



# SKY’S THE LIMIT FOR BRIAN’S FUNDRAISING

Brian Standring, a resident at Ivy House in Wellington, has completed his fourth charity skydive at the grand old age of 86, raising money for Alzheimer’s Society.



Brian in freefall

After a series of delays due to bad weather, Brian finally performed the jump, followed by what he describes as a “quite comfortable” landing, on 11th June.

“Despite an OK start to the day,” he recalls, “by the time we had gone through the training session and safety video, the weather had become cloudy, gradually getting worse. When we got up there, all we saw was clouds everywhere, as far as we could see.

*“The whole thing took around 25 minutes. It started with a freefall strapped to an instructor, about 30-40 seconds, travelling at around 100 miles per hour.*

***It just felt very, very windy, but I was able to muster plenty of smiles for my photographer!***

*“Then it became still as we slowly descended, now with an open parachute. We went down through the cloud, when you can’t see anything, and then we*

*got a breathtaking view.*

*“Despite the weather, a parachute jump is unique in every way – a superb sight of our land, all stretched out before you; the excitement, the wonder, the colours, and a sure feeling of being in safe hands. Much safer than driving on the M5!*

*“Oh yes, and a birds’ eye view of other birds – quite a strange experience!”*

This was by no means Brian’s

first skydive. Clearly a daredevil at heart, it was his fourth jump. Leaping out of an aeroplane from 15,000 feet – nearly three miles – is a far cry from his normally peaceful life at his home at Ivy House.

However, there is another, more heartfelt reason that Brian undertakes his daring feats.

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Schoolgirls’ dance competition raises thousands



# SPEEDWELL COURT AND WESTFIELD HOUSE HOLD EVENTS TO MARK DEMENTIA AWARENESS WEEK

Residents and their families, friends and carers enjoyed a party and fundraising event held at Westfield House for Dementia Action Week, which ran from 19th-25th May.



Speedwell Court's Dementia Awareness Day gave the audience the chance to hear from expert presenters

The residents' lounge was cheerfully decorated with bunting, and the lovely sunny weather lit up the room as Karl the singer encouraged dancing and singing along to much-loved classics. Pimms, prosecco and mocktails – and of course a good old ‘cuppa’ – were served through the afternoon. Karl took time to personally serenade those who are less mobile while others enjoyed clapping along.

A highlight was Great Abbeyfield Bake-Off, where staff were invited to showcase their baking skills in a friendly competition judged by a discerning panel. Many rose to the challenge and the resulting homemade and decorated cakes were spectacular. Others

had a bit of help thanks to Mr Kipling! After viewing and judging, all the cakes were sold to raise money for the residents' activity fund.

A raffle – featuring some lovely prizes donated by local businesses including Charnwood Brewery, Tesco, Dunelm, Morrisons and Delta Force Paintball – raised £135 which, coupled with other fundraising events and activities, gave an overall total of £375. The money was put towards residents' outings to the Aeropark at Castle Donington and Great Central Railway.

160 miles further south in Southampton, the latest in a series of Dementia Awareness Days was held at Speedwell Court, welcoming those who care for, support, or work with people living with dementia and other cognitive impairments.

With expert speakers from ALS, the NHS and Southampton University, the Dementia Awareness Day offered a wealth of insight, useful tips and information about dementia through a series of workshops and seminars.

Highlights included an overview of the Memory Assessment & Research Centre (MARC), an award-winning organisation that helps to better diagnose, treat, and help people live well with dementia, delivered by research nurse Leanne Cunningham; and a simulation workshop run by Speedwell

Court staff, enabling attendees to step into the shoes of someone living with dementia and experience the challenges they face in everyday life.

Family members and carers who attended learned how to better help loved ones with dementia to live a full life and to retain a degree of independence as their condition develops, and about local services available to support them in their community. Professionals working in the field were supported to develop a deeper understanding of what their clients go through and explore how they can enhance their services.

Speedwell Court's Customer Relations Manager, Justine Owen, said, "Our Dementia Awareness Days ensure that Speedwell Court remains at the forefront of dementia care and support in Hampshire.

"It is important to make the community aware that we are keen to share the knowledge and insight around dementia that we and others have, with local professionals, as well as those who have friends and family affected by the condition. These events provide a great opportunity to learn from each other."



