

# Newsletter

## By Lynn Fearn, Managing Director

Since our spring update, it has been comforting to see some small, yet significant steps towards reintroducing visiting at some Wren Retirement Living Care Homes. This has reflected a downward trend in cases of COVID-19 in both residents and the staff population at our homes.

I know that the last few months have been incredibly tough on relatives, our team members, and most concerningly, our residents. Throughout this period of visiting restrictions, the wellbeing of our residents has been at the forefront of my mind. Our teams have been incredibly creative in finding ways to keep residents in touch with both their loved ones and their local communities. However, while video calls and phone calls have been a great way to stay connected, it just isn't the same as meeting in person.

The decision to close our homes to all visitors was not an easy one to make, but it was the right thing to do to protect those in our care. The recent downward trend in infections in Wren Retirement Living Care Homes shows that the hard work, determination, and the emotional sacrifices made by all involved have paid off.

It has been heart-warming to see some of our residents reunited with loved ones in our safe outside visiting areas where this is possible. Although this great, but carefully managed freedom, has sadly not yet reached all of our residents, we are planning ways to further open our homes to visitors when it is safe to do so.

That said, we do now find ourselves in a climate of localised increases in confirmed cases of COVID-19 and local lockdowns. As we have seen recently in Leicester the North East and the North West, the situation can change rapidly, and should there be evidence of a 'hotspot' in a local area, care

homes must respond rapidly and impose visiting restrictions for the protection of residents and staff. I want to reassure you that any decision to impose visiting restrictions will be reviewed at least every 2 weeks or as further announcements are made by Central Government and Directors of Public Health. They will also be subject to a thorough risk assessment.

I am also exceptionally grateful to our residents and their loved ones for the patience, compassion and loyalty shown to our teams in the past few months. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the hard-working head office team, who have continued to support each of our care homes while facing the challenges of working from home.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding and hope that you and your family are keeping well at this difficult time.



*Staff at Wren House with kind donations from the local community*

# Len's 104th Birthday

Len Goldman, one of our residents at Patcham Nursing Home has enjoyed celebrating his 104th birthday surrounded by fellow residents, one relative and staff members.

The home was filled with cards and balloons as Len marked his special day with a full English breakfast and a birthday cake featuring his favourite photo printed on the top.

Throughout the day, Len received lots of presents and birthday wishes, including a digital photo frame gifted to him by the home so he can display his favourite family memories from throughout his life. Len, who is a keen poet, was also surprised with special bunting, made by activities coordinator Paula Grout, which included the verses from some of the poems that Len has written printed on the side.

As part of the birthday celebrations at the home, Len was joined by his daughter, Fleur, in the home's garden for a special socially-distanced afternoon tea.

Len, who is a former history teacher, was born in Weston-Super-Mare in August 1916, and moved to Brighton as a child. In addition to his keen interest in poetry, he has published a number of books about his life growing up in Brighton and his experiences in India during the war.

Len said: "I had an amazing birthday; the staff members at the home really went above and beyond to make my day special. My favourite part of the celebrations was definitely seeing my daughter, Fleur. The period of restricted visits has been tough, but it felt very special being able to see her again to celebrate this milestone together."



*Len's 104th birthday party at Patcham*

# 100th Birthday Celebration at Linden House



*Hilda's 100th birthday party at Patcham*

Hilda Lake, a resident at Linden House care home in Epsom recently celebrated her 100th birthday. She was joined in the garden by her son, Brian Lake, as she marked her landmark day with a performance from a local entertainer arranged by staff at the home.

Although she received lots of birthday cards and presents, none were more special than the official birthday card she received from the Queen acknowledging her special day. Hilda was born in London in July 1920, shortly after the end of the First World War, and would later move to Luton, Bedfordshire, to work as a personnel officer. While in Luton, Hilda married and had one son before her husband passed away in 1960.

Her son is a regular visitor at Linden House and was able to visit her in the garden. He said: "I'm delighted we got to enjoy this special day together. My mother is a very caring person and I was very proud to celebrate this milestone with her."

