



the almshouses Gazette

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Royal 'away day' visit to Bond's Hospital almshouses

The Almshouse Association was delighted to welcome our Royal Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales, to Bond's Hospital almshouses in Coventry on 25 May 2021 during the Association's 75th Anniversary year.

As part of his 'away day' in the city, The Prince of Wales took time to visit almshouses,

run by the Coventry Church (Municipal) Charities and meet with residents, trustees and guests, before cutting a cake

to celebrate The Almshouse Association's 75th Anniversary.

HRH was greeted by Deputy Lieutenant of West Midlands, Colonel George Marsh, who presented Liz Fathi, Chair and Nick Phillips, Chief Executive of The Almshouse Association, Mr Victor Keene MBE, Chairman



Mrs Virginia Rigby, Vice-Chair and Matthew White, Chief Executive of Coventry Church (Municipal) Charities and Mr Richard Kenyon, Chairman of Bond's Hospital Estate Charity. Prince Charles was invited to sign



above: HRH joins residents and trustees in the almshouse garden before cutting a cake to mark The Almshouse Association's 75th Anniversary.

left: HRH The Prince of Wales is welcomed to Bond's Hospital almshouses by the Deputy Lieutenant of West Midlands.

far left: HRH meets residents (l-r) Mrs Sheila Tognonato, Mr David Stanley and Mrs Olga Miller. photos by Richard Gray.

the charity's visitor book in the prayer room.

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Almshouse Association's 75th Anniversary Garden Party



The Almshouse Association's 75th Anniversary Garden Party took place at the beginning of September at Bucklebury House, Bucklebury Estate, in Berkshire. It was a delightful day, full of celebration for both the Association, the almshouse movement and our members. Our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales sent a special video message and former Prime Minister, Theresa May MP presented the Patron's Awards and the Gardens and People Awards.

full details pages 10/11

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S COMMENT

Reflecting on the establishment of The Almshouse Association

As we celebrate 75 years of The Almshouse Association, it really is worth reflecting on how far the almshouse movement has come during that time.

Emerging from a world of war, a group of volunteers got together to help support almshouses as valuable and much needed homes and also recognised the value of a movement based on individualism, compassion and activism. They were founders who made things happen, where the state had not. These volunteers formed The National Association of Almshouses (later to become The Almshouse Association) which acted as a platform to bring together the individual charities and take their messages to government, both local and national.

I feel that the original forward thinking group who established the Association would be quietly pleased with where we are today.

They would perhaps be pleased and proud to see almshouses on the BBC last month; a former Prime Minister, Theresa May MP, supporting her local almshouse; The Country Landowners' Association running a full article on almshouses; and a glowing report in the NALC (National Association of Local Councils) magazine on almshouses. The founders of The Association were, however, an ambitious and driven group and I am sure they would say there is still much more to do and the risks for the movement that were prevalent then are still present.

The challenges of being supported and understood by local government is as great an issue today as it was 75 years ago. To those who have a local council who understand and support them, it

seems bizarre that in some areas the local council do not recognise a 350-year-old almshouse charity as offering "affordable homes". This lack of understanding of almshouses is found across areas as diverse as social services and planning. And new central government funding schemes seem to ignore the value of charities delivering good quality homes for centuries if they are not "regulated and registered". These challenges are not new and when reading the minutes from early Almshouse Association meetings in 1946, they expressed concern that "charitable bodies such as almshouses would survive pending legislation"; but the minutes show that this comment was countered by a Captain Featherstone, who stated: "Any institution worth its salt would live on!" We are firmly on the side of Captain Featherstone. Your almshouse charities that you work so hard and so well to operate must be recognised and protected in whatever form you decide - be it regulated or trust.

We have just seen the first draft of a piece of research identifying the great value almshouses bring to the community, year in year out, as well as the many recognised benefits and values of providing safe, warm homes for so many people. The impact of savings to the state through almshouse provision runs to £43.6m per year! We will

raise this detailed report to every local authority and national government agency. We will be announcing the findings and analysing the report with MPs at a future All Party Parliamentary Group meeting. You will see in this issue the powerful message sent by our members to the APPG meeting in July on their response during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Almshouse Association CEO, Nick Phillips (above) joined former Prime Minister Theresa May at Robert Palmer Almshouses in Sonning to celebrate their 175th anniversary and the Association's 75th.

right: An anniversary display and garden party at Dunk's Almshouses in Hawkhurst celebrated the benefactor's legacy.

All the hard work is carried out locally and your fantastic garden parties are a worthy celebration of our anniversary. Your stories and awards reported in this issue are just a snapshot of the great work going on across the sector in making better places for people to live. HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duke of Gloucester continue to show great support for the almshouse movement. HRH The Prince of Wales attended Coventry Almshouses as part of the celebration of The Almshouse Association's 75th Anniversary, commenting on the great value and longevity of the movement and the

Association. You can hear his message made for our 75th Anniversary on the celebration pages of our website at www.almshouses.org/news/our-75th-anniversary-garden-party So what about the future? New buildings, as we have seen, are rising from the ground; better, more environmentally sound, yet retaining the character of the almshouse model. This is fantastic. However, I wonder why we are not seeing new charities being formed. The legacies that could leave homes for those in need for another thousand years. Why are there no new almshouse charities for young in-care

leavers without homes? Young men and women living in bedsits in the big cities, or today's refugees? You can't do more than you are doing running your almshouses but we, as your representative body, must continue to ask the question of today's philanthropists and social-minded businesses. Encourage more legacies and stimulate positive debate around almshouses ... I had better get on with it! Thank you for joining us in celebrating our 75th Anniversary this year. Keep safe and, as always, thank you for all your hard work and dedication to the almshouse movement.

