



# house & home

The Birtley House Group Newsletter, Winter 2013

## More than just care

Listening to the various speakers at the recent annual conference of the English Community Care Association, I was both pleased and frustrated in equal measure. Pleased, because it seems that the industry is finally grasping the importance of having care homes involve fully with their local communities, so as to break down the misunderstandings of how residents are looked after in nursing homes. At Birtley House, our ethos of working with the local community has always been at the heart of what we feel a good nursing home should aim to provide, while plans are very advanced in making sure that we continue in the same vein in 2014 with lots of wonderful events for our residents to enjoy with the local community.

However, I was left feeling frustrated that not enough emphasis is being placed on promoting and encouraging ways to improve the 'quality of life' (and not just the quality of care) for residents in care homes in England. In fact, the phrase was only mentioned once during the conference. For our residents at Birtley House, the importance of being part of something that is so much more than 'just another nursing home' cannot be underestimated when thinking about their quality of life, and although some of our residents might not have the ability to venture too far around our estate to see either

the 700-tree cider apple orchard, the geese and pigs we are rearing, or the beehives where Birtley honey is made, the knowledge that they are part of a living, breathing estate where so much is happening is, I'm sure they would all agree, invaluable to their well-being.

This sense of being involved and connected to a friendly, caring community is even more important for our residents during the cold winter months, as they are safe in the knowledge of being looked after by a truly special nursing team comprising of no less than seventeen nurses and thirty six carers, as well as all the other dedicated staff in different departments (totalling 102!) each of whom are a crucial and important part in helping to give our residents such a rich quality of life. However, we are always looking to find out how we can improve our service, so please feel free to contact myself or any of my family if you have any suggestions, our door is always open.

**Frank Whalley**



*Birtley House*



# Activities For All

As Christmas approaches we are reminded that it is, or should be, a time of thinking of others, and giving to those less fortunate than ourselves. With this in mind, we have, for about 15 years now, supported the nationwide Shoebox Appeal which brings joy to so many children in over 130 different countries. After discussions with some of our Residents, it was decided that we would support The Samaritans Purse Shoebox Appeal, which our local church, Holy Trinity, Bramley, was also supporting.

At Birtley House we believe in encouraging support across the different departments, so attached to their October payslips, I asked each member of staff to donate one small gift for the Shoeboxes, adding that this would immediately give us 100 gifts! Well.....The response was overwhelming! Each day, packages would be added to the collection boxes with noticeable pleasure on the givers' faces. Many Residents donated money which we put aside to cover the "donation" of £3 per box for transport costs. The mountain of shoeboxes was growing ever higher as we all looked forward to the first scheduled

packing day at the end of October when 30 boxes were filled, and the following week a further 20 boxes were completed. Such a fantastic achievement and our sincere thanks to everyone involved, as without this team effort we would never have achieved such a wonderful result. Last year's result was 47 so we've beaten that!

Whilst helping our residents to select which items to pack in their shoebox, it was extremely humbling to see that all the gifts recommended tended to be things that children in the U.K. would take for granted – e.g. toothpaste and toothbrush, pens, pencils, felt-tips, notebooks, hairbrushes, sweets, hats, gloves, scarves and small simple toys. The contents chosen must be for either a girl or boy and for a choice of three different age ranges (2-4, 5-9, 10-14). Each box is then covered with seasonal wrapping paper and labelled appropriately before being collected to start their long journeys around the world. An amazing organizational achievement and we are very happy to play a small part in it. A huge thank-you to all of you who contributed to this very worthwhile cause.





Another activity involving members of staff from different departments, is our monthly sing-along with Kevin Jacot who gives a piano recital before we all enjoy singing together. Numbers vary from month to month but it is encouraging to see newcomers joining us each month. Feedback from the Residents is that they thoroughly enjoy singing with the staff in informal and relaxed surroundings and we are looking forward to developing our Birtley Choir next year.

