



the almshouses Gazette

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Regional meetings go independent!

We are pleased to announce a new, streamlined process that empowers members to independently host a regional meeting. Through this initiative, our primary goal is to help support increased collaboration and engagement amongst member charities.

We believe that this restructuring of regional meetings will enable more of our member charities to facilitate informal gatherings, fostering mutual support as well as nurturing the keen sense of community that characterises the almshouse movement. The Association has created user-friendly templates to simplify the process of hosting a regional meeting. Whether you have experience as an event organiser or are new to the challenge, we hope these new resources will prove indispensable in helping to plan and execute a successful meeting. From venue considerations, catering and invitations, to running the meeting and follow up, we've got your needs covered!

We will work with you to send out your invitations and promote your Regional Meetings on our website and in our monthly e-bulletins. We will be on hand to support you if you have any questions or queries about the process but all member enquiries about the event itself will be directed to the member charity event organiser so that you will have complete autonomy to amend and update as necessary. To access the online guidance templates, please go to www.almshouses.org/model-policies-and-templates

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Almshouse Vice Patron makes three Royal visits to charities within a month



October brought a series of significant Royal visits to almshouse charities, making it a truly memorable month and a very busy one for our Royal Vice Patron, HRH The Duke of Gloucester. He helped mark a centennial milestone at The Courtauld Homes of Rest, Essex (photo above); delighted residents, staff and trustees at the City of Wells Almshouses, where he also visited a resident in her flat, and attended the official opening of a new almshouse development at Ossulton Court, Uxbridge. Further details and photos on page 4.

Christmas Fund legacy delights 679 residents

Thanks to the generous legacy left to the Association over 65 years ago by Major Allnatt, a successful businessman and philanthropist, The Almshouse Association Christmas Fund continues to bring happiness to almshouse residents all over the UK. Every year almshouse trustees and clerks let the Association know how many residents have reached the age of 90+ years and it gives us great joy to send out Christmas gift vouchers to the charities in time to be handed to residents on Christmas Eve.

This year vouchers were given to 679 nonagenarians and centenarians! What a great testament to almshouse living! See website for photos.

New online 'Introduction to almshouses' course

Our new online CPD accredited course is aimed at new trustees and clerks and those wishing to brush up their knowledge. Covering key areas with signposting and Q&A, this hour-long free online course is a great complement to a new recruit's induction and precursor to our full day in-person training course. It can be found in the Members area of our website under the Training and Events menu.

If you have any difficulties please contact Member Services on 01344 452 922.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S COMMENT

Firstly, I hope that you all enjoyed a restful, but Merry Christmas and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a very Happy New Year!

So what are the plans for 2024?

Without doubt, we must continue to raise the profile of almshouses. Most of us can drive through a remote village or market town and see an almshouse like a hunter spots a deer; we are attuned to their unique layout and architecture, maybe the simplicity of the row of cottage doors and benches outside, or the high, decorated chimneys and deep sloping roofs. Others however, those not part of our close-knit family, do not always see that almshouses are part of a wider group - the almshouse movement - providing homes to 36,000 people. When we first talk to government ministers or local councils about the value of almshouses, some do not know that they are lucky enough to have almshouses in their constituency or county. To add to the confusion, they may be called ‘Hospitals’, ‘Bede Houses’, even ‘Colleges’ or ‘Homes of Rest’. I wonder if over the next few years, we can find a way to develop that common “brand” and start to show that all almshouses are part of the wider almshouse movement? I have a feeling that when we do, the historic buildings, as well as the wonderful new almshouses, will be easily recognised as a group worthy of note, not just locally but nationally. And perhaps this would help in the recruitment of trustees, gain more support from councils and maybe, through association, bring in funding? This is another area we plan to tackle in 2024.

So how can this be achieved? Maybe more use of The Almshouse Association logo on your own material? A plaque displaying a shared logo? We would be interested in your views about how we can best share a joined-up picture. Whilst we know that the almshouse brand is built on collective value, like all great brands, it is only as strong as the weakest link. We know that not all almshouse charities are able to consistently meet those high standards and occasionally need some help. If you are aware of any struggling almshouses that need extra help, please do point them in the direction of the Association.

How far can the almshouse movement go to support one another?

I have been astonished by the generosity and care that trustees provide, not just for their own charity but also for the good of the wider movement. Recently, I was with an almshouse CEO who not only runs a very successful charity but has also been giving up his time to support a number of local charities that

are struggling with issues such as trustee recruitment and building management. Another CEO I spoke to in the Midlands has supported many almshouse charities by working with his board to take them under the wing of a larger charity as a linked charity. This enables the smaller charity to retain its character but with a new energised board. It is this collective support which is so valuable and helps maintain the quality of all. When talking to those we need to influence, the most compelling element of the model is the impact of the almshouse community on the wellbeing of residents. That is where the real difference lies. There is no easy measure of the wellbeing of residents but a target of “zero” for the number of lonely residents would be a realistic option.

We are stronger when seen together
Let’s shout about all being part of the big picture. As we work to raise the profile and coordinate our branding, this will help share the connected message. We will find ways to help charities with heritage buildings and raise the value of your work which both contributes to the heritage of the nation as well as the running of almshouses. We will share research and best practice to help our members build strong almshouse communities where residents feel part of a warm, friendly progressive movement. I hope that by sharing in this Gazette both our plans and what other charities are achieving, we can all feel a sense of shared pride in a world that seems at times as if it is going to implode with anger and despair. Keeping the thousand-year-old spirit of a model of companionship and community going strong when all around us are upsetting news stories is maybe the most valuable resilience we can offer.

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive

We’re here to help ...

If you are struggling to recruit new trustees and are considering a linked charity, or you are a charity which can support others, please let us know. Or, if there are any other issues you may need help with, do call or email our team for support.

The support we offer includes Standards of Almshouse Management Guidance Manual, one-to-one direct support, a visit and charity Health Check, CPD accredited training programme, seminars, webinars, online training, templates and guides, panel of consultants, mediator introduction, loans and grants, regional contacts in most areas, and regional meeting templates.



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Regional meetings bring almshouse charities together

East Anglia regional meeting

In September, Girton Town Charity welcomed more than 30 representatives from almshouse charities throughout East Anglia to the William Collyn Community Centre, followed by a visit to Dovehouse Court near Cambridge, its new development of 15 futureproof homes for over 55s in the village.

Nick Phillips, CEO of The Almshouse Association, praised the charity for “leading the way” in the movement by funding and building new almshouses which are built to stringent Passivhaus standards and have first-class sustainability credentials.

He highlighted the ‘cutting-edge design’ of the Dovehouse Court homes where residents are already enjoying living in a secure and warm environment, designed with a communal garden as well as individual raised beds to grow flowers and vegetables.



Ann Bonnett, Chair of Girton Town Charity, said: “It was a great honour to be asked to host this regional meeting and to be able to share our journey in creating these almshouses for the future.