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive

Long-term commitment to the almshouse movement

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HRH The Prince of Wales was also presented with a book by Michael Orten, titled: 'For so long as the world shall endure', a phrase used in the Will of the charity's founder, Thomas Bond, in 1506 relating to the term of the charity that he set up over 500 years ago.

Prince Charles then went into the garden where he spent time talking to the thrilled trustees and residents of Bond's Hospital and asking them about their interests.

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive of The Almshouse Association, said: "His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales once again showed his great commitment to the residents of almshouses. He is so interested in what they have to say and their individual stories.

HRH The Prince of Wales has been such a significant support to The Almshouse Association and our members throughout the pandemic, and we were delighted that he took the occasion of the visit to Bond's Hospital Almshouses to cut the cake celebrating 75 years of The Almshouse Association. Residents, volunteers and staff were so pleased and really enjoyed his company. It was such a boost for them, for us and the 1,600 almshouse charities in the country."

In her speech, the Chair of The Almshouse Association, Elizabeth Fathi, said how proud

the Association, the trustees and staff are to have the Royal patronage, and how grateful they are that His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales is so supportive of the historic almshouse model.

She said: "It is an honour to welcome His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, to help celebrate the 75th anniversary of The Almshouse Association - a movement that began 1,000 years ago: a thousand years of providing warm, friendly houses for local people. That shows it's a model that works!"

Residents, staff and trustees raised a glass to toast this special moment in the history of the almshouse movement.



above: HRH is presented to Nick Phillips, Chief Executive, and Liz Fathi, Chair of The Almshouse Association. above left: Cutting the Association's 75th Anniversary cake.

right: Prince Charles chats with Mrs Eileen Nixon in Bond's Hospital almshouses garden. photos by Richard Gray.



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Almshouse Association events

A With the COVID-19 restrictions lifting, the Association feels that the time is right to start holding 'in-person' events again and we're delighted to let you know that we will be running a series of seminars in 2022. The first of these will be our ever popular Trustee and Clerk Induction Seminar on 23 March 2022 in London.

This session will cover the basics of running an almshouse charity and we will be joined by a series of expert speakers. This seminar is particularly aimed at new trustees and clerks but we also welcome anyone who feels they need a refresher or perhaps weren't able to join an induction seminar previously. You'll find a booking form with more details in this Gazette. We will also be planning to hold three more seminars across the UK throughout 2022. Each seminar will focus on a different topic and will bring together expert speakers and case studies. The topics will cover: Looking after your residents, Looking after your almshouses and Managing your trustee body. Please look out in your inboxes and the next Gazette for full details

and booking forms. The other big event for your diaries is our Members Day, which will take place on Wednesday 15 June 2022 in Wolverhampton. This will be an excellent opportunity for members to come together to network, learn from each other, and hear from speakers on a variety of topics. Full details about the programme will be published in the New Year.

Popular webinars continue

We will continue to keep an eye on the COVID-19 situation and run the events in a cautious manner to ensure the safety of our members and staff. We hope that no events will need to be cancelled but we may need to take precautionary measures, such as requiring proof of a negative lateral flow test and the wearing of face masks, in some instances. All attendees will be advised in advance of any such requirements. Finally, our webinar programme has proved popular over the last 18 months and we will continue to run these in 2022. As always, if you have any suggestions for topics you would like us to



cover, please send your ideas to admin@almshouses.org. Don't forget, most of our webinars are recorded and can be accessed on our website at any time. We very much look forward to welcoming you to an event in 2022!

Accepting our history

" I am writing this as a personal response, but I am interested in the note "What's in our past?" that Nick Phillips wrote in the summer 2021 issue of the Gazette. My wife is from Eastern Europe and in coming to the UK found how history had been rewritten in her homeland to exclude many things that had gone on during and after the 2nd World War and how other history had been massaged to suit the "powers that be".

I have a strong belief that history is what happened - it cannot and should not be changed. We have to accept what took place and admit where it was wrong but not alter it to suit us. We should not glorify the past history but it is there to learn from. Look back at the appalling events of the past - such as the inquisition, the clearances of large parts of Scotland, slavery, and say that today we are sorry these things happened but don't ever try to deny they took place - learn from them and move forwards. Altering history risks losing the lessons we have to learn from it and making the same errors all over again.

The starkest lesson I learned was on a trip to my wife's home town and walking just 10 minutes up the hill to a fenced area that had been a concentration camp, walking inside the first hut and seeing cages full of children's toys, another of shoes, another of spectacles and personal effects. That tragedy took place; it was vile and evil just as slavery was vile and evil but it happened and surely the lesson must be not to go there again.

For our almshouse movement it must be for individual almshouses to look at where their money came from and if they feel it appropriate consider changing a name or apologising for the past. But never, ever, consider trying to rewrite history. As I say - this is a very personal view. **"**

Alistair Cochran

Appeal for advice on energy bills

Letter to CEO regarding solar panels

" I must admit that I was 'anti-solar' until the last few months! However, we have been deciding how we will deal with the utilities on a new development. Residents at Thomas Parsons Square have gas heating from four communal boilers with the usage paid by the charity. Residents pay for their own electricity although some cook by electricity and some by gas. At Chorister Court we are having underfloor heating from individual air source heat pumps, with no gas at all. We were concerned as to the fact that as everything will now be electric, we needed to keep the electricity bills as low as possible, plus, of course, being an environmentally friendly scheme for the future. Gas and oil boilers are going to be banned in new builds in the very near future and I believe that the date is gradually being pushed forward.

When I saw the predicted energy assessments (PEA) they were at band 'C'. This caused me concerns as I had expected 'B', which they were

eventually upgraded to but our architects advised that to get near to an 'A' we would need to look at PV panels. We had these priced as an extra and went for them. We were too late for the three two-bed units but have had them retro-fitted on the rear of the covered parking/store to divert to plots 7-9. We also looked at battery storage but that would have cost over £3k per unit.

