

Pendine Park News

The newsletter of the Pendine Park care organisation

Issue 4



Ian Lucas MP, Lesley Griffiths AM and the Mayor of Wrexham, Councillor David Griffiths with resident Laura Stephenson.

BRYN BELLA CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY

A trio of VIPs helped a ground-breaking care home to celebrate a special milestone in its history.

Among those who came to the 10th anniversary party at Bryn Bella were the Mayor of Wrexham, Councillor David Griffiths, Wrexham MP Ian Lucas and Wrexham AM Lesley Griffiths.

They chatted to members of an art class and marvelled at the pictures on display in an exhibition organised by artist-in-residence Sarah Edwards.

After a short speech by proprietor Mario Kreft, both Cllr Griffiths and Mr Lucas were presented with paintings by residents while Lesley Griffiths was given a bouquet of flowers.

When it was opened in 1999, the specialist care Bryn Bella provided for younger people was rare.

More recently, Penybryn, a new centre of excellence to care for younger people with brain injuries has also been established at Pendine Park.

Cllr Griffiths said: "What I like about Pendine Park is the warmth when you come in through the door and the welcome you get. There is a genuine feeling of care when you come through that door."

"I think people should come to Pendine Park and see what it's like and see

that everyone is taken to their full potential - I think the quality of care stands out a mile when you come in here."

Wrexham AM Lesley Griffiths is equally impressed with the standard of care and the quality

She said: "I'm delighted to be here today - 10 years of this wonderful facility here in Wrexham is something to be celebrated."

It was a message echoed by Wrexham MP Ian Lucas who said Pendine Park provided a "superb service".

He added: "Every person here is treated as an individual and their talents a skills and what they can use are made the most of, and I think the residents really appreciate that."

Veronica Smaje, the manager of Bryn Bella, said: "Our mission is to enhance the quality of life of the people for whom we care and I would like to pay tribute to the staff whose dedication helps the residents to lead fulfilled lives."

The anniversary was proud occasion for Mario Kreft, who established Pendine Park with his wife Gill nearly 25 years ago.

He said: "Gill and I originally came into the care sector because we had a very personal need for people in our family - and all these years later these are still the values that drive us."



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Residents make musical mag

A group of residents from Pendine Park produced a "magical and moving" performance after collaborating with a top orchestra.

The concert was the culmination of a series of creative music workshops with the world famous Hallé.

Each of our six homes was represented in the groundbreaking project which has been hailed a huge success.

Using water as its main theme, the "culmination performance" was a multi-media experience involving three special compositions, art work, photography and poetry.

The project was the result of Pendine Park's links with Arts and Business Cymru whose mission is to bring the worlds of business and the arts together.

Last year our long-standing relationship with our artist-in-residence, Sarah Edwards was recognised by Arts and Business Cymru.

Sarah and proprietor Mario Kreft were presented with a Sustainability Award because of their "truly inspirational" work with the residents.

As well as her popular art classes and visits to art galleries, Sarah also organises photography sessions – but creative music is a new departure.

The creative music sessions were run by Hallé pianist Janet Simpson and cellist David Petri who both enjoyed the experience immensely.

Janet said: "It's been amazing because of the life experience that the residents bring.

"They became so involved and focused and the main thing is that they are enjoying it.

"But it's more than just enjoyment, it's been really moving. It touches something in them and it touches something in the musician as well. There was something magical about today.

"It's been heart-stopping really, just a lovely, lovely experience. It's incredibly rewarding because the participants get so much out of it."

Sarah Edwards said the music workshops and the multi-media finale had exceeded all her expectations.

She said: "It was a totally emotional experience for

me because all of us have worked as a team to get this off the ground and the final culmination was overwhelming.

"We have not tried anything quite like this before and nobody could anticipate how it would work or whether it would work so to see the look on the residents' faces made all the hard work worthwhile.

"It was magical - the residents felt it, the staff felt it, the musicians felt it and the audience felt it. We all got something out of it and you can't put a price on that.

"A lot of credit goes to Janet and David, the musicians, because they had an affinity with the residents.

"Arts and Business Cymru have played an instrumental role in making all this possible and we're grateful to them for putting us in touch with the Hallé."