“Not only did we enjoy an excellent attendance but many people came to visit Dovehouse Court after the formal sessions to see at first hand what has been achieved. This visit was a great reward for all the hard work and

Correction to an article on page 6 of the Autumn Gazette, issue 272: ‘Preparing an annual return for the Charity Commission’ Incorporated charities that are CIOs do not need to file their annual accounts with Companies House, only with the Charity Commission.



above: **Girton Town Charity hosted a regional meeting in East Anglia for 30 almshouse charities with (foreground, left to right) Nick Phillips, CEO, The Almshouse Association; Ann Bonnett, Chair, Girton Town Charity; Jennifer Millard, Regional Representative and Ian Bramwell, Director, Mole Architects.** below left: **York regional meeting hosted by Fothergill Homes.**

inspired vision of our trustees over many years to bring the new almshouses to fruition. My thanks go to them and to the excellent team who worked on the project.”

frail residents. I was made to feel most welcome by trustees and clerks and given a tour of the gardens by one of the residents.”

East Midlands regional meeting

The Chairman of The Almshouse Association, Willie Hartley Russell, joined Nick Phillips at the East Midlands Almshouses regional meeting in Leicestershire. They presented an overview of almshouses nationally and outlined the great opportunities for raising the profile of the movement by member charities, both as independent individual charities and by us all working together as a movement. There was also a detailed discussion about the challenges of defining independent living.

The event concluded with a tour of the new almshouses which display the best of the old and new in almshouse architecture - bright, adaptable, warm and secure; a flag-ship model and an example to others. Many thanks to Chris Jones CEO at Wyggestons for hosting the event.

Regional meetings update - front page.

Almshouse Association Board Member, Margaret Stewart (front row, fourth from right) at the Lancashire regional meeting at Peter Birtwistle Trust.



Memorable month for Royal visits to almshouses

Almshouses featured prominently in the Royal Family Diary in October when our Royal Vice Patron, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, demonstrated his steadfast commitment to almshouses with three Royal visits in the same month.

The Courtauld Homes of Rest, Essex

3 October 2023. HRH The Duke of Gloucester joined the centenary festivities at The Courtauld Homes of Rest, Halstead, Essex. Amongst attendees were the trustees, the founder's family and residents. The Duke's visit included a fascinating tour of the Reading Room, adorned with historical pictures, architect's plans and details of the Courtauld family's captivating history. Almshouse residents, Mr. and Mrs. Fenner, were honoured to receive The Duke in their almshouse and enjoyed a delightful conversation; an encounter they will cherish for years to come. Following an afternoon tea with trustees, residents and guests, The Duke cut a splendid centenary cake and unveiled two blue plaques commemorating distinguished Courtauld family members and a third plaque to mark his visit.



Ossulton Court, Uxbridge

20 October 2023. HRH, The Duke of Gloucester, attended the official opening of Ossulton Court, a remarkable almshouse project by Uxbridge United Welfare Trust. Situated in the bustling heart of Uxbridge, Ossulton Court comprises 20 meticulously designed almshouse apartments, a project that spanned more than four years from inception to completion. The Duke's visit included a guided tour of the new development where he expressed his admiration for a beautiful display of apple trees, each dedicated to a resident and bearing their names on small plaques. Resident, Mrs. Janet Brown welcomed The Duke into her flat, which gives a splendid view of the courtyard garden lovingly tended by residents. The Duke concluded his visit by meeting residents and guests over a cup of tea, unveiling a special commemorative plaque and signing the visitors' book.



"It is a great honour to welcome our Royal Vice Patron to our member charities. The Duke seems genuinely impressed by the wonderful architecture, residents' stories and history that are the hallmarks of the almshouse movement, carrying with them centuries of living heritage and the stories of the hundreds of lives that create these communities." Nick Phillips, CEO of The Almshouse Association.



The City Of Wells Almshouses, Somerset

16 October 2023. HRH The Duke of Gloucester paid a visit to The City Of Wells Almshouses, creating an atmosphere of delight among residents, staff and trustees. The Duke explored the medieval buildings, gardens, chapel and Guildroom during his tour. Of particular interest was the Bubwith chapel dating back to the 15th Century, currently undergoing an exciting restoration project to transform it into a new community space in Wells. Resident, Mo Joyce welcomed to HRH in her flat, offering a view of the picturesque walled garden. The visit concluded with a gathering in the Guildroom where The Duke enjoyed a slice of cake and chatted with residents.



To read the full stories and view our photo galleries on these events, please visit www.almshouses.org/member-stories-news-and-events

We were also delighted that HRH The Princess Royal opened new almshouses at Cutbush & Corral almshouses in Maidstone (see back page).

Meeting the challenge of finding new trustees

Finding new trustees can be hard and daunting. Understandably, there can be nervousness about upsetting the balance of a well-operating and efficient board. Where the dynamic is right and progress is being made, the thought of any changes can be unsettling but bringing in fresh talent ensures a progressive and strong board and protects the longevity of the charity. At all times Charity Commission guidance should be followed where possible and, where resources allow, skills audits, trustee application processes, interviews, inductions and training are

by Panel Consultant and Regional Peer Representative, Jennifer Millard
www.almshouses.org/consultants/millard-consultants

all good practice. It is noted, however, that this is not always feasible for smaller charities or those with challenging resources. When it comes to advertising, try to think outside the box a little. Think about what would inspire you. Go beyond a simple 'black and white' worded advert. Bring in some colour, keep the wording short and simple and in plain English and, most of all, get out there! "Where?" I hear you cry, "But we've asked everywhere!"

My 'go to' list is as follows:

- Places people visit - libraries, shops, cafes, churches, sports centres, village halls, meeting places.
 - Local voluntary action groups, community foundations and other charities (they may have had recent recruitment campaigns and been oversubscribed).
 - Local schools, businesses, councils, voluntary organisations (Women's Institute), museums, etc.
- Use positive language in your advert; words such as 'difference', 'impact', 'support', 'team' - we want to attract positive and diverse people to make a difference.

We have a responsibility to be honest too. What shape the charity is in, what shape the board is in, how well resourced the charity is, what the time commitment is going to be. There is no

point in going through the recruitment process only to have to repeat it again because the person feels misled and steps down. Like so many processes within the third sector, it's daunting at the outset but when you've done it once, you've got a great template to replicate. Don't be put off by the words 'trustee induction' as a copy of the scheme, some recent accounts, minutes and a walking tour of the estate and some one-to-one time are more than sufficient; perhaps a 'buddy' opportunity with another trustee too; it need not be prohibitive.

My top tips ...

- The more you put into the process, the more you're likely to be rewarded.
- Consider setting aside a small marketing budget to draft an eye-catching advert.
- Research a circulation list for the advert and write a covering letter explaining why you need trustees and what the charity does - a 'case for support'.
- Prepare a standard response to enquiries - it will save you having the same conversation for each enquiry.
- Send some links to those who enquire: your website, Charity Commission 5-minute guides, etc.
- Log all enquiries so that you create a database to review later.
- Be open-minded, learn as you go, and be prepared to be flexible.
- Be as warm and welcoming as possible - remember you are the first interaction with the charity!



Trustee opportunity with The Almshouse Association ...

Our Mission:
For almshouses to be recognised as the exemplar form of community housing.

There are very few institutions that have lasted a century and even fewer that have lasted five hundred years. Almshouses have been part of our social heritage for over one thousand years. Today, new almshouses are being built in towns and villages across the country and you are part of this great legacy. The almshouse model is beginning to be recognised for its unique impact on residents' lives, offering residents a form of community living, free from isolation, with the spirit of caring and companionship at its heart but still enabling them to live independently.

