

## Historic homes reopen after £1 million modernisation



An 18-month project to redevelop, refurbish and extend nine homes by the trustees of the Arthur Winsley and Others charity in Colchester has brought 18th century listed buildings up-to-date with energy efficiency, sound proofing and landscaping improvements. Residents were consulted throughout the scheme.

*See centre pages for full details*

## Keynote speakers for Members Day

We are delighted and very privileged to have secured two inspiring keynote speakers for the Almshouse Association Members Day Conference on Wednesday 5 June.

General Sir Mike Jackson GCB CBE DSO DL, arguably the most high-profile army general since WWII, is an ex-serviceman known globally in both the military and civilian world.

He commanded the British forces in Iraq, UN forces in Kosovo and peacekeeping missions in Bosnia. With an emphasis on leadership and strategic insight,

General Sir Mike's presentations are sharp and memorable, featuring remarkable personal anecdotes and thoughtful examples of both success and failure.

Jon Sparkes is Chief Executive of Crisis. Energetic and passionate, Jon has headed up the charity since 2014, campaigning hard to tackle the root causes of homelessness. Previously he was Chief Operating Officer of UNICEF UK and Chief Executive of SCOPE, as well as holding trusteeships with ACEVO and SeeAbility.

*Full conference details on page 5*

## Prince Charles calls in for tea and a chat



June Hewes welcomed HRH The Prince of Wales, Patron of the Almshouse Association, to her home in Ely during a Royal "Awayday".

The Almshouse Association was delighted to put forward one of its member charities in Ely, Cambs, to be included in a Royal "Awayday" on November 27 last year.

In his capacity as Patron of the Association, Prince Charles visited the Thomas Parsons Charity where he was greeted by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant who presented Nick Phillips, Chief Executive of the Almshouse Association and David Brand, Chair of Trustees of Thomas Parsons Charity.

Afterwards, Jennifer Millard, Receiver for Thomas Parsons Charity, invited Prince Charles to see a resident's home and presented June Hewes, who has lived in one of the almshouses for 10 years. Once inside, HRH admired her living room and was given a tour of the kitchen and bath-

*continued on page 3*

## Work starts on new Coventry flats

The Lord Mayor of Coventry, Cllr. John Blundell, made a symbolic start to a £6.8 million project by Coventry Church (Municipal) Charities to provide 45 new flats at Bond's Lodge.

The scheme is part funded by the Charity's own resources and income from the Bond's Hospital Estate endowment fund. A grant is also being provided by

Homes England through the work of the Almshouse Consortium Ltd as well as a loan from the Charity Bank. The trustees are planning fundraising activities to meet the shortfall of approx £500,000.

Deeley Construction is carrying out the project, which has been designed by Nicol Thomas Architects. It is expected to be completed in April 2020.





## chief executive's comment

By the time you are reading this the United Kingdom may, or may not, be a little different!

I had the pleasure of listening to an elder statesman the other day who spoke wisely it seemed about the short and long-term impact of Brexit. He suggested that despite the talk and panic we seem to be living through, in the long-term it will not have a great impact on our nation.

Since almshouses have been around for quite a time, I took some solace in his view that it will all be seen in the rear view mirror of 10 or 20 years as a relatively minor "blip". Almshouses have an enduring quality and have been running successfully through a number of political and social 'blips' over the last 1,000 years and have remained robust and resilient. A grain of comfort for us I hope.

Having had the privilege of attending many networking meetings around the country over the past few months and learning from such a wonderful array of people, it is clear to see that running an almshouse comes with its own unique set of challenges.

I am convinced that we have some great opportunities ahead in the almshouse movement; building new almshouses, refurbishing existing homes and the possibility of new almshouse charities being established. With our members exploring these opportunities, we will be adding resource to help smaller charities with project management advice and will continue to encourage uptake of our grants and loans.

We will look to increase networking opportunities for members and look for more ways to share knowledge and experience across the network. I am currently working with the Almshouse Consortium Ltd (ACL) and colleagues to see if a web based platform can be used to share plans and projects, to save members having to reinvent the wheel and gain inspiration from others.

I am sure you will be aware by now there is a wonderful occasion for networking and sharing at our Members Day Conference on June 5 (see page 5). We already have some fantastic speakers lined up, as well as some very constructive workshops and I can promise a memorable day.

In other work, a key part of our strategy is to raise the profile of almshouses and we held our first Marketing Strategy Workshop with Board member, Tricia Scouller, marketing consultants and staff in early

February. It is clear that one of our challenges is balancing the great value of the history of the movement and individual charities with the need to be recognised as the right solution for future affordable housing. We are working on this opportunity as I write and I will keep you updated.

Finally, we have some new staff at Billingbear - Danielle Hughes, supporting Member Services and Events; Susan Brooks, Reception and Member Services; and Tracy Markham, who is covering maternity leave for our Finance Manager, Hanna.

A new staff member, Susan van Leest, joined us in March as Head of Fundraising and Charity Support. So even if there is no change to the wider world there is a bit of change here!

Have a great Spring and please do continue to share with us your stories and pictures - we love reading them.

Nick Phillips

## Case study highlights an eco-almshouse

The Housing Learning and Improvement Network (Housing LIN) has published its first case study of 2019 looking at a 21st century eco-almshouse, St John's Almshouses in Lichfield.

Written by Lorin Arnold of KKE Architects (@KKEarchitects), the new Housing LIN case study (no. 150) shines a light on the award-winning St John's Almshouses. This Passivhaus certified residential scheme for older people in Lichfield was completed in August 2017.

The client, St John's Hospital, is a charitable trust and historic almshouses organisation which has had a presence on the site since 1129.



The existing Grade I listed buildings date from 1495 and the new 21st century development comprises 18 new flats contained within two separate buildings which are arranged around a new landscaped courtyard.