We then decided to add solar iboosts which cost around £350 per unit. These divert the excess power to heating the water as the feed-in tariff (FIT) is so low. We are now seeing if we can get any assistance from the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) or similar to keep the electric bills down for either us or the residents. Any help that we can get as a charity would be welcomed. Is there anybody who is au fait with any of this?

I must admit that I'm learning as I go along. Bowler Solar Energy Systems are also trying find any assistance that is available to us. **"**

Mike Stubbins,

Thomas Parsons Almshouses

APPG hears how almshouses responded to COVID-19

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Almshouses, for which The Almshouse Association provides the Secretariat, held a meeting on July 1st to discuss how almshouse charities operated during the coronavirus pandemic. As part of the discussion we heard from three almshouse charities:

- Paul Mullis - Durham Aged Mineworkers Homes Association, North East
- Juliet Ames-Lewis - Richmond Charities, London
- Andrew Barnes - Great Hospital, Norwich

All three discussed how the pandemic had forced them to act quickly to ensure that residents were kept safe and comfortable as lockdown was introduced.

They agreed that the small scale, community focused almshouse model provided them with the flexibility to make

the necessary decisions without delay, based on the strong personal knowledge they have of each individual resident.

It was clear from the testimony that the strength of the almshouse community in each charity was vital to fostering resilience in the residents.

Similarly, the speakers noted that all of them would have benefited from almshouses having greater recognition, particularly from their local councils. It was felt that the lack of appreciation for the model meant there had been unnecessary delays at the start of the pandemic.



Member Services Manager vacancy

role: Member Services Manager
hours/contract: Full time/permanent
salary: £40-45k dependent on experience
location: Berkshire/Home/London

The Almshouse Association is seeking to appoint for a role of Member Services Manager. This senior position will represent the interests of the Association and provide excellent advice and support to its members.

The successful candidate will need to:

- Provide advice and assistance to almshouse charities to enable them to achieve best practice
- Lead on Member Services and drive excellent customer service throughout the Association
- Manage the Reception and Event Management team, taking a hands-on approach to events, training and successful delivery of the annual conference

- Liaise with the Royal Patron and Vice Patrons' office, taking a lead on Royal visit planning
- Work closely with the Charity Commission on any issue affecting members

With a good knowledge and understanding of membership organisations and outstanding listening, negotiating and influencing skills, you will have experience in developing corporate and strategically beneficial partnerships, managing a professional team and budgets. Possessing a high degree of integrity and the ability to represent the Association at a senior level, you will be able to contribute effectively and collaboratively with the senior management team.

For a full job description, please visit www.almshouses.org/job-vacancies/. If you have the necessary skills and experience, please send your CV and Supporting Statement to karenmcadam@almshouses.org

Ambassadors welcomed

Two more Almshouse Association Ambassadors have been appointed.

They are Dr Kate Tiller OBE (right), a Founding Fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford



and Bishop Tony Robinson (below), who is Bishop of Wakefield and works within the Leeds Diocese. Full details can be found on The Almshouse Association website.



Drapers achieve Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Congratulations to The Shrewsbury Drapers Company, who were one of four Shropshire groups to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. The Queen's Award is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK. Created in 2002 to celebrate the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation, it is the MBE for volunteer groups and is presented for life. It is awarded to outstanding groups of volunteers whose level of initiative and impact are truly exceptional. Each group is assessed on the benefit it brings to the local community and its standing within that community. Volunteers are expected to be leading its work.

The Shrewsbury Drapers provide sheltered housing for older people, preserve the heritage of the Guild and their historic Hall and promote a textile



Master John Crackett receives the award from the Lord Lieutenant for Shropshire, Anna Turner. photo: Shrewsbury Drapers.

design competition. The group has been in existence since 1462 and the 52 almshouse beneficiaries are vulnerable elderly people who are selected on the basis of need. The newest block of

almshouses, Drapers Place, opened in 2016 and was awarded The Almshouse Association Patron's Award by HRH The Prince of Wales in 2019.

Locals and visitors benefit from Drapers Hall and its contribution to tourism and trade in Shrewsbury. The Textile Design Competition encourages and recognises the work of several hundred students and crafts people. Major General John Crackett CB TD VR DL, the current Master of the Shrewsbury Drapers Company, said: "I am delighted that we have been awarded the QAVS. Not only is this a superb recognition of all the hard work put in by our volunteers year after year, but also I hope that it will make us better known locally and encourage a more diverse selection of skilled and energetic people to come and help us."

Flats for single homeless people in Worcester

Robin Walker, MP for Worcester, together with the Mayor of Worcester, Cllr. Stephen Hodgson and the Bishop of Worcester, John Inge, unveiled a plaque on July 2 to commemorate the opening of Stillingfleet House, the latest development by Worcester Municipal Charities, which provides 25 almshouse flats for single homeless people.

Paul Griffith MBE, Chairman since 1985, said: "Money management is essential for charities to keep pace with inflation. Since 2013 the charity has been pursuing a wholesale property re-investment strategy to provide affordable almshouses for the single homeless."

Obtaining grants and creating 'flats over shops'

He added: "Since 2016 we have been helped by the Almshouse Consortium and Homes England to create 64 new 'flats over shops' and in empty office buildings. Selling commercial charity property between 2013 and 2018 realised £2,114,100. Then, between 2016 and 2021, we obtained 21 grants from Homes England totalling £1,529,633. The Charity also borrowed £500,000 from Unity Trust Bank to help with cash flow."

He continued: "The trustees are delighted to have found an exciting new strategy that provides housing for the homeless, whilst also making a reasonable commercial profit, at a time when good investment returns are difficult to find and affordable flats for the homeless are in very short supply." The Chairman explained that the loss of rent from the Home Office when the Probation Service moved out of the building in 2019 will almost all be replaced by weekly maintenance contributions from the 25 flats "all of which will be spent on



above: **Stillingfleet House.** left (from left): **Cllr. Stephen Hodgson, Robin Walker MP, John Inge and Paul Griffith** at the opening of 25 flats for single homeless people.



helping the poor" and in creating four more flats for homeless people already being planned.