As a trustee of The Almshouse Association, you will be an important part of a thriving community of 1,600 almshouse charities and 36,000 residents.
Role content:
Being a trustee of The Almshouse Association is to help lead the national strategy for the almshouse movement. The trustee board is seeking individuals with an interest in improving the lives of others by supporting this membership organisation. The trustee board is made up of dedicated and committed professionals who meet regularly, either as full or subcommittee members and have a very strong long-term strategic goal. The role of the board is to envision and lead strategy, and support the Chief

Executive of an excellent and proactive executive team of staff to deliver the strategy.
We are seeking applicants who care about making a difference to thousands of lives through protecting a valuable charity model and have significant skills and experience in one or all of the following areas:
● IT/Web
● Branding/Marketing/PR
● Fundraising/Sponsorship
● Heritage and Historic Buildings
We actively encourage qualified applicants from a diverse background to apply.
Time commitment:
There are four half-day board meetings a year of which two are currently held online and two in person. There are also

... apply by 16 Feb 2024

other meetings throughout the year in subcommittees to address emerging or urgent topics but these are infrequent. Most trustees sit on an associated subcommittee.
Remuneration:
This is a voluntary position and therefore does not pay a salary. All reasonable expenses are reimbursed.
Term of office:
Three years initially.
How to apply:
Please send your CV to Angela Waters, PA to Nick Phillips, Chief Executive, at Angelawaters@almshouses.org or the Chairman of the Nominations Subcommittee, Paul Mullis at pmullis@damha.org.uk
The closing date for applications is Friday 16 February 2024.

Tips for charities to help residents claim state benefits

With the cost of living still causing issues, trustees and clerks may wish to recommend to their residents that they consider a benefit check.

There are a variety of state benefits on offer to help those who may be struggling to make ends meet but some people, especially if they are older, are not always aware of benefits they are entitled to. Research published this year suggests 850,000 households entitled to Pension Credit are not claiming it, that's £1.7bn left unclaimed (source: gov.uk). Our own research suggests that 40% of almshouse residents do not receive all the benefits they are entitled to. The application process itself can be daunting, so we thought it helpful to explore what's out there, how to apply, and some tips on approaches that charities may choose to take.

● **Benefits check:** we recommend residents are assessed for eligibility for all benefits using one of the benefits calculators available at www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators. If your residents don't have online access, suggest they ask a friend or relative to help them, or ask their local Citizens Advice for a Benefits check on 0800 144 8848.

● **Pension Credit:** those of pension age on a low income and with limited sav-

ings can apply online, over the phone, print out a form or even ask for a form to be posted to them, at www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim or call 0800 991234.

● **Housing Benefit:** mainly for residents of pension age and can be used to pay the weekly maintenance contribution (WMC) but not any part which covers heating, hot water or energy. You apply for it via the local authority.

● **The housing element of Universal Credit:** for working age residents on a low income. You can find out more about how to apply at www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim

● **Council Tax reduction:** if your resident is eligible for Pension Credit or Universal Credit, it is possible they are also entitled to Council Tax support over and above the 25% single person discount. This support is administered by their local authority.

● **Disability Benefits:** Attendance Allowance for those of pension age and Personal Independence Payment ("PIP") for working age residents is £68.10-£101.75 weekly, with a possible extra amount for mobility with PIP. These benefits are not means-tested and are for those who need extra



care and support due to a long-term health condition, whether they are receiving this support or not. It does not necessarily mean they cannot live independently. Broad eligibility criteria can be found on www.gov.uk but we strongly recommend seeking help from Citizens Advice to fill out a form. We also recommend registering your claim by ringing 0800 731 0122 for AA and 0800 121 4433 for PIP.

General tips: There can be long delays receiving some of these benefits. It's a good idea to keep copies of all forms sent, even if they are just screenshots. Ringing helplines earlier in the morning can reduce time waiting on hold and residents may find it helpful to have someone else on the call. Remember to ask if the benefit can be backdated. If the resident does not receive the amount they thought they were entitled to, they have 30 days in which to ask for the decision to be looked at again, known as a Mandatory Reconsideration.

Almshouse Association Ambassador's almshouse roadshow



Ambassador, Simon Smith likes nothing better than travelling around the country talking all things almshouse and has reached 4,000 people over the past two years! He recently spoke at Much Hadham WI and sent us this wonderful photo of himself with two ladies from the local almshouses. He writes: "I must tell you about the talk today. I'm just back from a lovely historic village called Much Hadham in deepest Herts. These two delightful ladies live in the almshouses in the village. At the end of the talk, they both stood up and said how lucky they were to live in such wonderful accommodation. Both have been residents for over 20 years. One of the ladies got very emotional and teary and said it was a 'lifesaver'. Audience members then reeled off the names of almshouses in other villages".

Charity Commission five-minute guides for trustees

The Charity Commission's latest research shows that just seven out of ten trustees answered basic role requirements correctly, demonstrating a knowledge gap that could lead to unintentional governance failings. The Commission's 5-minute guides act as a core syllabus offering trustees engaging, informative content covering the basics all trustees need to know. The Commission encourages trustees to refresh their knowledge and fill any gaps so that they can best serve their charities - and those who rely on them.

The core suite of 5-minute guides covers advice on the following subject areas:

- **Delivering purpose** - how to use your charity's governing document, how to deliver on your charity's purposes and the law.
- **Managing finances** - how to ensure your charity's money is safe, properly used and accounted for.
- **Conflicts of interest** - how to identify and deal with conflicts of interest in your charity.
- **Making decisions** - advice on how to make valid trustee decisions that are in your charity's best interests.
- **Reporting information** - how and what you need to report to the Commission.

- **Safeguarding people** - your responsibilities to keep every one who comes into contact with your charity safe from harm.
- **Political activity and campaigning** - charities that want to support, or oppose, a change in government policy or the law.



Each guide comes with a video (apart from Political activity and campaigning). All can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/5-minute-guides-for-charity-trustees

The Association's auditors, Buzzacott LLP, have also put together some helpful videos that members may find useful: *Accounts for non-accountants*.

They cover:

- The trustees' report
- Judgemental areas
- The statutory reporting requirements

To view the 'Accounts for non-accountants' videos, visit: www.buzzacott.co.uk/accounts-for-non-accountants



The Almshouse Way - new dates for 2024 NOW available

The CPD accredited 1-day course for recently appointed trustees, clerks and CEOs, as well as members wishing to consolidate their knowledge.

The course includes:

- Almshouse history, what makes almshouses unique, The Almshouse Association and how we can support you.
- Charity structures, the charity regulators, roles of trustees and clerks/CEOs, personal liability, your residents.
- Throughout the day we will be discussing almshouse scenarios and case studies.

