



# house & home

Birtley  
House

The Birtley House Group Newsletter, Summer 2017

Another Prestigious  
award for Birtley

Introducing our new Deputy

Sample a day at Birtley

Jeremy Hunt visit to Birtley



## Family Values

We recently attended the National Family Business Awards at Wembley Stadium, having been kindly nominated by local solicitors Charles Russell Speechlys, and we were thrilled to be presented with the 'Family Business of the Year' award for the South East of England. Although we are honoured to have won this award, it wasn't something that we set out to achieve - the family values that underpin all aspects of how we run our business are the same as they have always been since the business was started in the 1920's. Quite simply, it is just how we do things at Birtley House. The reason why we feel that family values should be at the centre of our business ethos is that, fundamentally, Birtley House is our Residents' home. It is where our Residents feel safest, and like a normal home there will often be laughter, and sometimes tears, but always love. Our staff choose to work here because they want to make our Residents' lives better, and the number of wonderful letters from Residents and their families is a testament to the hard work and dedication that they put in. Indeed, family values can be clearly seen in the fact that there are several members of the same families working here (not just my family!), and our Residents love meeting our staff's children too, especially the very youngest ones.

Perhaps this adherence to family values is the 'X factor' that differentiates a family-run business from its Corporate competitors, and certainly in the care industry it combines very well with the aims of all nursing homes to be places of compassion and safety. I feel that our Residents prefer having a long-standing family at the helm rather than a faceless board of Directors who

never get to know them and who only visit the home to check on the occupancy rates - and with five of the Whalley family working at Birtley, our Residents and their families never have to look far to find one of my family if they need to ask us anything.

Of course, being part of a family business can have its ups and downs, as all families experience occasionally, but I feel confident that if any of my grandparents or great-grandparents were still around today they would approve of the Home that we have created for our dear 'extended family' of Residents.

*Frank Whalley*  
*Managing Director*

### What next for Birtley?

**2015** *Manager of the Year*  
(Surrey Care Association)

**2016** *Care Team of the Year*  
(Surrey Care Association)  
**Outstanding Contribution to Social Care** (Surrey Care Association)

In 2016 we also heard that Birtley had gained a CQC rating of Outstanding!

**2017** *Family Business of the Year Award, South East Region* (National Family Business Awards)

In 2017 Birtley was also awarded Platinum status in the Gold Standards Framework accreditation

***Birtley never stands still so – watch this space!***

# Birtley in the Community

Birtley has always been actively engaged in the community, however the importance of such community involvement is often neglected by the care sector. We look at it as 'incoming' and 'outgoing' community liaison. Bringing the community in adds to the quality of life and most care homes will be involved, as are we, through their activities' programmes and specific fund-raising events such as the Macmillan Coffee Morning. We have taken this further by hosting major community events such as the Surrey Hills Wood Fair, Sculpture Garden and Golden Years' Festival which bring much larger numbers in to interact with residents and staff.

In the last year we have taken another step in this direction by bringing in the *halow project* to work with us in developing a community garden in the grounds. The *halow project* was founded by five friends who all had children with learning difficulties and the name was created from the initial letter of the first name of the five young people involved. Over the last year this involvement with the *halow group* has gradually developed so that we now have a regular weekly group which started by sowing seeds of vegetables, then preparing plots and planting out and caring for the plants. At the same time they harvested fruit such as rhubarb and strawberries and are now very busy harvesting vegetables too, as can be seen in the photos! They have worked closely with our garden team and have also started to prepare fruit and vegetables in the kitchen prep room here. The aim will be to develop further to the point where they can produce jams and chutneys etc. which they could sell at the Farmers' Market. They also joined us for our Strawberry tea for which they had picked and prepared the fruit. Damon Hill, who is one of the founders, did pop in that day too but he was not able to stay for tea as he was on a major bike ride.

The *halow project* also has year groups (they cover ages 16-35) and two of these groups come in every month to work in the gardens or woods. These larger groups are very lively and get stuck in to major tasks from picking cider apples in the orchard and moving logs in the woods through to digging over vegetable



plots or weeding thistles from the main lawns. We are looking to take this further as the Guildford Beekeepers, who do their training on our estate, are keen to give some of the group an experience of beekeeping. Others who run courses here e.g. wood and stone carving are also interested in giving the young people opportunities to try different things. Wild Learning, who run Forest School activities at Birtley have also had *halow project* days which have been much enjoyed. Most weeks in term-time we also host Forest School days for a Bramley group that provides one-to-one learning for children who have problems coping in normal school. These have been very successful too.

As mentioned at the beginning of this article we also are heavily involved in 'outgoing' community work with organisations such as the Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey Community Foundation and Surrey Care Association - but you will have to wait for our next Newsletter to learn more of this!

**Simon Whalley**  
Chairman



## From Matron's desk

Dear All,

Another lovely summer is unfolding at Birtley with all the normal events such as the Sculpture exhibition which this year saw the Residents enter their own sculpture, and there was a fantastic marquee and a Prosecco bus. I visited with a few of the Residents and thoroughly enjoyed their company and the sculpture. It was also good to see some of the Surrey Hills painted cows return to Birtley during the exhibition.