The design won this year's Architect's Journal Housing Project of the Year (up to £10 million). The Case Study can be

seen at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/A-21st-eco-almshouse-St-Johns-Almshouses-Lichfield/>

Further information about resources concerning almshouses can be found at the Housing LIN's almshouses page at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/HousingforOlderPeople/Almshouses/>

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## Contemporary new homes are accessible and efficient

After the trustees of Finchley Charities identified a need for additional one-bedroom homes for waiting list applicants, a suitable location was identified in the north west corner of the existing site in Thackrah Close.



The proximity of London's north circular road was a significant issue but it was felt that a suitably designed building could overcome the problems of noise and air pollution and also improve the amenity of residents in the existing homes.

### Low maintenance

The brief for architects Hampson Williams Architecture was to create a high quality, sustainable design that would provide affordable and accessible low maintenance and energy efficient homes.

The properties needed to be equipped with modern telecare to meet current and future care and support needs, integrate with the existing community and provide easy access to a new garden area, encouraging residents to spend time talking and meeting outside their own homes.

The result is a building with 16 new properties in a contemporary style. A slate roof with zinc metal clad dormer windows

extends over the first floor accommodation, contrasting with the ground floor walls clad in traditional timber shingles. These will soften and turn grey creating a natural look to complement the courtyard and promote a sense of well-being. The materials need

very little maintenance and harmonise with the existing structure and surroundings.

Timber planters in the courtyard, with the tops at sitting level, incorporate a mixture of general plants and herbs while allowing space for residents to grow their own plants through the Residents' Garden Club. All the living and bedroom spaces face onto the landscaped south facing courtyard, for which ground floor residents have direct access. Particular

attention has been paid to cater for those with limited mobility, wheelchair users and residents with sensory impairments.

Kitchens are semi-open plan to the living room and there are large bedrooms and contemporary shower rooms.

A whole house ventilation system is used to reduce the need to open the rear windows. Clean air is drawn in through vents at the front of the building, distributed around the internal rooms and stale air expelled to the rear. There is a sprinkler system and an array of photovoltaic panels. The homes are highly insulated in excess of standard requirements and the development has been awarded a silver security rating.

Overall cost of the project, which included work on other parts of the site, was £2.6 million with grant aid of £800,000 from the Greater London Authority.

## Association Patron calls in for tea

*continued from front page*

room. He remarked: "This is not a bad little place is it and they are all nice neighbours too, I hope!".

After the visit, June said: "That was wonderful but very nerve-wracking in advance as I've had to do a lot of cleaning. It's not every day you get a royal guest."

Prince Charles then joined residents in the dining room at Poet's House, taking time to enjoy a cup of tea at each table while chatting to residents, staff and trustees. He said: "You must have all been waiting very patiently and I would like to wish you a very merry early Christmas".

Vera Ford, 91, who has lived in an almshouse for five years, said: "He was so nice and asked me about Christmas and my holiday plans. I would be happy for him to be king one day."

John Moore, who works for the charity, said: "What a friendly and nice man, he was very interested in speaking to everyone about their houses and was extremely down to earth".



Before unveiling a commemorative plaque, Prince Charles was presented with a bound copy of the history of the Thomas Parsons Charity by David Brand, who thanked him for visiting.

It was an incredibly busy day for the Prince of Wales as he also met



Above: Nick Phillips, CEO of the Almshouse Association and David Brand, Chair of Trustees of Thomas Parsons Charity, are presented to HRH The Prince of Wales. Below: Sharing a cup of tea with residents.

with many Cambridgeshire dignitaries, visited the stained glass museum and undertook a walkabout at Ely farmers market, all the while chatting with and shaking hands of many well-wishers along the way.

The Almshouse Association is very honoured that His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, is Patron of the Association. It is our hope that he will be able to continue to visit as many of our member charities as possible in the future.

## Disclaimer

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At the time of publication, the content of this newsletter is correct to the best knowledge of the Almshouse Association's officers. Information is provided for the general guidance of trustees and clerks, who should take their own professional advice where necessary.



## 'Secret Garden' party

Often referred to as 'The Secret Garden' due to its delightful setting, Bradford Tradesmen's Homes celebrated 150 years in September with a garden party for residents, their families, trustees and guests.

Also present was Mrs Shirley Behrens, with her family, who unveiled a plaque in memory of her late husband, John, who served as a trustee for over 50 years, mostly as chairman.

He contributed hugely to the life and progress of the trust and oversaw the modernisation of homes and facilities.

Tradesmen's Homes is a Grade II listed almshouse that was started by Victorian philanthropist Titus Salt in 1868. Initially, it was a terrace of two storey houses, together with a chapel which today provides community facilities for residents' coffee mornings, indoor bowls, games and entertain-



ment, including monthly tea dances and socials.

Accessed from a private tree-lined drive, the central and surrounding gardens are maintained by two gardeners who also grow flowers and vegetables for the residents. At the rear of each terrace are small easily-maintained private gardens.

In 1878 another terrace to complete the square was added by Elizabeth and

John Wright, in memory of Isaac Wright. In 1887 a house and office for the administrator was built in memory of Benjamin Rawson and in the 1970s three modern bungalows were added for residents who are no longer able to live in one of the two storey houses.

Trust Chairman and former High Sheriff, David Sutcliffe, said: "It was wonderful to see everyone enjoying the celebrations and to have so many of the Behrens family with us to remember John. He is greatly missed."

## Critical details when making claims for Universal Credit

An almshouse charity has shared the experiences of its younger residents making claims for Universal Credit (UC) which in some cases have proved to be challenging.

It has been found that in the case of those almshouse charities that are Registered Providers it is critical at the outset that the accommodation is declared as being social rented accommodation.