We have also joined together to remember those who have died in conflicts, past and present, for Remembrance Day. We are all very grateful to Mrs Kathleen Coe, who recently moved from Birtley Mews to an apartment in the main house, and made many beautiful poppy cards donating all the proceeds to the Poppy Appeal.

# A Step Back in Time

Another excellent example of recent inter-departmental co-operation was a special afternoon when the residents were transported back in time to a 1940's/1950's themed Tea Dance. The event was held in a decorated activities' room hosted by two of our care assistants, Gyorgyi Mellor and Cheryl Searle. They were treated to an afternoon of dancing from a visiting volunteer dance group, "Remain Nameless", followed by a sumptuous tea of sandwiches, cakes and pastries, which were provided by assistant chef, Suree and Sister-in-Charge, Kim. A raffle had been organized in which every resident won a prize! The afternoon was a wonderful success and all who attended, thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The afternoon ended with Bob Sable, on behalf of all the residents, thanking Gyorgyi, Cheryl and all those involved, for a happy and memorable time.

As always, the Activities' team endeavour to provide variety, stimulation and fun through the daily activities arranged, knowing how beneficial these Activities are, and we hope that we can give even more enjoyment throughout 2014.

Happy New Year

**Caroline Whalley**



# From Matron's Desk...

Dear Residents

The seasons pass so quickly and already it seems a long time since summer. Thank you for all the kind messages regarding my son's wedding which went really well, we all had a lovely day and the church looked beautiful with all the flowers as did the stunning cake that Kim, Sister-in-charge, made for them.

We have had a really productive year which is reflected in the excellent CQC inspection report. (see opposite).

I was so pleased with the general tone of the inspection and the comments from both staff and resident's. As always, we strive to do better and better and I will be looking at ways to include our residents and their families with both care issues and wider issues during the coming year.

After two years of hard work we finally have a date for the Gold Standard Framework (GSF) inspection to take place. This will be on December 12th. The team will arrive at 10am and stay for the day, sharing lunch with us and hopefully coming to Activities. I will spend a couple of hours with them showing them our paperwork and then Frank and I will show them around Birtley. They will, of course, want to speak to some of our residents and if you would like to be involved please let me know.

If you remember, the GSF was first introduced so that we could improve on the quality of life for our residents, and to help prevent hospital admissions. It has also given us an opportunity to explore Advanced Directives with our residents, where they have the chance to let us know what care needs they would like in the future, so that we ensure we do the right thing for each of one of them. In essence, it is about living well until we die. Hopefully we are achieving this, and that everyone feels a sense of involvement with what goes on here at Birtley.



I am looking forward to another Christmas at Birtley and we plan to produce and perform a Christmas song for our residents from the staff. We have enjoyed joining our residents during the music afternoons with Kevin, singing is so good for you both physically and mentally and I hope we can continue with this activity together in 2014.

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



# Report on the Recent CQC Inspection at Birtley House Nursing Home

As you may or may not be aware the Care Quality Commission (CQC) are the organisation responsible for regulating all health and social care services in this country and it is their responsibility to check that the essential standards of quality and safety are met within each establishment. These are the standards that our residents should expect and deserve.

The CQC carry out unannounced visits to nursing homes from time to time, and on November 3rd we had just such a visit from a CQC officer. We always welcome these visits as we are able to showcase what we do and also seek any advice from the officer so we can continue to upgrade our services in line with legislation. Often the visiting officer has a medical background and on this occasion was a doctor.

During her visit she was able to observe care being carried out, to speak with residents and any family members present, as well as speaking to staff about their experience of working at Birtley.

The nursing staff and myself were able to demonstrate the holistic approach to care that we work hard to give, and I would like to thank the staff on duty that day for dealing so professionally with the officer, in fact she commented on the good impression the staff had made on her.

The report was extremely good and it is clear from the comments that both residents and staff are happy and feel involved in our community within Birtley.

What was seen by the officer was a partnership between residents and staff - what I like to think of as "our Birtley family" – and I was proud to show the officer what happens within all the departments that work together to provide the type of atmosphere that promotes good health and happiness. It was a really positive visit with a positive outcome. There are a few recommendations for us to try which we will be implementing in the near future, but we always welcome advice regarding ways in which we can improve our service to our residents.