Millie's cake won Abbeyfield Loughborough's Great Abbeyfield Bake Off

# TAMAR HOUSE SCOOPS DOUBLE PRIZE AT CITY AWARDS

Tamar House Care Home in Plymouth enjoyed a successful evening at the Celebrating Excellence in Care Awards, an event organised by Plymouth City Council to highlight the outstanding contributions made each day within the adult social care sector.

Operations Manager, Jamie Graham, triumphed in the Care Home Manager of the Year category, while Lexie Witcher was highly commended in the Rising Star category.

Cllr Mary Aspinall, Plymouth City Council cabinet member for health and adult social care, said, "I'd like to congratulate every single one of our winners and say a big well done to everyone who was nominated. The work you do is so important and often underappreciated.

"These awards are a fantastic opportunity for us to shine a light on all the hard work that takes place every single day across the city to make sure adults with care needs are supported, looked after and helped to live fulfilling, healthy lives."



Award winners at the Celebrating Excellence in Care Awards

# OPEN (ALMOST) ALL HOURS



The honesty shop sells everything the resident need

Abbeyfield House in Brecon has been helping residents to get their everyday essentials by creating an on-site honesty shop, stocking items from tea to toothpaste and greetings cards.

House Manager, Emma Debenham, explains, "I discussed the idea with the residents and their response was extremely positive and enthusiastic, with many suggestions on what they would like to see stocked."

Canon Clyde Johnson, one of Abbeyfield Brecon's longest-serving residents, also gave his blessing, as he uses the room to hold small Catholic Services and for private prayer. The room doubles up as a small library, and Clyde hopes the shop will encourage more residents to make use of it!

As opposed to a regular shop with a till and a cashier, an honesty shop just has a tin, and the idea is that those who want something pay for it by putting money in – without anyone to 'check'.

"We don't intend to make any profit from this venture," says Emma, "and all the money we receive goes straight back into restocking the shop."

The shop helps residents to maintain their independence as much as possible by enabling them to purchase what they need, when they need it, and it also eases the burden on some families if it is only something small that's required.

Resident Kate Bosset said, "It really is a bonus to be able to purchase things like toothpaste and a toothbrush, jam for breakfast, all sorts! Very valuable."

Emma continues, "We stock some cleaning items, so that those residents who wish to clean their own flats or just do the washing up and keep on top of the dusting can do so.

"We also have stamps, puzzle books and boxes of chocolate, if residents want to shop for a loved one's birthday.

"We have two guest suites, so if anything is forgotten, the shop will have it!"



Residents are able to find what they need at the honesty shop



The honesty shop is regularly re-stocked with everyday essentials, treats and gifts

# NEW MALDEN STAFF STEP OUT FOR FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE

Care Assistants Sonia Edgington and Elaine Gould and Housekeeper Linda Whitcombe, from Abbeyfield House in New Malden, took on a fundraising walking challenge in May, which was National Walking Month.

Sonia and Linda walked two miles every weekday, while Elaine ditched the bus to walk to work.

The trio smashed their fundraising target, raising a whopping £1,407, which will be put towards activities and essentials for their residents.

Sonia explains, "We are really stretched in terms of budget, and some of our residents have limited disposable income or family support to rely on.

"I asked our manager what we could do to raise some extra money to support

them with things they may need, such as toiletries, clothes, make-up, or anything that's personally important for them.

"We also like to take our residents out from time to time, to places like the beach or the zoo, but outings like these can be costly and often fall outside of our budget.

"A small fund that we can dip in and out of makes the world of difference. Even celebrating a birthday is sometimes a stretch for our budget, but with this extra kitty we can provide gifts and food for everyone to enjoy."



(L-R) Linda, Sonia and Elaine



Linda's dog was a welcome guest on many of the walks





## AROUND THE WORLD WITH ANNETT HOUSE

Annett House in Berkhamsted has been running a series of ‘around the world days’, bringing a little adventure and variety into the home by introducing the residents to different cultures and cuisines from around the globe.

Deputy House Manager, Annalee South, says, “Our around the world days are a wonderful way to encourage residents to try

something new, and they always bring lots of smiles and laughter.

“We decorate the dining area to match the featured country and often add themed table settings and fun extras like quizzes. If any residents have visited that part of the world, they often enjoy sharing stories and memories, which sparks great conversation and helps build connections. It’s a lovely way to learn more about each other and reminisce.