If a charity is not a Registered Provider it will be categorised as private rented accommodation and the maximum monthly 'rent' that will be paid via UC is equivalent to the local housing allowance.

When making a claim, residents should not indicate they are living in supported housing as the typical support provided by almshouse charities is that of Lifeline, scheme manager services, etc., which are not deemed to be eligible for support costs from a UC perspective.

It is also important that when completing the Social Rented Sector verification form that the charity as 'landlord' should indicate that the resident is not in 'specified

accommodation', otherwise known as 'supported exempt accommodation'.

The weekly maintenance contribution (WMC) paid by the resident should be inserted under the 'basic rent amount' required on the form; any other housing-related costs in addition to the WMC should be categorised as 'ineligible service charge amount for UC'.

### Five months arrears

Any difference shown between the resident's declaration of 'rent breakdown' and the landlord's declaration will result in an anomaly and the resident being asked whether he or she agrees with the landlord's figures.

In the case in question, however, the UC office considered the resident's declaration to relate to 'supported housing' without liaising with the local authority's Housing Benefits Team. It is for the local authority to determine whether the support provided by an almshouse charity to its residents meets the conditions of 'supported exempt'. In these cases the

claimant must claim Housing Benefit to meet the housing costs and it should not form part of the UC claim.

The charity then provided a detailed breakdown of their service charge to the local authority following which the authority confirmed that 'supported accommodation' did not apply and that the housing costs would need to be met by UC. However, the referral from the UC office to the local authority which then referred the matter back again led to an undue delay, with the resident being nearly five months in arrears in receipt of benefit payments.

The lessons learned from the experience are: ● try to engage with the resident early on in the process to ensure the declarations made on the UC form are correct; ● liaise with the local authority to obtain a ruling as to whether the nature of support provided by the charity to residents leads to a classification of 'supported accommodation' or otherwise and ● check the terminology carefully, ie. 'supported housing', 'specified accommodation' or 'supported exempt accommodation'.



## Office converted to new flats in Wells

At the beginning of January, two new homes were opened for the City of Wells Almshouses Charity by the Mayor of Wells, Celia Wride. Guests were welcomed by Nick Wilson, Chair of Trustees and were able to see inside the new homes.

The two properties were previously the charity's office building which has since been relocated to a smaller almshouse, creating one extra home to bring the total to 33. The majority are cottages but the new conversion has created a ground floor and a first floor flat. Both have a wet room and secondary glazing. The almshouses were originally built in 1638 with a legacy from Henry Llewellyn, an Alderman of the City, although the current buildings date from a Victorian rebuild.

Felicity White, Town Clerk, said: "We are delighted with this work which maximises the use of residential space and concludes the project to provide better glazing for each almshouse. The accommodation itself is beautifully presented."

More information on the charity's website at [www.wellsalmshouses.org.uk](http://www.wellsalmshouses.org.uk)

## Members Day Conference

Haberdashers' Hall - Wednesday 5 June

We have had a very encouraging response to our inaugural Members Day Conference and with just two months to go, now is the time to secure a place by booking tickets using the booking form enclosed with this issue of the Gazette or online at [www.almshouses.org/seminars-and-events/events](http://www.almshouses.org/seminars-and-events/events)

The day will be a golden opportunity for sharing experiences with colleagues in the almshouse movement and we have an impressive array of speakers lined up, as well as a range of constructive workshops.

### Speakers and Organisations participating

● Gerry Morrison heads the Charities and Social Enterprise team at Rollits LLP and specialises exclusively in charity law.

She advises charities in relation to compliance with the Charities Acts and all aspects of charity legislation, including creating and registering new charities, restructuring and reorganising charities, charity incorporations and mergers.

She regularly provides trustee training sessions and legal update seminars and is a regular contributor to the New Law Journal Charities and Appeals Supplement in relation to a wide variety of issues impacting on charities.

● Chris Drinkall heads the Property Dispute Resolution Team at Rollits LLP and specialises in commercial and residential property disputes. Chris regularly advises almshouse charities on issues that crop up with residents and how to address those issues, including taking steps to set aside appointments and recover possession of properties.

He is a keen advocate of charities being proactive and helping them put procedures in place to try and "nip issues in the bud" before they escalate into complex, protracted and costly disputes.

● Stone King LLP - is one of the three top rated charity law firms nationally, recognised by Chambers and Partners. Our work with charities and social enterprises is at the heart of our practice and approximately two thirds is for not-for-profit organisations. Our lawyers act for many hundreds of charities across the sector from household names, including almost 200 of the largest charities in the UK, through to local community groups. The depth and breadth of our experience means we understand the environment in which charities and social enterprises operate and the issues they face. Charity is not a speciality for us, it is at the heart of what we do.

● Dr Alison Armstrong, Project Director for The Whiteley Foundation for Ageing Well, leads Whiteley Village's research activities, with the overall aim of running collaborative research projects to help improve the lives of residents and staff, and that will also be shared for the wider benefit of older people and organisations working with them. Alison has worked in engineering, academia, and

runs her own training company. She is passionate about the intersection between individual, community and ecological well-being, and is writing a book about coping and resilience.



Invites you to join us for our inaugural

## MEMBERS DAY CONFERENCE

HABERDASHERS HALL, LONDON  
Wednesday 5th June 2019

- Key Note Speaker
- Seminar Sessions
- Guest Speakers on topical issues
- Q & A with Panel of Experts
- Exhibitor Stands
- Networking
- Announcement of Almshouse Association 2018 Awards
- Teas, coffees and lunch included

### Tickets cost £50 per person

Places are limited so please book as soon as possible by completing and sending the booking form to:

The Almshouse Association  
Billingbear Lodge, Maidenhead Rd  
Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 5RU

Or email: [admin@almshouses.org](mailto:admin@almshouses.org)

(Please ensure your email includes all the details requested on the booking form)

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# The Magic of Almshouses

● Helen Boyd is a Training and Development consultant specialising in Adult Safeguarding training. She has trained health and social care staff at all professional levels over the past 14 years and is a former Assistant Director of Adult Social Services where she gained practical Safeguarding experience. Helen is a trustee of Bishopsteignton United Charities, a small almshouse charity in South Devon.

