

*News and Views from*

# AROUND THE HOUSES

I must start this newsletter with sincere apologies to one of the residents at Sibley's Orchard. In our last edition Mrs Ilona Gatehouse was given the wrong name in our welcome section, my apologies to Ilona and we hope that she has now settled in.

Much has been happening over the last two months not all of which I have room to feature in this newsletter.

Sadly for the Society Peter Gibbs, a member of our Executive Committee felt that it was time to stand down after 22 years of service. Originally a member of the Berkhamsted Society Peter

agreed to remain on the committee and become Company Secretary of the newly merged Society - a role he only relinquished a year ago. The Chairman of the Society, John Stevens, presented Peter with a certificate commemorating his long service together with a small token of the Society's thanks. Thanks were also expressed to his wife Anna who was presented with a small basket of flowers for all her support over the years.

The presentations took place at an important event - a party to celebrate the completion of the new extension at Annett House. Those who are regular readers of our newsletter will know that about eighteen months ago we started a major building project to turn each of the ten rooms at Annett House in to two room suites so that residents would



**July/August 2005**

have separate living and sleeping areas as well as their en-suite bathrooms. The party took the form of a pig roast and as well as all the current residents and their relatives, volunteers, members of the Executive committee, and local friends and supporters many previous volunteers and members of staff were invited to join the celebration.



One of the suites at Annett House has now been named the Ella Cole Suite in memory of a very generous legacy which has been used towards the cost of this project. Ella Cole was the relative of one of our current residents and was herself an Abbeyfield resident and her Society also benefited from her generosity. Thanks must go to the resident of the Ella Cole Suite for allowing it to be used on the evening as a 'show suite' for those who had not yet had an opportunity to see the finished work.

Another important event was also commemorated at the party when

Shirley Clarke was presented with a certificate and basket of flowers in recognition of over twenty years service - first to the Berkhamsted Society and after the merger to the new Society.



Annett House is not the only house to have been busy recently. St. Mary's House have also hosted a number of events - several of which were open to all.

A coffee morning and bring and buy proved extremely popular despite somewhat wet weather on the day.



St. Mary's House have also been pleased to welcome a wide range

of speakers to their regular Wednesday coffee mornings. In



May John Ward from the BBC Three Counties Radio Action Desk came to talk about the People's War project being undertaken to archive

memories from the war to leave a legacy of living history for future generations.

Residents from Annett House were able to join us for this occasion and at the end of the talk each resident was given a pack to enable them to contribute their memories.

Having invited the Quakers to join us for coffee after their Sunday service a few weeks earlier, St. Mary's House appreciated an offer from one of their members, Audrey to return on a Wednesday morning to tell us about the history of the Quaker faith or more formally 'The Religious Society of Friends'.

Having invited contributions from the residents or any other readers of this newsletter I am delighted to have received a short article from Sylvia Brightley at Sibley's Orchard. I look forward to receiving contributions from more

of you over the coming months!

There is an old saying about being hoist with one's own petard and that is true in my case. Having suggested the new title for the newsletter, I feel I should write something. The problem is what?

I have had a very ordinary life, being one of four children of a family with not much money. Thanks to my mother I was able to take up a scholarship to the local Grammar School (my father thought education was wasted on girls!) and I spent the war years at school – lessons in the semi-basement cloakrooms during air raids, so no excitement there. On leaving school I was employed for a year in local government which was even less exciting, most of the time being spent in working out the cost of digging holes in the road and then filling them up again, or answering complaints from people who had tripped over paving stones or who had suffered from dogs fouling the pavements. These problems are still with us today, which I suppose says something about us all.

A year of that was more than enough and I was lucky enough to move on to a job on the administrative staff of one of the colleges of London University, which brought me into contact with people from other countries and other walks of life. Parts of the College were still in ruins as a result of air raids, so we worked in make-shift offices with pre-war equipment (my first typewriter smelled strongly of damp and mould) and we were perpetually short of stationery and envelopes which had to be re-used until they could not be used

any more. Then as now, education was permanently short of money!

Many of the post-war students were ex-service personnel from all parts of the world and the great variety of people I met did much to broaden my horizons. Although much of the work was form-filling, I met many interesting characters from eccentric professors (yes, there really were some) to new students away from home for the first time and their anxious parents. I also made many good friends with whom I am still in touch.

The personal aspect of the work made it very rewarding and every time I thought about leaving I decided to stay "for one more term, or one more year". In the end I stayed for nearly forty years and retired to enjoy a life of leisure and travel, no longer restricted by dates of terms and no daily commuting! Many of my trips were with two very good friends from whom I first heard of Abbeyfield. They had helped to found their local Abbeyfield and my frequent visits to them often included a call on the residents there. When I was afflicted with spinal osteoporosis just over two years ago, I knew that of all the options open to me Abbeyfield was the right one. I am now happily settled at Sibley's Orchard, with pleasant companions, still able to enjoy a measure of independence, but free of those worries which can be such a burden as we get older.

Thanks to my very kind sister and nephews I was spared the trauma of selling my bungalow and clearing the accumulated belongings of many years of saving what might come in useful. They continue to support and help me to enjoy life. With books, radio, TV, CD's and crossword puzzles, to which I am addicted, time passes very pleasantly. I also enjoy visits from younger relatives (in addition to nieces and nephews I now have ten great-nieces and nephews) as well as long-standing friends from schooldays onwards.

As I said at the beginning, a very ordinary life, but a happy one!

*Welcome to.....*

Mrs Eleanor Jones who has recently joined us at St. Mary's House.

*Happy Birthday to.....*

Kathleen from Annett House  
Irene from St. Mary's House  
Bill from St. Mary's House

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**If you would like to contact us you may e-mail us at [susanpullen.abbeyfield@virgin.net](mailto:susanpullen.abbeyfield@virgin.net) , you may phone us on 01442 217578 or you can send items to Mrs Susan Pullen, St. Mary's House, 9 George Street, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP2 5HJ.**

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**Registered Office: 9 George Street, Hemel Hempstead Herts.**