

Bits & pieces

The Sculpture Garden

The organisation of the annual sculpture exhibition has been changed from Birtley to Surrey Hills Enterprises, of which Simon is Chairman. The main change you'll notice is that there will not be any exhibits in the house or inner courtyard, by the Activities Room but there will still be over 100 sculptures in the gardens and grounds for your enjoyment. There will be a marquee in the parkland which will house a café and the internal exhibits. Members of the public will be charged £5 entry, but entrance will remain free for Residents, their families and staff. The exhibition runs from 30th April – 5th June. For further details please see: www.surreyhillsenterprises.co.uk

New wifi network coming soon

To improve the reliability and coverage of the wifi at Birtley, we are installing a new network. Disruption will be kept to a minimum and we plan that the new network will be up and running by early May.

Celebrating the Queen's 90th

Plans are being finalised for a special event at Birtley to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday. The provisional date for this is Thursday 9th June. Further details will be announced asap.

Mobile Sensory Bus

Following on from the success of the first visit of the bus, we have scheduled a second visit on Thursday 16th June. This represents the ideal opportunity to see and purchase various gadgets which are designed to aid those living with varying degrees of hearing or sight loss. In addition, simple servicing of hearing aids can be carried out while you wait – free of charge. Timings for the visit will be announced in the Activities programme for June.

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The next edition will be August 2016.



Birtley



Birtley

house & home

The Birtley House Group Newsletter, Spring 2016

Birtley is officially
outstanding

Reminiscences
of a former schoolgirl

Waverley
cares

Surrey half marathon

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Going the extra mile

As you will read later in this edition of House & Home, three members of the Birtley House staff – Clinical Lead Rudo Rumveye, Head Chef Steve Morton and Care Assistant Melinda Chikanya – recently completed the Surrey Half-Marathon, and we are very proud of their achievement. They raised hundreds of pounds for their chosen charities, money which will go a long way towards helping many of the most vulnerable and poorly members of our society. And they are not alone, as the warmer months bring many charity athletes to the highways and byways of Britain (including my wife Sinead who will be valiantly taking on 'The Moonwalk', a night time 26 mile walk across London in aid of Breast Cancer Awareness on May 14th), as they put themselves through physical discomfort in an attempt to achieve personal milestones with the aim of helping others. Quite literally, they are 'going the extra mile' for people they may not even know.

At Birtley House, 'going the extra mile' is something that we try hard to achieve every day for our Residents. At the heart of our ethos is the belief that we can always improve the quality of life for our Residents, and that they deserve nothing but the best. This doesn't just mean doing all the small things correctly (which is essential in building our Residents' trust in the staff), but also creating roles and responsibilities that focus on a holistic view of the well-being of our Residents such as our Counsellor, Wellbeing Mentor,



Support Services Supervisor, Chaplain and Companions. We try hard to listen and react to the needs and wishes of our Residents, and we hope that this allows them to live their lives the way that they want, rather than in a way that might be easiest for us.

As you may already be aware, we are delighted that this focused commitment has resulted in the Care Quality Commission awarding Birtley House their highest rating of '**Outstanding**' following their recent inspection. Karen and all the staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that we are not only wholly compliant with all the CQC Regulations, but also that we have gone 'the extra mile' in creating innovative and interesting ways to provide the best possible care. However, this does not mean that we won't still continue to look to improve our service and that we are always happy to listen to suggestions on how to do this!

So with the rest of Spring and Summer still ahead of us, maybe now is the time to sign up for a challenge and to go the extra mile to raise money for a charity – and if you can't do the physical challenge, then please remember to give generously when someone you know asks for sponsorship, as what they are doing really does make a difference.

Frank Whalley
Managing Director

A-Z of activities

A is for the ACTIVITIES Team, namely, myself, Carol Downer, Tina Bell and Ann Entiknap, with some recently started morning activities arranged by Rosa Dollerson and assisted by Denise Peters. I hope this Article will demonstrate what a wide range of varied and interesting Activities take place here at Birtley House. Also for ART - we always seem to have several talented artists amongst our Residents and we try to encourage them to keep up this skill, as drawing or painting can be so therapeutic.

B is for BOOK CLUB, a very popular monthly activity, arranged and run by Ann Entiknap who never fails to come up with an interesting topic for discussion each month. Also for BIRD and BUG BINGO - these games have proved to be great favourites and we have recently purchased a new and slightly more challenging audio version with a Bird and Animal theme.