The garden now boasts a willow Arbour which is beginning to take shape and blends into the garden beautifully.



The strawberry tea in the Rose Garden was a great success and Residents were joined by family members, making it a lovely event for all.



I am thoroughly enjoying the Coffee mornings that I hold monthly and the numbers have grown over the months. It is great to have all your ideas regarding improvements we can make at Birtley, and to have some real fun and laughter together. We have talked about holiday destinations, books we are reading and the meaning of our surnames alongside some very practical issues and suggestions; so please keep coming and sharing your views. I have decided to hold a drinks evening in August after supper and will send a memo with a date so we can join for lively discussion and an evening drink. If it is fine we can do this outside, which would be lovely.

The themed evenings continue to be a success and the next one will be a BBQ with wine tasting.

I am delighted that Michelle, who started here 5 years ago as a Staff Nurse, has taken up the post of Deputy. This will allow me more time to spend with you and to look outward to improve all aspects of care at Birtley.

I am currently working closely with Surrey University on their Ethics Committee and have had the opportunity to be involved in some filming which will be used in Student Nurse training and will form the basis of some online training. Ethical questions in care settings are something close to my heart as I believe that is the way to help provide truly individualised and personal care for each Resident. Ethical issues, such as cardiac resuscitation and hydration in end-of-life care, are situations that face us all, but we seldom look at our own belief system, which dictates how



we respond in these situations. I hope to look in more depth at spirituality in nursing homes as NICE guidelines outline some new directives surrounding this topic and having had our own Chaplain here for over 12 years we have good experience to share.

Having listened to Residents, and seen the success and increase in the numbers attending Holy Communion, I feel there is a real need to expand this area of Birtley life and I think we might form a discussion group to discuss some of the issues unaddressed at present. Once we have some dates, and a plan, I will let people know.

We have also been involved in some research concerning infection in the elderly and were recently visited by some professors from Sweden to see how we deal with this here in England.

In addition, we were visited by the Dementia Bus Experience, a very powerful teaching tool for our staff so they become more aware of the challenges faced by our Residents who have this condition. We had the opportunity to experience how dementia might affect us and to really understand how it might feel, rather than read about it in books. Experiential learning is much more powerful at teaching us the reality of a disease or condition and I hope this will lead to a greater empathy and a change in practice within the home.

Birtley never stands still, and we continue to evolve and improve; always looking at ways to expand our horizons and introduce better systems such as our eMAR system, which has been introduced since the last newsletter. This computerised system for drug administration and ordering runs alongside our existing Medecare Care Planning system, allowing our GP, Dr. Rinttila, to access Resident records and be more responsive to any drug changes. Senior Staff nurse Mirella Simeon has taken the

lead on this system and the improvements in stock management and wastage are noticeable already. Mirella has become an expert in using this system; making sure that you all receive your monthly medication in a timely fashion. I am very proud of the nursing team as they have embraced these changes and we are beginning to see the benefits. A huge thank you to Janet Hall, Marketing and IT Manager, who has hand-held us throughout this process.

On a personal note, my two daughters-in-law are expecting second babies, so I am looking forward to two new grandchildren: one to be born in August the other in February, due around my late Nan's birthday. Amy, who is due in August, is having another little boy and Nikki does not know yet but I am predicting a girl! So that will be six grandchildren.

My daughter is in her final year of teacher training and has received very good grades, so I will be looking forward to attending her Graduation. It will be a very busy year.

I want to finish with a little quote from a book called **"The things you can see when you slowdown"**

