

COLTEN Chronicle

www.ColtenCare.co.uk

Autumn 2020

Residents began face-to-face reunions with families thanks to a Covid-safe visiting approach we introduced after three months of lockdown.

Perspex screens installed in entrance ways at all 21 of our homes enable people to see and talk to each other up close but without the risk of transmitting the virus.

The first reunion was at Canford Chase in Poole between resident Brenda Dyer and her daughter Beverley Darbyshire.

Like other families, their only means of communication after lockdown began in March was on the phone, in video calls and through emails and letters.

"The visit was brilliant," said Beverley. "It was wonderful to talk to her on the phone and on the iPad but there's nothing like actually being able to look into her eyes.

"I absolutely get why the screen is there. It was wonderful to see her so close and yet know that she was safe and I was safe, and neither of us were putting anyone else at risk. I was really thrilled that I was able to see her."

Brenda said: "It was real morale boost. It makes me feel a lot more optimistic that

Safe reunions



It was the first time Beverley Darbyshire had seen mum Brenda Dyer, seated inside, face to face since the start of lockdown.

I may be able to see more of my family over the coming months."

Canford Chase Home Manager Charlotte Wilson said: "We've done amazingly well so far with social distancing, PPE, testing and controls on admissions and visits. We were delighted to be able to introduce the safe visiting solution and see our residents and relatives reconnecting. It's heartwarming."

Across the 21 homes, relatives and friends book

half-hour time slots for the visits so that everyone has a fair opportunity. Visitors are also guided through a full safety procedure.

There was an extra special reason to celebrate the first reunion at Amberwood House in Ferndown.

It gave resident Gladys Blythe, known as Joan, the chance to celebrate her 72nd wedding anniversary with visiting husband Peter.

Before lockdown, Peter had visited daily, with the pair also phoning each other three or

four times a day.

Peter said: "This has been the longest time we have been apart since we got married in June 1948. It has been difficult, and it was so lovely to see her again."

Eleanor Abrams, Amberwood House Home Manager, said: "It was heartbreaking that Peter's visits had to stop because of lockdown and it was so emotional that they were able to see each other again, especially on their anniversary.

"Joan was rather nervous beforehand, she said it was like preparing for walking down the aisle again.

"For all our residents, it had been a time of excitement. Some had been a little nervous about how the visits would work but after they had seen their loved ones again they were so happy. It's just lovely."



Watch the video

To watch a short film about Beverley and Brenda's reunion visit
www.YouTube.com/ColtenCare

Inside



This autumn, we are offering two weeks free at any of our homes, whether the stay is simply for respite or on a longer term-basis.



Residents' delight at letter from Dame Vera Lynn after birthday greeting



Rev Jim from Castle View is helped to share in granddaughter Lucy's wedding day



This cute little chap grew up to design beautiful living spaces

COLTEN CARE
'Cherishing You'

Mark Aitchison,
Chief Executive,
Colten Care



Celebrating our team's achievements

Welcome to our autumn 2020 edition highlighting how our amazing team is ensuring residents continue to live well during this time of Covid.

We have much positivity to celebrate. Our homes remain reassuring havens where loved ones are safe and life goes on as near to normal as possible. Activities, experiences and companionship haven't stopped – they are as meaningful and vibrant as ever, we're just doing them in different ways.

There are many examples of how our team are using their imaginations to bring residents and relatives together and help residents retain their community links. For instance, we have been enabling happy family reunions through a Covid-safe visiting approach, we've reached out to friends in the community to help one of our centenarians celebrate her birthday in style, and we made it possible for a former vicar to be involved in his granddaughter's wedding even though he couldn't attend in person.

We are truly fortunate to have such a strong, dedicated team caring for our residents and families. Colleagues continue to be magnificent in ensuring safety, keeping residents' spirits up and communicating what has been happening in our homes.

Likewise, we're blessed with the support of many relatives who have praised the way we are dealing with and communicating about the management of the Covid risk. One factor that people comment on time and again is the reassurance of knowing that all 21 of our homes are registered for nursing care, so if a resident's needs change they can stay in familiar surroundings. We are grateful to every relative who has been in touch. Your encouragement is very much appreciated.