“We find these days really enrich our residents’ experience and create a joyful, engaging atmosphere in their home.”

Resident Denise added, “I absolutely love these days, we all have so much fun! The staff put a lot of effort into making it enjoyable, just for us.”

Annalee and her colleagues also love to get involved, often dressing up to match the theme, which usually gets a few laughs from the residents!

Annett House will shortly be visiting China, with chopsticks, lanterns and dragon-making to explore.

## SUNDERLAND RESIDENT LENDS A HELPING HAND

To mark Abbeyfield Week (see pages 6-8), Dorothy, a resident at Hope Bank View in Sunderland, pledged 90 minutes of her time to volunteer alongside the Activities Coordinator, Andrea.

They spent their time volunteering at their local Morrisons supermarket, running a stall and raising money for Helping Hands, a local organisation providing a range of care services in Sunderland and the surrounding area.

Dorothy’s reason for deciding to volunteer was in order to give something back to her community.



Dorothy wants to give something back to her community

## JULIA LIFTS THE LID ON HIDDEN YORKSHIRE SECRETS

We love to recognise and celebrate special talents and accomplishments in The Voice. Whether it’s sporting success, artistic aptitude or a penchant for poetry, it’s always a joy to discover something new about one of our residents.

One such resident is Julia Smith, who lives at Fern House in Bingley. Julia not only enjoyed a successful career as a librarian, but has also published two books.

The first, Fairs, Feasts and Frolics: Customs and Traditions in Yorkshire, published in 1989, delves into the peculiarities and inimitable culture of Britain’s largest county, highlighting various customs and explaining their historical significance and social impact. For those wishing to find out more about Pudsey Fair, Chalking

the Door, Settling the Watch and, of course, the famous Yorkshire pudding, this is surely a must-read.

Julia’s second book, The Elusive Father Brown: The Life of Mgr John O’Connor, published in 2010, recounts the remarkable life of the infamous priest around the turn of the 20th century. A prolific author, art collector and controversial figure both inside and outside the Catholic Church, O’Connor was a mysterious and shadowy figure to many, and the inspiration for his good friend G. K. Chesterton’s fictional detective, Father Brown – who knew more about the criminal underworld than the criminals themselves!

Aside from her books, Julia wrote articles for magazines such as The Yorkshire Dalesman, which were based

mainly on village customs and traditions such as maypole dancing and well dressing.

Nowadays, Julia enjoys her life at Fern House, especially when there is musical entertainment – whenever there is music playing, Julia will be dancing!



Julia doing her favourite thing - dancing!

## SALTASH RESIDENTS NEVER MISS A STITCH

Residents and volunteers from the Abbeyfield Saltash Society visited Devonport Market Hall to see the amazing knitting and crochet creations at ‘The Longest Yarn’ exhibition.

The trip provoked many discussions and memories of wartime, and commentary was provided by the daughter of a resident, Jo Groves, who created one of the 20 panels which depicted the bombed Saltash Working Men’s Club.

Transport was provided by Mike Finch, who runs the Saltash Red Bus service, which Abbeyfield Saltash have used on many occasions to visit local events and cafés.

On arrival, the residents were delighted to see Mike presented with a special Saltash Town Council Award for ‘Contribution to the Community’, by local councillor Julia Peggs.



A knitted traditional wartime scene



Mike Finch receives his award

## SKY’S THE LIMIT (CONTINUED FROM COVER)



Brian Standing

He explains, “While I skydive for the excitement and pleasure it provides me, my key reason is that it is a good story to help me fundraise for Alzheimer’s Society, and ultimately those living with dementia and their carer partners.”

Having previously helped to care for his friend, Alan, and had other friends who have lost their lives to dementia, Brian knows all too well the tremendous toll it can take, not just on people who live with dementia, but also their friends and family.

He calls the day-to-day experience of carers “the rough end” when it comes to dealing with the effects, and it was Alan’s diagnosis that inspired him to become a Dementia Friend in 2014, a programme run by Alzheimer’s Society.

“Ever since,” he continues, “I’ve been passionate about trying to do something, whatever it might be, to help people with dementia. The great thing about being a Dementia Friend is that you can be a ‘friend’ to someone with dementia, however you interpret that to be. There are so many opportunities to choose from, and you can give however much time you want.”