*Life is like jazz.*

*Much of it is improvised; we cannot control all the variables.*

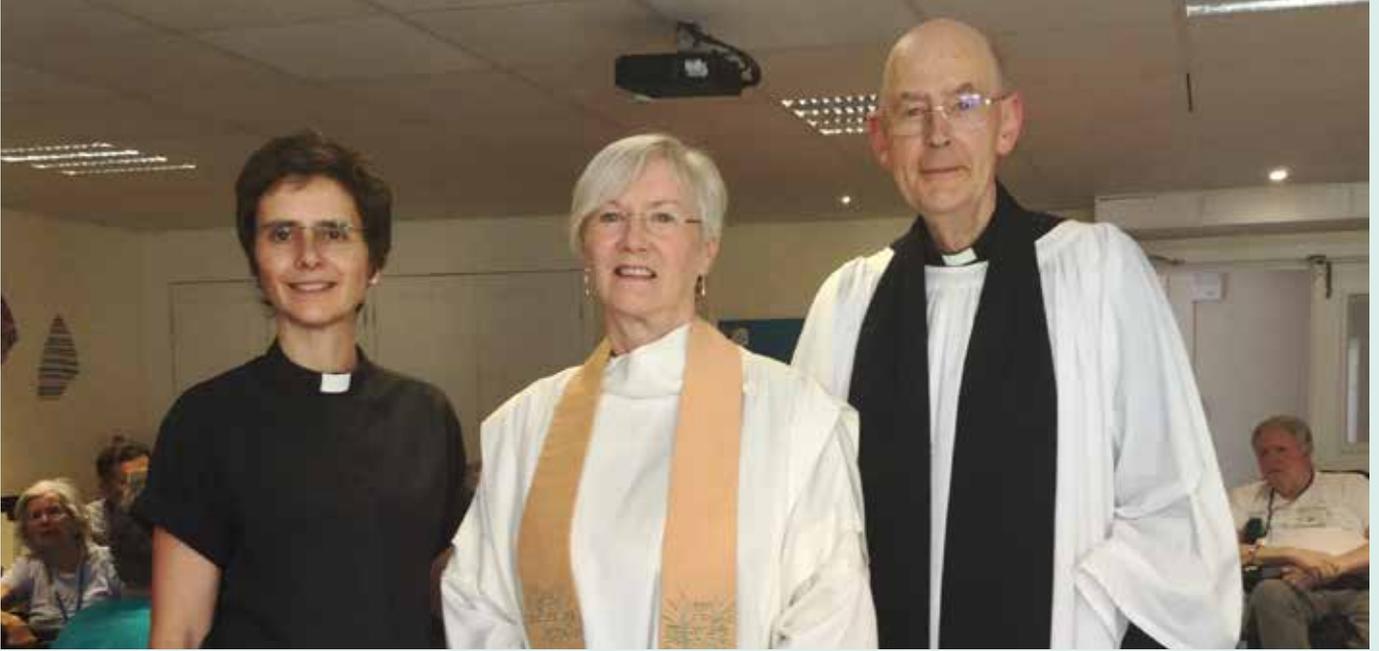
*We must live it with panache and flair,*

*Regardless of what is thrown at us.*

God bless!

yours

**Karen Williams**  
**Matron/Registered Manager**



## *Licensing our new Chaplain*

A special Communion Service was held on Wednesday 14th June to celebrate the licensing of the Reverend Canon Angela Townshend as our Chaplain. This ceremony was conducted by Reverend Richard Hay, Assistant Archdeacon, Diocese of Guildford. The Reverend Vicki Burrows, Vicar of Bramley & Grafham, also took part in the service. With a congregation of 40 residents & visitors, the singing was fantastic and we were very grateful to Elaine, (an undergraduate working at St. Catherine's School) for playing the piano so beautifully for this wonderful occasion.

## *A Bowl of Cherries...*

My husband, Ned, has often been amused by the skill I have of remembering songs. My mother sang to me the popular songs of her time and she often had 'The Light Programme' on. I guess I imbibed the songs I heard as I imbibed my mother's milk. Then as a teenager, in Bath, I went on to be a part of a Music and Drama group and we sang all sorts of things from pantomime to Gilbert and Sullivan. So I had a good introduction to light music in my youth.

Recently, I bought a large punnet of Cherries. I have always loved cherries. The song which came to mind, and stayed there far too long, was 'Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries'. The problem was that in the punnet was a number of overripe or rotten cherries, but I had bought a punnet and so I had to take the bad with the good.

Life is a bit like that song. We may have thought that life is good and that it will go on forever, but we don't know what difficulties lay ahead of us. A friend of mine was recently taken seriously ill with a brain tumour, I am sure there are people you know who have had to face illness or disability and old age creeps up on us all and our joints and muscles ache.

We have to cope with all sorts of 'bad cherries' in our bag of life. The important thing is to give thanks for the good things and pray for strength to cope with the difficulties that life throws at us.

But how hard it is to thank God for what has been, when we are dealing with the difficulties that are present now. What we can do is turn to God. We can invite friends, family and staff here at Birtley to share in our experiences. In these ways we can be loved and supported through whatever difficulties we may face.

We all know people who have had a hard life, one way or another, too many 'bad' cherries, indeed we may feel that we ourselves have had too many knocks and bruises along the way. If we trust in God then those difficulties will be easier to cope with and we can learn to laugh and love, enjoying the 'good' cherries!

I have been singing 'Life is just a Bowl of Cherries,' in my head ever since I started thinking about this article and I want to

dedicate it to all those wonderful people who, loving God, see beyond the hardships to the simple joy of being alive.

*Agatha Christie wrote,*

*'I have sometimes been wildly, despairingly, acutely miserable, racked with sorrow, but through it all I still know quite certainly that just to be alive is a grand thing.'*

Life is indeed a bowl of cherries!

Life is just a bowl of cherries  
Don't take it serious,  
Life's too mysterious  
You work,  
You save,  
You worry so  
But you can't take your dough  
When you go, go, go

So keep repeating "It's the berries."  
The strongest oak must fall  
The sweet things in life  
To you were just loaned  
So how can you lose  
What you've never owned

Life is just a bowl of cherries  
So live and laugh,  
Laugh and love  
Live and laugh at it all!