The course runs at venues around the country. Places fill on a first come first served basis. It costs £105 per delegate, which includes refreshments and a light lunch. To view the venue locations and download a booking form, visit: www.almshouses.org/the-almshouse-way-1-day-course

Members' feedback from the course:

- *I think the course was brimming with information, knowledge, useful facts, and was delivered in such a way that it worked!*
- *An excellent training day, providing me with very useful additional knowledge as a relatively new trustee. It has provided me with more confidence to deliver support to the residents and meet my duties as a charity trustee.*
- *Absolutely excellent course. Very well prepared and delivered. I have never attended any training where everyone is happy to be there (trainers and delegates).*
- *A very thorough grounding: relevant information presented succinctly and efficiently. As well as communicating information, the content and context. Raised awareness of the importance of skills, particularly communication, attitudes, including compassion, emotional intelligence and contributing to community. All this takes a lot of forethought and preparation, requires a skilled and authentic facilitator who is walking the walk. An excellent course.*
- *Thank you very much for having me and I found this course invaluable to reaffirm many aspects in making those hard decisions we all must make!*

- Turning off radiators will save energy and money but the biggest savings come from lowering your boiler flow temperature.
- Leaving heating on low is not as cost-effective as you may believe. According to the Energy Trust it is cheaper to reheat your home.
- Is it cheaper to heat one room or the whole house? A small room may be worth heating individually if it is less than one quarter of the whole house.
- The most economical way to run central heating is to use a programmable/smart thermostat.
- In a modern building it may be advisable to seal any leaks/draughts, close curtains and doors to keep heat

Tips for cutting the cost of home heating

- in one room and out of others. However, in older buildings air needs to circulate to avoid condensation on cold surfaces such as outside walls, so make sure there is sufficient circulation of air.
- Block up chimneys if they present a constant draught - but make sure air can circulate from other areas of managed ventilation.
- Ensure the boiler is working efficiently. A boiler engineer can carry out an efficiency test.
- Set the heating to come on one hour before you get up and to go off one hour before you go to bed.

- No one-size-fits-all but as a general guide it is recommended that heating should be left on 8-10 hours a day.
- Check radiator controls. Maybe turn the heat down rather than off at night. Every degree you can lower the thermostat could gain an estimated 1% off your heating bill.
- The ideal room temperature is considered to be 21 degrees. Increasing the room temperature just a few degrees will increase energy bills substantially.
- Longer-term, seek quick wins on insulation, make sure roofs have good insulation and that loft hatches are insulated.
- Heavy curtains or shutters can also improve window insulation.



above and right: **United St Saviour's Charity Appleby Blue development in Southwark** (photos Philip Vile).



Almshouses making the headlines

Over the past few months, almshouse new builds and redevelopments have been making the headlines all over the UK – in local and national newspapers, in the trade press, all over the web and on radio programmes.

United St Saviour's Charity made a huge splash with their stunning new Appleby Blue development. Completed in May 2023, it provides 57 homes for 63 residents aged 65 or over in Southwark. The charity has worked to support the people and communities of Southwark

idents and charitable organisations in the borough. It tackles social need through a grant-making programme and helps to build strong, supportive and well-served communities through sheltered housing in its three almshouses, St Saviour's Court, Hopton's Gardens and the newest development, Appleby Blue. The building, designed by Stirling Prize-winning architects, Witherford Watson Mann, provides a blueprint for future adult social housing projects for older people.

There were editorial spreads in The Guardian, the Financial Times, and on

the Housing LIN website, as well as several architectural publications including the RIBA Journal. See them all at: www.almshouses.org/almshouse-research-and-publications

RIBA Stirling Prize

We were also delighted to see that The John Morden Centre, built as a social hub where residents of Morden College Almshouses in London can interact and

live full social lives, has won the prestigious RIBA Stirling Prize, awarded to the UK's best new building in 2023. It was described as a "joy and inspiration, creating an environment that lifts the spirits and fosters community".

And we were equally thrilled to see that the news was picked up by a number of news outlets and publications, including the Financial Times, The Guardian, BBC News and Radio, The Big Issue and many architectural magazines including Architecture Today.

In the Summer Gazette, issue 271 we published an article on the new **Almshouse Longevity Study** (published in May 2023 by Bayes Business School) which stated that living in an almshouse can boost the longevity of its residents by as much as two-and-a-half years.

We commented how delighted we were about the number of media outlets that had picked up the story and we are very encouraged that some eight months later, the report continues to be quoted from in many articles. **Novelist and scriptwriter Laurie Graham wrote a wonderful linking piece in The Spectator entitled: 'Why I'm happy being a Brother' (see issue: 02 September 2023).**

Illustration: John Broadley



There have been countless stories in local newspapers and we try to publish as many as we can in the Members' Stories area of our website.

Greener living in Kendal

One such story was in The Westmorland Gazette (8 September 2023). In an article headed: 'Kendal Almshouse Charity spearheads social housing growth for over-55s', charity Chair, Peter Dicksbury, said: "I am delighted to see this project get off the ground after a lot of hard work by many people, for which I am very grateful". Promising a greener living solution, the new almshouses will feature energy efficiency with an open-plan living, kitchen and dining area, all benefiting from high thermal efficiency, air source heating and solar panels.

Major project in Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton's Express and Star reported the second phase of Sutton Coldfield Charitable Trust's £870,000 almshouse refurbishment to upgrade residents' facilities, the guest room and wardens' accommodation.

TV's 'Vera' plants anniversary tree

In The Isle of Thanet News, the 100th anniversary of Lazarus Hart Havens of Rest Trust almshouses in Ramsgate was been marked with a tree planting 'dug in' by award-winning actress and Thanet arts patron, Brenda Blethyn.

Sustainable homes designed for people with disabilities

A £3.8m sustainable housing development for people with disabilities has been opened in Newcastle upon Tyne by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Cllr Veronica Dunn. The St Mary Magdalene & Holy Jesus Trust's Magdalene Court almshouses in Spital Tongues are set amongst mature trees on a prominent site at the top of Richardson Road.

It was designed by JDDK Architects and built by Meldrum Construction to meet National Space Standards, with extensive circulation space for residents. There are 15 accessible one-bedroom apartments designed for older people with a disability who wish to live an independent lifestyle. The development also includes three two-storey, three-bedroom homes designed for families, the first time the Trust has provided housing for families.

Air source heat pumps

The innovative scheme provides highly insulated and airtight homes with heating by air source heat pumps powering low surface temperature radiators. Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery ensures no heat is wasted while allowing a steady supply of fresh air. Magdalene Court also has a 'green' roof terrace of sedum plants. Internally, the apartments are designed for lifetime occupation with open-plan living, dining and kitchen allowing light from the living space windows and balcony through to the kitchen. The bath-

room is also flexible, providing for a bath or shower in a wet room design for future adaptability.

The ground floor apartments all have private patios and gardens while the upper apartments have balconies to create a connection with nature and outdoor green spaces. All the apartments are fitted with a warden call system to summon help if required, whilst there is also an extensive ground floor store for wheelchairs and electronic buggies. The three family homes enjoy south facing gardens with a patio and shed for cycle storage and rear access for added convenience.

The layout features future adaptability with an accessible WC for future shower installation, an aperture for a future through-floor lift, stair lift and temporary bedspace in the ground floor living space.

John Lee, Chairman of the St Mary Magdalene & Holy Jesus Trust, commented: "The Magdalene Court scheme is an exciting development for the Trust. It both builds on what we have done successfully in the past in providing accommodation for older people, but also widens our scope to include providing accommodation for families. We consulted extensively on this scheme with partners and stake-



holders and providing the mix of accommodation that we are doing will ensure that the Trust is using its assets effectively and efficiently to deliver benefit in the city.