### Members Day Conference Seminar Topics

session 1 *Safeguarding	or	Mediation - issues with residents
session 2 *Update on legislation and regulation	or	Setting aside scenarios - emphasis on frailty
session 3 *Loans, grants and project management	or	Safeguarding

\*aimed at charities that employ staff

### Participating organisations





# Avoiding common problems with trustee Boards

by **Liam Kay** reproduced with the kind permission of Third Sector

At the centre of every charity scandal is a trustee Board that has somehow failed in its duty. With every failing board the signs are often evident years before the crisis comes to bear. What are the signs of a failing Board and how do you tackle them before the very future of the charity is jeopardised?

Ros Oakley, Executive Director of the Association of Chairs, says the level of challenge from trustees is an issue for many struggling Boards. "There can be too much or too little. A sometimes dysfunctional politeness exists, so trustees fail to properly scrutinise decisions or to express opposition to others' opinions. Equally, a Board can be too fractious and allow inter-personal conflict to overshadow genuine debate about ideas and direction."

There is also the issue of which subjects are raised at Board meetings and whether the focus is on past mistakes, not future opportunities. "A Board that is going

wrong often gets very insular, looking backwards about what has happened and sometimes with too much recrimination", says Oakley. "You need to do a certain amount of looking back to learn and to assess performance but a healthy Board is spending quite a lot of time looking forwards and outwards."

## Dysfunctional Boards

Louise Thomson, Head of Policy for not-for-profit at the ICSA Governance Institute, says there are a number of types of dysfunctional Boards including the 'rubber stampers' that simply allow executive decisions to pass through unchallenged.

She says: "Another type are the 'fire fighters' who lurch from crisis to crisis which ultimately prevents effective long-term planning and can lead to bigger problems in future. Others focus too much on minutiae rather than on strategy and planning while others can go too far in the opposite direction and not focus enough on compliance and regulation."

Thomson says there has to be balance between these two disciplines for a Board to be effective. She adds: "Sometimes trustees want the exciting stuff to look at, they want to see the strategy, they want to look at shaping the future of the charity. So you need to have the right blend of exciting stuff as well as the compliance and regulatory parts and historical data."

The problems can sometimes be isolated to individual trustees which means a private meeting with the chair might be necessary to discuss any issues with the Board member's performance. This can include factors such as Board members who fail to read Board papers, who don't carry out their legal duty to scrutinise policy effectively and those who want to focus only on their own

specialism and not on other important parts of the Board's work. The charity governance code is an important reference point for Boards, highlighting some of the more worrying aspects of Boards' behaviour that can lead to problems.

Rosie Chapman, author of the code, says that good Boards typically have "emotional maturity" and are focused on the health of the charity as well as taking the time to review its performance.

How can charities address problems in the Board? Ros Oakley says a lot of issues can come down to personalities. Having greater diversity and turnover of trustees can prevent a Board from becoming stale or ineffective. Inductions for trustees, as well as regular reminders of their responsi-

bilities, can ensure that they focus on the charity's priorities and the contribution trustees make to them. He said: "You can have a Board full of individual stars but it is looking for the constellations between them that is really critical."

Rosie Chapman says that term limits - which the code says should be nine years for trustees - are a good way of keeping a Board fresh and preventing staleness and complacency from creeping in.

She says: "I have seen Boards that silt up, where you get either a chair or trustees who just won't leave. They stay in the role for too long. This means the people on the fringes get less and less engaged, particularly if the chair has been around for a long time. You end up with this tiny pool of people who won't shift, don't get new ideas and then wonder why they can't attract new people to the Board."

## Interviewing trustees

Louise Thomson says that interviews with trustees as they apply to join the Board are a good way to gauge whether they are the right fit for the organisation. Perhaps the best way of ensuring that a Board is effective is the easiest to implement - socialising together.

Thomson says that simply having a meal together before a trustees meeting or taking opportunities to get to know people outside the boardroom can be key to a functional and effective Board.

She says chairs should ultimately take the lead in ensuring trustees meet the standards required, even if that means asking them to depart. "Governance isn't just about the policies and procedures, it is the people as well. We have to grasp that nettle sometimes. It's not pleasant but if it is harming the charity then someone has probably got to have that conversation."

**A visit to the Isle of Wight in the summer of 2015 by the then Deputy Director of the Almshouse Association, Julian Marczak, led to the formation of a discussion group which has recently held its second meeting.**

**During that first visit with the trustees of the Worsley Almshouse Charity there was an in-depth discussion about the charity, which proved very useful, as well as a visit to the almshouse cottages and meeting a nonagenarian who had been a resident for almost 25 years.**

**It became clear that in some parts of the country, almshouse trustees occasionally met other almshouse charity trustees in order to share good practice. Our own trustees hardly knew of the existence of the four other Isle**

## Almshouses featured on television

There was much excitement at the Almshouse Association when we received a call from a television company asking if we could represent the almshouse community in a documentary series about housing through the ages. We had to keep it all very hush-hush until it went live on More4 earlier this year.

Presented by Phil Spencer, the documentary looked at the "History of Britain in 100 Homes" with visits to properties dating back to 11,000 BC. These included castles, cottages, stately homes and social housing that still stand as living history and are much loved homes today.