*Angela Townshend  
Chaplain*

## *Our New Deputy Manager:* Michelle Hutchinson



Firstly, I would sincerely like to extend my thanks to the Board and to Karen for the opportunities I have had since becoming a part of the Birtley team. I came to Birtley in November 2012 after moving from my hometown on the West Coast of Scotland, a seaside place called Ayr.

I left Ayr just before my 18th birthday and moved to RAF Lossiemouth where I lived for nine years and I was very sad to leave

as both my daughters were born in the little community hospital there. Rebecca is now 25 and entering her final 18 months training to be a hairdresser, while Aimee is 22 and has just finished her 3rd year at Glasgow Tech doing Fashion and Design. I then moved to Norwich where my eldest son was born. Kieran, 20, is Acting - he swears he is going to be the next Sean Connery! We lived in Norwich for a year before moving to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, living on the base for just over a year before returning to my hometown, where my youngest son, Callum, was born. Callum will be 16 this year and recently did his work experience here at Birtley House which he very much enjoyed and has said would love to return. I have been told that all of my children didn't fall very far from the tree, as they not only look like me but also have a lot of my traits!

Growing up I was always very sure I was going to join the police force, but raising a family put my career on hold. When I returned to Ayr, I decided that I would start broadening my knowledge and decided to do an HNC in Internet Technology. I then did an Administration course and started working with a home school-link project. I then worked as an Administration assistant in a Primary School where I stayed for a few years before deciding I wanted to change career again, but wasn't 100% sure to what! I love to sing and even auditioned for a Band but my nerves got the better of me and so I quickly pushed that idea to the side. I had always enjoyed sciences at school

and decided that I would do a Biomedical sciences course, which I really enjoyed.

It was during this time that my Grandmother started to spend a lot of time in hospital and one day, while visiting her, I looked out into the corridor and saw an elderly patient being comforted by a Nurse. The Nurse was so compassionate and caring that I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I applied to Napier University in Edinburgh and was accepted. However, with such a large family, finding a home proved very difficult and, very reluctantly, I had to turn the offer down as I felt I was holding a place back that someone else could have.

I then worked for a multi-disciplinary team which consisted of Housing, Social Services, Health, Education and the Procurator Fiscal of Ayr. We trained all the departments in Safeguarding and other issues related to young people. It was during this spell that a member of the team who was a Nurse encouraged me to apply to University of Paisley to do mental health nursing. I was fast approaching 40 and I knew I had to do it then or I never would. However, on completing the form, I ticked the wrong box and that's how I ended up doing Adult Nursing – the best mistake I have ever made! My very first placement was in an Elderly Care Hospital and I knew from my first day that elderly care was an area I wanted to specialise in.

After I qualified, I worked in a closed dementia unit in Scotland - a very challenging role but also very rewarding. One morning, coming off night duty, I came across an advert for a family run Nursing Home in Surrey. My partner is a Dorking lad and was desperately missing home - I remember reading the advert and thinking

that it all sounded too good to be true but, being curious, I applied. Everything just fell into place, we were coming on holiday to England at the time of the interview; we found a house in Cranleigh with no problems; a school for my youngest son and I knew that I was meant to come to Birtley to work. So with my partner Steve, my son Callum and my 2 cats, Lacey and Katie, the Scottish fraternity descended on Surrey. Although Birtley is fast paced and busy, that was the best decision I have ever made.

Karen and the Board have always been so supportive and Karen fully understands that I miss my family in Scotland terribly and has often helped me blow my nose when I've had to wave them goodbye when they return home. Birtley is a truly unique place and I consider myself a very fortunate person to work with such lovely people, to care for such kind Residents and to look out of each window and be met with stunning views. I have done training in Palliative Care, Dementia, Diabetes and I am awaiting my results for my Mentorship course, which I had to complete at a Masters level due to having a degree already. The results are due on the 31st of July, so everyone please cross your fingers and toes. I would also like to say that the Carers are outstanding and are such a hard-working team; they have my greatest respect.

Five years on, I have gone from a wide-eyed Staff Nurse to a blurry-eyed Deputy Manager and I would like to thank all the team, the Board and the Residents for their support and well wishes in my new post.

A massive thank you for my years at Birtley so far.

**Michelle Hutchison**  
**Deputy Manager**

# Variety in Activities



So often we are asked “How do you manage to think of all the different activities each month?” I think the honest answer is that it is not so much the different activities but the implementation of them in varying and imaginative ways that makes the difference. There are certain activities that we schedule into the programme each month, and we would not be very popular with our Residents if we omitted them but this gives an element of continuity and familiarity which in turn gives a feeling of security. However, within this “comfort zone” of knowing what to expect, variety is the key to success.

2017 has been an exceptionally busy year and I can hardly believe that we are now into the second half of it! I am so grateful to the team for their continuing enthusiasm, sense of humour and commitment, without which the activities wouldn't be nearly such fun for our Residents or us!

Trying to condense several months' programmes is not easy but, if I use the letters of the word '**ACTIVITIES**', I hope to give you a flavour of what we have been doing between Easter and into the Summer months.