Capped weekly contributions

"Despite being affordable in name, often affordable housing schemes still have fairly high weekly costs, particularly for more popular areas. So, perhaps most importantly for residents, we have used our funds to cap the weekly maintenance contributions, inclusive of service charges, at Local Housing Allowance levels.

"The new apartments have been quickly snapped up and we are now continuing with an extensive refurbishment programme for our existing properties whilst also developing plans to provide additional properties on our main site on Claremont Road."

Richmond new homes

The Richmond Charities marked the start of a new development of almshouses with a 'breaking ground' ceremony in September 2023. The charity provides accommodation for people who are over the age of 65 and in housing and financial need, and has been doing so for over 400 years.

Mollie King, who is the daughter of former trustee, Stephen King, a member of the Saturdays pop group and Strictly Come Dancing fame and now a Radio 1 DJ and TV presenter, broke ground with a ceremonial spade. Juliet Ames-Lewis, Chief Executive of The Richmond Charities, said: "This is a really exciting new development for the charity. Five new almshouses are being built which will be fully wheelchair accessible and built to Passivhaus standards, the highest level of energy efficiency."

This new development, along with another new build of 12 almshouses on Queen's Road, Richmond, will increase the charity's almshouses in the borough from 145 to 162.

Mollie King said: "I'm very proud to be here today supporting The Richmond Charities. Today's breaking of the ground



event for the future of another much-needed almshouse estate means so much to me and all of my family. "Adequate housing and a real sense of community for the elderly was a cause so close to my Dad's heart - he was, and continues to be, such an inspiration in my life and anything he was passionate about has certainly been passed onto all of us. He put so much time and care into supporting The Richmond Charities and it's an honour to be here in his name. I hope the development continues to make a real difference to so many people and their loved ones." The new homes are designed by Clive Chapman Architects and are being built by Buxton Building Contractors.

More news from almshouse charities

For more news of almshouse charity activities, projects and developments, go to: www.almshouses.org/member-stories-news-and-events

Trust helps struggling charity's homes stay in the village

The Poland Trust almshouse charity in Brockham, Surrey was established in the 1950s when six almshouses and a warden's flat were built and named 'Poland House', after the original benefactor. Since then, the charity has added four more homes on the same site for the benefit of older residents of the village and three adjacent parishes.

Last year the Trust completed its 'Poland Meadow' development on a greenfield site, with 12 almshouses for younger people - six families and six single people whose average age is in their thirties. The Trust was then approached by another charity in the village

which operates as a housing association providing 14 homes plus a warden's flat on the site of the former vicarage. This charity explained they were having difficulty finding new trustees and asked if The Poland Trust could help them. It was important to both sets of trustees that control of the vicarage site remained within the village rather than being taken into a larger housing association or a commercial operator. The objects of

both charities were similar and the Charity Commission had no objection to the 'merger', with The Poland Trust acquiring the assets and liabilities of the housing association

charity which was then to be closed down. An added benefit was that the warden couple at Poland House had recently retired and are now almshouse residents, adding another home to the almshouse stock. The younger warden at the vicarage has enthusiastically taken on the role for both sites. The timing was not ideal because much of the negotiation took place while the Poland Meadow project was still in progress and the legal process has been slow and time-consuming. However, the opportunity to secure the future of the vicarage site, leading to a total of 37 almshouses for the benefit of both young and older residents in the local area in perpetuity, could not be missed.

contributed by Andrew Barrett,
The Poland Trust



Almshouses reopen after major two-year redevelopment

Newly modernised almshouses at Geffery's Fields in Basingstoke have been opened by David Liming, Master of the Ironmongers' Company. An extensive two-year redevelopment saw the property stripped back to its bare walls, reconfigured and fully refurbished.

The charity now has 52 one-bedroom flats (a combination of single and double bedroom homes), an extended garden room for residents to use for community events, a computer and library room, internet access for all flats and a high-tech emergency notification system to enable monitoring and operation of the facility when the warden is off duty. Richard Patteson-Knight, a trustee of the Ironmongers' Company, said: "We wanted to provide a high standard of accommodation that we could be proud of and which balanced the needs and aspirations of new and existing residents. These works have extended and future proofed the facility by 30 years".

Assistance and goodwill from residents

He added: "As with any big project, there were challenges. The UK's withdrawal from the European Union exacerbated supply chain problems for the construction industry; there was the COVID pandemic with three lockdowns and, sadly, a break-in and vandalism of the home. However, despite these challenges, work persevered and throughout the whole process we ensured that our residents' wellbeing remained at the heart of our deliberations."

During the work, residents were relocated to a sister facility at Geffery's House in Hook with compassion and care, not to mention strict health and safety protocols. Residents and their furniture were moved at a rate of two flats a day.

Richard said: "It was a complex operation and we could not have done it without the assistance and goodwill of our residents. With such a big redevelopment, disturbance was inevitable but we made every effort to minimise disruption to their lives".

Following completion of the work in March 2023, members of the Ironmongers' Company road tested the facilities to iron out any post-completion issues.

Two years and a day after vacating Geffery's Fields, residents returned to their new home, much to the delight of all those involved. The move started on April 11 and was completed on May 5, with a party held the following day to celebrate their



return and the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. The opening ceremony included lunch and a church service at St Mary's Church for 87 guests, among them was Willie Hartley Russell (Chairman of the Board of The Almshouse Association) and Cllr Ronald Hussey (Eastrop Ward, Basingstoke & Deane Council).

Reflecting on the redevelopment, Richard said: "It has been a great comfort that we have been able to draw on the expertise and knowledge of members of the Ironmongers' Company to deliver this project. Our Charities Manager and the Warden of Geffery's Fields also played essential roles during the residents' move and resettlement. I would like to thank our residents for their patience as we built the wonderful home that they truly deserve."

Geffery's Fields is a sheltered housing scheme owned by Sir Robert Geffery's Almshouse Trust and supported by the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers. It was founded under the Will of Sir Robert Geffery in 1704 which left money to the Ironmongers' Company to build almshouses for the poor. To find out more about Geffery's Fields, please visit:

www.ironmongers.org/gefferys-fields

Assessing design and ambition

One of the great privileges of inspecting almshouse projects for an Almshouse Association Award is to study the variety and diversity of thought, care, and approach that trustees seek through architects and designers. Clearly, they gain great satisfaction from achieving the best solution for the project and take pride in showing the judges around the properties. Added to this is the delight of residents displaying their homes and trustees knowing they may be in line for recognition by way of the Almshouse

by Simon Pott, Past President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Chair of the Awards Panel

important bearing in mind that today's building costs can easily become tomorrow's maintenance charge, as well as considering what features of the unique historic almshouse model are relevant in the modern design and how heritage aspects can be built into the design. Some charities have considerable resources whilst others need to be much more circumspect. If resources



Presentation of a Patron's Award to The Mills Charity, Framlingham, Suffolk for the Mills Crescent almshouses development.

