

THE BROMLEY ABBEYFIELDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ABBEYFIELD BROMLEY SOCIETY

No. 62: APRIL 2013

CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

Doesn't time go quickly? I say this as I realise I have been in post as Chairman for six months. It is a real pleasure to work with my colleague Volunteers and Trustee members and I thank them for their patience as I get to know how we operate.

As well as dealing with the day today issues and overseeing the work of the Trustees I have produced the business plan for this year and reported back to the AGM on past achievements. At the moment, much of my time is spent attending National Abbeyfield meetings as well as meeting other organisations that support the elderly including visits to local Extra Care providers. I think it is important that we are aware of what is going on around us and ensure that those nearby are kept up to date with future details of our organisation.

I have also met with colleagues from the Beckenham and Orpington societies to look at the potential for developing new provision. This is a long process and at the moment we are fact finding and visiting other areas to see what is possible.

The most important aspect of my new role is to ensure that we continue to provide very high quality accommodation and support for our residents. The House Committee is doing an excellent job and Louise, the House Chairman, has very high expectations.

We welcome the continual support from our Volunteers and now wish to increase our volunteer base so that we can provide more support and activities for residents.

We are also looking for new Trustees so if you are interested please get in touch through the office or website.

Steve Belk
Chairman

REPORT FROM THE HOUSES

I recall starting one of these Reports some years ago with the observation that they all started with comments on how busy we have been, or a complaint about the weather. This report will be no different and let's face it the weather has been the biggest topic of conversation for most of us for some time. Here we are at the end of March, heating full on, think woollens still being worn, bed socks not put away, and flurries of snow being blown around by a strong north easterly wind, originating in Siberia; Easter eggs already eaten, and the long range forecast not exactly inspiring!

Right, that's the doom and gloom element dealt with, now let's look at the more positive side of life. It is important, however, to take a while to remember that whereas most of us will don overcoats, boots, hats and gloves and brave whatever the weather, for a lot of our residents this is not a viable alternative. Being confined to the Houses can become restricting and lead to lethargy, mild depression and a "fed-up" with life attitude, which is only natural. We would encourage all our sponsors and friends of residents to bear this in mind, and try and increase the number of times they visit or, if feasible, take residents out during this time. A short drive in a warm car is better than just sitting looking at four walls.

We have now replaced the rear area outside 118 with new paving and better links with the other pathways so those who enjoy walking around the garden (the circuit) will be able to resume as soon as the weather is warmer. During the past six months the gardener, Viktor, has reduced the height of some of the hedges; repainted all the fencing and posts; the wall around the car park in 2A was rebuilt; all the steps and manhole covers have been outlined in white so that they show up better; our sheds have been painted to preserve them. All this as well as mowing the lawn and keeping the beds tidy. He will be resuming his labours on our behalf in the next week or so.

Maintenance in both houses, whether internal or external, is never ending. Not a week goes by without one firm or another turning up for the quarterly, six-monthly or annual inspection, maintenance call, or a special one-off call out. It is always important, therefore, for us to know of any problems or issues residents, or visitors may find. Keeping the houses in good order is essential to making life as comfortable for residents as possible.

We also have to consider major refurbishment or replacement of equipment, and this can sometimes be very costly. The replacement of the gas boilers and the hot water cylinder in 2A is a case in point, as together these cost £10,000.

As with most years, we experienced some turnover of residents. With sadness we reported the deaths of David Jones and Connie Manners and that of Harry Genet during his trial stay; we also said goodbye to Mary Kimmins and Joan Fleming who decided to move on to homes with greater care facilities.

Despite some pessimism voiced at the AGM regarding room vacancies, we are currently more optimistic as we have four potential new residents' waiting to complete trial stays over the next two months. With two double and two single rooms available, we would hope to see some of these filled by early summer, following the completed trial stays. We are always extremely grateful to our existing residents for all the kindness and support they give to potential residents – the initial contact and helping hand will often convince the “new” boy or girl that Abbeyfield is for them.

After having taken serious soundings from residents at the recent Open Forum, we have commenced the Exercising 4 Life sessions with Pam Stennett. We have had to make a small charge for these 1.5 hour sessions – 12 weeks, then a short break, followed by the next 12 weeks. The cost per week is £2.50 per resident, amounting to £30.00 for 12 weeks. The Society was very willing to subsidise these sessions and is, indeed, doing so, however, with only one House having taken up the opportunity to take part in this activity, we may have to reconsider pricing when organising the next group of sessions and other activities.

Fingers crossed, everyone, for some better weather when we can all enjoy the garden and think about shedding the woollies!!!

Louise Gough

House Chairman

TALKING ABOUT GARDENS



What a year for our gardens, after those few lovely sunny days last March it was a wet and not over warm summer followed by a grey cold winter. It is a wonder that plants survive such varied conditions.

Those that live in a specific condition such as hot dry or continuous freezing cold have evolved to exploit them. Think of cacti in the desert with no leaves to reduce water loss from the sun and thick fleshy stems to store what little water there is; or those plants in that exist in freezing conditions which have a very short growing season and are prostrate from to benefit from the heat reflected from the rocks.

Our plants have to be ready for anything and cannot even rely on the season for warmth or water. This year our plants have had an early baking followed by flooding, cold and freezing yet most have survived in my garden, the snowdrops and crocus are flowering albeit a little later than usual. The frogs in the pond which usually start to spawn in early March have yet to put in an appearance. There is no sign of the phox beginning to shoot and the asters are barely putting their new shoots above the soil. It seems as everything will be late this year. Yet nature has a way of adapting and it may be if we get some warmth they will put on a spurt and catch up, it will be interesting to see. I just hope the pear blossom always one of the first to blossom will wait until a warm spell to come out or the frost will do for it. Last year was such a poor one for fruit with few apples, plums and pears.