Resident Angele (correct) Grant learned to play the piano when she was younger and revelled in the opportunity to make music again.

She said: "It's been absolutely wonderful to learn to express oneself and how to communicate with others with interaction between individual people.

"Water is very soothing and I think that's why it is used such a lot in therapy. It is very uplifting.

Fellow resident Susan Mullally added: "We didn't know what to expect but the Hallé have done a splendid job getting us playing all kinds of weird things. It's been quite fascinating.

"This has been uplifting all the way through with the imagery of the river starting up in the mountains. It gave a picture behind it that was rather pleasant."

Pendine Park proprietor Mario Kreft was overjoyed that the project had been so successful.

He said: "I have been in the care sector for more than 20 years and while we have had many inspiring experiences this ranks with the very best of them.

"We're not new to music therapy at Pendine Park but we're taking it to another level through our partnership with Arts and Business Cymru and the Hallé.

"I think it's been wonderful for musicians at that level to spend time with our residents and create something that was truly magical."



ABOVE CENTRE: Janet Simpson
ABOVE: Hillbury resident playing
the Halle Orchestra
RIGHT: Pamela Welti



Mario Kreft, artist in residence, Sarah Edwards and Steve Pickett, from the Hallé, receive the award from Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones AM.

Music award after

Pendine Park has won a new accolade for the highly successful collaboration with the Hallé.

Proprietor Mario Kreft and Pendine Park's artist in residence, Sarah Edwards and Steve Pickett, from the Hallé, have received a special award from Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones AM.

It was presented during a ceremony at Ruthin Craft Centre, hosted by Arts and Business Cymru who brought the Hallé and Pendine Park together.

The Hallé conducted a series of creative music with residents representing each of the organisation's six care homes.

ic with top orchestra



TOP LEFT: Mike Rigby
TOP RIGHT: Residents in rehearsal



Simpson from the Halle with Helen Smith
Elsie Parker with Janet Simpson and Dave Petri from



collaboration hailed major success

Mario said: "I think we are at the beginning of examining how important a role the arts can play in the care sector so that we can help people to lead more fulfilled lives.

"We are hoping the project is going to lead to more training for Care Practitioners so that we can use the experience to ensure that other people benefit in future.

"When you see somebody who is affected by dementia playing instruments and conducting professional musicians, it gives you understanding of how much empowerment is really important to people.

"One of the residents said that, despite her disability, it made her feel equal with the musicians from the Halle – and that is the most important thing to take away from this.

At the presentation ceremony, Ieuan Wyn Jones, the Minister for the Economy and Transport, renewed the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to providing financial backing to Arts and Business Cymru.

He said: "The work that they do bringing together arts, business and the wider community is a positive example of successful partnership working.

Sister Spitfire is still flying high

A nurse dubbed Sister Spitfire when she served in the Second World War has been speaking about her experiences for the first time.

Mrs Margaret Ellis, 93, needed every ounce of her indomitable spirit to cope with the carnage of Northern France 70 years ago.

But amid the horror of a military field hospital a few miles south of Dieppe, she also found love because she met and later married her much-loved husband, Geoffrey.

The bitter sweet memories are still vivid for Mrs Ellis, now a resident of Gwern Alyn.

She is rightly proud of the medals she was awarded for her unstinting and brave service; proud too of being nicknamed Sister Spitfire by a group of German prisoners of war she looked after.

She said: "It was always my ambition to be a nurse because I wanted to be like my Nain who was a midwife in Pentre Broughton.

"When I was 17 I went to Bury General Hospital, it was the finest training school in the North of England."

After three years of training, she was appointed as a young Sister in a women's surgical ward.

But this was 1939 and the storm clouds of war were gathering - nurses were desperately needed to tend to soldiers injured during fighting on the frontline in France.

Mrs Ellis recalled: "I joined up with Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps and we went to Northern France the year the war started.

"I was based in a field hospital with 1,200 beds and on night duty I had six tents with 20 beds in each tent.

"We tended to the men and gave them the best care we could provide. We saw some terrible things.

But there was romance amid the horror of war because Mrs Ellis met the man who later became her husband.