Filming with the Almshouse Association for the second episode took place in the wonderful setting of Hugh Sexey's Hospital in Bruton, Somerset which dates back to the 17th century. Phil Spencer and the Association's Chief Executive, Nick Phillips, were invited to look around the almshouses and hear from residents about how much they enjoy living in the almshouses and being part of the community. Nick Phillips talked about the long history of almshouses, how they continue to thrive today, the important part they play with the increasing demand for social housing and how we are helping to shape affordable social housing in the future with new developments and refurbishments.



## Fair for social fund

**Bedworth Almshouses provided the perfect setting for a Christmas Fair in aid of the residents' social fund, at which the High Sheriff of Warwickshire, Clare Sawdon JP, was welcomed by Jane Corrigan, a trustee of the Nicholas Chamberlaine Trusts.**

**Clare sits on the governing body of the Foundation of Lady Katherine Leveson that cares for elderly people**



photo (from left): Almshouse residents Steven Moore and Ray Massey, High Sheriff Clare Sawdon, Vikki White and Ann Haywood.

**at Temple Balsall. She was previously Chair of Governors at the Dame Alice Leigh's Almshouse in Stoneleigh.**

**Clare praised sisters Ann Haywood, Scheme Manager and Vikki White, her deputy, for their work at Bedworth. Together with a group of hard working residents they had beautifully decorated the Governors' Hall and Residents' Lounge.**

**Christmas items were on sale along with home-made cakes, a raffle and tombola. Money raised will help fund a number of trips being arranged for residents this summer.**

## Modernised homes reopen after £1 million facelift

Nine listed almshouses, some of which date to the 18th century, have reopened in Colchester following a £1million facelift by The Arthur Winsley and Others charity.

At a ceremony at Winsley's Square, off Old Heath Road, the Bishop of Colchester, the Rt. Rev. Roger Morris, blessed the refurbished buildings before the Mayor of Colchester, Cllr. Peter Chillingworth, cut a ceremonial ribbon.

During the 18-month project the homes were redeveloped, refurbished, extended and brought up-to-date with improved energy efficiency, new wet rooms and kitchens, sound proofing and landscaping.

The project also involved demolition of old sheds (former privies), garden walls and single storey extensions,

removal of raised walkways and stairs, together with construction of three, two-storey rear extensions.

The work was phased in order to accommodate residents elsewhere on

the trustees hold a service in Winsley's chapel and have their annual meeting and dinner on the same day. The reopening ceremony was arranged to coincide with the events.



photos: Nigel Brown Photography.

the site. They were consulted before work began and kept informed of progress.

In line with the Founder's wishes expressed in his Will of 1726, every year

## Sharing best Isle of Wight practice

of Wight groups but felt it would be good to get to know them.

Two years later, with Julian supplying contacts and suggesting topics for discussion, the Worsley Almshouse Charity invited representatives from the Wyndham Cottle, Brigstocke, Augusta Wilder and Thomas Binstead MacNamara charities to attend the first informal meeting. Needless to say, these small groups are run entirely by volunteers so the opportunity to meet others involved in providing accommodation was welcomed.

A second annual meeting was convened during the summer of 2018,

again supported by the Almshouse Association, which brought the group up-to-date with the latest developments. Discussions ranged over property maintenance and emergency action, fire safety precautions, liaison with the Almshouse Association, regular meetings with residents, annual inspections, residents' handbook, finding and appointing new trustees, concessionary TV licences, and identifying other local almshouse groups who are not members of The Almshouse Association.

Everyone welcomed the opportunity to pool ideas and concerns and hoped to find time during the autumn to invite members to visit their respective almshouses.

**Terence J Blunden**





HRH The Duke of Gloucester presents Patron's Awards to Peter Brown, Chairman of Trustees (top) and Andrew Clague, architect (centre) for the Sir Roger Manwood Trust and to the Rev. Canon Tim Harper (below) of Amersham United Charities.



## Presentation of Patron's Awards

The Almshouse Association was delighted when our Vice Patron, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, accepted an invitation to visit Hammersmith United Charities almshouses in celebration of their 400th anniversary and to present the Patron's Awards for 2016 and 2017.

The event took place in December at the charity's Sycamore House in London.

HRH arrived at 2.00pm and was greeted by Kevin McGrath, Deputy Lieutenant for Hammersmith and Fulham; Mike Smith, Chair of Trustees at Hammersmith United Charities; Elizabeth Fathi, Chair of Trustees at The Almshouse Association; and Nick Phillips the Association's Chief Executive.

### Visited residents

The Duke of Gloucester was invited to sign the visitors' book following which Mike Smith presented Victoria Hill, Chief Executive and Clerk to the Trustees at Hammersmith United Charities.

HRH was shown a wonderful display that traced the history of the charity right back to 1618 when Dr. Thomas Edwards made a gift of £20 for the immediate benefit of the

HRH The Duke of Gloucester presents Patron's Awards to Richard Auger (above right) for the Shrewsbury Drapers' Company and to David Corney, Chairman of Trustees (right) for The Davenport Homes.

poor of Fulham and left £100 to buy land for their long-term benefit.

The Duke of Gloucester was then accompanied by the Scheme Manager, Cathy Lehane, to visit two residents in their homes. Afterwards HRH walked through the award winning gardens to the residents' lounge where the Chair of the Almshouse Association, Elizabeth Fathi, presented the Patron's Award recipients to the Duke. He then joined residents for a delicious afternoon tea before presenting the awards, scrolls and plaques.



After the presentations had taken place Mike Smith thanked HRH for visiting Hammersmith United Charities and invited The Duke to unveil a plaque to commemorate the day.

HRH The Duke of Gloucester visits resident Pearl Armstrong in her home (top, seated) together with Cathy Lehane, Scheme Manager. Later he signed the visitors' book after walking through the award-winning gardens with Almshouse Association Chief Executive, Nick Phillips (below).