Association's Awards Scheme with the pinnacle being a Patron's Award. Whether for new build or renovation of a heritage building, the same criteria and basic principles apply when the Association's Awards Committee assesses applications. Over the last five years the shortlisted almshouses have ranged between superb new, or modernised properties designed by those who have taken exceptional care and used imagination to ensure relevance and places for residents, to those where greater thought and the use of more innovative ideas is necessary. This is especially

are limited, advice can be sought from The Almshouse Association about possible sources of funding such as via Almshouse Consortium Limited through its collaborative approach to Homes England. This will involve the preparation of a costed plan as with any business venture. The experienced architect can add immeasurably to produce a scheme that adds significantly to the wellbeing and pride of residents and set the properties apart from the mundane. Early planning is crucial. The first step is to select a team, probably headed by an architect ideally, as well as a cost consultant, who would work closely as a team with the trustees. Clear understanding by all as to the details of the scheme and



Architects, solicitors, surveyors and other experts who understand almshouse charities are valuable to our members. We are building up our panel of consultants list to support members so if you have received very good service from an expert who really understands almshouses, please encourage them to contact us to join our panel of consultants. Contact susanbrooks@almshouses.org

how it fits with the existing properties in the charity needs to be established, and then a builder can be chosen. The overriding consideration should be to achieve accommodation of a standard that you would be pleased to offer your family. Costs have risen sharply. A recent scheme utilising a quantity surveyor resulted in four tenders being received, all of which more than double the anticipated cost. This appears to be due to the fact that the builders did not want work which would have provided little profit and indeed they would have given the charity a poor return on its expenditure. A word of warning: do not expect quotations to remain open for months while trustees deliberate. Timeliness is vital. Do not allow properties to deteriorate to a point where exceptional expenditure is required. Ahead of time consider the roof, address the heating system, decide whether bathrooms should have showers or wet rooms installed and whether new kitchens are needed. Thought should also be given to future-proofing issues such as access for those with disabilities, especially bearing in mind that we are living longer and that our needs increase. Taking such matters into account will help to avoid the consequence of expensive retrofitting.

Specimen budget will help control charity finances

The Association's 2024 specimen outline budget is available on our website to assist charities in budgeting, maintaining control of their finances and helping to calculate Weekly Maintenance Contributions (WMCs). The form, which is available in both Word and Excel can be found at: www.almshouses.org/model-policies-and-templates/ together with updated guidance notes and in response to questions from members these additional points may be useful.

The different funds

● ERF (Extraordinary Repair Fund):

This is a designated reserve fund, invested for growth, for future major items of repair, eg. the roof being replaced or a new heating system.

● CMF (Cyclical Maintenance Fund):

This fund is designated for maintenance occurring at regular intervals, eg. internal and external decoration, new

kitchens and bathrooms, new fencing, etc. Funds should be invested for growth but be accessible.

● Routine Maintenance: This is for the day-to-day running of almshouses, eg. replacement light bulbs, plumbing and guttering costs, although for some charities the distinction between this and the CMF will be small. The term 'maintenance', which refers to routine activities and preventative work, should not be confused with repairs, which is restoration work. Money will tend to be transferred between the funds concerned. The amounts we have suggested for setting aside in the three funds are for guidance only, although they have been based on professional advice. Trustees will need to decide, for example, whether items like gardening and cleaning go into routine maintenance, or whether a sum from the ERF is to be utilised for cyclical maintenance. See Standards of Almshouse Manage-

ment, section 8, for full details. Many charities in the process of reviewing their budgets feel it necessary to increase their WMC and full guidance is available in section 9 of Standards of Almshouse Management.

Explaining WMC increases

We recommend explaining clearly, with as much notice as possible, the increased amount, the reasons why the increase is necessary, how in broad terms the WMC is calculated, where residents can go to get help in applying for Housing Benefit and who to contact if this causes distress or they have further questions. The specimen budget is intended to be a catalyst for discussion and a guide only, for trustees to provide a framework to help plan ahead.

See Standards of Almshouse Management: www.almshouses.org/standards-of-almshouse-management-2023/

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023

After months of pressure and following Lord Best's proposal for an amendment, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023. **The amendment is covered in the report as follows.**

The government amendment in lieu also raises the thorny question of defining "affordable housing", which has been debated in the House of Commons on numerous occasions and not resolved. The government amendment adds that "affordable housing" means social housing as it has been defined (very broadly and often misleadingly) since 2008. However, the amendment adds some new, encouraging words that "affordable housing" could mean housing of "any other description of housing that may be prescribed".

This is helpful. It opens the door for a new definition of affordable housing which, in the future, this or another Secretary of State may prescribe. We will work with Dept for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to see whether agreement can be reached in the months ahead on a more satisfactory definition to update the definition from 2008, in readiness for the first opportunity to substitute a better version. This minor amendment is actually very significant for the almshouse movement. With the right ministerial support, we can enable almshouses to be part of the "prescribed" definition.

In addition, there are a number of other key elements in the report that will be of particular importance to almshouse charities:

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be retained by Greater London and Wales but replaced in the rest of England by a new Infrastructure Levy (IL) system. This is non-negotiable and set locally and will eventually replace s.106 contributions.

The Almshouse Association (TAA) regularly publishes Policy and Governance updates on its website. Blue text (below) denotes a web link specific to the document or report. See: www.almshouses.org/latest-news/

- Local Authorities must provide an exemption from IL for charities using property for a charitable purpose. Full details are within Schedule 12, Part 1 of the legislation.
- CIL/IL can be used for a wider range of infrastructure projects including affordable housing, which is defined as:
 - (a) social housing within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, and
 - (b) any other description of housing that CIL/IL regulations may specify.

Another potential source of funding will be from Community Land Auctions (CLA), where the receipts can be put towards infrastructure on a similar basis to CIL/IL with affordable housing again defined as:

- (a) social housing within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, and
- (b) any other description of housing that CLA regulations may specify.

For those members who are Registered Housing Providers, the National Housing Federation has produced a useful summary of LURA at: www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-receives-royal-assent

There are a wide range of other matters, such as planning and regeneration within LURA and also a section to do with Heritage which updates the Listed Buildings Act. The full text of LURA 2023 can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/enacted

Seeking support for almshouses from Members of Parliament



September:

Nick Phillips, Association CEO met with Ben Everitt, MP at Westminster to seek his support for amendment to the National Planning Policy Framework affordable housing definition. A champion of affordable housing and significant lead on Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Ben Everitt's support is invaluable.

October:

Charles Fifield, Policy and Engagement, attended the Conservative Party Conference (photos above) and met with Lee Rowley, MP (Local Government & Building Safety) and Rachel Maclean, MP (Housing & Planning Minister).



Nick Phillips



David Simmonds, MP



Jo Churchill, MP



Ben Everitt, MP

November:

Nick Phillips and almshouse charities representatives met with Jo Churchill, MP to discuss challenges and opportunities within the almshouse movement. Jo was particularly interested in the ambitions of the Essex almshouses, well informed on their positive impact on residents wellbeing and agreed to take forward matters regarding s.106 and Homes England funding.

December:

Nick Phillips met with David Simmonds, MP who showed great interest in the way the almshouse model supports residents with a strong community of good neighbours. He plans to help raise the positive profile of almshouses in Westminster.

2023 Party Conferences Update: Desire to build more housing across the political spectrum

Autumn was party conference season and this year saw an increase in their importance for all the main political parties, as there must be a general election by January 2025 at the latest.

● **The Conservatives** in Manchester were less vocal about housebuilding announcements than the other parties. The Conservative party is concentrating on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, its flagship housing and communities legislation and The Almshouse Association continues to lobby for almshouses to be included within the definition of affordable housing for planning purposes. The fringe programme at the Conservative party conference showed that housing is increasingly being seen as an issue which must be tackled if their pledge to build 300,000 homes each year is to be achieved.