Geoffrey Ellis came to the field hospital as a patient, having suffered an injury during the fighting - and he was an ardent, determined suitor.

She said: "I'm not kidding, it was a nightmare. We were in fields and we had no meals - all we had was the fresh eggs laid by chickens in the field, and we would eat the raw eggs."

"As the Germans advanced, the 51st Highland Division fought a rearguard action.

"Without them we would never have got away because the Germans were quite near to us."

After being evacuated back to Britain, Mrs Ellis worked at a military hospital on the outskirts of London where German prisoners of war were also patients.

Mrs Ellis said: "I'm not very big and I was very young in those days but I was quite strict and they called me Sister Spitfire.

After the war, Mrs Ellis and her late husband, Geoffrey, returned to the Wrexham area and lived in Gwersyllt where they raised two sons and a daughter.

Mrs Ellis worked in the War Memorial and Wrexham Maelor Hospitals until her retirement more than 30 years ago.

For Cindy Clutton, the manager of Gwern Alyn, it is a privilege to be given the opportunity to look after a "latter-day Florence Nightingale".

She said: "Mrs Ellis was and remains a remarkable lady to whom we all owe a great debt.



DESIGN AWARD FOR PENYBRYN

The design of a centre of excellence to care for people with brain injuries has earned glowing praise from a panel of experts.

The £3 million Penybryn Neurological Centre at Pendine Park was named as one of the stars of the prestigious Healthcare Design Awards.

The state-of-the-art facility which was opened 18 months ago was highly commended by the judges.

Penybryn was designed to look after 38 younger people who have suffered head injuries or have other neurological disorders like acquired brain injury and conditions like Multiple Sclerosis and Stroke.

Head judge Jon Chapman said: "We have received a record number of entries and the quality of the projects has been higher than ever.

"The judges were very impressed and asked that it be highly commended."

Pendine Park Properties, who own the Penybryn had been a finalist in the awards. He said: "It is an excellent piece of work."



WHEELS IN MOTION

A sponsored wheelchair push turned into a fun day out for the residents of two Wrexham care homes.

The convoy of wheelchairs resembled a Paralympic parade as the residents of Gwern Alyn and Hillbury, some of them in their 90s, headed for the town's Bellevue Park.

The wheelchair push was the brainchild of Activities Manager Gerry Humphreys, from the Pendine Park care organisation which runs the two homes.

She explained: "There's a lot of enthusiasm from relatives and staff - some of the staff have even come even though they are on their day off."

The £600 raised by the event will go into the residents' fund to pay for special treats for them.

Gerry explained: "Here at Pendine, we feel that their social life doesn't have to stop just because they're in a home.

"Whatever they might have done before coming here, we try and carry it on. It's my mission in life.

"We organise a whole host of activities all the time as a matter of course - everything from art classes, arts and crafts, photography, various visits, films, bingo and so on - not to mention various therapies.

"It certainly gives me a lot of satisfaction making them happy, it's a fantastic feeling. You get to know what they like and you can have a laugh with them."

As well as being a successful fund-raiser, the wheelchair push was a big hit as a social event.

Ann Mitchell, whose 94-year-old mother Olive Humphreys is a resident of Hillbury, thought it was a marvellous idea.

She said: "Anything they do like this is good. It gets my mum out and it's company for me - because it's a bit boring pushing a wheelchair on your own."



Staff and residents in Bellevue Park

Right: Hilary and David Roberts.



ENYBRYN NEUROLOGICAL CENTRE

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...awarded the accolade.

...lent building which took a lot of
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...meet the needs of people with disabilities
...tremely well.

...here is a great need for a facility like
...is to provide specialist care for younger
...people with brain injuries.

...our aims were two-fold in that the
...sidents need to feel at home but it is
...as also got to be fit-for-purpose in terms
...meeting their needs and we believe
...at we have achieved that balance at
...enybryn.

"It is a homely, friendly environment with a good atmosphere but at the same time the standards in terms of the care we provide are extremely high.

"I think what we've created here is a bit special and we are going to move from strength to strength.

"Our plans for a £4 million centre of excellence at Pendine Park to care for people with dementia have been given the go-ahead by Wrexham County Borough Council.