Patron's Awards scrolls and plaques were presented to:  
Peter Brown (Chair) and Andrew Clague (architect)  
The Sir Roger Manwood Trust  
Rev. Canon Tim Harper - Amersham United Charities  
Richard Auger - Shrewsbury Drapers' Company  
David Corney - The Davenport Homes



Award winning schemes from top left - The Sir Roger Manwood Trust and Amersham United Charities and from below left - Davenport Homes and Shrewsbury Drapers' Company.

Representatives of the award-winning schemes with their plaques and scrolls - The Davenport Homes (left), Shrewsbury Drapers' Company (below), Amersham United Charities (below left) and The Sir Roger Manwood Trust with Nick Phillips, Almshouse Association.



## new members

Cambridge Pringle Group  
Cambridge  
John Scott's Charity  
Leeds

Desmond Waite MVO FRIBA, a long term Architect Panel member, died on 20 December 2018 at the age of 92.

He became involved in almshouses on taking over from his predecessor, Harold Marsh, as Clerk to Trinity Hospital, Castle Rising, Norfolk who had died unexpectedly.

Desmond was asked to undertake modernisation of the 1614 buildings to 1960 standards. Since he knew very little about the workings of almshouses he made contact with Leonard Hackett at Billingbear Lodge.

They formed a close association and Desmond was asked to take on a number of modernisation projects, largely in East Anglia but some as far afield as Newbury and Leeds.

As well as serving as clerk to the trustees at Trinity Hospital for 50 years he undertook projects as architect for over 100 charities in the

## Desmond Waite

course of 60 years with refurbishments, modernisation, extensions, alterations and new buildings.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, with a pressing need to upgrade almshouses, Desmond reluctantly accepted the need to use flat roof extensions to achieve the accommodation required within available funds.

He was always an advocate of good, sympathetic design, particularly where it involved buildings of historic nature.

His son, Richard, said: "I became interested in all aspect of almshouses, the administration, the buildings and the like, having been encouraged by my father to observe SAM and to practice the Almshouse Association's ethos of good value and good design.



Much to his pleasure I was able to take on an appointment to the Executive Committee, a position he would dearly have liked himself had circumstances allowed."

A special highlight of Desmond's involvement in the almshouse movement was when he was able to host, jointly with the trustees, a reception for HM The Queen to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the almshouses at Trinity Hospital, during which his achievements were celebrated.

His influence and guidance will be much missed.

## First World War poppy tribute

Crafty neighbours have drawn on decades of needlework expertise to commemorate the fallen of the First World War.

Members of the Craft Club at The Sir E D Walker Trust in Darlington came together to crochet, knit and sew poppies for a display in the community library and social area to mark the centenary of the war's end.

The project was the idea of resident Pat Wilson, who also produced her own work in cross stitch for the display.

She said: "I'd heard about other people doing displays and I thought it would be nice if we did one. We always have a project on the go and as each one finishes we start something new. This was one everyone wanted to contribute to."

The display is especially poignant for resident Joyce Johnson, who has

shared mementos of her family, including so-called Dead Man's Pennies honouring two of her uncles who were killed in the war.

She said: "Their brother, who was my father Clarence McLoughry, was called up three days after his 17th birthday. He was a prisoner of war but survived, unlike his older brothers".

Jane Reed, Trust Manager, who produced silhouettes of soldiers for the display, added: "Everybody has done something towards it. Those who can't knit or crochet sewed buttons on and everybody helped put it all together."

Trust Chairman, Alasdair MacConachie, said: "There are some very talented ladies among the residents.



Members of the Craft Club (from left) Mary Cresswell, Joyce Johnson, Pat Wilson, Jane Reed (Manager), Alasdair MacConachie (Chairman), Win Dunn, Frances Stabler and Cilla Gaylor.

I am very impressed with what they've produced for this special centenary."

The Craft Club meets weekly and has made a host of items including candles, knitted and crocheted blankets for homeless people and gifts for children attending nearby Ferndene Nursery.



## Discovering if almshouse residents live longer

A couple of years ago, one of the trustees of Whiteley Village heard that archived records of past residents were stored in the loft of the village's care centre. After a dusty exploration, they were rewarded with a treasure trove of information dating back to the founding of the village in 1917.

It was clear that this quantity of data could yield some very interesting and useful insights into ageing over the past century but also that it would require expert analysis. Through a contact of one of the trustees, the actuarial academics at Cass Business School were approached to ask if they would decipher and analyse the records as part of a joint project (mostly funded by The Company of Actuaries Charitable Trust Fund).

Cass Business School agreed and what transpired has confirmed what we always suspected: that residents at Whiteley Village live longer than their compatriots in the general community. This outcome diminishes or even removes the link between socio-economic groups and longevity, whereby lower socio-economic groups generally live shorter lives.

Whiteley Village is a purpose-built retirement community, set in 225 acres of

beautiful Surrey woodland, featuring a large collection of almshouse properties dating from 1917. There are over 260 cottages, 50 extra-care apartments and, from May 2019, a new care facility with 30 state of the art care suites.

The research offers an intriguing insight into the positives of almshouse living. We found that women lived on average 2.7 years longer (and up to 4.9 years longer) compared to the same socio-economic group in the general population, giving some a life expectancy equivalent to the highest socio-economic group.

### Information on ageing

For men, the effect was more modest, with Whiteley Village men's life expectancy to be equivalent to the middle socio-economic group in society. But this still represents a very positive outcome.

Discovering that, historically, residents have lived longer than would be expected for their socio-economic group has been enormously valuable for raising the profile of the Trust and the Village and in establishing a research foundation to investigate this further.

We have now started to ask more considered questions about well-being,

Whiteley Village resident, Beryl Brown, with Ethna Mertens, Head of Clinical Personal Care.



ageing and the benefits of almshouse living. One fascinating question that Almshouse Association members could help to answer is this one: is this longevity gain only a Whiteley Village phenomenon, or does it apply more generally to almshouses?