I was impressed with some of the comments from the people who spoke with the officer and a few examples of these are below. To see the full report please visit [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk), or copies can be made available at reception.

A big thank you to all staff and to all the residents for making this a really great place to be.

**Karen Williams - Matron/Registered Manager**

*"I do have a choice how I spend my day"*

*"The staff are very kind and they work hard to make sure I am comfortable"*

*"I feel very safe and secure"*

*"Care plans ensure we provide the right care for the people at the right time and in the right ways to make sure people are comfortable and safe"*

*"This is a fabulous place to work and I am proud to be part of the team"*



# Garden Views Winter 2013

As the days start to shorten and the leaves are turning from their summer greens to autumn browns, it's the time of year to reflect on the past season and realise that as a gardener you can never say your work is finished, there's always something else to do.

It has been an incredible year for fruit, the cold spring, followed by the warmest summer for several years and a mild, wet autumn, have all combined to provide ideal conditions for fruit production. Bumper crops of all the soft fruits, particularly raspberries, have kept the kitchen staff on their toes and contributed greatly to the fantastic food they cook here. A big thank you must go out from all the garden staff to the chefs for keeping us well sustained throughout the year!

The lower half of the Long Walk is filling in nicely as the plants settle in. The upper half has had a year of intense weed control and with any luck will be planted up in the spring and complete the re-development of these herbaceous borders. Alas the same can't be said of the wildflower border where the Mare's Tail has put up a considerable fight and therefore will need another year of being fallow in order to really get this most persistent of weeds under control.

The late summer feed of the lawns has greened them up nicely after the scorching they got during July and August. They are now looking very healthy and the continued programme of feeding, weeding and scarifying will continue. The lack of an early frost has meant the grass has kept growing well into October and November and as

much as we love mowing, we could do with a rest now!

The Kitchen Garden continues to provide seasonal vegetables and cut flowers. The weather again has helped with fruit and flower production and it is always gratifying to see the process all the way from a packet of seeds to plate. There is always a tinge of sadness when we pull out the spent plants, a feeling tempered by the prospect of it being even better next year.

As the work load slows down over the winter months, it's a great time in the garden to plan for next year and although there are no major projects on the horizon we will be continuing to improve the existing areas, tidying the corners that always get overlooked and getting on with the jobs that we don't get time to do during the growing season. As a team, we are always looking at ways of developing the gardens and grounds to further improve the stunning surroundings we are so very lucky to be part of and, as always, please let us know if you have any suggestions.

Overall, it has been a great year in the gardens and we hope you have enjoyed being out in them as much as we have enjoyed working in them. There is always room for improvement and next year, fingers crossed, will be even better.

From the all the estate staff, Emma, Paul, Theo, Geoff and myself, we would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Matt Miller - Deputy Head Gardener**

# Producing Birtley Cider



With the cider orchard now into its 3rd year and becoming well established, the first proper harvest has been completed and in total, an estimated two tonnes of apples were hand-picked and sorted into box pallets. Many thanks must go to the garden staff, Theo and our work experience student, Ryan, and the teams from Oakleaf Enterprise who helped pick.

Finally, the juice is filtered and pumped into stainless steel vats.

Despite a few teething problems getting used to the new equipment, it has been a great success and we have produced almost 1000 litres of juice that will, hopefully, be fermented into quality cider. Unfortunately, we won't be able to try any for at least 3-4 months as the process of turning the natural sugars into alcohol slowly works its magic. We will all have to just wait in anticipation until then! Many thanks to all those who helped in this process: Ann Gooding, Ken Ashwell, Ryan Lintott, Steve Livesey-Bennet and Andy Holdaway all gave up their free time to help us and it has been, all in all, a fascinating, sociable and immensely satisfying process so far.



It was also a pleasure to be able to show a number of our residents around the set-up, Peter Losson and John Browne made a small detour on their morning walk to have a look and June Sabel and Dr. Bobby Reynolds also had extended tours of the pressing in action later in the day. It really has been most rewarding to share the experience with such a cross section of our community.