## **A** - ART & ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES.

We always have a number of very artistic Residents and their talents can usually be seen by taking a look at the paintings in their rooms as, undoubtedly, they will have brought one or two with them. We tailor the Art Afternoons so that everyone who comes will feel able to

have a go, and we are now wanting to keep some of the larger group efforts to decorate the walls of the Activity Room. It is always a delight to see how thrilled the residents are with their achievements and the stone-carving with Simon Keeley was a particular success.

**C** - **CREATIVE CRAFT & COOKING.** A great deal of encouragement is needed for these, but as long as the project is not too taxing or time consuming, the end results are greatly admired by all. You would think that Cooking would be extremely popular but so often we get comments like "it's lovely not to have to cook anymore!" so we do this less frequently.

**T** - **T'AI CHI** has its followers although it is not everyone's favourite form of exercise! But those who take part, always seem to enjoy it, especially as it is followed by a delicious Birtley Tea! The last THEMED supper was 'A Mediterranean Evening' and Kerry (Kitchen Manager) produced an amazing Greek Supper. The bubbly and wine, together with the Greek music got everyone in the mood!

**I** - **IMAGINATION** and **INSPIRATION** are what the Activities Team must have to do their job well. We welcome any ideas from Residents and their families so don't be shy to suggest something new.

**V** - recently a **VISIT** to the Normandy Therapy Gardens, near Guildford, was arranged as well as trips to Garden Centres, Open Studios, and the monthly tea party in the Bramley Church Room. VISITS from various speakers are always popular especially the wildlife ones - particularly Jenny Nockolds' talk with slides about Volunteering with

Elephants in Thailand, and Sherry McKelvie with her beautiful African wildlife photos.

**I** - **INDIVIDUAL** needs. We meet these with one-to-one visits by our dedicated volunteers, Tessa Johnson and Elaine Pollington, and Wellbeing Mentor, Cheryl Searle. Our PatDog and PatCat visits are also popular.

**T** - **TALKING.** We had a very successful afternoon recently when we asked Residents to bring down a favourite item and tell us why it was special to them. A wonderful variety of objects were shown which gave a valuable opportunity to talk about the past.

**I** - **INTERESTING** is what we try to make all the activities!

**E** - **ENTERTAINMENT & EXERCISE.** In July we trialled an Entertainment Group, Strictly Entertainment, who performed a virtual cruise called "All Aboard" - a musical journey around the world which was great fun. A different form of Exercise is also included each week.

**S** - **SINGING** makes everyone happy so we include this as often as possible but especially when we have our monthly Piano Recital with Kevin Jacot when, for the last 20 minutes, as many of the staff as can, join in for a Sing-along of old favourites.

This is just a few of the activities that take place but they are always fun, so from the Team and myself, thank you for all your appreciation and participation.

*Caroline Whalley*

# Tasty Morsels

## *from the Kitchen*

Summer is now well upon us and we have already seen a few weeks of high temperatures. This, coupled with a few good storms, has brought us plenty of tasty produce like strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes and courgettes, to name just a few, from the kitchen gardens which has been a pleasure to incorporate into our daily menus.

The kitchen garden saw a steady supply of strawberries including those for our annual strawberry tea which were enjoyed together with some homemade scones, Victoria sponge cake and even a glass of Pimms. Everyone had a pleasant afternoon and even some sunshine managed to shine through.

Our last special evening followed a Mediterranean theme with tastes coming from several different islands and areas around the Mediterranean. Many thanks to all the Kitchen team who helped prepare a feast for our Residents to enjoy: Tzatziki, Greek Salad, Couscous, Antipasti, Caramelised red onion and goats cheese tart, Greek-style lamb with orzo followed by Spiced Figs with ginger mascarpone and Baklava. We were all treated to some Greek music with dancing from Karen, Betty and Cheryl with many staff members dressing for the occasion.

I have had the pleasure to speak with many of our residents and get to know everyone since I started here in January, either as a one-to-one or as a group discussions like the "Let's Talk" afternoons or Ice Cream Tasting. This helps me, as the Head of Kitchen, find out what everyone likes so that we can better tailor our menus to you, our Residents. I am keen to keep this going and to speak to all our Residents as often as I can, so please do request to see me if you have any suggestions for our menus or dishes you would like to try.

We welcome Michael Foreman to the Kitchen team as Kitchen Porter, Michael is local to the Cranleigh area and joined us here in June.

**Kerry Nash**



# Enjoy a day at Birtley

People come to our Day Club for a variety of different reasons: a change of scenery and companionship; to provide the chance for a regular carer to have a day off; to enjoy a home-cooked lunch with new friends or to just sample life at Birtley.

Whatever the reason, this popular facility also offers a chance for some physiotherapy or a massage, perhaps a visit to the hairdresser or to have assistance with a long hot bath. 'Regulars' often time their visits to fit in with Activities they wish to participate in - we can send out our Monthly Activities programme on request.

The day starts with Morning coffee, lunch is enjoyed in the Orangery, while Afternoon activities are followed by tea all for a small daily charge. One of our regulars, Mrs Kathleen Graham, seen here with her son Richard, celebrated her 100th visit recently. She was extremely surprised to learn that she had been as many times as this!