"The new centre, to be called Bodlondeb, is a response to the growing need for specialist care which will enable us to develop our existing services.

"There is a huge and growing need for services to care for people with dementia - both in the community and first class residential care facilities.

"As a result, the majority of people needing community care services and admission to care homes are people with dementia.

"At the same time, I believe the new facilities are also going to look after younger people with dementia and I think there is a particular need for this.

"Our aim is to have a world class dementia care centre here in Wrexham because we believe that people with dementia deserve the very best care that is possible."

PHOTOGRAPHY DAY OUT IN PORTMEIRION



TOP: John Lewis and Sarah Edwards

ABOVE: Margaret Davies frames the perfect picture.

LEFT: Resident Christine Jones gets some tips from Artist in residence Sarah Edwards

A trip to a fantasy village has inspired a new photographic club Pendine Park to stage their first ever exhibition.

The club was set up by Sarah Edwards, the award-winning artist in residence and of their first photographic safaris was to the picturesque Italianate village of Portmeirion, in Gwynedd.

Created by the legendary architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, Portmeirion provided the setting for *The Prisoner*, the cult television series from the 1960s.

Even on a soggy afternoon, the budding photographers captured Portmeirion's visual magic.

Sarah has been running art classes there since she was appointed 13 years ago to run the Wellbeing Programme at Pendine Park.

Sarah said: "Trips like this are about enhancing the quality of life of the residents.

"The art classes and the photography give them a focus and a sense of achievement.

"At the end of it, they will be able to see the photographs on the laptop and we're hoping to use the pictures to stage photographic exhibitions.

"Portmeirion is a truly inspirational place and hopefully the pictures we have taken today will form the basis of the first exhibition.

"Portmeirion is such an amazing place that it is an inspirational place to create art work. It was quite a trek to get here but it really is worth all the effort."

Activities Manager Gerry Humphreys said it was "very important" to have trips like the one to Portmeirion and it gives the residents something to look forward to.

She said: "My mission in life is to make sure they get out and about and have the opportunity to do something different.

Gerry's philosophy is certainly appreciated by Margaret Davies, an enthusiastic member of the photography club.

She said: "I have been a member of the arts class for a while and the photography is great too.

"I don't know where I'd be without it, it's very enjoyable and I get a lot of satisfaction out of it.

Fellow student John Lewis was equally passionate about looking at life through a camera lens.

He said: "Portmeirion is a marvellous place and I absolutely enjoy doing the photography. It gets us out and about and we go to really beautiful places."

Proprietor Mario Kreft added: "Art in all its various forms, including photography, gives people a sense of purpose and the work that Sarah does has certainly helped residents to lead fulfilled lives.

"Very often, people have not realised that they have an artistic talent – so it gives them an enormous sense of achievement and pleasure.

"It's a huge positive in their lives – I know that from the feedback I get from their families and themselves."

STAFF FUNDRAISING EXPLOITS

Staff at Gwern Alyn set their sights high when it came to supporting this year's Red Nose Day.

Six colleagues donned their walking shoes and headed for the 1,800-foot summit of Moel Famau, the highest peak in the Clwydian Range.

The four-mile hike was the idea of manager Cindy Clutton but care practitioners at the home readily agreed to take part. She was joined by colleagues Lauten Rose, Stacey Sutton, Karen Brown, Ceri Smith and Diane Roberts.

Wearing their Red Nose T-shirts they set off from the Bwlch Penbarras car-park and followed the main track to the Jubilee Tower on the summit of Moel Famau before returning by the same route. They completed the hike in about an hour despite a short picnic break at the top.

"We have already raised £250 but there could well be more than that in the end," said Cindy.

"It was harder than we expected, with another hill around every corner, and the wind was also quite strong," she said.



After their exhausting hike to the top of Moel Famau Manager Cindy Clutton, right with staff Lauren Rose, Karen Brown, Stacey Sutton, Ceri Smith and Diane Roberts

Each year the staff support either the Children in Need appeal or Comic Relief's Red Nose Day.

This year their colleagues at the Hillbury Home wore pyjamas for work.

That was the idea of home manager Mildred Heywood, but was quickly supported by 15 members of staff.