● **The Labour party conference** took place in Liverpool and they were much more vocal about their ambitions for housebuilding, albeit somewhat matching the government's target by pledging 300,000 new homes each year. In contrast, however, there were proposals to establish new towns, allow some housebuilding in some parts of the green belt to be designated grey belt, making it easier to build on brownfield land and encourage more council house building. Labour also had a busy fringe calendar for housing related matters.

● **The Liberal Democrat party conference** was held in Bournemouth and saw the party's membership overrule its leadership by refusing to pledge to scrap the national target of building 380,000 new homes each year. The Young Liberals were at the heart of the debate. As part of overall housebuilding efforts, the Liberal Democrats are pledging to build at least 150,000 new council and social homes a year.

● **The Green party in Brighton** pledge to ensure a home that's "warm, safe and affordable for everyone" was possible, giving the legal right for homes to be properly insulated, damp-proofed and mould-free, and with the cost of renting set in line with local wages.

The party conference season has demonstrated that whilst there are clear differences between the parties on policy, for once all parties seem to be agreed on the principle of building

more houses. This could be especially important for the almshouse movement if matched at the local level by councils and councillors across the country, who are usually responsible for planning-related matters on a local level.

To help spread the word we have updated the public area of The Almshouse Association website to include a specific page for MPs and Councillors, along the main horizontal menu bar, to make it more visible and we would encourage members to use this in correspondence with MPs and councillors.

www.almshouses.org/mps-councillors

Charity Commission

The Charity Commission is increasingly tightening up on financial reporting deadlines, ie. the Annual Return, Accounts and Trustees Annual Report (TAR) together with up-to-date information on trustees, which some had fallen behind with due to the Covid pandemic.

We would remind all our members to keep up-to-date with their statutory filing duties as part of their legal obligations under the Charities Act 2011. Further information, guidance and useful links can be found at www.almshouses.org/charity-commission

Step forward to online Lasting Power of Attorney

The most vulnerable in society will be better protected as reforms to simplify and streamline lasting powers of attorney are given Royal Assent.

These legal agreements enable a person to grant decision making powers about their care, treatment or financial affairs to another person if they lose mental capacity.

The Powers of Attorney Act starts to bring the existing paper-based process online for the first time. The new online system and the additional safeguards are now being developed by the Office of the Public Guardian.

Visit: www.gov.uk/government/news/step-forward-to-online-lasting-power-of-attorneys

Guarding against thieves and scammers

Around four million people are scammed in the UK each year. Some of us are more trusting than others, which is not something to be ashamed or embarrassed about.

However, we need to be constantly aware of the potential dangers and protect ourselves against scams. Here are some top tips to help you and your residents avoid scams.

- Keep personal details private and never give out personal phone numbers, addresses, bank details, passwords, dates of birth or any other personal information to anyone who emails, phones, or knocks on the door.
- Don't open emails or attachments from email addresses that look suspect. If you do open them, don't click on any of the links asking for details or money. We all need to be vigilant about 'phishing emails' that look like they have come from a bank or another financial institution where we may have an account. Look at the email address carefully and the language

Age UK has produced a free booklet "Avoiding Scams." Call 0800 169 65 65 or go to www.ageuk.org.uk
Action Fraud - to report a scam call - 0300 123 2040
Citizens Advice consumer service - 03454 040506
Victim Support - 08 08 16 89 111

used - the scammers are clever but often there is something you can spot that makes you think twice. Right click on the email address so that you can see it in full. Often these scam emails will include a request for the individual to enter their password and username. The criminal then captures these details.

If you are unsure whether the email is genuine, contact the company that is emailing you via telephone or email, but DO NOT use the number or email address or link in the email; use the official number you would normally use to contact them. They will be able to confirm if they have emailed you.

● When answering the door, remember: Stop, Lock, Chain, Check. Doorstep scammers may knock on the door and pretend to be a trader. They

may seem polite and friendly but that does not mean they can be trusted.

- You and your residents should always ask for an identity card and if still unsure and feeling pressured, the resident should call the clerk or trustee of their charity. If you are the clerk or trustee, check with a colleague to see if they are aware of someone calling in. If a clerk or trustee cannot help, residents should speak to a relative or make direct contact with the police.
- Never accept deliveries of anything that may not have been ordered.
- Never sign anything on the spot and don't be embarrassed to say "No" or ask people to leave.

● Don't believe letters claiming you have won a fortune. If you haven't entered a lottery or prize draw, you haven't won it!





RAF 'salute' Betty's 100th birthday

Betty Danson celebrated her 100th birthday on November 5 and The Dover Almshouses, part of the Municipal Charities of Dover where she has lived for 38 years, organised a party to remember! Betty was in the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) during the war, working on Lancaster Bombers and it was therefore appropriate that Wing Commander Shaun Ryles, MBE



attended on behalf of the RAF to wish her happy birthday. A guard of honour was provided by cadets of the 354 Dover Squadron air training corps, who also 'marched in' the birthday cake. Betty was toasted by 60 guests and the Deputy Mayor of Dover. The cake displayed photos from Betty's life and, of course, there was a card from the King and Queen. Betty said she will never forget her special day.

contributed by Corinne Bentley, Scheme Manager

Congratulations Lynn

Our birthday wishes go to Harley's Almshouse resident, Miss Lynn Trowbridge in Hay-on-Wye, Powys, Wales who celebrated her 100th birthday on November 7. Lynn has been a resident at the Almshouses in Brecon Road for over 20 years!

Visit www.almshouses.org/news/100-year-old-almshouse-resident-shares-life-story

Pub lunch marks 360th anniversary

The trustees and residents of Rev. John Cooper's Hospital Charity in Elton, Peterborough recently celebrated the 360th anniversary of the almshouse charity with a celebratory lunch at their local pub.

Founded in 1663, Cooper's Hospital is one of the oldest charities in England and the 360th anniversary gave much cause for celebration. In fact, it was a double celebration which also honoured long-term trustee, Julian Fairweather who was retiring after 57 years service.

Can the charity lay claim to having the longest-serving almshouse trustee? It's definitely so of their own records



but how many charities can top this figure? Despite this long service, Julian's retirement still came too soon for the charity but they were happy to be able to give him a wonderful send-off, on such a momentous anniversary day.

Retiring with a Girton Goose sculpture

On his retirement as Chairman after 25 years' service with Girton Town Charity, Dr Robin Hiley was presented with a Girton Goose by the current Chair, Ann Bonnett.

He was instrumental in a range of important and inspired initiatives to improve life for residents and in November 2023 trustees and colleagues gathered to celebrate his work and present the sculpture, made by Cambridge-born Matthew Lane Sanderson who created the village's Sculpture Railings. The Goose reflects the town's long and unique relationship with geese, as they were an important source of feathers for quills used by scholars and scribes at Cambridge University Colleges.

A summary of Robin's achievements included fulfilling the charity's sale of its land on Wellbrook Way, resulting in a significant endowment from which the interest could be used to increase the provision of almshouses and a range of schemes and grants to help residents. Awards were made to numerous village projects, and schemes and grants intro-



duced to benefit all ages, from pre-school and primary age children through to older residents.