C is for COOKING and CRAFT - both these activities require rather a lot of persuasiveness when we get comments like "I came to Birtley so that I wouldn't have to cook anymore!" Craftwork needs to be uncomplicated and fun but once completed everyone is delighted with the results! At present, we are planning an appropriate



CARD for the Queen's 90th birthday which we hope the Residents will really enjoy making.

D is for DVD's. Usually a documentary type of DVD is chosen from a wide range of topics, and often a relative might recommend one. DANCE (or Ballet) DVD's are firm favourites.

E is for EXERCISE - each month we include 2 sessions of Gentle Exercises to Music into the programme and these are always well attended and enjoyed! This is one of three types of Exercise that we offer here, all of which give definite benefits, both physically and mentally.

F is for FLORAL FUN. Flower arranging is enjoyed by both men and women and we sometimes make it competitive, although whoever is asked to judge the arrangements usually finds this an almost impossible task as the standard is so high! FILMS - full length feature ones, are shown twice a month on a Saturday afternoon. This is another of Ann's responsibilities and recent films have been 'right up to the minute' e.g. "Suffragette."

G is for GUITAR recitals, GUEST speakers, GIRL FRIDAY afternoon, and GARDENING, usually in the form of bulb planting.

A-Z of activities

His for the HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE which our Chaplain, The Revd. Tricia Hislop holds once a month, when hymns are sung and a short sermon is given. Friends and families are always welcome to come to this service. Revd. Tricia is also happy to give Communion to anyone who would like to receive this in their room.

Is for INDOOR GAMES when the fiercely competitive streak comes out! We have a good selection of popular games like skittles, quoits, carpet bowls, carpet snakes and ladders, and Birtley Bullseye. These games help to improve hand/eye co-ordination.

Jis for Kevin JACOT who entertains everyone once a month with his wonderful musical talents - generally on the piano, but also the keyboard, violin or clarinet. If we had a vote amongst the Residents, I guarantee that Kevin would be the No 1 entertainer here!

Kis for KEVIN Jacot!! I could have got away with that perhaps, but no, I will put down the KNIT and NATTER GROUP held in the Mews Dining Room on alternate Sundays. To be honest, I think there is more

Nattering than Knitting, but it is the meeting of friends and the companionship that matters most and the main reason for holding these sessions.

Lis for our LET'S TALK afternoons when we discuss various newspaper articles (amusing and unusual) and it is fascinating how this stimulates all sorts of interesting conversations. We also try to bring LAUGHTER into our activities - after all it is reputed to be the best medicine!

Mis for MULTI-ACTIVITIES when the Residents have the choice of puzzles, bagatelle, bridge, dominoes, rummikub or scrabble. All excellent for the mind and memory. I could include MUSIC in this category, but it has been mentioned elsewhere. However, we can never have enough music in our lives, so I will include it!

Nis for NATURE TABLES which we have found to be an effective method of bringing the outdoors, indoors. It opens all our eyes to the wonder of Nature.



Ois for OUTINGS which we organise to Garden Centres or places of interest, but the main criteria is that a good tea will be available wherever we go!

Pis for POETRY, PAINTING and PLANTING as well as the very popular visits from our PATDOG and PATCAT. (More about them later). Please take particular note of the poem printed in this newsletter, which was composed by a group of our Residents earlier in the year.

Qis for QUEENIE, our PATCAT who visits once a month with her owner, Sue Collingwood. Together they bring a great deal of pleasure to our many cat-lovers. Carol and Tina are remarkable with the monthly QUIZZES that they devise. These are usually themed picture quizzes and the afternoons can get very competitive!

Ris for the RESIDENTS' MEETINGS which we hold quarterly that gives everyone an opportunity to talk in an open forum. Minutes are taken and a copy given to all Residents (and relatives if they request it.)

Sis for SINGING which we do a lot of here! Whenever Kevin Jacot is here, we include a 20 minute slot when as many members of staff that can, come and join the Residents for a SINGALONG of Songs from the Shows or other well-known songs. S is also for our annual STRAWBERRY TEA which we have every June. This is held outside (if the weather is kind) in the Rose Garden with delicious cakes, scones and fresh home-grown strawberries.