Brian enjoys his life at Ivy House and appreciates the ethos and the family-style atmosphere. He takes full advantage of the independence it offers and can often be found enjoying his hobby of Nordic walking or taking part in his local park run on Saturday mornings.

Brian also chooses to give his time as an Alzheimer’s Society Companion Caller, and has sat on the Volunteer Advisory Panel for the organisation. They have recognised his various contributions by presenting him with two prestigious People’s Awards in 2021 – in the Couldn’t Do Without You category, which is chosen by a group of staff, volunteers and trustees; and in the Best of the Best category, which is given by the Chief Executive.

Ever modest, Brian is quick to downplay these achievements. “I was very proud and honoured to receive the awards, but I just see them as awards for volunteering,” he says, “and there are a lot of very good volunteers. I don’t pretend to be particularly special in that regard.

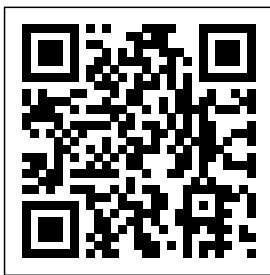
**“I suppose the aspect of helping those less fortunate is in my DNA.**

That’s what I’ve tried to do with the Marlow Striders,” (an inclusive running club Brian co-founded in 1990 when living in Buckinghamshire), “and with my fundraising for Alzheimer’s Society.”

One in three of us will develop dementia in our lifetimes, and it is the UK’s biggest killer. Brian is keen to stress, “Every pound raised means that Alzheimer’s Society can continue being a vital source of support and a powerful force for change for everyone living with dementia.”

Please help Brian to reach his fundraising target if you can by visiting his donation page: [www.justgiving.com/page/brian-standing-11](http://www.justgiving.com/page/brian-standing-11).

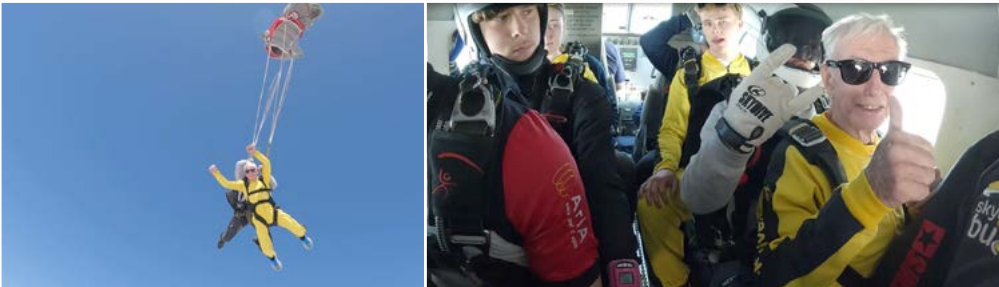
You can also head over to our blog to watch a video and see some more photos of Brian’s skydive – visit [www.abbeyfield.com/blog](http://www.abbeyfield.com/blog) or scan the QR code.



Brian strikes a Superman pose



It's a double-thumbs up!



Brian has completed around 150 parkruns

Marlow Striders, an inclusive running club Brian co-founded, organised a special celebration for his 100th parkrun

Higginson, Marlow



## GET IN TOUCH



Editor: [voice@abbeyfield.com](mailto:voice@abbeyfield.com)  
General enquiries: [enquiries@abbeyfield.com](mailto:enquiries@abbeyfield.com)



Telephone: 01727 857536



Online: [abbeyfield.com](http://abbeyfield.com)

# ABBEYFIELD WEEK HIGHLIGHTS

Abbeyfield Week, held in June, is our annual celebration highlighting the unique spirit of Abbeyfield houses and homes, and the values that make them special places to live and work.

Here are just a few highlights from what was a truly fantastic week, with over 80 events held across the country. Our focus, as ever, was to engage with the local communities in which we operate, and we are thrilled that so many people and organisations turned out to support us.

We don't have room to show all the wonderful photos we received here, so please check out our social media channels and website for more (links at the top of the page).



Summer 2025



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## GET IN TOUCH



Editor: [voice@abbeyfield.com](mailto:voice@abbeyfield.com)  
General enquiries: [enquiries@abbeyfield.com](mailto:enquiries@abbeyfield.com)



Telephone: 01727 857536



Online: [abbeyfield.com](http://abbeyfield.com)

Abbeyfield Winnersh in Wokingham put on a community carnival, attracting over 100 people from the local area.