I hope you enjoy your autumn Chronicle. You can receive more information on individual homes by joining the mailing list for our quarterly community newsletters. Please speak with your Home Manager, or email marketing@ColtenCare.co.uk. If you have any feedback on the Chronicle, please tell us at ContactUs@ColtenCare.co.uk.



Colleagues at Bourne View in Poole celebrate Carers Week with thank-you messages and cake.

'Team work, love and joy': celebrating carers

Hundreds of team members at our 21 homes overcame lockdown challenges to raise awareness of the vital role carers play in the community.

Reflecting our 'one-team' approach to residents' wellbeing, taking part in National Carers Week were nurses, carers, chefs, receptionists, administrators, hairdressers, gardeners, maintenance staff and colleagues in other roles too.

Organised and led by Companionship Team Leaders at each home, the week featured the sharing of thank-you messages and handwritten thoughts on the positive difference that working in care makes.

Posted on message boards were sentiments such as: 'I came to work today because I like to see joy on the residents' faces', 'Working in care is about giving the care that they deserve and can't provide for themselves', and 'The best part of my job is everyone and everything being one team'. One carer summed up her job satisfaction by writing: 'Team work, love and joy'.

Donia O'Connor, Senior Companionship Team Leader, said: "Colleagues highlighted many

reasons why a career in care is so rewarding, from the compliments you receive from residents and their families to the pride and satisfaction you have knowing you have helped make someone's day by your words and actions."

Observing physical distance restrictions, the week featured daily treats for staff and residents such as homemade cakes, ice lollies and doughnuts and a co-ordinated singing of the Dolly Parton hit Nine to Five.

Residents at Fernhill, Colten's Outstanding-rated dementia care home in Longham, Dorset, have given the care they receive a big thumbs-up.

Asked to describe their carers, Phyllis said: "They are lovely. They look after us and we love them." Fellow resident Joyce said: "It's nice having them around to look after us. I like it here and have nothing to complain about."

 **Watch the videos**
To watch a short film about our participation in Carers Week, visit our YouTube channel at www.YouTube.com/ColtenCare.

Dame Vera's poignant birthday reply to residents

Shortly before her death in June, Dame Vera Lynn surprised and delighted residents of Canford Chase with her response to a card they made and sent for her 103rd birthday.

As lockdown approached in mid-March, staff and residents decided to cheer themselves up by decorating a birthday card with a heartfelt greeting and a montage of photos showing them holding yellow flowers.

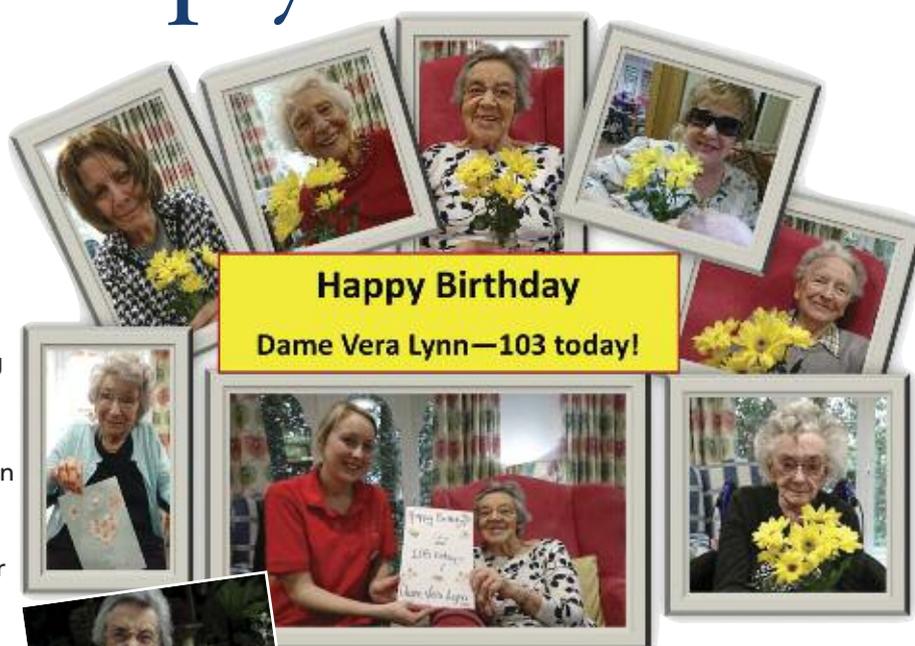
"It was a rather wet and grey afternoon and everyone was naturally apprehensive about lockdown," recalled Companionship Team Leader Julie Wathen. "Vera Lynn had just put out a public message, as her birthday was a couple of days later, encouraging everyone in Britain to 'keep smiling through', as she'd sung in the lyrics of We'll Meet Again."