Tis for the T'AI CHI class run by Charles Townsend and offers a different form of beneficial exercise. Also for THEO the PatDog, a much-loved cocker spaniel who is brought twice a month by his owner Claire Jenkinson, and who give enormous pleasure to our many dog lovers. I think it amuses everyone that we always print in the programme that each activity is "followed by afternoon TEA" but it's a fact and everyone looks forward to their cup of tea, sandwiches and cakes!

Uis for "UMPTEN UTHUR" activities! Apologies, but I just couldn't think of a genuine activity beginning with U.

Vis for VIDEOS, although these days we prefer to use DVD's because of their far superior quality of picture.

Wis for WORD GAMES, another popular and beneficial activity for everyone of all ages!

Xis for the XMAS TREE (forgive this abbreviation) in the Activity Room, which the Residents thoroughly enjoy decorating, often with items they have made themselves in a Craft session.

Yis for YOGA - the armchair form of yoga which is run by Christine Shaw and is another very well-attended form of exercise.

Zis for the SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC. If there are a number of birthdays in one month, we might have a light-hearted look at the characteristics of that particular sign, and definitely don't get too serious about it all!

So having come to the end of the alphabet, you can see just how many different areas of entertainment and activity we embrace! I hope you all enjoy reading this as much as the Activity team enjoy planning and delivering them and thank you for all the appreciative comments made to us.

Caroline Whalley
Director



From the kitchen

As I am writing this, I am sitting here listening to the new-born lambs in the field next to us and it's a wonderful sign, telling us that spring has arrived and we have the summer to look forward to with all of the lovely garden produce, thanks to the hard work and great planning of the gardening team.

In fact, we have just taken delivery of our first batch of purple sprouting broccoli, which will be a welcome sight on the menu.

Also this year we hired a new chef to replace Angelina Mason, who had retired. Aurimas Virsulis, or Auri for short, joined us at the end of January and has made a welcome addition to our team. He brings a great wealth of experience after many years within the care industry. Auri is originally from Lithuania and lives in Egham with his wife and two young daughters. Among his many talents, Auri speaks quite a few languages, fluent Russian being one of them. Auri has been made to feel very welcome by everyone here at Birtley and has settled in very well.

We have had a few themed nights since the last edition which are proving to be very popular. The last one was our St. Patricks' evening on the 17th March and we plan to have a themed evening every second month, so look out for the next event in May.

Also this year I have entered us into the first ever Dysphagia (which means difficulty swallowing) 'Chef of the Year' competition, so I will keep you updated as I hear more about that.

The advent of summer brings not only better weather, but the many more dishes we can produce. As always, the team and I are always looking for ways to keep the food exciting but if you have any dishes you particularly want to see on the menu, please do tell us and I will add it for everyone to enjoy.

Roll on the spring and summer!

Steve Morton
Head of Kitchen

Gardening news

Out in the gardens we have been busy as always and the sooner we can get on top of all the day to day tasks like weeding, edging, mowing etc the more time we can focus on continually improving the grounds, making access to certain parts easier and hopefully encouraging more of our Residents and their families to come out and enjoy the wonderful surroundings here at Birtley.

The fernery has been finished under the old oak tree and has been planted up with ferns from the woodland. In time we will purchase more varieties to supplement them and fill in the spaces around the old tree stumps. The bee-friendly hedge has been planted and the deer fencing improved. In time this will grow up and provide a screen to hide the yard.

In the pond the Flag Iris has been cut back hard which will stop it encroaching into the water, leaving behind wildlife friendly bays between the clumps. The subsequent clear up afterwards has proved difficult with the large amounts of frogspawn in the water.

With the incredibly mild and wet winter it's been hard to keep on top of the lawns, but all dry spells were taken advantage of to keep the grass short and under control and the grass has now had its' annual weed, feed and moss-kill and been scarified to get rid of the thatch and strengthened, ready for the summer.

A new fence has been put up in the lodge garden to replace the dying yew hedge that sadly suffered from severe water logging. In the autumn, we will plant a selection of bulbs along the front to add colour for next spring.

The raspberries that were growing along the wall in the kitchen garden have been lifted and replanted with the others in the fruit

garden. Also several new planting bays have been created to house some more unusual species to go with, amongst others the Goji and Honey berries.

Behind the barn a new lean-to has been built by Tony and Paul to house some of the estate equipment. With the soil levelled off, a wildflower bank has been created that will hopefully attract bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects.