Traditional fair events, including a coconut shy and a tin-can alley, were available for people to enjoy, whilst some braver members of ALS staff offered to be splattered with cream and dunked in the pool in the name of entertainment. The event was made extra special by a visit from pupils from Oak Tree School, who were treated to some time on the teacups, helter-skelter and bouncy castle; and the Mayor of Wokingham, Cllr Carol Jewell, who also dropped in. Thanks to some generously donated prizes, the raffle raised over £500 for the residents' activity fund.



Enjoying a dance at the Abbeyfield Winnersh community carnival



Old and young alike enjoyed the fairground attractions at Abbeyfield Winnersh



Guests at The Firs' garden party enjoyed the beautiful sunshine



The Firs in Nottingham invited people from the local area to bring their own picnic and favourite tippie to enjoy in their beautiful, landscaped garden, which looked resplendent in the fine weather.

A raffle was held to raise money for the residents' activities fund, and there were even medieval stocks for people to throw wet sponges at some willing good sports. One member of staff who offered to help at the event added, "What a fantastic day! I was thrilled to attend, and we were so lucky with the gorgeous weather. It was such a joy to spend time with the residents and soak up the amazing community spirit. I'd been busy in the kitchen baking cakes – and they didn't last long! But the real star of the show? A beautiful Victoria sponge made by one of our wonderful residents – an absolute crowd favourite!"

## GET TO GRIPS WITH TECH THE EASY WAY

Need a hand with technology? AbilityNet can help!

Would you like to feel more confident using technology, but don't know where to start? Whether it's sending emails, using a smartphone or tablet, joining video calls with family, or simply browsing the internet – help is available, and it's free.

We've teamed up with AbilityNet, a UK charity that supports older people to use technology with confidence. AbilityNet offers free digital support in your own home, tailored to your needs, at a pace that suits you.

What support can I get?

A trained AbilityNet volunteer can visit you to help with:

- Setting up and using a smartphone, tablet or laptop
- Creating and using an email address
- Accessing online services (like shopping, banking or GP appointments)
- Staying safe online

You can choose to have just one session, or a few visits, and to be visited as an individual or as part of a group – whatever works best for you.

One-to-one support is usually provided in your home, but it can also take place in a shared lounge or communal area if that's more comfortable for you.

Who can get support?

Any resident in any Abbeyfield house or home can access this support. If you think you could benefit, or just want to find out more, contact AbilityNet directly on 0300 180 0028, email [enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk) or complete the free support form on their website – or ask a member of staff to help you to do so.



## Success using AbilityNet – Hope Bank View

Hope Bank View in Sunderland was the first Abbeyfield service to host group digital skills sessions with AbilityNet.

Running across three afternoons in late July and early August, these friendly and practical sessions helped residents to build their confidence, ask questions, and learn how to stay safe online. As well as the group sessions, one-to-one support was also available.

Interim Housing Manager, Jacqui Hudson, said, "We know how much residents want to feel more confident using technology, and these sessions are proving to be a big hit with them, breaking down barriers and teaching useful skills."

We'll be following up in a future issue of The Voice to share how it went.



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/Abbeyfield\_2

## “MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS” INSPIRE SCHOOLGIRLS’ DANCE COMPETITION

A dance competition delivered by a team of sixth form students from Withington Girls' School (WGS) has raised nearly £2,000 for Downing House, their local care home.



The 'Dancing Through the Decades' competition saw over 600 students taking to the floor. Each year group took on songs from a different decade, from the swinging sixties through to the 2020s, wearing classic, era-defining costumes and expertly executing their dance moves.

***“The students have made a real difference to the resident's lives.”***

The event was organised as a fundraiser for Downing House and Family Fund, which delivers grants for low-income families raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young person.

Tara Sumra, a member of the Year 12 Dance Committee, which put together the event, said, "Many Sixth Form students at our school dedicate time each week to volunteer at local care homes, providing companionship and playing games with residents, and allowing us to build meaningful connections with them."

"We decided to fundraise for Downing House, not only because it is a local care home,

but also because we feel that its values strongly align with our school's ethos of community, care and belonging."

After careful deliberation, the competition's judging panel awarded winners in age group categories, before declaring a Year 10 form group as the overall winner for their standout routine to Vanilla Ice's Ice Ice Baby.