This is a question the Almshouse Association is rightly asking and if you have an interest in helping us answer it, please fill in the enclosed questionnaire telling us what historic data you hold, so that we can assess whether there is enough comparable information for us to find out.

**Dr Alison Armstrong** Project Director, The Whiteley Foundation for Ageing Well

The full report is available at [http://whiteleyvillage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CASS\\_ILC-UK\\_-\\_Does\\_Living\\_in\\_a\\_Retirement\\_Village\\_Extend\\_Life\\_Expectancy\\_-\\_Web\\_version.pdf](http://whiteleyvillage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CASS_ILC-UK_-_Does_Living_in_a_Retirement_Village_Extend_Life_Expectancy_-_Web_version.pdf)

## International factors are crucial in the Brexit conundrum

The newspaper headlines have been, understandably, full of Brexit stories. With such a significant political event in sight, it would be tempting to conclude that financial markets were being driven by Brexit uncertainty over the past few months. But what does that mean? Lower corporate profits? A weaker currency? Higher or lower inflation and interest rates? A property market crash? There have been many confusing headlines and forecasts made over the last few months.

Even at the time of writing (mid-February, with seven weeks to go until Brexit), it is not clear what will happen. Financial markets

NAACIF single year total return (income plus growth of capital) performance %					
from	01.02.18	01.02.17	01.02.16	01.02.15	01.02.14
to	31.01.19	31.01.18	31.01.17	31.01.16	31.01.15
<b>NAACIF</b>	<b>-1.8</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>-4.2</b>	<b>11.0</b>
FTSE All-Share Index	-3.8	11.3	20.1	-4.6	7.1

don't like uncertainty. Worry and uncertainty tends to cause investors to require a higher risk premium to invest in assets with such an event on the horizon. So it would be reasonable to conclude that this anxiety leads to prices of risky assets, such as company shares, to be lower than otherwise.

With a UK focus, and knowing that the price level of the FTSE All-Share Index fell by nearly 13% in 2018, it would be easy to blame Brexit uncertainty for the market performance. But this analysis misses a crucial point - that all major global stock markets also fell in 2018. At times it seems that some movements in sterling are linked to Brexit headlines - but here, too, this is overly simplistic. The trend in

global currency markets in 2018 was that the US dollar was generally strong, supported by a central bank in interest rate tightening mode. Sterling, meanwhile, has been remarkably stable against the euro in the past year or so.

A similar conclusion can be drawn about UK government bonds (gilts) - international factors appear to have been more significant than domestic issues. The prices of 10-year gilts ended 2018 at levels close to where they were just before the June 2016 referendum.

A key factor affecting financial markets in the past 18 months has been US monetary policy. Interest rate expectations started to

rise in late 2017. Initially, financial markets ignored the impact but then in February last year markets woke up to the influence of higher rates and this effect was evident at various points throughout the year when markets sold off.

Brexit is an additional uncertainty but is only part of the story. UK financial markets do not operate in a domestic vacuum. International factors are crucial.

So where do we go from here? Many commentators are fearful of a phase of sterling weakness, such as that which took place after the surprise Brexit vote in June 2016. This is one possibility, although arguably even a 'no-deal' Brexit would be less of a

surprise to markets than the outcome of the vote in 2016. And there are offsets - a weaker currency was associated with very strong profit growth in late 2016/2017, since a large proportion of UK company profits come from overseas. Headline inflation picked up but only on a temporary basis.

It's an uncomfortable conclusion but we accept that we don't know how financial markets will initially react to Brexit events. But we do know that UK financial markets do not operate in isolation. International factors will continue to exert an influence.

The National Association of Almshouses Common Investment Fund (NAACIF) was unable to avoid a negative return over the past 12 months, primarily because its biggest exposure is to equities, particularly in the UK. Currency factors mitigated some of the performance of the overseas segment of the portfolio, as around 50% is invested in the US and the dollar was strong against sterling.

However, there was a modest gain from the fund's bond holdings, which represent the smallest segment of the portfolio as the asset class looks very expensive and at risk from higher interest rates. Compared to bonds, UK equities, meanwhile, are at their most attractive valuation in decades, supported by corporate earnings growth and dividends.

*We are unable to give financial advice. If you are unsure about the suitability of your investment, speak to your financial adviser. The views expressed in this document should not be taken as a recommendation, advice or forecast.*

12 February 2019

**Jenny Rodgers**  
Investment Manager

## Avoiding fires in thatched roof property

The Institution of Fire Engineers (Special Interest Group for Heritage Buildings) is preparing a detailed guide to Fire Safety in thatched buildings which will be available shortly.

It will include information about the construction of thatched roofs, reasons why they catch fire, precautions and devices that can be introduced, relevant legislation that applies and insurance.

The comprehensive advice covers use of solid fuel or wood burners in thatched properties, insulating the inner flues of chimneys and having them swept regularly, only burning well-seasoned or kiln dried wood, fitting spark arrestors and their maintenance, fitting bird guards, developing Fire Plans, installing smoke and heat detectors, and forming fireproof

barriers between the roof timbers and the thatch layer, etc.

Thatch fires are not as common as in other types of residential property, the likely reason being that owners are aware of the vulnerability of such roofs and therefore take extra care. Statistics show that fires occur in about 1 in 735 thatched houses each year and 1 in 320 in other houses.

However, a fire in a thatched property often leads to the complete destruction of the roof, whilst further damage is caused to the interior caused by smoke and by the water used for firefighting.

A fire that destroys a thatched cottage leads to the loss of part of our country's heritage and the guide is intended to reduce both the number and severity of fires occurring.

## MP cuts first turf for new flats project

The trustees of Winnocks and Kendalls Almshouse Charity welcomed guests and residents to mark the start of a project to build nine new almshouse flats in Military Road, Colchester.