We continually try to enhance the borders here at Birtley and have been building up a selection of plants that will cope well with sandy soil and give us a long season of colour. Penstemons and salvias are particularly hardy and we have added to our collection with new varieties. Salvias are very diverse, ranging from herbaceous perennials to shrubs in white and pale yellow through corals, hot pinks and cherry reds to the darkest blues and purples. We have chosen a good colour range of both hardy and shrubby types and these will complement the existing types, mainly planted around the terrace.

Jill Parrott & The Gardening Team





Senior Classroom



Girls' Common Room



The Gymnasium

Community links

In Community Links, we feature someone who has a past or present link with Birtley. Many of you are probably unaware that Birtley House was used as a school in the 1930s. Although there are a few old photos dating from that time, there is very little anecdotal information. We were absolutely delighted to receive an account of life at the school from Mrs Elizabeth 'Betty' Bell (nee Hopgood) who was a pupil here, along with her elder sister Marna. Betty is now 92 years old and has an incredible memory of her time as a schoolgirl.

Betty visited Birtley at the end of January when she was doing a 'trip down memory lane' with her daughter, Jenny Elmes, mainly as a result of Jenny writing the book "M-Mother: Dambuster Flight Lieutenant John 'Hoppy' Hopgood", who was Betty's brother.

John 'Hoppy' Hopgood, pilot and 2nd in command in the May 1943 Dambusters raid, died a hero at just 21 years old. Wounded by flak and with his Lancaster M-Mother ablaze, Hoppy had no hope of escape yet managed to gain height for two of his crew to parachute to safety. The plane crashed moments later.

Using Hoppy's school diary and letters to his mother and sister, this book tells the story of how a boy from a small Surrey village (the family lived in Shere) matured into a gutsy war hero. A veteran of forty-eight bombing sorties and an expert pilot in three Bomber Command

Squadrons, this is the man who taught Guy Gibson (who won a VC for leading the Dam Busters' 'bouncing bomb' raids) how to fly a Lancaster.

Betty will visit Birtley once again in June, when she will join us for lunch and we hope, share more of her memories with our Residents.

Reminiscences of a former schoolgirl

During the 1930s Birtley House was adapted as a Parents National Educational (PNEU) School. Such schools were based on Charlotte Mason's philosophy of education whose motto for students was: "I am, I can, I ought, I will". The girls in PNEU schools enjoyed a great deal of freedom as Betty remembers:

"There were about 16 pupils, including a few juniors, but the rest of us were aged 11-16 years. I went from 11 years until Miss Hill died, when I was 15. Miss Hill ran the school with her friend Miss Driver and there were about six other teachers, a French au-pair and a Matron. My sister, Marna, was 3.5 years older than me and a prefect when I started – so I avoided her. Sometimes I was a day girl and sometimes a boarder. At weekends we occupied ourselves by letter writing and going on walks, including a two mile walk to church in Shamley Green on Sundays. I remember sharing a dormitory with Carmen Blacker and one summer we kept ourselves entertained by acting out charades of

daily occurrences and mimicking members of staff. Carmen used to go to sleep quickly, but I used to pull my bed up to the window so that I could watch a thrush singing, and that is how I started to learn birdsong.

The school was situated some way from the road and had two drives: the back for tradesmen and the pupils, whilst the front was for staff and visitors. There was a big garden with extensive lawns and in the field we played netball in winter and rounders and tennis in the summer. When I was a day-girl, I cycled the six miles from home in Shere and back again every day, so I was excused games, but I loved rounders and so always stayed on for that. There were some good trees in the grounds e.g. a cedar, which we were forbidden to climb – so we put someone on watch whilst two of us climbed... we needed to be warned if Marna was coming!

Originally the gym was a garage which was transformed into a gym. It was full of equipment: Bars up against the walls from which we hung upside down; Ropes which you twisted around one leg and then climbed up; a Horse with a springboard to jump over and land after a somersault on the other side and Forms which were long balancing bars when turned upside down. Once a week we had a minibus that took us to the swimming pool in Guildford.

In the house we had to use the back stairs and not the lovely oak staircase. There were three main rooms with highly polished parquet floors, so we had to wear crepe soled shoes to

stop us from slipping. One room was for the Headmistress and the other two were used as classrooms. The large dining room was off the hall, it had a grand piano, four tables for pupils and one for Miss Driver and Miss Hill. We had to hold open the doors for teachers and if it was my turn I would do a handstand to shut the door!