Whilst most students were keen to take part in the dances, those who did not were still able to contribute to the events' success, channelling their efforts into other elements such as special effects, set design, costume styling, hair and make-up, lighting and sound, and running charity stalls and a raffle.

***“Downing House's values of community, care and belonging strongly align with ours.”***

Downing House was incredibly grateful to receive the extra funds that the competition raised and invited some students from the Dance Committee to visit. The girls revealed the good news to the residents that they had

managed to raise £1,832.50, and also showcased their additional talents as singers with a special performance.

The home's Manager, Claire Williamson, said, "We would like to thank the hundreds of students from WGS for raising money through their dance competition, and our visitors for their excellent and entertaining performance, which the residents very much enjoyed. It is fantastic to see young people getting together and having a great time doing something to support a worthwhile cause in their community."

"The funds we receive will be put towards activities for our residents, which have a tremendous positive effect on

their wellbeing. The students can be confident that they have made a real difference to their lives."

Aiyla, a Year 10 student, said, "We not only danced, we bonded. New friendships were made and overall, it was just an unforgettable experience."

"We have seen the positive influence that we can have on the lives of local care home residents," added Tara, "and we were inspired by our individual experiences to channel our work into a broader community effort. We were delighted to be able to visit Downing House and perform for the residents, and to see the smiles on their faces when we revealed how much we have raised."



The Sixth Formers entertained residents at Downing House with their singing



# WHAT A HOOT!

Residents at Great Bradfords House in Braintree were treated to a visit from a lovely barn owl called Ludo, from a local farm.

Ludo was named after a character in the classic 80s film, Labyrinth, starring David Bowie. Although not portrayed as particularly wise, Ludo in the film exhibits several characteristics that Ludo the barn owl mirrors, including sharp instincts and protectiveness.

The European barn owl, who was under a year old, was very well behaved and enjoyed being stroked and fed by everyone, staff included. Barn owls in captivity can be expected to live up to 20 years of age, so Ludo has many more flights ahead of him!



Jean, Ludo and Pam

# FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR TORRINGTON RESIDENTS

Residents and volunteers from the Abbeyfield South West Society were treated to a steam train ride and river boat cruise when they visited the Dartmouth Steam Railway and River Boat Company.

Following some coffee and cake at Paignton station, the residents enjoyed a half-hour steam train journey over to Dartmouth, which took in the fantastic scenery of the English Riviera, followed by a river cruise along the Dart. The cruise was rich with landmarks, including the historic Britannia Royal Naval College and Agatha Christie's beloved Greenway estate, now cared for by the National Trust.

The outing concluded with a return journey on the steam train, leaving everyone with smiles and cherished memories of a wonderful day spent together.



Sheila Angell

## Poetry corner

We're delighted to share this wonderful poem titled My Home, written by Sheila Angell, who has recently moved into Poplar Lodge in Bembridge. It perfectly illustrates the warm and homely environment that we aim to create for all our residents – thank you, Sheila!