"We decided to create a card for her as a fun activity to cheer us all up. I felt she was a great role model again for these troubled times and one our residents could really relate to. Her message about smiling seemed especially appropriate for us to rally behind."

The greeting in the card wished Vera a very happy birthday, stating: 'Here at Canford Chase, you will be pleased to know we are still smiling through.'

Julie researched a contact address in East Sussex for Vera Lynn and posted the card that day, not expecting a reply.

Three months on, all at the home were thrilled to receive a letter from the



Some of the images inside the card made by Canford Chase for Dame Vera Lynn.

LEFT: Resident Jean Nichols with the letter of reply from Dame Vera

famous lady herself, typed and sent by a personal assistant, and addressed to 'all the residents at Canford Chase'.

It read: "Thank you so much for the beautiful handmade birthday card, which took pride of place on my mantelpiece. It was very special to see your happy faces and to know that you 'keep smiling through'. In these difficult times, it's so important to smile and the beautiful yellow flowers in your photos are bright and cheery.

"I send you all my very best wishes and thank you again for taking the trouble to produce such a very special

birthday card."

Resident Doris Storey, who celebrated her 101st birthday in lockdown just after Dame Vera became 103, said: "It was so lovely that we did the card and photoshoot, and that Vera Lynn replied. She would obviously have had lots of cards."

Sadly, Vera Lynn passed away not long after, creating the possibility that her note to Canford Chase was one of the last messages she sent to her fan base. This prompted extensive media coverage of the home's correspondence with her, including stories in the national press and an interview on the BBC involving Doris and Home Manager Charlotte Wilson.

Two weeks free offer for autumn

We've been contacting elderly people in all the communities we serve to make them aware they are welcome to come and stay with us.

We're particularly focused on

those who may be worried about Covid, feeling isolated at home and in need of reassurance as the pandemic continues.

While observing our rigorous protocols, we are offering



those people we know, and who know us, the opportunity for flexible, respite care through select admissions.

Under a special initiative

running this autumn, we are offering two weeks free at any of our homes, whether the stay is simply for respite or on a longer term-basis.

For more details, and to check terms and conditions, visit www.coltencare.co.uk/two-weeks-free.



'Part of a big

Relatives praise our approach to Covid

Residents at all our 21 homes have been continuing to enjoy care, comfort and companionship despite the challenges of physical distancing and Covid control.

Every day they have fulfilling experiences not readily available to many older people living at home in isolation.

Aside from space and time for quiet personal reflection, our homes have been staging Covid-safe get-togethers for activities such as singing, exercise, arts and crafts, games and gentle gardening.

We've been communicating about life during lockdown both in the Chronicle and in regular messages from our Chief Executive Mark Aitchison and newsletters from the homes themselves.

In return, we're thrilled to have received much positive praise for our approach from relatives.

Heather Lightbody, whose mother Noreen has lived at Wellington Grange in Chichester for two years, told us: "You have done a really good job in communicating with families. It makes

such a difference to have an idea of what has been going on. I know that companionship has continued. We've heard about lots of activities such as making lemonade, flower arranging and events such as VE Day. My mother is very happy and established with a little gang on her floor. Even when restrictions were still tight they were taken outside to enjoy the gardens, and are now able to get back to their daily lunch together. It's comforting knowing that she has company and is seeing other people. It's a huge reassurance."