If you were naughty you were sent to the Headmistress – once Carmen and I painted our faces green in Miss Rose's painting class. The Headmistress sent us to wash it off and to make up a punishment for ourselves. We suggested tidying the shoes in the gym for a week. There was a little music room, which had been the maids' bedroom, with a ledge you could get out on and jump down. We were very brave and were never caught! When I was in the top dormitory (a roof bedroom), we used to climb out on the roof when the staff were having supper and ate our collected sweets. We got back into bed by the time the staff had finished their meal and again, we never got caught. One day though, we had been left alone to get on with our Anatomy homework. We decided to open the window and lower ourselves down on the fire escape rope. I was the third to go and just at that moment Marna came in and caught me, poised on the window ledge. My sister coiled up the rope and reported us. As a punishment I had to write 100 lines saying 'I must be trustworthy'.

It was a lovely school because we were given a lot of freedom and Miss Dowell was an excellent teacher, stretching the brightest and the slowest alike".

Betty Bell (below)



From Matron's desk

In July, I will celebrate five years at Birtley House all of which have been interesting and eventful. It's easy to forget all the things that have happened and changed during that time. I was reflecting on the changes and how we might build on them, both personally and in the House. I have celebrated two weddings, as both my sons have married. Also, three of my grandchildren have been born whilst I have been working here and I have celebrated my 50th birthday. Not forgetting of course, my Nan, Gladys Amey's 105th birthday, so there is a lot to be able to share with you all.

On the work front we have had changes, as many of our long-standing Residents have completed their final years here, alongside many new Residents joining our community. There have been changes within our team and new roles have emerged to complement the existing care staff. Opportunities have opened up for staff development which include counselling, companionship, the introduction of a Clinical Lead role and a Head of Kitchen and many others. Alongside all of these, I would like to highlight the role of the Wellbeing Mentor.

This role was created due to changes in care and the need to demonstrate that Residents are involved in meaningful activities throughout the day. The activities team have been providing extensive and varied activities in the afternoons for many years, but we needed to develop something to demonstrate that more was being offered. The role has been designed to work alongside the activity team, providing additional support to those Residents who would like to do something in the mornings. This has led to some lovely time spent completing crafts and listening to music. These activities can involve just one person or a small group and everyone who has attended seems to feel it is worthwhile. It is particularly good when joint work between teams takes place, such as on the Queen's birthday card.

We would welcome suggestions from you about any activities or ideas you have that we can add into our programmes.

Another success story involves an individual Resident, Mary Ellingworth who Rosa, Ken and myself were lucky enough to join on her visit to Park Side School, which has within its grounds an old church that used to be Mary's family's place of worship. The school was once a manor house and her introduction to this house was through her father who spent time there as a civil servant, interviewing young men for the diplomatic service. We spent a lovely couple of hours being shown around the school and the church, followed by high tea in the headmaster's study. We are looking forward to arranging more events over the summer.

As you are aware, we received the news of our 'Outstanding' rating from CQC. This fabulous outcome has involved a huge commitment by all members of staff who have worked together tirelessly as a team to achieve this wonderful commendation. We strive to do the best for our Residents and their families and will continue to do so in the future, but if there are any areas that you feel we need to address, then please do let us know.

Karen Williams
Matron/Registered Manager



Birtley is officially 'outstanding'

The role of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is to monitor, inspect and regulate all health and social care services in England. As such, the inspectors are free to speak to whoever they wish when they inspect a nursing home and to examine any records relating to the care of the Residents.

Three inspectors arrived at Birtley, unannounced, from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 27th January. They delved deeply into all our records – care plans, staff files and other records relating to the management of the service we provide. They spoke to thirteen Residents, three relatives, nine member of staff, the Registered Manager (Karen) and two external health and social care professionals.

In a way, the actual inspection was the easy part of the process. The long wait following the inspection, until we heard what we had achieved, was agonising! At Birtley we strive to provide the best possible care for our Residents and as such, we thought we'd done well – the question was, how well?

CQC publish their findings, including ratings, to help people choose the right care. Ratings following an inspection are in one of four categories: 'Inadequate'; 'Requires Improvement'; 'Good' and 'Outstanding'. When it appears that the home warrants an 'Outstanding', the findings of the local inspection team are first presented to the main County CQC Board. Having got past that hurdle, the final stage is for the findings to be presented to the National CQC Inspection Board. That meeting was held on Friday 18th March.