Half the machinery shed had to be cleared, cleaned and thoroughly sterilised prior to the cider mill, press and tanks being installed and a visit by Waverley's Environmental Health team. I am delighted to say that on the 7th of November our inaugural press got under way.

The orchard is still in its infancy and nowhere near full production and we expect to double our yields year-on-year for the next 4 years until we are eventually producing over 20 tonnes of apples from our 700 trees. Continued nurturing of the trees will be key to achieving this and we will soon be taking delivery of a few more to complete the half rows and fill in the gaps where there have been some losses.

The apples are washed and then pulped. The pulp is formed into a 'cheese'. The 'cheeses' are then stacked and pressed to squeeze out all the juice.

## Estate Update

Autumn is finally showing its true colours down in the woods as November begins to start getting some frostier mornings. Whilst some of the leaves have completely fallen, many oaks are only just becoming aware that winter is on its way.

Next year we will purchase a new set of weaners to continue our bracken management plan, which has been so successful this year. We plan to double our livestock numbers in 2014 and then plant the cleared areas with new trees as part of a sustainable woodland management plan that I am currently reviewing. This will have many positive effects in the woodland ranging from increased habitat for nightingales, butterflies, bluebells and many different mammals. The timber will then be sold as firewood and charcoal as it has been this year - please see Tim if you'd like to buy some.

The pigs have very little to feed upon now, so they are very lucky to have over a ton of apple mash, left over from the last couple of weeks of apple pressing, to get their snouts into. They will be leaving Birtley soon and if anyone would like to purchase some free-range, apple-fed woodland pork over the next few weeks then please speak to Tim.

**Theo Tramblinas**

# Birtley's Christmas Traditions



Sharing Christmas pleasure has been one of our strongest traditions. From my earliest childhood memories I recall that, apart from a stocking from Father Christmas, we never opened our family presents until we had given out presents to all the residents and staff. The house was always simply decorated with holly, ivy and a Christmas tree – originally in the drawing room but for more than 40 years we have put it in the main hall where a tree approaching 20ft in height is quite dramatic!

My father's birthday was 22nd December and my parents usually hosted a large dinner party to celebrate. On our return from school we always had to construct a Christmas 'scene'. This would take the form of a fairy castle or winter wonderland often some 3 feet long made of polystyrene and artificial snow with groups of figures which would stand in the hall. Thinking back it is hard to comprehend how we had time for so much preparation! As long as I can remember, residents and staff have joined the family to celebrate on Christmas Day. Before we had lifts it was the job of my brother and I to carry those whose walking was unsteady down the main stairs in a special lifting chair. I am sure Health and Safety inspectors would have a fit if we tried this now! Even as recently as the 1990s there was no demand for a dining room as all residents preferred to eat in their rooms. They did however come down for a glass of sherry and presents and the family individually decorated every Christmas lunch tray with

treats and crackers. Hours were spent polishing fruit I recall! Subsequently Christmas lunch was set up in the Activities' Room and then moved to the new Orangery five years ago. Now it has grown each year with more residents and guests joining us and is overflowing from the Orangery into the Drawing Room.

For many years we have launched our Birtley Christmas with a carol concert with the Blackheath and Bramley Choral Society. This has become a very special evening with so many residents, guests and staff that we are perilously close to capacity! Although it is a very busy time, it is wonderful for us that our lovely 'extended family' at Birtley enjoy sharing Christmas with us and we look forward to doing so for many years to come.

***Simon Whalley***



# Events Update

## Surrey Hills Wood Fair: October 2013



This annual event, hosted by Birtley House and held in the parkland here, is organised by Surrey Hills Enterprises (SHE), a Community Interest Company (CIC) which promotes rural businesses and the development of the local economy. Simon is the Chairman of SHE and he, along with members of the Birtley House staff, plays an integral role in the organisation of this event.