Heather's sentiments are echoed by Elizabeth White whose mother-in-law Doris has lived at Avon Reach in Mudeford for seven years. "I can't speak highly enough about the staff," says Elizabeth.

"They treat us as part of a big family. It's so encouraging to watch all the videos from the homes in the newsletters and to see how happily normal everything seems. Activities are still happening. Mum is reading and going down for lunch as usual. It all sounds absolutely normal."



Scout Group Leader Lisa Massey and son Barnaby Pearce bring the pebbles to St Catherines View.

Young hearts cheer residents at St Catherines View

Kind-hearted children at a special needs Scout group have created and shared inspirational artwork with our Winchester dementia care home, St Catherines View.

Nine members of the Osborne Scouts painted around 50 colourful pebbles as sensory gifts for residents.

The children, who all attend the city's Osborne School, decorated their stones with acrylic paintings of rainbows, faces, flowers, butterflies and other designs.

St Catherines View received the pebbles from Scout Group Leader Lisa Massey and her son Barnaby Pearce.

The pebbles were placed around the garden, giving residents the opportunity to discuss their feel, weight, shape and colour.

Companionship Team Member Laura Sheldrake said: "Our residents are enjoying seeing the brightly coloured pebbles. It's so lovely to know that the Scouts have been thinking about us."

Castle View enables resident Jim to

Castle View in Poundbury helped a resident - the Church of England's longest serving priest - play an important role in his granddaughter's wedding despite lockdown.

Reverend Jim Cocke, 94, was ordained for more than 67 years, serving as Vicar of All Saints', Headington, Oxford, before retiring to Dorset in January 2020.

He had been due to give the address at the marriage ceremony of his granddaughter Lucy in April but, like many other weddings across the country, the happy occasion had to be postponed because of Covid.

When the service eventually went ahead under physical distancing restrictions, only 15 people were allowed in the church - St Giles' at Hooke near Beaminster, Dorset - and Jim could not attend in person. Instead, staff at Castle View ensured he was able to prepare and send a personal address to be read out, highlighting the importance of partnership in sustaining love and marriage.

After the ceremony, they hosted a Covid-safe visit at



Reverend Jim Cocke was enabled to receive the home from his granddaughter Lucy, and her mother, Jim's daughter Fiona Boggs.

the home which meant that Jim could see his husband Nick Dawnay face-to-face.

Jim said: "I felt very much included in the

g family'



members at Newstone House spell out their message of family support during lockdown.

share in family wedding joy



a Covid-safe visit at room Nick Dawnay Boggis.

see Lucy and

the special day. I

thought Lucy looked so lovely. It was a great pity not a lot of people could go to the church because of the restrictions, but I am just so proud of her."

Lucy thanked the Castle View team for enabling the visit to see Jim, saying: "It made my day even more special knowing my grandfather was included."

Likewise, Jim's daughter Fiona Boggis, mother of the bride, said: "The staff were brilliant. They did everything they could so Lucy and Nick could come and visit. They even put out banners and balloons to welcome them. They couldn't have been kinder."

Katja Williams, Companionship Team Leader at Castle View, said: "We are very privileged to have Reverend Jim with us in the home. He kindly leads Sunday morning hymns and Bible reading much to the appreciation of those attending. We were only too happy to do what we could to address the challenges of Covid restrictions to ensure he could enjoy his family's special day. We all extend our congratulations to the happy couple, wishing them a life of joy and blessings."



Music to her ears. The moment resident Rosemary Cottrell began listening to her daughter Jenny's request for *Come Fly With Me*.

It's Colten Radio

Relatives have been responding enthusiastically to a great idea initiated by our dedicated Music and Arts Partner, Fiona Pritchard.

A professional musician, Fiona wanted to give families the opportunity to share musical experiences with their loved ones in spite of lockdown.

In the spirit of radio-style listeners' dedications, she invited relatives to send her a request for a meaningful song or piece of music that she would then play to the resident and read the message from their family.