Mrs Penelope Adamson, another Day "clubber", celebrated her birthday at home recently, which we recognised on her next visit. Visitors to Day Club soon feel part of our extended Birtley family and love to catch-up with their new friends.

Before attending the club, a simple pre-visit assessment is carried out to ensure that we can meet the needs of the individual while they are here. If you would like further details, please contact us or see our website:

[www.birtleyhouse.co.uk](http://www.birtleyhouse.co.uk)





*Weysight visit to the*

## Sculpture Garden

Every year, our friends from the Weysight (formerly GAMBIT) groups of blind and partially-sighted come to Birtley to enjoy the annual Sculpture Exhibition. Unfortunately, this year dreary weather meant that they couldn't enjoy the outdoor exhibits and our lovely grounds but, with plenty of indoor sculpture to see, everyone had a wonderful time.

Coffee was served in the Orangery along with cakes, shortbread and piles of warm cheese scones which had been made by Rachel, one of our chefs. Her scones are particularly

delicious and had been made following a special request from members of the groups and their sighted volunteers, who have enjoyed them on previous visits here.

The Weysight groups in Godalming and Guildford help adults of all ages who have a visual impairment develop new communication skills so that they can increase their independence, with classes to learn Braille, Moon, Touch Typing and IT skills. For more details see: [www.weysight.org.uk](http://www.weysight.org.uk) @WeySight



# Jeremy Hunt

## *visit to Birtley House*



A hastily arranged visit to Birtley in the hectic run-up to the General Election gave our Residents the chance to discuss social care issues in the UK with the then Conservative Parliamentary Candidate, Jeremy Hunt; his third visit to Birtley. Chatting to all the 11 assembled residents in turn, he focused on just a few at a time to shake hands with them and answer their individual questions. After coffee with homemade shortbread, and a quick visit to the Virtual Dementia Tour Training bus which was on site that day, he drove off to resume campaigning.





# Garden Views *Summer 2017*



As usual, things have been as busy as ever out in the gardens and despite a few weather-related setbacks, all is relatively under control.

In the Kitchen Garden the *halow group* are doing a great job of managing the crops, their enthusiasm and willingness to get on with the less glamorous tasks has been absolutely fantastic. The two late frosts all but wiped-out early planted seedlings

and then six weeks of no rain made watering a daily task. All the hard work and weather-watching has paid off though and we are now producing bountiful crops of beans, courgettes, tomatoes, beetroot and potatoes; with squash, pumpkins and raspberries all swelling nicely in the sun; plus cabbages, purple sprouting broccoli and sprouts - there'll be plenty of picking still to do.

Elsewhere in the garden, the newly formed standard wisteria on the front lawn promised much, and were covered in flower buds but sadly the frosts killed everything and left them looking very poorly. Luckily though, they soon perked up after a good soaking and must be pruned weekly to keep them under control. Fingers crossed for flowers next year.

The newly landscaped rockery has been a huge success with many people taking in the new vantage point across the parkland from the raised bench. One slight setback is that the upper pool has developed a leak and has started to undermine the surrounding soil, therefore at the time of writing the pump has been turned off, so we can clean out several years of silt build up and locate and fix the leak. So hopefully it'll soon be back to full working order.

The long walk is in full colour now, the intensive early season weeding has paid off. Gaps have been

filled and more plants will be incorporated next year to add some height.

The Rose Garden is also in full bloom, despite the drought making the grass look slightly parched and the annual Strawberry tea, held in the garden, was a great success and enjoyed by all.

One major disappointment, and a victim of the late frosts, is the orchard in the garden. Some of the blossom-laden trees succumbed to the sub-zero temperatures, wiping out 99% of any potential fruit buds. If you look closely there are a few apples that made it but sadly barely enough to make a decent sized crumble! The cider apple orchard however survived and has lots of fruit to pick.

The variety of wildlife seen around the estate continues to grow. Some not always wanted - on several mornings the first task of the day has been chasing out Roe Deer and the Rabbits continue to be an annoyance! Other are always welcome, from the Little Owl who can be seen most mornings perched on the rose garden gate, the Kestrels who are controlling the Vole population, a Fox who is regularly seen lurking under the beech tree and the Red Kites and Buzzards, whose flying displays are a joy to watch.

As the year marches on, thoughts are already turning to the autumn and potential further improvements in and around the garden. We'll be clearing out some of the unused beds in the kitchen garden to make more space to grow a wider variety of fruit and veg. Seed catalogues have been thoroughly flicked through, looking for some new plants to incorporate into the beds and borders. The lawns have suffered this year due to drought and extreme heat, so a programme of restoration work will begin in the autumn to revitalise them. The planting in the Secret Garden will be improved and evened out. Also, as previously mentioned, the pond will be getting a good clean up, with some of the encroaching vegetation cut back.

Hopefully the summer will continue to be warm and the gardens continue to be enjoyed by everybody.