"Everyone, including the kitchen staff, was happy to take part, though some wore fancy dress instead of pyjamas," said Mildred.

Gwern Alyn staff also staged charity concert in aid of the Alzheimer's Society.

The Pendine Park group has close links with the Society because of the growing number of elderly suffering from dementia.

Mario Kreft, the proprietor of Pendine Park, was impressed by the enthusiasm of the staff.

He said: "I think this just underlines just what an excellent group of people we have working here at Pendine Park.



Staff at Hillbury with (front left) manager Mildred Heyward and cook Steve Cole (right) with other staff members who took part.

Sitting down on the job

Three workmates needed a rest after a fundraising marathon for charity – but no-one suggested that they have a sit-down to recover.

For the three who work for the Pendine Park care organisation group are still a little tender after sitting in every seat at Wrexham Football Club's Racecourse Ground.

The three – activities co-ordinator Gerry Humphreys, senior care practitioner Tracy King and care practitioner Becky Griffiths – undertook the unusual challenge to raise money for the Alzheimer's Society.

They chose the charity because they find themselves having to deal with a growing number of dementia cases.

Forever seeking novel ways to raise money for good causes, Gerry asked Phil Sadler, commercial manager for the Blue Square Premier League club, for ideas.

He mentioned that when the club was in administration a couple of years ago two local lads raised money for the club by sitting in every seat.

The Pendine Park trio completed the marathon in six hours and raised £300. "We're very proud of ourselves, but wouldn't do it again," said Gerry, who had to spend the next day recovering in bed. "We're all pretty sore.

Keeping a watchful eye on them throughout and checking that they did complete the task was another colleague, Maggie Langford, who is a nurse at the Cae Bryn home and who has close links with the local Alzheimer's Society.



From left, Tracy King, Becca Griffiths and Gerry Humphreys.



A day in the life.... Tracey Smith

Nursing Home Registered Manager Tracey Smith, 45, has a busy day ahead of her from the moment she wakes at the home near Wrexham she shares with 12-year-old daughter Sophie.

I am up about quarter to eight for a breakfast of Ready Brek along with Sophie who goes to secondary school and then I drive to work. I am the Registered Manager of the Highfield Care Home, part of the Wrexham-based Pendine Park Care organisation.

Highfield has 59 residents with disability and mainly elderly and I am in charge of the running of the home with over 70 staff so the first task is to get reports on how the residents are.

Some do have mild dementia but their physical needs are greater than their mental needs – many of them have had strokes so there are often issues with mobility or swallowing so they need a nurse during a 24-hour period.

I was trained as a nurse, myself, after I left Ruabon High School and I worked at the Maelor Hospital, in Wrexham, on an orthopaedic and A and E admissions ward but after two years I fancied a change.

I joined Pendine eight years ago here at Highfield as manager.

My role now isn't hands-on nursing, it's more managerial but I still have daily contact with the residents – you have to get around to know what's going on.

I prefer the private sector to working in the NHS, you have a higher level of personal responsibility and more control over making sure that standards are high and are maintained – Pendine Park was the first home in the UK to attain IS9002 as far back as 1992.

If a resident is unwell then I check what's being done but we have really good nurses here and we do talk a lot

I also go out to do assessments, to see if we would be able to care for people.

I don't really have a break at all, just a coffee at my desk and a sandwich for lunch, but it is a nice and relaxed atmosphere – this is home for the residents so we don't want to be regimented.

Highfield is a lovely place to work, it was purpose-built so the facilities are very good and each of the residents has their own room with en-suite and there are lots of activities going on for them.

There are parties and music, we have choirs in and regular entertainment as well as art classes and trips and we promote many and varied therapies with the residents.

Pendine even has its own teaching care centre, an initiative developed by the owners as part of the drive for the highest standards and they're very keen on staff development too.

I finish my day at about 5.30pm and then it's back home for tea with my daughter and talk about her day.

My elder daughter, Natalie, lives nearby and she has a little boy who is three in January so I'm a grandmother and she has another on the way.

Usually I spend my evenings in front of the TV watching the soaps but I also go to the gym. I used to go three times a week but now it's every other weekend – it's harder in the dark and the cold.

For more information on Tracey and her role see www.pendinepark.com