Her initial invitation attracted almost 100 requests, of which 74 have been played at the time of writing. These special moments, across all our homes, are being captured on video for families to watch and enjoy. We're planning to share a 'highlights' edition in due course.

"Music is a common language with a positive effect on our well-being," said Fiona. "It stimulates our emotions and motivation, and because it's non-verbal, it's accessible to everyone.

"There has been a terrific response to our call for dedications and it has been so lovely to spend time in each of the homes creating 'Colten Radio'."

Among the requests have been many jazz standards. The Frank Sinatra hit *Come Fly With Me* was chosen for a delighted Rosemary Cottrell, a resident at Newstone House, by her daughter Jenny. They plan to take a helicopter ride together along the Dorset coast and the request was sent to whet Rosemary's appetite.

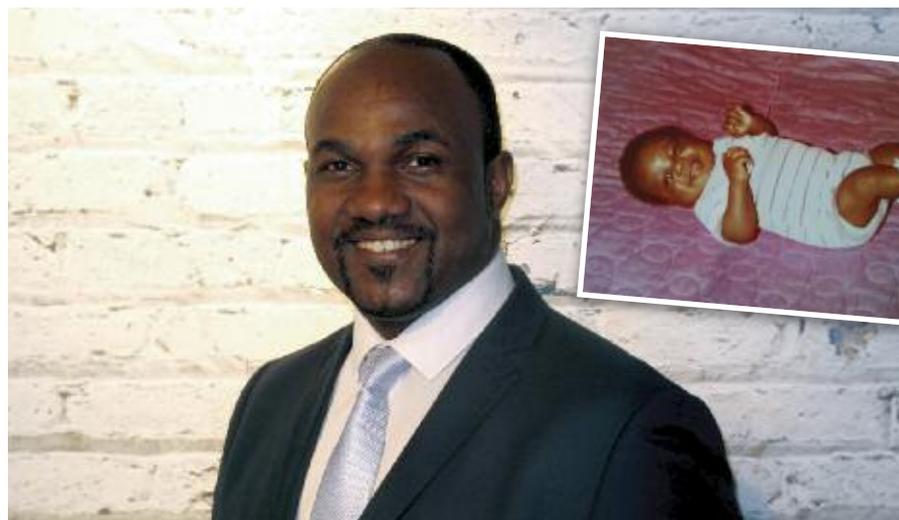
Elsewhere, Pete Jordan asked us to play *When the Saints Go Marching In* for his mother Marigold who lives at Linden House. "We played a Louis Armstrong version and her eyes went wide in delight and her toes began to tap," Fiona said.

QUESTIONS
20
QUESTIONS

Our architects' team is responsible for ensuring all our homes are designed to the highest of standards. By creating and developing beautiful living and working spaces, the team contributes directly to the quality of life for residents and staff.

Group Architect Madalitso Alfazema (Mada for short) is a RIBA-qualified architect with more than 15 years' experience as a senior architect, team leader and project and development manager.

Here we catch up with Mada to find out a little more about him.



Career history: Studied Architecture at Greenwich University and then worked for a year with a retirement community developer as an Architectural Assistant on a year out. Following this, I then went to Oxford Brooks University for further Architectural studies where I qualified as a Chartered Architect and read a Master of Science in Energy Efficiency and Sustainability. I then re-joined the developer company and spent 15-plus years working in the capacity of Senior

Architect, Team Leader and Development/Project Manager. I trained as a Project Manager in 2014 which gave me a good grounding to expand my skills and mindset in effective management of projects, programmes and portfolios.

Interests: I have always been interested in art, music, fitness, Christian faith, current/world affairs, and spending time with my family. I have recently developed a passion in long walks and running.

Q: Who was your first childhood hero?

A: Bruce Lee. I grew up on martial arts movies and had a full collection of his videos.

Q: What would be your ideal holiday?

A: Exploring new hilly seaside resorts with beautiful beaches and scenic walks.

Q: What are you superstitious about?

A: I don't have superstitions as I believe in God.