The long wait had been well worth it – Birtley House was announced to be 'Outstanding'; one of a very small percentage of homes in the whole country to have attained such a pinnacle.

The rating reflects the dedication and professionalism of all our Nursing and Care teams, underpinned by our Care support team. However, it's the vision, drive and leadership of our Registered Manager, Karen Williams, which got us there: ***"The Registered Manager has a contagious enthusiasm for improving people's experiences and led by example. Through discussions with her, people and staff it was obvious that she had fostered a culture within this service of openness and reflection. Through the process of supporting staff it was clear that her leadership system was one of high support and high challenge"*** CQC 2016.

Of course, all staff at Birtley played a part in reaching the Outstanding achievement – the Whalley family, Housekeeping, Kitchen, Maintenance, Activities, Gardening and Administration teams all work together to ensure that we provide the best possible service to our Residents.

So, ever onwards! Life at Birtley never stands still; we are not complacent and will strive to improve on the service we provide to all our Residents.

Janet Hall
Marketing & IT Manager



Outstanding

Mews news



Spring has finally arrived in the Mews and we have our very own "Springwatch" going on all around us. Our lovely ewes and lambs are back in the fields to the rear of the Mews, keeping us entertained with their frolics. Much bleating can be heard resonating around the flats from mothers calling their babies to heel...

More recently we welcomed a new addition to our garden. A duck has chosen our little flowerbed in the Mews courtyard to lay her eggs – 15 in total! Quite a feat. We are keeping an eye on her and as I write, we wait in anticipation for the new arrivals. The Residents very much enjoyed the recent St. Patrick's Day supper, complete with authentic Irish music, whisky & Guinness and continue to participate in the various activities laid on by Caroline and her team.

We will be having some acoustic tiles fitted internally to the ceiling of our dining room to give better audibility, as at the moment when there are a few people talking at once, it is

difficult to hear. Also, the new updated wifi will be extremely useful for Mews Residents, offering them a much better service.

We were very sad to say goodbye to Warden, Jeni Gait-Smith in January, who had worked at Birtley House for a number of years and we welcome Cheryl Searle and Claire Gough as our new Wardens. We also welcome Mrs Pat Stevens to Flat 6 and wish her all the best here at Birtley Mews.

Jojo Beard
Mews Warden

Spring...

A peaceful new day, with vibrant blue sky
I listen intently to birds chirp and cry

Many buds now bloom into life
Finally giving up the winter strife

The air is fresh, with a gentle breeze
Aeroplanes leave white trails with great ease

The trees branch out, with new leaves
shiny green
And sweet smelling blossom, the best I've seen

The lambs hop and skip in fields of green grass
Whilst the odd clouds above arrive and then pass

We are now so thankful that spring is here
And we embrace this season with jolly
good cheer!

Written by Birtley Residents:
Mary Mirecki, Iris Newton & Pat Scrase
29th January, 2016

News from Birtley Estate

I think we can all safely say that it was a strange winter, very mild and very wet. I am ready for spring and today, it definitely feels like it has arrived.

The lambs are slowly making their appearance in the back fields behind the house. I believe the farmer produces several thousand each year, so it must be exhausting keeping his eyes on so many ewes in case of complications. From my previous experience in lambing, someone needs to be doing checks around the clock, in case a problem arises. The lambs then need to be marked with the same number as their mums' and left in a small area to feed and bond for several days, before being released into the fields with the rest of the mums and new arrivals. I think it's great to not only hear them, but also see them building up friendships with other lambs as they begin to explore the world and play.

The woodland has seen another coupe of hazel restored and replanted. This will be coppiced in seven years' time and the product will be used on the estate or sold. We have a good supply of firewood, not only Hazel, but also Ash, ready that people can purchase for their fires.

When the wood is felled it is then cut into 6 foot lengths, split lengthways and it is left to dry in the woods for a week or so, which dramatically affects the weight. It is often easier to put on the shoulder and walk out of 'hard to get to' places.

We also have three new work experience students on site; Michaella Sparkes who is currently on her first year of a foundation degree in animal management. Michaella has to do 400 hours of work experience and is very interested in Conservation work; there is also Alex Grubb who is on his BTEC level 3 in Countryside management. Alex is very interested in Pest control and is hoping to manage rabbit, fox and deer populations in

the future; Georgi Ennis is our Horticulture Student - Georgi is 16 and in her first year. She is already making waves in the horticulture world as she received 3rd prize in the 'Young Horticulturist of the Year' heat at Merrist Wood College, which is run by The Chartered Institute of Horticulture. She is currently assisting Emma and the Gardening Team.