A Sensory Garden was created for all to enjoy and the William Collyn Community Centre was designed, built and named after the charity's founder. Earlier this year saw the completion of a further 15 Passivhaus almshouses at Dovehouse Court. Ann Bonnett, Chair said: "Robin made an enormous contribution to our community and we owe him a huge debt of gratitude. I'd also like to thank his wife, Sheila for her support, not least for allowing her home to be the office for many years and taking endless phone calls. In conclusion, we all wish him a wonderful retirement and a happy 75th birthday."

Digital telephone switchover reminder

The digital telephone switchover is fast approaching when homes and businesses will move from analogue phones to a faster digital system by 2025.

This change applies to all phone lines no matter who your telephone provider is (BT, Virgin, Sky, TalkTalk, etc.) and you should be contacted by them to make the switch. If you have telecare equipment, you will need to advise your provider of this. Also contact them to let them know your line is becoming digital. Once your line has been switched, follow the instructions sent by your telephone provider - eg. plugging your phone into a new broadband hub. If you have any questions, contact your telephone provider. It's also a good idea to make a 'before and after' test call to the monitoring centre using your telecare equipment to make sure everything works.

A warm welcome to the almshouse team!

Over the past few months, The Almshouse Association has welcomed four new part-time members of staff to our team and we are pleased to introduce you to (from left to right):

Charles Fifield, Policy and Engagement; Harriet Lemon, Training and Development; Jacqueline Smith, Finance; and Jo Williamson, Member Services.



• To find out more about the team and to read the biographies for all the staff working at the Association, visit: www.almshouses.org/meet-the-team

• If you are interested in finding out more about The Almshouse Association Board of Trustees, visit: www.almshouses.org/board-of-trustees

• To view all the Key Board Decisions agreed by the Board at their meetings, visit: www.almshouses.org/news/board-key-decisions-a-record

Celebrating 90th anniversary of street naming

The summer sun shone for around 65 residents of WJ Mills Trust in St Day, Cornwall as they came together for a tea party to celebrate 90 years since the renaming of a street in St Day after the charity's benefactor.

William John Mills, who was born in St Day but later moved to Devon where he built up the Duchess of Devonshire Dairy, never forgot his roots and established the charity to look after the 'poor and needy.' Since 1933 the Trust has provided homes for around 500 local people right in the heart of this historic village. The



tea party coincided with annual festivities known as St Day Feast, which celebrates the area's proud mining heritage. The event sees children and adults dancing through the streets in traditional dress to the sounds of the Carharrack and St Day Band. The following day, local children were given the afternoon off to

parade from their primary school, stopping to pay their respects at the end of Mills Street, which holds a very special place right at the heart of the village. The atmosphere of good cheer and appreciation for the work of the Trust, was matched only by the number of pasties, scones (jam first!) and pots of tea consumed on the day.

contributed by Donna Birrell, trustee

Retiring after 40 years at Quadrant Almshouses

At a coffee morning with the residents of the Quadrant Almshouses in Fordingbridge last summer, Chairman Bill Dow (pictured on the right) presented Helen Tague with a bouquet of flowers to mark her 40 years as Clerk to the Trustees. Helen was supported, as always, by husband Trevor. The almshouses in Church Street consist of eight flats given to Fordingbridge Parish Council by Reginald Hannen in memory of his father, John, at the end of the First World War. The almshouses were originally intended for aged or infirm people from the parish of Fordingbridge, Hampshire who had served in the Great War of 1914-18. In 2019 the Quadrant Almshouses celebrated the centenary of its endowment.



The Almshouse Way

The Almshouse Way 1-day training course is being held at venues throughout the year, throughout the country.

Visit our website for the latest details: www.almshouses.org/the-almshouse-way-1-day-course

2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 6	Trustees & Clerks Seminar	Oxford
May 2	Wardens & Scheme Manager Seminar	Leicester
June 27	The Almshouse Association AGM	location tbc
Sept 4	Trustees & Clerks Seminar	Shrewsbury
October 10	Trustees & Clerks Seminar	Tunbridge Wells

THE ALMSHOUSE ASSOCIATION

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VICE PATRON

HRH The Duke of Gloucester, KG GCVO

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Modernised flats opened by Princess Anne

HRH The Princess Royal opened 12 new almshouses at the Cutbush & Corral Charity in College Road, Maidstone at the end of October. She was accompanied by The Lady Colgrain, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Kent.



residents, trustees, staff and contractors. The project was developed when trustees realised the existing six almshouses built in the 1920s were too big, too costly to run and too difficult for individuals with reduced mobility to negotiate. The new one-bedroom flats provide compact, high-quality, affordable accommodation, suitable for the charity's beneficiaries. Princess Anne unveiled a plaque to commemorate the event and presented trustees of the charity,



HRH was met by the Clerk and Chief Officer of the Cutbush & Corral Charity, Liz Abi-Aad, before visiting residents in their homes and meeting guests, including local dignitaries,

Caroline Highwood and Sue Darbyshire, with long service awards. The Cutbush & Corral Charity was founded in 1865 by Thomas Cutbush and today has 154 properties for those in housing need in the Borough of Maidstone. Further details and photographs can be found on the architects website (Clague Architects) at www.clague.co.uk/news/6271

Join Friends of The Almshouse Association

The response to 'Friends of' has been overwhelming and we are eagerly looking forward to meeting all our new friends in the coming months. Even before the launch in November, we welcomed early-bird friends to the club with some charities gifting club membership to retiring trustees and clerks - it's so wonderful to see our community building already! The first edition of our *Friends in Alms* newsletter will soon be published and we are now busy planning our first almshouse tour, which promises to be an engaging and insightful experience for all involved. We are thrilled to embark on this journey with you and are excited about the positive impact we can collectively make in preserving and promoting the rich history and mission of almshouses. Please contact Gerry Harmon at gerryharmon@almshouses.org or

NOTE: If you were a Lifetime or Associate Member of the Association, you will have received a letter with further details of the Friends of club and we look forward to sharing the many benefits with you over the coming months

David Burton at davidburton@almshouses.org to discuss further, or visit www.almshouses.org/friends-of-the-almshouse-association We look forward to you joining us!

The Friends of The Almshouse Association is a club where meaningful connections can be fostered with like-minded individuals who share a passion for almshouses and the almshouse movement. There are some great benefits, with a unique calendar of activities and projects in which you can get involved. Other benefits include a twice-yearly newsletter with updates on the Association's activities, dates of Friends gatherings held across the UK, case studies, biographies and much more.



Garden volunteers

Green-fingered volunteers from B&Q dug out their shovels to help spruce up almshouse gardens in Stratford upon Avon last September. The almshouses form part of the Municipal Charities of Stratford and are home to eight residents. The charity's Chief Officer, William Clemmey, said: "St Joseph's Homestead gardens are in need of a lot more gardening support than we can provide on a weekly basis. "We are delighted B&Q staff are able to volunteer to come and help transform these wonderful gardens



photo: Marcus Mingins, Stratford Observer

which in the past have won Stratford in Bloom competitions." Richard Wood, B&Q's deputy manager, added: "Our staff are really pleased that they can offer something back to the local community through this volunteering opportunity". Municipal Charities provide homes for 47 residents in five locations in Stratford upon Avon.