We were blessed with wonderful weather over the weekend - the Sunday was sunny and positively warm! This helped pull in the crowds, with 4,500 visitors of all ages and countless dogs of all shapes and sizes coming to join in the fun.

There were over 100 stalls, demonstrations and activities spread throughout the parkland and woodland including: music, art and craft stalls, wood-burning stoves, impressive heavy and vintage machinery, nature walks, tree climbing, pond-dipping, chainsaw sculpture and a wide variety of coppice crafts.

Many of our staff and residents looked around and thanks must go to the Care Assistants who pushed wheelchairs over the rather bumpy terrain. As usual, our intrepid Mrs Coe took the opportunity to sell her homemade cards, many of which had a woodland theme, in aid of the Community Foundation for Surrey.

We had wonderful feedback from visitors, some of whom came on both days as there was so much to see and do. Comments such as the 'Best Day Ever' made all the hard work worthwhile.

The next Surrey Hills Wood Fair will be 4th and 5th October 2014.

## Dates for your Diary

### Rare Plant Fair

The next Rare Plant Fair ([www.rareplantfair.co.uk](http://www.rareplantfair.co.uk)) will be on Sunday 6th April, 11am – 4pm. Once again this promises to be an exciting event for all gardeners with a wide variety of plants on sale, many of which are unusual or difficult to find. The exhibiting Nurseries will be on hand to advise you about which plants would best suit your garden, along with tips for success.

### The Sculpture Garden

Our annual exhibition, The Sculpture Garden, will run from Saturday 3rd May – Sunday 1st June. Once again, we expect to have approximately 150 exhibits on display, in a wide variety of media. With a quiz for the under 12s, the exhibition makes a super outing for all the family – especially on weekend afternoons and Bank Holidays when we'll be serving tea and delicious homemade cakes. Catering can be arranged at other times for Group visits - either during the public opening hours with tea, coffee and cakes available or as a private evening viewing of the sculpture with drinks and canapés. For details please contact [events@birtleyhouse.co.uk](mailto:events@birtleyhouse.co.uk) or 01483 899513.

Further information on events at Birtley House can be found on: [www.birtleyevents.co.uk](http://www.birtleyevents.co.uk).

**Janet Hall**

# Excerpts from a Case Study by Grundon: A Caring Approach to Waste Management

Until summer 2012, Birtley House had worked with several different waste contractors but, Tim took the decision to try and consolidate waste management under one contractor.

“We used to have two or three companies involved in the various waste disposal streams but new charges were introduced which didn’t work in our favour, so we took the opportunity to review the contract.

Wherever possible we try to work with local suppliers and companies with personality. We looked at a lot of options but Grundon Waste Management impressed us, they were also a long-standing family business and right from the start, worked hard to give us the solution we were looking for. For us this was the closest we could get to a local business with a very personal approach.”

Today, Birtley House employs just over 100 staff to look after the 40 or so residents and maintain the exceptional grounds and gardens which provide a quality of environment which must be almost unique in the sector. Inevitably, it generates a considerable amount of waste – from infectious healthcare waste, sharps and out-of-date drugs to offensive waste such as dressings and incontinence pads; together with general waste, recycling and hazardous waste, including detergent bottles, disused electrical items, light bulbs and batteries.

Grundon invited five members of staff from Birtley House to tour its Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and joint venture Lakeside Energy from Waste (EfW) operations at its base at Colnbrook, near Slough, and Tim and his team were very impressed with the operation.

“I knew they would be good at recycling, but I hadn’t appreciated everything else they do in terms of avoiding landfill and turning waste into energy.

Although Grundon were a very competitively priced solution, cost wasn’t the deciding factor. Visiting the Colnbrook facilities and realising that, in one fell swoop, we could virtually eliminate the waste we send to landfill, together with the fact they could offer a total solution for all our waste streams, was what made the difference.

It also helped us to understand the processes better ourselves and in turn, we were able to pass that information on to our staff to help make them more efficient when it comes to disposing of waste.