Q: Who would you most like to be trapped in a lift with?

A: Interesting question...my 3-year-old would be interesting company. She chats a lot and never stops singing and dancing so would provide some great entertainment to pass the time.

Q: Who do you most admire?

A: My grandparents.

Q: What car do you drive?

A: A Mercedes C-Class Saloon bluetech.

Q: What makes you angry?

A: It takes a lot to get me angry but the one thing that can get me there quickly is people who have a blatant disregard for other people's rights and welfare.

Q: What is your favourite smell?

A: Petrichor – that pleasant earthy scent that accompanies the first raindrops after a period of hot dry weather.

Q: What is the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?

A: Get ready for my early morning walk/run.

Q: Cats or dogs?

A: Cats

Q: What is your earliest memory?

A: At 3 years old, chasing my sister down a corridor in our house when she took 'my' pawpaw fruit. She then dropped it, it split open and I put my foot in it and the end wasn't pretty. I have the mark on my forehead to remind me.

Q: Which TV/radio programme do you try never to miss?

A: Your Home Made Perfect

Q: What is the best thing about your role?

A: Being able to enhance people's quality of life through high-quality design.

Q: ...And what is the worst?

A: Being away from my family.

Q: What would be your desert island luxury?

A: Streaming music and audio books

Q: What do you wish you were good at?

A: Sprinting

Q: What has been the crowning moment in your life to date?

A: The birth of our two girls.

Q: What is your favourite meal?

A: Barbequed pork and apple sausages, curly fries and salad.

Q: What would be your dream job?

A: A life coach.

Q: If you could bring something extinct back to life what would it be?

A: Shaking hands and coughing freely without worrying about scaring people around you.

Extra boost to keep families in touch

Staff at Newstone House in Sturminster Newton have thanked a resident's daughter for bringing in some extra help during lockdown.

Jenny Cottrell nominated the home as a worthy recipient of a free Huawei computer in a national charity initiative, the AJ Bell 'tablet giveaway'. She thought it would be a fitting reward for the way staff support family and community connections.

Delighted to hear her bid was successful, Jenny said: "Newstone House deserves a gift. In normal times its doors are fully open to the community. There are craft shows, 'pub' evenings, minibus trips, dog shows, screenings in the in-home cinema and lots of other activities that people from the area get involved in."

Jenny, whose mother Rosemary lives at the

home, added: "Newstone is already very well resourced and has been enabling Skype contact since March but an extra tablet will mean even more family contact time. The idea is that it's used to connect people.

"I thought AJ Bell's offer to distribute tablet devices to care homes was admirable."

Team members have thanked Jenny for nominating the home. Liz Whittingham, Companionship Team Leader, said: "We're doing all we can to help keep loved ones connected during this challenging period and it's lovely that Jenny thought of us. We will treasure the tablet greatly."

AJ Bell, a Manchester-headquartered investment platform, launched its tablet initiative for care homes and hospitals to help people who may be feeling isolated during lockdown.



Newstone House resident Rosemary Cottrell with the new tablet donated by AJ Bell

Our Celebration of Life

Families went online to share memories of loved ones who have passed away at our care homes in the past year.

Our annual Celebration of Life is usually an opportunity for relatives, friends, current residents and staff to get together in person and reminisce.

With Covid restrictions ruling out face-to-face community gatherings this year, team members decided to hold an alternative-style event.

They invited families and friends of the residents to join online meetings and share personal memories and time for reflection. The intimate event featured poems, music, hymns, readings and prayers. In some homes, vicars conducted services via Zoom.

Participants were encouraged to write about their loved ones in email messages. Staff transcribed these onto memory cards which they tied to 'memory trees' in the



At Newstone House staff and current residents hand-painted pebbles in memory of friends they have lost in the past year.

homes' foyers and gardens.

There were many affectionate and personal contributions such as: "Isobel – a wonderful wife and lover of music"; "Norma – loved sitting in the sunshine"; "Betty – had a wonderful motherly nature"; and "Jessie – loved travelling the world playing sports".