Brian also revealed that he believes the secret to his mother's longevity to be genetic. He said: "My grandmother lived well into her 80s and my mother has reached 100. I am positive that it is not a coincidence!"





# Farewell to Sue and Jennifer

Featherton House care home in Deddington said a fond farewell to two dedicated and hard-working members of its team after a collective 25 years of service.

Sue King retired after an impressive sixteen years as housekeeper, while Jennifer Ward, activities coordinator, is also hung up her uniform after nine years of providing entertainment and happiness to residents at the home.

Agi Rygala, interim manager of Featherton House, was keen to thank Sue and Jennifer for their hard work and loyalty over the years, before wishing them both well on their retirements. She said: "I would like to say a huge thank you to both Sue and Jennifer for the loyalty and passion they have shown during their time at Featherton House.

"They have both given years of service, are dedicated to the home and would happily go above and beyond the call of duty to help ensure the comfort and safety of our residents. Everyone at the home will miss them and wishes them the very best for the future."

Ilze Careless, regional manager Wren Retirement Living, added her tribute to the staff members at their retirements. She said: "Sue and Jennifer are shining examples of the dedication and commitment shown at Featherton House day in, day out. On behalf of everyone here at Wren Retirement Living, I would like to wish them a very happy retirement."



*Jennifer Ward and Sue King*

## Paula Celebrates 20 Years at Westerham

We have many long-standing members of staff at Wren Retirement and another is Paula Mahmoodi from Westerham Place care home. Paula began working at Westerham Place in September 2000 at the age of 17. She was at college studying health and social care and accepted the position of carer at the home. A few years later Paula was promoted to senior carer.

Paula is Westerham Place's longest standing member of staff and is a valued member of the team. Paula said: "I love working at Westerham Place, I love looking after the residents and I love working with my colleagues. Westerham Place is my second home and I can't imagine working anywhere else."

Claire Davis, home manager of Westerham Place, said: "Westerham Place would not be the same without Paula working in it. Paula demonstrates everything a carer should be and any home would feel privileged to have her working in it. In the eight years that I have been the home's manager, I have seen her continue to grow within her role."

"She is a fantastic mentor for new and aspiring care staff. Her kindness and dedication to the residents rubs off on everyone. Nothing ever fazes her, and she tackles every new or challenging situation with calmness and kindness and has a way about her which seems to diffuse even the most challenging of situations. Everyone wants to work on Paula's weekend!"

Ann Healy, a resident said "Paula is a very kind person. She lives close by to where I lived, and we talked about the local school as I used to work in a school."



*Paula Mahmoodi celebrates 20 years' service*



# Lockdown at Wren House



During lockdown, staff and residents at Wren House have kept themselves very busy, so much so that they have decided to document their activities in their very own book.

The hardback book, 'Lockdown at Wren House', contains pictures and write ups about all of the things the home got up to during lockdown, including weekly claps for carers, lots of donations from local businesses and a variety of activities. The book is available for family members to purchase if they wish, so they too can share the wonderful memories that Wren House residents made together during the UK's lockdown period.

One of the activity days residents particularly enjoyed was VE Day. The home planned a day filled with celebrations for the residents and everyone took part in themed activities, as well as sharing stories of times gone by with each other.

Facetimeing family members has been a key part of residents' days, and staff members ensured they were able to keep in touch with their families as much as possible. Another staple in Wren House's timetable has been weekly exercise classes, making sure residents could stay on top of their fitness and not feel guilty for indulging in the tasty treats donated by kind-hearted local firms.

Domino's Pizza was one of the businesses which treated everyone at Wren House, sending delicious pizzas, which the home turned into a Pimms and pizza party! One of the residents at Wren House, Pauline Taylor, said: "Lockdown was a strange time for us all, and it will certainly

go down in history. While I am saddened by the losses that families have faced across the world, I'm pleased that I have been able to make some wonderful memories with my Wren House family. "The book is fantastic, and it will be a great way to remember this crazy time in years to come."

