduled for 2012 having been cancelled due to the endless torrential rain.

Throughout all these years and continuing today, the gardens, grounds and woodland

have been developed and improved to a huge extent – thanks to all the hard work of the gardening team. In 2011 the first 500 trees were planted in the new Cider orchard, thanks to a team of willing volunteers. The formerly largely derelict kitchen garden has been brought back to full production – supplying seasonal fruit, vegetables and salads to the Birtley kitchen. Visitors to Birtley often remark on the ready supply of fresh flowers in the House throughout the year. Even in the winter months the gardening team endeavour to brighten the house with flowering pot plants and even ornamental Gourds. The herbaceous borders have been redeveloped and now look truly stunning. The woodland is being managed to increase its biodiversity and the coppiced wood is made into charcoal. In 2013 geese were introduced into the Cider Orchard to help keep the weeds under control, while in the woodland, pigs helped to clear unwanted undergrowth – Birtley pork was available during the autumn and this year we have more piglets in the woods. The first test pressing of the cider apples took place last autumn and we are all looking forward to sampling the results. Local beekeepers now have hives on-site and so we will soon have Birtley honey too!

Our Matron/Manager joined the Birtley team in 2011, bringing with her a wealth of experience especially in the area of palliative care. The key worker scheme was introduced along with some new senior roles in the Care and Nursing teams plus an increased emphasis on training. Birtley started the accreditation process to achieve the Gold Standards Framework (GSF) in Care Homes award. All the hard, committed work paid off when we received the prestigious award earlier this year – proving that providing excellent care and the well-being of our residents is at the centre of everything we do, whatever the department. All of the Events held here, developments in the parkland and the community involvement, help to give our residents a rich quality of life which is vital to their wellbeing.

So, looking forward to the next 10 years, I'm sure that the gradual evolution of Birtley House will continue. Many of us will have long since retired by 2024 but I'm sure that providing excellent care and quality of life to all our residents will remain at the heart of everything which happens here.

Janet Hall
Marketing Manager



Staff News

New Faces at Birtley House

In the past few months we have welcomed the following to our large team of staff:

New Staff Nurses are Madalina Bardas, Iwona Kobic, Marianne Nazareno, Maria Parerewa and Mirela Petre, while we have the following new Care Assistants: Kathleen Cowey, Regie Derecho, Claire Gourlay, Abigail Loryman, Oghenetega Osivwemu, Amy Hefferon and Arvind Seedheeyan, Vimla's brother.

Joining the Housekeeping team are Michal Tyniec who is Wojciech's brother, Tomasz Wrona, Marzena Petrylak and Aimee Furey, Michelle Hutchinson's daughter, who will only be with us over the summer months,. Already a familiar face at Birtley is Lynn Cawkwell (Footcare) who is now also doing manicures as well as helping with escorting residents to hospital visits. Jayne Evans has joined the team taking the menus and James Messenger, Orsi's husband, has joined the Admin team.

Recent Leavers

Pursuing their careers elsewhere are Carolina Castro (Admin team), Una Areosa (Staff Nurse), Louise Wong (Care Assistant) and from the Housekeeping team, Peter Walker and Rebecca Brion. Best of luck to them all!



Birtley Bumps!

Four members of staff will be going on Maternity leave shortly: Vimla Seedheeyan-Koolash, Madga Tyniec, Orsi Kiss-Messenger and Mildred Button. We'll look forward to meeting all the new babies in due course.

Pirates Ahoy!

A delicious barbeque was followed by hours of swashbuckling fun at the staff party which had been organised by Tim and Karen. Families were welcomed too, with three and even four generations joining in the fun and games which included a tug-of-war, sandcastles, water bombs and a treasure hunt followed by a raft race in the chilly lake, with Tim having to walk the plank as the finale.

News from Birtley House

The next edition of House & Home will be Winter 2014. In the interim, please see our Blog for the latest news from Birtley House.

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