Grundon was able to give us advice on how to classify waste and we’ve noticed a difference in that nursing staff are now more careful about waste disposal. At one time a lot of material would go into hazardous waste bins which didn’t need to be there and, as we were being charged per bag, we have managed to cut costs a little there.”

The opportunity to work alongside another family business was important for Grundon. The Nursing Home was first registered in 1932 and its heritage draws parallels with Grundon, which was founded in 1929 by engineer Stephen Grundon and moved into the waste management sector in the 1970s. Stephen’s son Norman is still company chairman while his son, Neil, is a very hands-on deputy chairman for the business, which has operations throughout the Thames Valley.

Grundon already has a strong track record in helping organisations divert materials from landfill, encouraging them to recycle or send waste to its EfW facility, where incineration creates around 37 Megawatts of electricity, the

vast majority of which – enough to power around 50,000 homes – is exported into the National Grid.

The company works closely with clients to find the best solutions for their waste management needs and it is this can-do attitude which also struck a chord with Tim.

“Our predominantly female workforce, was finding it hard to use one hand to open a conventional bin lid and then swing the bag in one-handed. None of the other companies we spoke to could help, but Grundon went away and came back with a solution, installing bins with a drop down panel at the front which makes it much easier for our staff. It was the little details like that that made a difference.”

Grundon has now been working with Birtley House for over a year and streamlining the waste collection has seen the installation of 770 litre capacity lockable wheeled bins for clinical waste, together with 1100 litre bins for general waste and mixed recycling. Both of these are collected weekly; while Grundon’s technical department collects non-healthcare hazardous waste separately.

Tim says they are continually looking at ways to reduce the amount of waste and one of the next big targets will be food waste. Grundon already offers a segregated food waste disposal service, where the majority is sent for anaerobic digestion to be turned into biofuel or fertiliser.

Grundon’s Phil Steer, business development manager, who works with Birtley House, said: “We have a very good working relationship with the team, the operation runs very smoothly and we are always looking for new opportunities to support them, such as in the disposal of food waste.”

They are very keen on green credentials and it’s important to them to ensure waste is disposed of by recycling and through our EfW plant instead of going to landfill.”

Underlining its commitment to sustainability, Birtley House has also installed a woodchip boiler, fuelled substantially from wood cut on the estate for all its heating and hot water requirements and, because the property isn’t on mains drainage, it uses a reed bed system to treat waste water to Environment Agency standards, with plans to pump the recycled water to irrigate the garden and cider orchard.





## Welcome

Welcome to Katie Marks who recently joined Birtley House as a Care Assistant.

## Goodbyes

Sadly Julia Clarke, our Dining Room & Menu Supervisor, has decided to retire. She will be much missed as she has been a very dedicated and loyal colleague for 14 years.

Care Assistants Analiza Estallo and Michaela Copley left Birtley recently.

Carolina Castro has been a familiar face at Birtley House for over seven years. Sadly, she has decided to leave her full-time role as Lead Administrator to pursue a career in the NHS, in an Admin Support role. However, the good news is that Carolina will remain working at Birtley as a Receptionist/Administrator on alternate Saturdays, so will remain a valuable member of the Birtley team.

Very best of luck to all our leavers.

## Promotions & Role Changes

Lisa Bosley was recently promoted to Care Supervisor in September. She used to work a dual role as a part-time Receptionist and a Lead Carer. Dawn Critchell is the Care Supervisor in the House and Lisa's promotion is working extremely well, providing Care Supervision in the Annexe.

Senior Staff Nurse Bea Du Plessis has taken on an additional role as Professional Development Nurse.

## Celebrations

Matron, Karen Williams, celebrated a very special birthday recently. Kim Edwards, Sister-in-Charge, made her a stunning 2-tiered cake, decorated with very realistic gerbera iced flowers. The cake was much appreciated by Karen and all the staff. Karen then moved onto a second celebration with the residents in afternoon activities.

# News from Birtley House

The next edition of House & Home will be Spring 2014.

In the interim, please see our Blog on [www.birtleyhouse.co.uk](http://www.birtleyhouse.co.uk) for the latest news from Birtley House.

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