At Newstone House in Sturminster Newton, Dorset,

staff and residents hand-painted pebbles in memory of those they have lost.

On each stone was the resident's name, along with a picture depicting their hobbies or interests. The pebbles were then laid in what will now become a permanent 'Forget-me-not' garden.

Vanda Baker, Home Manager

at St Catherines View in Winchester, said: "Although we couldn't meet in person with families this year, we still wanted to give everyone the opportunity to reflect and reminisce. Celebration of Life is all about remembering the individuality of residents we have had the privilege of knowing. It is an ideal chance to celebrate the joy, laughter and experiences of those who came to stay with us."

Sally Smith, Nurse Learning and Development Manager, who leads our end-of-life care strategy said: "We didn't want the restrictions to stop our annual Celebration of Life event which has been held every year since 2017. It always proves to be a precious and heartfelt experience for those taking part.

"We strongly believe that good end of life care should extend to supporting relatives and friends whose loved ones have died."

Sara's finding the right people for roles

Ensuring our residents are supported by the most caring, dedicated and professional team is a key focus for Sara Hegarty.

Our newly appointed Senior HR Recruitment Adviser is the pivotal link between applicants and vacancies at eight of our homes in West Dorset, Salisbury, Winchester and Chichester.

As both a provider and employer of choice, we do all we can to attract the right candidates whatever the role – a policy Sara aims to continue.

"It's much more than just matching a CV with a job spec," says Sara. "The best thing is going out into the homes and seeing what difference it makes having the right people in the teams, seeing what goes on every day. I was talking to a resident who was saying what nice staff we have.



That felt so rewarding."

Based at our Colten House head office in Ringwood, Sara has joined us with ten years' recruitment experience, mostly gained in agencies. "I wanted to move in-house and work for a

company that was providing support to people. The care sector is a new departure for me but I knew Colten Care runs good quality homes and is very well established. This is a real opportunity to use my skills to help the company continue to find the right staff."

The Covid pandemic has put a temporary end to recruitment open days at our homes so much of Sara's early work with us has been on the web, tapping the potential of social media and online message boards to find candidates.

Sara grew up in Reading and moved to Bournemouth in 2007. She lives with her partner Kev and cat Astrid. Outside work, Sara and Kev enjoy mountain biking, camping and photography.

Huge interest in Hilary's 100th

St Catherines View resident Hilary Schoenman had an unexpected deluge of good wishes as she celebrated her 100th birthday.

Team members at the Winchester home took an imaginative approach to her big day knowing that lockdown would prevent a face-to-face party with family and friends.

Instead, they put out an appeal on social media inviting people in the community to send in birthday cards.

Altogether, a remarkable 182 cards were received from as far afield as Australia and the United States.

Companionship Team



Member Laura Sheldrake said: "It was incredible. We gathered all the cards as they came into our letter box and kept them together until Hilary's birthday.

"There were so many we had to deliver them to her in batches. It wasn't only cards, there were gifts too. We even had offers to help her celebrate with ballet performances, saxophone playing and choir singing to name but a few.

"Unfortunately, due to lockdown, we couldn't take those up but we were all overwhelmed by people taking the time to be so generous. The



Hilary with some of her many cards which had to be delivered in batches.

LEFT: Hilary as a girl.

whole idea was to make it an occasion to remember and judging by the response I think we succeeded."

Hilary, who also enjoyed a family tea party via Zoom and a homemade cake, said: "It was just marvellous."

Gifts on the day included miniature bottles of gin from Surrey-based Wessex Distillery and a gin and tonic-making 'kit' from local couple Matthew and Meredith Parris.

When Hilary was born in Cheshire in 1920, the First World War was only two years in the past, women had to be over 30 to vote, and horses were still a significant means of transport in many people's lives.

And 100 years before coronavirus, the deadly Spanish flu pandemic was only just being contained after infecting hundreds of millions of people around the world.

Hilary's earliest memories are of life by the sea and spending her childhood on the beach and riding horses. In the Second World War, she worked as an ambulance driver.

Asked for her secret of longevity, she said: "You need to live every day as it comes."