I have yet to find out if I have lost anything and if so it will be a good excuse to plant something new! The trouble with a small garden is that it quickly becomes full and there is no room for anything more.

Sue Hayes

Abbeyfield Bromley Trustee



I began volunteering about eight years ago, after taking early retirement from work (yippee !). Why Abbeyfield Bromley? Well, I wanted to do something practical that involved people, that also avoided anything to do with finance or complicated business plans.

So, for the first couple of years, each time a new resident was due to move in, I did the painting and decorating of the bedrooms. After re-decorating about six rooms and en-suites, I decided to come down from the top of the wobbly ladder.

I then took on the role of doing the Support Plans twice a year with the residents. This involves spending quiet time with each resident, and is a useful opportunity to find out if we can do anything to improve the quality of their living environment and general well-being. I report back to the House Chair (Louise) and the House Manager (Irina)

Open Day

For the past three years, I have organised (with the assistance of many willing volunteers) the annual Open Day and Fete. Our first one, in July 2010, was a crash course in panic, and a steep learning curve on how to put on a two-hour show with live music (the lovely Bijou Trio), cream teas, book stall, garden plants, bric-a-brac, children's games, chocolate tombola, home made jams, cupcakes, and a Grand Raffle. Our previous Chairman, Adrian, was the Master of Ceremonies, aided by a dashing panama hat and some new batteries in the loud hailer. Our only loss was a set of party balloons which slipped their moorings and were last seen headed for Penge at 2,000 ft.

Fast forward to 2013, and the planning for this

year's event has already begun. It's still hard work, but I am now beginning to enjoy it.

Easter and Christmas Stalls

A couple of years ago, we had the idea of setting up a Stall in the dining room of No. 118 at Easter and Christmas times, so that the residents could do some shopping without having to go out to the shops. It's fun looking for bargains, and I pop up to refresh the Stall every few days, and have also taken requests by residents for specific items.

Jam Packed

Never did I imagine that my partner (Peter) and I would take up jam making! This started off as an experiment to create a contribution to the summer Open Day, gradually expanding our repertoire. There has been the odd mishap on the way (our 2012 Blueberry Brick has been blacklisted by every dentist in Bromley), we now produce a seasonal range of jams and marmalades. The apricot and almond are particularly popular.

Fun and Festivities

I've also attended a number of other events, including acting as escort on occasional summer outings to pubs with the residents, and attending the annual visit by carol-singing local school children. We also welcome the three-person pantomime troupe each year (although Cinderella's coach and horses is a bit of tight fit between the piano and bookcase)

The Future

I plan to move from Bromley within the next year, so it would be lovely to know if someone reading this would be like to take on some (or all) of the things I do. It's been fun, sometimes hard work, but it's not rocket science, and there is a great group of staff and other volunteers to work with. Over the years, I've been grateful for the support of many people, including Audrey Percival, Helen Harrison, and the Foard family, as well as all the staff at Nos 118 and 2A.

If you are interested, why not give me call on 0208 249 3577, e-mail pamela.lutterloch@ntlworld.com or send a note via the Abbeyfield office at No 118.

Pam Lutterloch

Abbeyfield Bromley Volunteer



Everyone I meet is impressed with the Abbeyfield model and particularly impressed with the Bromley Society. In addition to motivated staff and experienced Trustees, we have a team of volunteers who provide the extra support that makes a huge difference to our resident's companionship and supported living.

We know that we need to continue to build our team of volunteers and for this reason we have made it a priority for the coming year.

There are many volunteers who support our resident's everyday needs, from being a friend, helping out at events or trips, to overseeing individual resident's support plans. We also have potential volunteers approach us asking how they can help. With this in mind, we are planning the activities we do as volunteers so we can match volunteers to particular activities and support new volunteers to take an active role. We are also updating our volunteer register so we are clear about who is doing what.

If you are currently doing some work as a volunteer or would like to do so in the future it would be wonderful to see you at our volunteer coffee morning on April 16th at 10.30am (at the Bromley Abbeyfield house). It would also help us if you could recruit new volunteers. If you know anyone who has good people skills, or likes to organise events or simply likes helping out, please point them in our direction.

DATE FOR YOUR CALENDAR



Saturday 13th July 2013

A SAD GOODBYE TO VERONICA

As most of you will know, Veronica "retired" from being Abbeyfield Bromley's Administrator with effect from 31 March 2013. Note the " " around the word retired!! This is because we have no intention of letting Veronica slip silently away!

Veronica has spent 11+ years as our Administrator and there is very little she does not know, or cannot remember about those past years. Abbeyfield Bromley produces some of the best management accounts, financial updates and end of year accounts of any small group such as ours. This is entirely due to Veronica, the systems she has put in place and her attention to detail, all stemming from her background in accounts/payroll with Berry Bros. the well known wine merchants.

Veronica has spent the past six months encouraging, teaching, cajoling and quietly persuading Irina that accounts are not dry, but can be fun!! Testament to her teaching skills lie in the fact that Irina has progressed in leaps and bounds and now feels much more comfortable with her new role.

We are extremely grateful, and none more so than myself, to Veronica for all she has done for the Society over the years. I much appreciate her kind and generous offer to continue to "keep watch" over the accounts and support Irina when and where necessary, as a volunteer.

We have been very lucky to have Veronica's services for so long, and I know that she will make good use of the additional spare time she now has.

Thank you, Veronica, and think – no more Exec. Committee Minutes to type, yippee!



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