Nick Phillips, CEO of The Almshouse Association, said he was impressed not just by the quality of the build but the fantastic use of the charity's resources in turning commercial investments into almshouses for those in very immediate need.

He said: "The partnership between Worcester Municipal and Citizens Advice is unique and inspirational. The people occupying these almshouses faced years living on the streets. These almshouses can be life-changing opportunities for young homeless people in Worcester."

£4.4million scheme for 21 'affordable living' homes

Construction of the Parochial Charities' new almshouses in Great Shelford, South Cambridgeshire is underway. The trustees recently held their first site meeting with the contractor as foundations were being excavated. They are looking forward to seeing this £4.4million scheme progress to completion around the end of next year.

The 21 new units are a mixture of one, two and three-bedroom homes, with gardens. They will bring the total number of almshouses owned by the charity, which provides affordable living for people in housing need in Great Shelford, to 53.



Sarah Rann, the Parochial Charities Chair of Trustees, said: "After three years in planning, we are delighted to see our contractors breaking ground at More's Meadow. I would

particularly like to thank the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for their grant of £1million to help build these homes."

New almshouse for Market Harborough

The Almshouse Association was delighted to be invited by the Hallaton and Isabella Stenning Trust to the opening of the first new almshouse to be built in Harborough village for 100 years. It was an honour to witness the young family being welcomed by their new community.

The charity has 16 almshouses in High Street, North End and Hog Lane, providing villagers with affordable accommodation and enabling them to stay in Hallaton, if they wish, as the high cost of housing in the village may otherwise prevent them from doing so. Generations of young and older people from the village have benefited from this.



Homes for veterans opened in Ledbury by Ross Kemp

Four new state-of-the-art almshouses for veterans built by The Buchanan Trust were officially opened in Ledbury by well-known actor, presenter, investigative journalist and long-term supporter of the Armed

Forces community, Ross Kemp. The new homes (see photo right) have been built specifically to help ex-service personnel make a successful return to civilian life and The Almshouse Association was

pleased to be represented on the special day by CEO, Nick Phillips.



Ross Kemp (left) with Nick Phillips.

Leading the way with solar power

Four new solar-powered almshouses built to a high standard of comfort and economy have been opened at Jesse Mary Almshouses in Cheltenham. They are typical of a new generation of almshouses which take the best of traditional design and incorporate the highest standards of insulation and solar energy to reduce their environmental impact and improve economic resilience. Joining residents and trustees to enjoy the day were the Mayor of Cheltenham, Cllr. Steve Harvey (who cut the opening ribbon); Deputy Mayor, Cllr. Sandra Holliday; the MP for Cheltenham, Alex Chalk, former Assistant Whip and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Ministry of Justice); Valerie O'Connor, Chairman of Trustees; Nick Phillips, CEO of The Almshouse Association; together with the architect and building contractor representatives.

It was a great day enjoyed by all and we even managed to get a spot on the local BBC news!



right: **Fran Johns, resident.** far right: **Cllr. Steve Harvey, Mayor of Cheltenham.** below: **Guests view the solar-powered almshouses.**





Member charities join in our 75th Anniversary celebrations

It's been quite a year! With many challenges, but also many celebrations and triumphs. The 75th Anniversary of The Almshouse Association has seen Goodly Dale Cottage Homes Almshouses celebrating their 90th anniversary, St Mary Magdalen Hospital in Colchester celebrating their 900th anniversary and many other members celebrating their own milestones, together with our anniversary, by holding special garden parties for residents, trustees, staff and special guests. Where space and restrictions permitted, members of the public were also invited to join the parties to find out more about almshouses.

On these pages are photographs from some of the almshouse parties we have heard about around the country. Overleaf are photographs from our own 75th Anniversary Garden Party, during which recipients of the Patron's Award 2018 and the Gardens and People Award 2019 were presented with their awards by former Prime Minister, Theresa May MP.

Goodly Dale Cottage Homes

When Goodly Dale Cottage Homes in Windermere, Cumbria celebrated their 90th anniversary, children from the local primary school drew pictures to illustrate their milestone, which were then made into decorative bunting when they joined residents and trustees for a lunch of sandwiches, scones and cake.



Royal Albert & St Swithun's

The Royal Albert and St Swithun's Homes Almshouse in Worcester celebrated the Association's 75th Anniversary over an entire week-end! Residents enjoyed a barbecue and quiz on Saturday and the following day were treated to afternoon tea with



a fabulous singer. They also presented prizes to their 'Gardeners of the Year' for their wonderful displays.

Dunton's Almshouses

Dunton's Almshouses in Dedham, Essex date back to the 16th century and said that celebrating the 75th Anniversary was a very good excuse to put on a party! Residents and guests enjoyed sandwiches, cakes, tea and musical entertainment and are keen to do it all over again. After a fun-filled day, their oldest resident hitched a ride on her son's mobility scooter up the garden slope to her back door!



St John's Homes

Celebrating 140 years of service as well as the Association's 75th Anniversary, residents and trustees of St John's Homes Kempston almshouse charity enjoyed the double celebration with an alfresco tea party in their courtyard. Residents were each given a memento toaster and key fob to mark the special occasion.



St Mary's Hospital



St Mary's Hospital, Chichester opened their almshouse gardens as part of the National Garden Scheme and reported how much of a community effort it was. Monica Winnett, Scheme Manager was in charge of setting up; Ray Winnett took charge of the gardens; their chaplain chatted to visitors and lent a hand as needed; and the refreshments stall was run entirely by residents. They all thoroughly enjoyed welcoming and chatting with more than 300 visitors over the sunny weekend and were delighted to raise £1,553 for NGS health, mental health and gardening charities and £347 for St Mary's.