Some of you may have seen Goose eggs for sale in Reception. They are from our own geese and have flown (no, not like that!) off the shelves, quicker than we can clean them. Any future eggs will be left with the mothers to be hatched out into goslings, so I am afraid you may have missed out for this year.

Speaking of food, I have to say that this year's bacon was the best I have ever had in my entire life. It was actually sweet to the taste and if cooked a little crispy had everything you could ever want in terms of taste. I don't know how much is left but you had better be quick if you want to purchase some, as I am about to purchase my fifth half kilo packet.

I am sure now the weather is warming I will see some of you in the gardens. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask. Let's hope it's going to be a dry summer.

Theo Trambinas
Birtley Ranger



Counsellor

My role is varied as explained in previous editions of our newsletter, and I continue to support Matron and the Birtley team in a variety of ways, providing the best service we can for our Residents and their families. It has become even more apparent when speaking to other care services, that this role is unique and the feedback has been that it is very beneficial to all to have the psychological support.

The Whalley family and Matron are forward thinking in providing the Residents and their significant others with the opportunity to have psychological support, from their initial admission through to end of life care.

In the last newsletter, I explained the importance of documenting the wishes and preferences for end of life care for the Residents. I continue to complete these Advanced Care Plans with the Residents and their next of kin as appropriate, dependant on circumstances. As someone approaches end of life, we have been able to ensure that their wishes are carried out to the best of our ability.

Many family members have stated that they are relieved to have these important discussions in a very informal, but professional way in this documentation process. It is an obligation of all in the health sector, to offer this opportunity to Residents. A part of the Advanced Care Plan covers a section on Organ Donation and in the time that I have been completing these care plans, a number of Residents have been keen to enquire whether they would still be eligible to donate organs.

This led me to investigate further as despite being on the organ donation register myself, I was not clear if there were certain criteria regarding age and organ donation. The result



of my enquiries led to a visit from an organ donation specialist, who kindly came to Birtley House one afternoon in February and gave a talk on Organ and Tissue Donation. We learnt that these are two separate areas of Donation and we were given much information about how the service works and the demand versus donors on the register. It was a very emotive talk and one important clear message that we were left with, was that anyone who wishes to be a Donor must let their next of kin or significant other know, so that when the time came their loved ones could carry out this wish, rather than in a time of their grief, feel unable to make this important decision.

This has helped us as a team to help our Residents, some of whom have been very clear about their wish to donate and we feel better able to support them as a result of this talk. We invite anyone reading this article who would like to discuss any issues connected with this or who would like to look at the document to please make contact and speak to either myself, Matron or a member of the Nursing Team who will be happy to explain this in more detail.

Should you wish to know more about organ donation please go to:
www.organdonation.nhs.uk

Our volunteer "befrienders" continue to visit the Residents, giving up their time in the most generous way. They have completed the relevant security checks, and have training appropriate to their role. The most recent addition to our team is Kimberley who is at school locally and is here as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award programme. Kimberley has written a few words to introduce herself.

Amber Turnell
Counsellor

Introducing our new volunteer

I joined the lower sixth at St Catherine's School, Bramley in September and found Birtley House as a local place where I could do some volunteering. I live in Reading, Berkshire but during the week I board at St Cats, so I am fairly new to the area.

I am currently in my first year of A-Levels and I am studying Chemistry, Biology, Geography and Mathematics. In my free time, I play netball, piano, participate in debating and I am part of a school choir. I am also embarking on my Gold Duke of Edinburgh award, which is part of the reason why I started volunteering. With all of this going on in my life, it's so lovely to take a couple of hours out of my week away from all the work and extracurricular activities

to unwind and spend time with the lovely Residents and amazing staff at Birtley, just to talk and help out where I can.

When I leave school I hope to study medicine at university, so volunteering at a place like Birtley is going to help me develop my people skills and boost my confidence, by talking and getting to know a new group of people in a caring environment.

I have already really enjoyed my time, and although I have only been a couple of times, I feel very comfortable and welcome. I recently attended the St. Patrick's dinner, and I've got to say, I am thoroughly excited about the next themed night! I am looking forward to what my time here will bring and I would like to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to join such a wonderful community.