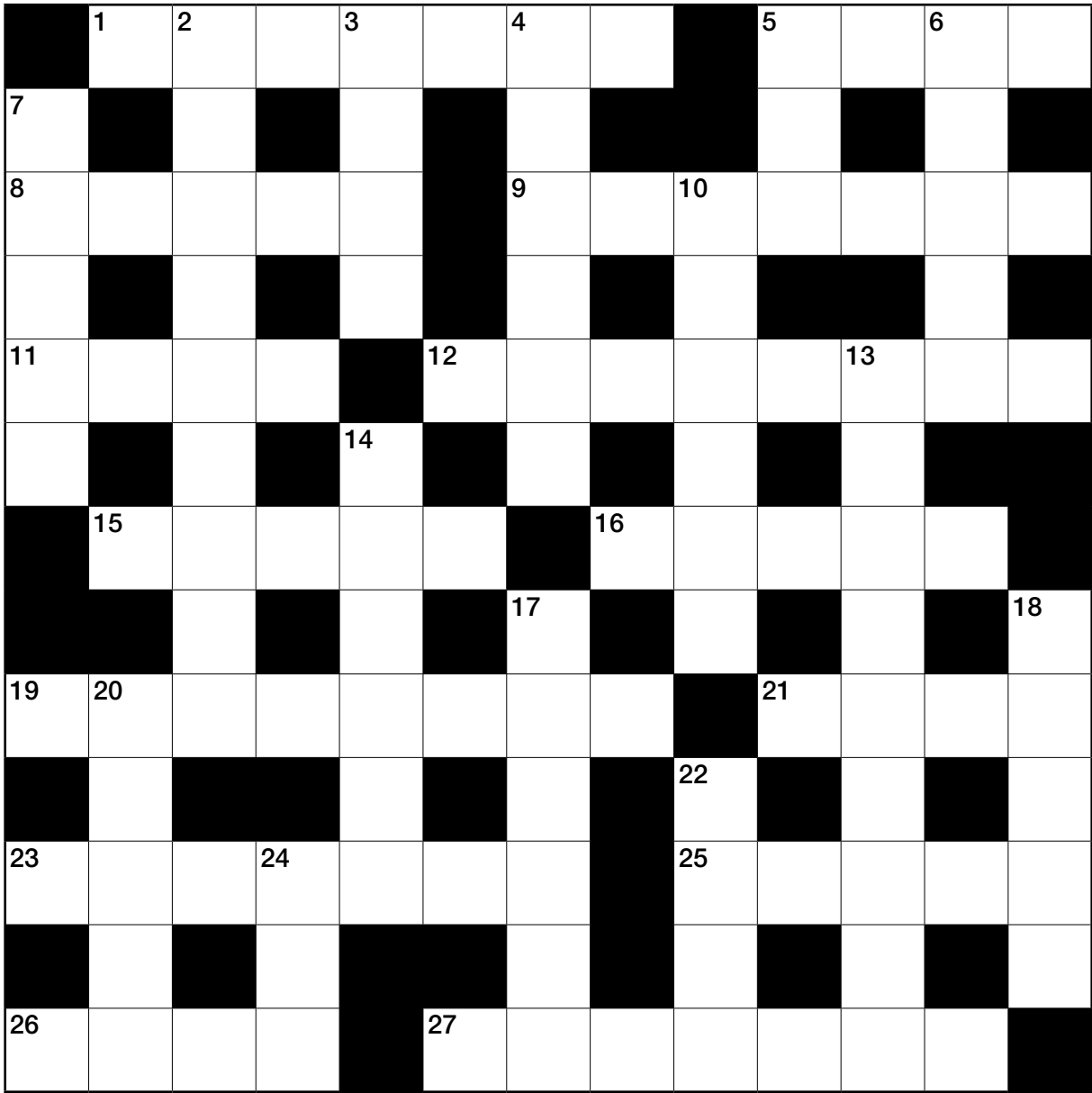
*I came into Abbeyfield on the first of June,  
It's ten days later and I'm over the moon.  
I have a room with a view,  
Two trees that sway with the breeze;  
It gives solace to my soul – which I need.  
It's a large room so all my furniture fits in,  
It's comfortable and I'm happy and safe within.*

*The people who live here are kind and understand.  
The food is delectable and delightful and delicious.  
The staff have made us their friends.  
Phil is another dimension, with wisdom that comes from experience;  
I haven't had the chance to get to know Lois yet,  
But I am sure that she's the glue that makes this happy crew.*

# PUZZLE PAGE

## CROSSWORD

- Across**
- 1 Aptitude (7)
  - 5 Illicitly enter a computer network (4)
  - 8 Female person (5)
  - 9 Left over, extra (2,5)
  - 11 Style of traditional music (4)
  - 12 Ovine bath (5-3)
  - 15 Monastery (5)
  - 16 Nose, proboscis (5)
  - 19 Predicted sequence of events (8)
  - 21 State of agitation (4)
  - 23 Evoking sympathy (7)
  - 25 Forbidden (activity) (5)
  - 26 Group (4)
  - 27 Illicit pleasure trip in a car (7)
- Down**
- 2 Humming insect (6-3)
  - 3 Quiet country byway (4)
  - 4 Irascible, grumpy (6)
  - 5 On the \_ unprepared (3)
  - 6 Dog breed (5)
  - 7 Fast, speedy (5)
  - 10 Brownish-yellow pigment (6)
  - 13 Conjugal slumber-structure (6,3)
  - 14 Small boat driven by the feet (6)
  - 17 Complete failure (6)
  - 18 Ghost, spectre (5)
  - 20 Articles of porcelain (5)
  - 22 Mix (ingredients) with a spoon (4)
  - 24 Pull the plug on (3)