Will Quince, MP for Colchester, cut the 'first sod', together with Chairman of Trustees, John Enfield; architect, Adam Edwards of Purcell; and Stuart Boardley, Director of Brooks & Wood Limited, who are



carrying out the construction. John Enfield thanked all those involved in making the project viable and in particular Colchester Borough Council for providing essential grant funding. Residents and guests then enjoyed an afternoon tea.

## Clerk's dedicated service

At the Annual General Meeting of William Holmes Almshouses in Ripley, Derbyshire the trustees gave thanks to Gerry Fryer MBE who retired as Clerk after 12 years of service.

Chair of Trustees, Ian Fisher, said he had delivered magnificent leadership and expertise in the day-to-day running of the almshouses and the charity had been transformed into the efficient and effective position it is in today. The trustees expressed their gratitude for Gerry's dedication and wished him the very best for the future.

Gerry said he had enjoyed working with the trustees and residents and was very proud of the high standard of accommodation. Gerry founded the Derbyshire Carers Association and was awarded the MBE for his work with carers locally, regionally and nationally. The William Holmes Almshouses is a small complex comprising six one-bedroom bungalows built in 1926 with a bequest left by a local provisions merchant who died in 1922. The properties were modernised in 1984/85, installing separate bathrooms and central heating. In 2006 double glazing was fitted and the fascias were clad.



Gerry Fryer MBE (left) with Ian Fisher, Chair of Trustees, at the AGM.



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# Energy scheme grant helps to install efficient heating

The Birmingham and Solihull based almshouse charity, Sir Josiah Mason Trust, was delighted to be awarded £76,806 from the Warm Homes Fund at the end of 2018.

The fund was established by the National Grid and is administered by the community interest company, Affordable Warmth Solutions. Its purpose is to support local authorities, registered social landlords and other organisations working in partnership to address some of the issues affecting fuel-poor households.

The £150 million fund plans to support over 22,500 households by providing money to install affordable heating solutions in homes which do not use mains gas as their primary source of heat.

The trust is partnered with E.ON Energy Installation Services and has secured significant funding for eligible installations from the government's Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme, which aims to reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty.

## Vulnerable residents

The scheme obliges large gas and electricity suppliers to help households with energy efficiency measures.

The funding will enable the Josiah Mason Trust to install modern gas fired central heating in 36 bungalows and 16 apartments which are heated by inefficient electric storage heaters.

The cost of energy and the energy efficiency of these homes has been of real concern and a priority to resolve.

Chief Executive, David Healey, said: "We know that we work with some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in our society and not providing adequate and affordable heating for these residents is not in line with our values.

"This funding is invaluable and will really enable us to improve the heating in our homes and achieve the vision of our founder."

For more information about the Warm Homes Fund, visit [www.affordablewarmthsolutions.org.uk/warm-homes-fund/overview](http://www.affordablewarmthsolutions.org.uk/warm-homes-fund/overview)

To find out how E.ON Energy Installation Services can assist your charity, please contact Andrew Edwards at [Andrew.edwards@eonenergy.com](mailto:Andrew.edwards@eonenergy.com) or call 07815 502613.

## Dulwich knitters team up for hospital neonatal unit

A group of dedicated Dulwich knitters are helping to keep premature babies warm at the Kings College Hospital neonatal unit in south London by providing handmade blankets, clothes and soft toys.

The doll-sized blankets keep the babies cosy in their incubators and the soft teddies are often used to keep their heads cushioned against feeding tubes. When the children leave hospital they take the clothes and other items home so a steady supply is needed in the neonatal unit.

Keen craftswoman Sheila Grantham started making blankets for the hospital after lengthy stays in 1988 and 2001 for two hip replacements. She later began a weekly knitting group with her friend Freda Neville, who was recovering at home from leg injuries caused in a serious car crash.

Over the years many other ladies have joined Sheila and Freda, having met while living at the same block of flats in East Dulwich. Sheila has since relocated to live at the Dulwich Almshouse Charity's almshouse on College Road and will soon be joined by Freda and

another member of the knitting group, Gwen Hickman, who is also moving into the almshouse.

The group is as much about friendship as it is about the knitting. Freda said: "We're all friends and we're there for each other if we need it. We help each other with our craftwork."

Another member, Peggy Ball, said: "I like coming to spend time with my friends each week. It's not just a knitting group, it's a sanity group."

As well as supporting the neonatal unit the group also make full-sized knee rugs for other patients at the hospital and donate their products to fundraising events held by local charities.

Members of the group knit, crochet, patchwork, embroider and sew, sometimes working on projects together and are also



Photo: Dulwich knitters (from left): Peggy Ball, Jean Ball, Freda Neville, Gwen Hickman and Sheila Grantham.

hoping to find somewhere local to display some of their work.

They are planning to meet regularly at the almshouse every Tuesday afternoon and welcome new members. Anyone living nearby who would like to join them, please contact the scheme manager, Shelley Miles, email: [shelley.miles@dulwichalmshouse.org.uk](mailto:shelley.miles@dulwichalmshouse.org.uk)

## Almshouse website

There is a wealth of information on the Association's website to help answer many of the day-to-day questions trustees and administrators may have about running their charity.

Registered users also have the facility to post on our members' forum and advertise their vacancies. Go to: [www.almshouses.org](http://www.almshouses.org)

## 2019 dates for seminars

### JUNE

Tues 18 Trustees and Clerks St John & St Anne, Oakham

### SEPTEMBER

Wed 25 Scheme Managers Devizes Almshouse Charity

### OCTOBER

Tues 8 Trustees and Clerks Thorner's Homes, Southampton

Almshouse Association Members Day Conference and AGM

Wednesday 5 June The Worshipful Company of Haberdashers, London