As we go to print, news and photos from more parties and celebrations are still coming in (look out for them in our next Gazette and on our website too). **They include:** ... a double celebration at The Wivenhoe Housing Trust combining our 75th and the opening ceremony of their newly revamped courtyard at Jonathan Feedham Court ... the Saffron Walden almshouses Garden Party opening their gates to the public to come and explore their grounds and find out all about them ... tea and cake and a new residents welcoming party at the Charity of Ann Edwards. **And these are just a few of the many events we are hearing about.** It's so exhilarating to see the community spirit that is such a huge part of the almshouse movement being displayed by so many charities in such inspiring ways. The parties that we have managed to attend have been warm and welcoming. Trustees and residents have all revealed their passion for their almshouses with great energy. After the hardship of the pandemic and, indeed, the continued challenges occurring in the aftermath, we have taken heart from the wonderful stories and case studies that have been flooding in and filling our website and social media platforms. We hope you have found them inspiring too.

Andover Charities



Andover Charities trustees joined in The Almshouse Association's 75th celebrations by holding a picnic afternoon tea in their community orchard. Eighteen residents and trustees enjoyed individual food boxes filled with a range of finger food. Katherine Bird, Clerk to the trustees, said: "It was really wonderful to be able to sit together and socialise for the first time in over a year!"

Dunk's Almshouses



Dunk's almshouses, Hawkhurst celebrated our 75th with a very well attended garden party, despite the rain. They created a display (see photo on page 3) showing the history of their almshouses for guests to learn about the legacy of Sir Thomas Dunk, which included a school as well as six almshouses. Residents and trustees made lots of cakes and savouries and there was a 'guess the weight of the cake' raffle. £474.50 was raised in donations for the charity's educational fund to help the children of the village.

Robert Palmer Almshouses

Mike Hart, Chair of trustees and his team at Robert Palmer Almshouses in Sonning on Thames celebrated their 175th anniversary and the Association's 75th by holding a summer afternoon garden party in July. Former Prime Minister, Theresa May MP and Philip May, together with Nick Phillips, CEO of The Almshouse Association joined residents, trustees and friends in the beautiful gardens to celebrate the community spirit of almshouses with a champagne toast and afternoon tea.



Christ's Hospital Almshouses

Despite appalling weather, the Christ's Hospital Almshouses in Abingdon were determined to carry on



with their plans to get involved in the Association's 75th celebrations. They welcomed 150 visitors, including the Town Mayor, to look around an almshouse and garden and by all accounts thoroughly enjoyed "showing off" what they had achieved.

Bridport Charities



In July, trustees and residents of the Bridport Charities almshouses enjoyed a garden party in their South Street garden.



The Almshouse Association Garden Party 75th Anniversary celebration

Our own garden party took place on September 8th at Bucklebury House on Bucklebury Estate in Berkshire and was a delightful day full of celebration for the Association, the almshouse movement and our members. We had a wonderful visual display of all the fantastic photographs you have taken over the years, showing the diversity, the warmth and the passion for almshouses and just how far we have all come and what we have all achieved. This can now be viewed on our website at www.almshouses.org/news/our-75th-anniversary-garden-party

There are some very special memories wrapped up in the wonderful photos and you may even come across one of yours!

We were so pleased with the very considered and inspiring video message

from our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales and you can also view this on our website.

He speaks warmly about the passion that is shown by you, our members and the vital importance of this thousand year-old housing model that is still standing the test of time.

We were also honoured that poet Kevin Crossley-Holland wrote a commemorative poem for The Almshouse Association. This is on our website for everyone to enjoy.

The Patron's Award 2018 and the Gardens and People Award 2019 recipients joined us on the day and we celebrated their achievements in a moving ceremony, with the awards presented by The Rt Hon Theresa May MP.

Our CEO, Nick Phillips spoke on the roots of the Association and highlighted some ground-breaking new research which evidences the economic value that the almshouse movement brings to the community; and our Chair, Elizabeth Fathi talked about almshouses through the ages.

Overall, the day was a true depiction of the almshouse movement. The celebratory toast given by our Chair, Elizabeth Fathi highlighted the strength of our members and what our organisation is all about, supporting you and representing you to achieve the best for your residents and ensuring the longevity of the almshouse movement.



above: Theresa May MP, Nick Phillips CEO and Willie Hartley Russell, a trustee of The Almshouse Association and our host for the day, who had the honour of cutting the 75th Anniversary cake.



Impressive new-build almshouses and an increased national awareness of the almshouse movement are among the highlights of our anniversary year



above: Nick Corke, Mills Charity.
right: Kevin Crossley-Holland, poet.



Gardens and People Award
Partis College, Somerset (below). Angela Cheyne and Tony Davies.



Throughout the summer we have also had some great press too! This was part of our 75th Anniversary strategy, to ensure we achieved more awareness for the almshouse movement. This is starting to bear fruit with articles in local and national press. We have also been fortunate to attend some amazing almshouse openings. These include Bond's and Ford's

Almshouses in Coventry, who hosted a special VIP visit from our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales, during which he made the first cut of an amazing Almshouse Association 75th Anniversary celebration cake. Then there was Cheltenham, whose impressive new build almshouses (see page 7) demonstrate the future-proofing of almshouses with their 'ecological-friendly' infrastructures and accessibility in mind. These are just a sample of the amazing openings happening across the country at which we were delighted to be involved.

They highlight the robustness of the almshouse model that supports local people in housing need. Our journey of awareness-building, with a goal to educate everyone about almshouses, will remain a focus in the latter part of 2021 and into the New Year, so please do keep sending in your stories and details of any celebrations.

The autumn months will be full of sparkle and light and uplifting messages for all of us in the almshouse world, thanks to your dedication and hard work. Heartfelt thanks to you all.