## SUDOKU: MEDIUM

8		6			3		9	
	4			1			6	8
2			8	7				5
1		8			5		2	
	3		1				5	
7		5		3		9		
	2	1			7		4	
6				2		8		
	8	7	6		4			3

## SUDOKU: HARD

2			3		6			
6		5	9			4		8
						5		2
4		9		6	3			
			8			7		1
		1		4			9	
1		6	2	7				
	2					8		4
		4		1	8			7



# 60 SECONDS WITH ADAM REES

We spoke to Adam Rees, CEO of the Abbeyfield Bristol & Keynsham Society, about the nature, rewards and challenges of his role, and the lessons he has learnt from a career working to help older people.



**How long have you been working for Abbeyfield Bristol & Keynsham, and what other roles have you had working with older people?**

I have been CEO of Abbeyfield Bristol and Keynsham Society for 18 months and I love working with the staff and residents here. I moved to Bristol from Wales over a decade ago to set up and lead a partnership of over 250 organisations that sought to tackle loneliness for older people. It was a great opportunity to involve older people directly in planning and delivering the work. Before I joined Abbeyfield, I was a director of a regional older people’s housing charity. Both of these roles have given me valuable experience that I’ve been able to bring to my work here at Abbeyfield.

**What was it that attracted you to work for Abbeyfield?**

I love the strategic thinking and organisational planning of being a CEO, but I also really love people. I get to speak to residents, their families, staff, and volunteers all the time and this always makes my day!

**How does your professional experience lend itself to your role as CEO for an Abbeyfield Society?**

I have worked in charities for 20 years and really enjoy being in a job that makes a real difference. A lot of my previous work has been about helping people to get their voices heard, and it’s the same here at Abbeyfield. Our residents are not just a group of older people, but individuals with unique experiences, wants and needs.

**What does a typical working day look like?**

I have realised that there is no such thing as a typical day. One day I might be meeting with trustees or other societies in the South-West, and the next I might be talking about menus

or plumbing! I try and get out to each of the houses regularly to help me understand what is important to our staff and residents when I am making decisions that may impact them.

**Which part of your job do you most enjoy?**

It’s obviously the people! We have four houses, each with a distinct personality because of the staff, residents and volunteers. Speaking to our residents makes my day. They each have their own stories and life experiences, and it’s always exciting to see a different aspect of a resident as they tell you about the time they sailed to Hawaii or designed a garden at the Chelsea Flower Show. We have residents from 59 to 104 with different backgrounds and interests, so it is important to respect that and celebrate this variety.

**What are the biggest challenges you face in your role?**

Abbeyfield is often not recognised enough locally or nationally, so I enjoy championing what we offer and making sure that more people know about the fantastic work that the societies do across the world.

**As the CEO, what are the best ways to support and motivate your team to deliver the best possible service for your residents?**

The biggest lesson has been realising what an amazing resource we have in our staff and residents – they’re real partners in this organisation, not just observers. As CEO, I often have to make the hard (and sometimes unpopular) decisions, but it’s easier when I’ve genuinely heard and listened to what the residents and staff think. Recognising their incredible dedication and addressing their challenges directly is key to keeping everyone motivated and delivering our best.

**What great things can we expect from Abbeyfield Bristol & Keynsham over the next year?**

We turn 60 next year, so we are looking forward to a year of celebrations that remembers all the staff, trustees, residents, and community members that have got us through the last six decades. We have also just produced a five-year plan to get us ready for the next 60 years!



Abbeyfield England  
Portland House, Belmont Business Park  
Durham, DH1 1TW

Registered Charity No. 1213760  
Company No.14411261

Abbeyfield Living Society  
Hampton House,17-19 Hampton Lane  
Solihull, B91 2QT

Registered Charity No. 200719  
Company No. 574816

Tel: 01727 857536  
Email: [voice@abbeyfield.com](mailto:voice@abbeyfield.com)

The Voice is produced in partnership with Abbeyfield England and Abbeyfield Living Society.

## Want more stories?

If you’d like to find out more about what’s going on at our services around the country, take a look at our blog at [www.abbeyfield.com/blog](http://www.abbeyfield.com/blog), or follow us on social media – details at the top of page 11.

### PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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