**Matt Miller**  
Gardener

## *Bringing* Summer colour *to the terrace*



Former keen gardener, Resident Betty Steele, volunteered to help brighten up the roof terrace which was equipped with baskets and containers but was rather lacking in colour. So, with funding from the home and accompanied by her daughter and granddaughter, Betty had a trip to a garden centre to select the plants she required.

Enlisting the help of other keen gardeners, the Residents quickly transformed the terrace. They then enjoyed a cup of coffee while they sat back to admire their handiwork. Betty, assisted by Cheryl our Wellbeing Mentor, has since set up a rota for watering and deadheading to ensure that the pots continue to look their best throughout the summer months. Many thanks to Betty and her team for all their hard work!



# Walking in *their shoes*



In life, you may sometimes look around you at others and think “I wish I could see what they see; have the same experiences in life; feel what they feel; enjoy what they enjoy”.

If you found that walking in their shoes made you feel uncomfortable, disorientated, vulnerable and confused you’d quickly go off the idea. However, what if there was no escape and this was your new life? A terrifying prospect.

1 in 5 people in the UK either have, or are likely to develop, dementia; of those born today that figure rises to 1 in 3. It is likely that many of us will develop it as we get older, or will know someone who does.

Although Birtley House Nursing Home does not specialise in dementia care, and are unable to accept the most challenging cases, we all receive basic training as part of the very wide syllabus we cover with our Nurses, Carers and support staff. Our forward-thinking Matron/Registered Manager, Karen Williams, decided to take the training a stage further and arranged for the Virtual Dementia Tour to visit; this is the only scientifically and medically proven method of giving a person with a healthy brain an experience of what dementia might be like. By walking in the shoes of a person with dementia, the aim of this simulated training experience was for us to start to understand the issues that they experience every day.

36 members of staff were trained throughout the day. Divided into groups of three, wearing glasses which mimicked macular degeneration; headphones which played a cacophony of random sounds; with inserts in our shoes which made even standing painful and large gloves so that we lost much of the peripheral sensitivity in our hands, we were moved into a darkened room with flashing lights. We were thrust out of our comfort zone and into a world which was terrifying.

Although the time spent within the bus was only eight minutes, it seemed an age and was utterly exhausting. In the extensive debrief sessions we all described slightly differing experiences, showing us that people with dementia will not experience an identical path and progression of this disease. However, we all experienced feelings of confusion and isolation. We felt lost, disorientated, intimidated and vulnerable; often unable to move, to follow simple instructions, to complete simple tasks. We often felt that the safest thing to do was nothing!

The purpose of training is to learn – what did we take away from that day? It had helped us to begin to understand and empathise with the day-to-day experiences of people living with dementia. What will make them feel more comfortable, what will help them maintain dignity and what will help them to make sense of the confusing world around them. By making some simple adjustments to the way we give care, we can start to improve the lives of people living with dementia. We will do precisely that.

Coincidentally, Jeremy Hunt, our MP, had arranged to come to Birtley on that day to chat to our Residents. So, we took the opportunity for him to speak to the Trainer and to give him a brief insight into what people living with dementia may experience. It was a very powerful and thought provoking day.

*Janet Hall*



# Work Experience at Birtley House



It is increasingly difficult for the young to enter the highly competitive job market and having some experience of life in the real world of work is an invaluable addition to their CV. These two young people made the most of their week at Birtley:

Callum, the son of Deputy Manager, Michelle Hutchinson, came to Birtley to work alongside Sam Millward in the gardens doing a week of work experience during April.

Callum is at Glebelands School and had just finished his mock GCSEs and will take GCSE in 2018. Callum is not sure what he wants to do for his career, so is trying out different things and feels that maybe working outside and not being stuck at a desk, might be more his thing. Callum said he was really enjoying his time at Birtley and his Mum reported that he was sleeping 'like a log' with all the fresh air and hard work!

Katherine came to Birtley on a work experience placement for a week in April. She is studying at Guildford College, doing a two-year Health & Social Care Level 3 B-Tec qualification.

Katherine is 16 and lives at home with her family, including her Grandpa who has had two strokes



and has dementia. Katherine helps her Mum with caring for her Grandpa which is quite a demanding task, but it has been this experience that has led her in the direction that she is currently following, of working with older people which she really enjoys.

The B-Tec qualification requires a variety of different placements and Katherine has worked alongside both adults and children with learning difficulties. She said she prefers working with adults as she found the children's temper tantrums extremely challenging!

Whilst at Birtley, Katherine has helped in the kitchens, in the Mews and shadowed Care staff. She has also joined in the Monday morning Activity where she enjoyed chatting with Residents and participating in the Quiz. She has found that she really enjoys the social interaction of working alongside people and being able to make a difference.

***Many thanks to Rachel Richards who interviewed these two work experience students while they were working hard at Birtley***

# Staff News

## Promotions/ Change of Role

Vimla Koolash has been promoted to Clinical Lead Nurse while Michelle Hutchinson has been promoted to Deputy Manager.

Julie Eagleton has been promoted to Senior Care Assistant. Senior Carer, Amparo Romero, has stepped down from her permanent contract but stays on the 'Bank'.