Gardens and People Award
The Day Foundation, Suffolk (right).
Sylvia Bickers and Claire Martin.



Patron's Award
The Charity of James
Goodman, Bedfordshire (right).
Garth Holman and
Jonathan Billington.



Gardens and
People Award
Lady Lumley's
Almshouses, North
Yorkshire (left).
Mary Hogarth and
Margaret Fletcher.



Patron's Award The Mills Charity, Suffolk (above).
Nick Phillips CEO, Nick Corke (Mills Charity), Rt Hon Theresa May MP,
Karren Piper (Mills Charity), Elizabeth Fathi Chair, Simon Pott, Chair of
The Almshouse Association Awards.

The Almshouse Association regularly publishes Policy and Governance updates on our website. Text in blue below denotes a web link to a specific document or report. These can be accessed via our Policy and Governance web articles at www.almshouses.org/latest-news/

Charity Commission

Cyber security training package launched for charities and small businesses
The National Cyber Security Centre has published a free e-learning package to support small organisations, including charities. The training, [Cyber Security for Small Organisations and Charities](#), guides businesses through the actions they should take in order to dramatically reduce the risk of the most common cyber-attacks, such as ransomware and phishing.

Trustee recruitment
Reach Volunteering has launched a website to help charities improve how they recruit trustees and increase their board’s diversity. The [Trustee Recruitment Cycle](#) includes guidance, templates, and insight from other charities, with an aim to make it easier to recruit more openly and inclusively. It was created by Reach Volunteering, alongside the Association of Chairs, Small Charities Coalition and Getting on Board. The Trustee Recruitment Cycle takes charities through the recruitment process in six stages and is designed so charities can dip into relevant sections, or work through the whole recruitment process from start to finish.

Updated guidance on charity accounting
The Charity Commission has updated its guidance on [Charity reporting and accounting: the essentials November 2016 \(CC15d\)](#) and on [Independent examination of charity accounts: guidance for trustees \(CC31\)](#) to include advice on the use of electronic signatures on the balance sheet, trustees’ annual report and independent examination.

Wales

Social Housing in Wales
Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change, announced a commitment to deliver 20,000 new low carbon homes for rent within the social sector during this term. Social housing will be defined as within the recognised TAN2 affordable housing definition. It will only include social homes for rent, intermediate homes for rent and shared ownership schemes.
The Almshouse Association is seeking to work with the Welsh government to make them more aware of almshouses and their position in the affordable housing sector.

Housing

First Homes
The Government has announced its planned introduction of First Homes; homes which are discounted for purchase by a minimum of 30% for first time buyers. The Almshouse Association is concerned that priority will be given to the new model ahead of homes for social rent. This is the result of local authorities being told to prioritise securing 25% of their affordable homes allocation as First Homes from developer contributions before proceeding to consider alternative models of affordable housing. The

Association believes that local authorities should be able to choose the most appropriate model of affordable housing for their local community whether this be social rent, or even supporting new almshouse developments.
Although the levels of new council/ social housing have increased slightly in recent years, it would benefit the sector if the Government provided greater support for genuinely affordable homes for rent, rather than continuing to focus on home ownership, which, even with First Homes will be out of reach for many.

Planning

Historic England – Listed Building Consent
Historic England has published guidance on listed building consent. The note gives both general advice for owners of listed buildings about listed building consent as an application process and on how to judge whether proposals need consent, how to achieve certainty on the need for consent and how to make informed applications. It also gives advice on works which may or may not need listed building consent, depending on how the works are proposed to be carried out.
The Association is still seeking to work with Historic England on producing a specific guide focused on almshouses.

National Disability Strategy
The Government has published its

National Disability Strategy which seeks to improve the life of disabled people across the country. Part of the strategy focuses on housing, particularly accessibility, with some immediate measure including:
● boosting the supply of housing for disabled people by raising accessibility standards for new homes, increasing the supply of affordable homes, including supported housing, and accelerating the adaptation of existing homes by improving the efficiency of local authority delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant, worth £573 million in 2021 to 2022
● extending disabled tenants’ rights on accessibility
● ensuring the safety of disabled people in buildings, for when there are emergencies

Coronavirus

Everyone working in care homes to be fully vaccinated under new law to protect residents
The Department of Health and Social Care has announced that people working in CQC-registered care homes will need to be fully COVID-19 vaccinated with both doses. The new legislation means that from October – subject to Parliamentary approval and a subsequent 16-week grace period – anyone working in a CQC-registered care home in England for residents requiring nursing or personal care must have two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine unless they have a medical exemption. It will apply to all workers employed directly

by the care home or care home provider (on a full-time or part-time basis), those employed by an agency and deployed by the care home, and volunteers deployed in the care home. Those coming into care homes to do other work, for example healthcare workers, tradespeople, hairdressers and beauticians, and CQC inspectors will also have to follow the new regulations, unless they have a medical exemption.
Each almshouse charity will need to assess the risk and vulnerability of their residents and may make their own policy with this regard. The Almshouse Association team will be happy to discuss if you have any queries.

Lessons from 16 years of almshouse lending



Carolyn Sims

Ethical lender, Charity Bank has a strong history of almshouse lending and the bank’s Director of Lending, Carolyn Sims, who is a trustee of an almshouse, Huggens College, has been heavily involved with almshouses since joining the bank in 2005. Carolyn has provided some tips for almshouses considering loan finance.

Approach a lender as soon as possible
When planning your project, if you think that you need loan finance, get lenders involved at an early stage. By doing so you will have access to their expertise and guidance, as well as upfront information on what is expected from your organisation. No matter the size of your project, there is a lot of preparation required to apply for loan finance. The earlier you can start preparing, the smoother the process will be. Remember the lender will have seen similar projects before and will be able to help you avoid possible pitfalls using their own experience.