Kimberley Nyamakope



Birtley Staff run the *Surrey Half Marathon*

On the morning of Sunday 13th March 2016, three of our intrepid members of staff lined up together at the start line of the Surrey Half Marathon. Now in its 3rd year, the Half Marathon attracts runners of all abilities, ranging from those trying to beat the course record of 62 minutes, to those who are happy just to complete the course. The route was around Woking, Sutton Green, Jacobs Well and Hook Heath and our Matron, Karen was also there to support and take photos.

The three runners were Steve Morton, Head of Kitchen, Rudo Rumveye, Clinical Lead & Melinda Chikanya, Care Assistant and they were completing the challenge for different charities & reasons.

Steve started training in January at a local gym, as well as running around his local area in Woking. The furthest that he had run prior to starting his training was six miles, so the jump to thirteen and a half was quite daunting. Steve was raising money for Pancreatic Cancer Action, a charity close to his & his family's heart – Steve's mother-in-law, Margaret suffered with Pancreatic Cancer and sadly passed away last year and her attitude to life of 'just do it' was a driving force for Steve.

Previously, Steve's family ranging in age from 6-78 all participated in a 10-mile walk around Virginia Water to raise money for Pancreatic Cancer Action and they raised the great sum of £1700. Steve decided that he wanted to keep the momentum going with fundraising and set out to raise £300, so far he has raised £800.

Rudo decided to do the Half Marathon as a personal challenge to prove to herself that she could. Her training was mainly done in



the gym and so when the day came, she was rather regretting that she hadn't done more outside training beforehand. However, with quaking nerves, she got going and found the going tough, reaching the ten-mile mark was a massive relief and she was all for giving up at that stage BUT she kept going and with the aid of her fellow runners, Steve & Melinda, who came back to find her and run the last mile alongside her, she made it.

Rudo was raising money for Lung Cancer Research as she lost an aunt to lung cancer in January and also sadly lost a good friend to breast cancer. She didn't do a huge amount of fundraising because she was worried that she might not turn up to the start of the race! However, she did turn up and finished the race and she is personally donating the sum of £200 to her chosen charity.

Melinda started pounding the streets of Bramley in January on her training programme, headphones firmly on, she trained in all weathers and slowly built up her distance. When she signed up to do the run, she wasn't feeling in full health and she wasn't absolutely sure that she would do the run and therefore elected not to raise money for Charity. However, as her training progressed, Melinda's health improved and she decided she would go ahead and complete the challenge.

Now, she's got the 'running bug' and she is going to do the Royal Parks half marathon on 9th October and she will be raising money for Charity when that one comes around.

Staff news

New Starters

We are very happy to welcome the following staff members who have joined us since our last edition of House & Home:

Viorica (Vio) Darie, Staff Nurse; Julie Robbins, part time Staff Nurse; Auri Virsulis, Chef; Lisa Cadec, Care Assistant; Frances (Fran) O'Neill, part-time Care Assistant; Charlotte McNamara, Housekeeping Assistant; Pauline Lamy, part time Laundress; Mark Chalacan returns to Birtley working as a Bank Care Assistant.

Changing Roles

The following members of staff have changed their current roles as follows:

Cheryl Searle, part-time Mews Warden/part-time Senior Care Assistant; Claire Gough, Mews Warden one Sunday per month/Lead Care Assistant; Glory Chalacan & Katalin Vass will job share the Sunday Receptionist role and Katie Marks has changed to a Bank Care Assistant.

Promotions

Huge congratulations to Ola Sychulska who has been promoted from Lead Carer to Care Supervisor.

Farewells

We have bid farewell to the following members of staff and we wish them well: Jeni Gait-Smith, Rochelle Sales, Michael McDougal, Elaine Durbridge, Amparo Romero, Tomasz & Marzena Wrona, Andrei Craciun, Jane Kovari, Rachel Harman, Thembi Willow, Alison Reeves, Katie Cowie and Goma Thapa.

Maternity Leave

Senior Staff Nurse Vimla Koolash has gone on leave to have her third baby.

Wedding Congratulations

On Sunday 24th January, Tim Whalley & Vicky were married in Vicky's home City of Jiangyin near Shanghai, China. Close family and friends travelled to attend the very colourful Ceremony, as pictured below.