Cheryl Searle, who has held the dual role of Mews Warden and Wellbeing Mentor, has stepped down from the Mews Warden role but has increased her hours as Wellbeing Mentor, following the departure of Rosa Dollerson.

Jo-Jo Beard has stepped down from her permanent Mews Warden contract, but remains on the 'Bank' too.

In a change in emphasis in her role Janet Hall, formerly Marketing and IT Manager, becomes Internal Communications & Digital Marketing Manager.

## New starters and returning staff

A big 'Birtley Welcome' to all the following: Care Assistants Lauren Edwards, Kirsty Foster (a Medical

Student who is working for us over the Summer) and Kimberley Plowright; while Care Assistant Bonita Mubaiwa returns to Birtley. Laxmi Gurung has joined the Housekeeping Team. Staff Nurse, Ildiko Peter, has joined the nursing team. Michael Foreman joins the Kitchen Team as Kitchen Porter.

## Farewell and Good luck to ...

Care Assistants, Sita Gurung; Donna Welch; Malin Rantala; Jessica Caswell. Wellbeing Mentor Rosa Dollerson; Staff Nurse Richard Gilbert, who has moved to Cornwall, and Marianne Nazareno; Pantry Assistants Connor Coster, Michal Tyniec and Robert Abraham, who left after an incredible 22 years of service and Marketing Assistant, Rachel Richards. Rachel will remain a familiar face around Birtley as her Mother is one of our Residents.

## Some Celebrations

The beginning of August saw our Head of Administration and Bookkeeper, Gill Benhassoune, celebrate 10 years at Birtley, while Rachel Enticknapp celebrated an amazing 20 years as a chef in the Birtley Kitchen! Our special thanks and congratulations to both ladies for all their hard work and support over so many years.



# Bits and Pieces

## Dates for your Diary

Help us raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support when we join the 'Biggest Coffee Morning in the World'. Last year we raised an amazing £820 – with your help and support we might be able to raise even more this year.



Please note that our coffee morning will infact be a **coffee afternoon!**

Also, we are holding ours **the day before** most other Macmillian coffee mornings in the country.

We like to do things differently at Birtley!

**Thursday September 28th 2.30 – 4.30pm**

**Drawing Room**

**Coffee, homemade cakes, cake stall and tombola**

**Entrance: £4 which includes coffee and cake**

## The Surrey Hills Wood Fair 2017

Now in its 8th year, this popular event for all the family returns to Birtley Estate on 30th September and 1st October. Further details: [www.surreyhills.org/events/the-surrey-hills-wood-fair/](http://www.surreyhills.org/events/the-surrey-hills-wood-fair/)



## Teas in the Village

Tea parties are usually held once a month in the Parish Room, attached to Holy Trinity Church in Bramley. These teas are free of charge (donations are welcome) and are open to all Bramley Residents – so that includes all our Residents. Visits to the teas are not part of the regular activities programme and as such, we are only able to transport up to six Residents each time. If more are interested, we will form a rota. Dates for future teas will issued in the monthly Activities programme and the visits will be co-ordinated by Cheryl Searle, Wellbeing co-ordinator.

## Hearing Aid Champions

Birtley has a new venture up and running - Hearing Aid Champions are a group of volunteers who have been trained in the servicing and cleaning of hearing aids. Our Hearing Aid Champions, Sue and Carol, visit every six weeks and go around to see all Residents who have hearing aids. They make sure that the aids are in good working order and clean. They even supply new batteries for each Resident. This service is of a great benefit to our Residents, saving them a lot of time and effort going to the audiology clinic or waiting at the hospital. Sue and Carol will be visiting Birtley next on **Friday 15th September 10.30 – 12.30**. The visits are organised our Support Services co-ordinator, Dawn Critchell, who will let you know further dates once they have been arranged.

## Like Birtley on Facebook

Keep up-to-date with all the news from Birtley House on our Facebook page **@birtleyhouse** or our regular blog on the Birtley website.

Don't forget to **'Like'** the page and share it with your family and friends to help spread the world of all that we do so well here.

Find us on 

## Many thanks ...

To all the residents, relatives and friends who have completed a **Carehome.co.uk** Review Card.

Birtley now has a review rating of 9.9 (out of a maximum 10) making us 1st in the listing on Carehome.co.uk for Care Home in: Surrey, Guildford area and Guildford. Brilliant!

Don't worry if you haven't completed a card yet and would like to – it's an on-going

process and new reviews are always most welcome. It's very easy to do:

- Cards are available from Reception or the Activities team
- Complete the few questions on the card add your comments
- Send it **FREEPOST**
- Reviews are checked by Carehome to ensure they aren't fraudulent and then posted on-line next to the Birtley House listing





## Birtley

### **Do you want to receive this newsletter?**

House & Home is available via email or printed format. You can also download it from our website. Please let us know if you wish to unsubscribe from the distribution list or if you would prefer to receive the newsletter in a different format.

*The next edition will be Winter 2017.*

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