Surround yourself with the right people
Try to make sure everyone involved in your project has the right experience and expertise to add value to the process. This could mean having a member on your management team, board of trustees or a co-optee with experience in development; or involving lawyers who specialise in working with charities. You should ensure that the architect, quantity surveyor and any contractors you hire have experience working on similar projects and are financially robust themselves.

Lenders like Charity Bank can help with this by running their own financial checks and providing details of firms they have worked with previously.

Be prepared for all eventualities
Things can and do go wrong with development projects, especially with those that have numerous people involved and take place over a longer period. It’s better to be aware of this and plan for all eventualities from the beginning. There can be unforeseen circumstances: asbestos buried on the site to be developed or unmarked utility cables running across a site are just two that we have come across. It’s vital that you make sure you have enough contingency and solid cash flow in place to keep the project on track no matter what happens.

Don’t sign anything before speaking to lenders
One almshouse we worked with had obtained planning permission before we got involved. Unfortunately, it was revealed later by a valuer that the permission gained was so restrictive it could not serve as loan security as the valuer was unable to prescribe any value. Difficulties like this can be avoided by engaging with an experienced lender early on and seeking advice from them before signing anything. Whether your almshouse is in need of refurbishment, you want to refinance your existing loan, or there is another project you have in mind, Charity Bank is happy to have an early conversation or more detailed discussion on how we might be able to help. To find out more please call us on 01732 441919 or visit www.charitybank.org



Advice on unoccupied properties

by Trudy Brown ACII, Chartered Insurance Broker, Higos



One of the biggest challenges for a property owner is protecting their property when it becomes unoccupied. Empty premises are more susceptible to certain types of loss or damage and for a charity this could be especially devastating. Types of loss or damage to be aware of are:

- Fire damage caused by a faulty electrical installation or arson
- Water damage from a burst pipe
- Vandalism, malicious damage, graffiti
- Theft - damage to the property itself and its contents
- Gradual deterioration from adverse weather or lack of maintenance
- Squatters

You have a legal duty to make safe your property and consideration should be given to personal injury that could occur to anyone coming onto the property.

To deter potential intruders, detect any issues at the earliest opportunity and manage unlawful entry, there are a number of measures you can take.

1. There should be regular visits to the property for a general check.

Insurers usually stipulate a time frame in which to do this and a formal record should be kept. As well as checking no damage has occurred it is also an opportunity to mitigate any further damage should something have happened.

Any such damage should be reported to your insurer or broker at the earliest opportunity and to the police if a crime has taken place.

2. Disconnect utility services and drain the water from the system unless it needs to be kept on for any security/fire protection systems or security lighting or sprinkler systems. In some instances you may be asked to keep the heating system in operation, particularly during the winter months, to remove the risk of burst pipes. Your insurer can discuss this and options with you.
3. Letterboxes should be sealed and any redundant contents removed from the premises. You should also ensure there are no combustible materials left in or around the property.
4. It is advisable to check that keys have been recalled and, if not possible,

consider changing the locks to prevent unauthorised entry or access.

5. It is important to ensure the boundary is secure. This can be done through a maintenance plan to keep safe any perimeter fences and to keep vegetation tidy. Security lighting could also be used to assist in deterring intruders from accessing the building.
6. In some instances it may be appropriate to board up any accessible doors and windows or ensure main entry doors are secured by a five-lever mortice deadlock to British Standard 3621 or similar.
7. If there is an alarm in place this should continue to be operated, maintained and inspected. A temporary alarm system, CCTV or security service could be considered for larger premises.

Please contact your insurance broker as soon as the property becomes unoccupied. Every policy will have terms that apply and possible cover changes that come into force when a property becomes empty.

Managers' rapid response to almshouse flood

Does your almshouse have an up-to-date emergency/disaster policy in place?

A York property management company found theirs was put to the test when a recent downpour caused a listed almshouse to flood. Mulberry PM staff leapt into action when a resident of Grade II* listed Wandesford House, York rang to say water was pouring down internal walls and staircases and the electricity to five flats was outed as a result of the late afternoon deluge.

Residents moved to lounge

Managing Director, Anya Mathewson and Head of Property Management Laura Street raced straight to the almshouse, which comprises 12 flats for women over 50, while Almshouse Administrator Emma Davis summoned Mulberry PM's team of contractors and Operations Director, Graeme Dixon sourced towels to help stem the flow of water. Having first ensured that the lady residents of the almshouse were safe and dry in the communal lounge, in

another area of the house, Anya and Laura started briefing contractors. "We could see that the issue seemed to be a blocked and overflowing hopper (which funnels water from the gutter into the downpipe) 20ft above ground at the back of house," said Anya, adding: "Water had also got into the electrics cupboard."

Discovering the cause

Over the next three and a half hours, the Mulberry PM team were joined by contractors who between them made safe the electrics, identified and removed the cause of the hopper blockage (a squirrel's nest which had remained undisturbed during one of the driest Aprils on record), removed excess water with a 90ft hose and installed two giant fans to help the house and contents dry out further. Emma booked three residents into the local Premier Inn and drove them round there as well as liaising with relatives of another resident who opted to move out to stay with them. Anya emailed all the trustees to keep them updated and spoke to Chair of the Wandesford House trustees, Elizabeth Hey. Meanwhile Laura started an insurance claim with specialist brokers Grout. Throughout the operation, Mulberry staff and contractors observed all COVID-19 protocols on masks, distancing and use of hand sanitisers. The team did not leave Wandesford House until four hours after the first emergency call, when they were satisfied that the almshouse was safe, the flooded areas were drying out, and that all of the remaining residents were comfortable.

Repairs and redecoration

They returned the next morning to check on the ladies' welfare and make sure the electrics had dried out sufficiently to be safe for all the residents to return to their homes. Mulberry PM will now oversee repairs and redecoration at the almshouse, which was built in 1739. Thanking Mulberry PM on behalf of the Wandesford House trustees, Elizabeth Hey said: "What a relief for the residents and ourselves to have Mulberry PM here for us at times of crisis. We're so grateful that the team knows the various workmen who could be contacted immediately and that they worked so promptly to help those residents who had to move to the

Premier Inn, or to stay with family."

Anya said: "I'm very proud of the way the Mulberry PM staff reacted quickly and professionally to ensure our residents were safe and help was at hand. I was also delighted that our fantastic contractors arrived at the scene so promptly and worked together to put things right at this historic building which is also a valued home."

Emergency plans

She added: "But as smoothly as everything was taken care of, the experience has made us realise that we didn't have a disaster protocol in place. We are now drawing up a plan of action for those unforeseen emergencies when, for example, a key member of our experienced staff or one of our regular team of contractors is unavailable. It could potentially save a lot of time, expense - and even someone's life." Mulberry PM works with trustees and board members to help manage the day-to-day operation of almshouses on a bespoke basis. Managing Director Anya Mathewson is The Almshouse Association's Regional Champion for Yorkshire and is happy to give advice on managing a successful almshouse.



Life Trustee honour



Daphne Cornell, a long serving trustee of King Edward VI & The Reverend Joseph Prime Almshouse Charity in Saffron Walden, has accepted the role of 'Honorary Life Trustee' for her service and commitment to the charity. She was presented with a picture of herself standing in front of the Almshouse Chapel by trustee Malcolm Domb. Daphne is a former Town Mayor and still serves on several local charities. The illustration was drawn by almshouse resident and local artist Sarah Turpin, who is well known locally for her work. Lisa Morrissey, Business Officer

Farewell to retiring clerk

Simon Smith is well known in High Barnet as a fundraising quiz master and charity supporter. For 16 years he also managed more than 60 of High Barnet's historic almshouses, before taking early retirement from his role as Clerk to the trustees of the Jesus Hospital Charity.



Simon has been busy saying goodbye to the many residents he has known so well over the years, including former nurse Liz Walsh (left) who lives in one of seven new almshouses opened two years ago. Completing Ravenscroft Cottages in Potters Lane was one of Simon's most satisfying accomplishments, dealing with consultants and contractors on behalf of the trustees and co-ordinating the construction of the almshouses. He said: "We are proud of our expansion programme which has demonstrated the continuing importance and relevance of providing housing for the elderly and needy."

Beavers brighten up the garden borders

Terry Sweet, resident warden at The Sheffield Firth Almshouses, sent us this cheerful photo and explained:

"I was contacted by Cath from the 142nd Fulwood Scout Group Beavers (Sheffield) to see if they could come down to The Sheffield Firth Almshouses (Firth Homes) and plant some marigolds to help cheer up our residents. The Beavers normally visit us at Christmas but due to COVID-19 it was not possible and they thought this would be a good replacement. Yes, it was! We had a great night. I prepared a section of our gardens near the public footpath so they can be easily seen. We had a good turnout from our residents to cheer them on and we have had many admirers so far. Here At Firth Homes we do try to support our local community where we can and the Beavers have been regular visitors."



Welcome to a new member

The Rous Charity, Newmarket, Suffolk

They have 13 properties across two sites, which provide homes for people in need who previously worked in the racing industry.



New role for chairman after 30 years

After 30 years as chairman of Lord Petre and Puckle Charities almshouses in Billericay, Peter Strong has decided to take on the slightly less demanding and time consuming role of trustee.

As chairman, he has been ably assisted by his wife, Christabel and carried out his leadership role in an efficient manner. He has been a friend to all of the residents

of Petre Place over the years. In many cases this has improved their lives considerably as he has always been available to them at the end of a telephone line, or in person, quickly finding solutions to any problems they may have. Residents showed their appreciation of Peter's work by holding a small tea party at Petre Place and presenting him and Christabel with a gift as a thank you.

We all hope Peter enjoys his work as a trustee and wish the incoming chairman, David Clark all the best in his new role.

Supplied by John Burrows



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The Almshouse Association

Billingbear Lodge

Maidenhead Road

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Berks RG40 5RU

Tel: 01344 452922

Fax: 01344 862062

email: AlmshouseSupport@almshouses.org

web: www.almshouses.org

Registered Charity No. 245668

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Photography Competition

- winner and runner-up prizes

What a wonderful photography competition we have had! We were delighted with the stunning photographs submitted by members and it was an incredibly difficult decision for our judges to choose a winner and runner-up!



WINNER

Sheila Seymour, Clerk to the Trustees, Chubbs Almshouses, Crewkerne won first prize for her photo (above) on the theme 'Happiness' titled: 'In my shed, litho printing'. Congratulations Sheila!

RUNNER-UP

Susanne Munslow-Adair, resident, Benn's Walk Almshouses, Richmond upon Thames won the runner-up prize for her photo (right) on the theme 'Flora and Fauna', titled: 'Tall Rudbeckias'. Congratulations Susanne!

Our professional photographer said: 'They are all worthy winners!'

We agree. You are all winners but, sadly, we could only offer prizes to the overall winner and runner-up and these were announced at our 75th Garden Party.



Thank you to everyone who participated and watch out for more competitions!



The Almshouse Association 2021 Awards

Has your charity completed a major refurbishment or new build project during 2021?
Did you introduce innovative technologies for the benefit of the residents and property?
Have you initiated a gardening project for your residents?

We are very pleased to invite applications for the following awards



2021 Gardens & People Award



2021 Patron's Award



2021 Excellence and Inspiration Award

Please visit www.almshouses.org/almshouse-association-awards for our submission format, tips and design guidance, Patron's Award design brief and details on previous award recipients.

Please send your submissions to admin@almshouses.org

Deadline for entries - Friday 14 January 2022