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**St Catherine's**  
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**St George's**  
Washington

**Wellburn House**  
Northumberland

**Whorlton Grange**  
Newcastle upon Tyne

# The WellburnPost

WELLBURN FRIENDS

Issue 2 • Winter 2015/16

FREE

## A HOMEMADE CHRISTMAS

*Crafty ways to **add**  
the personal touch  
this Christmas*

## THE WINTER CHILL

*How do you keep  
a home running  
in the depths of  
Winter?*

## IN THIS YEAR

*Discover what  
was making the  
headlines in 1982*







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## WELCOME

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### EDITOR'S Letter

**W**elcome to the second issue of The Wellburn Post. Our very first issue was a huge success and thanks to everyone involved in getting this out to all of our friends. We've had some really amazing feedback and we're hoping to continue that with this issue.

In this Winter issue, we'll be reviewing our favourite literary offerings in our regular book corner. We'll also take you for a trip down memory lane with our 'back in the day' feature and remind you what was happening 'in this year' in 1982. Join BBC and Times writer, Alan Beck on p13, as he discovers there's a lot more to keeping our homes going in the winter than you might think.

London based designer Mikey looks at crafty ways to add that personal touch to gifting this Christmas p8, and they'll save you money too! We've already tried them out and they're a lot of fun to make.

We've also launched a new website, dedicated to The Wellburn Post. Over time, we'll be adding content from every issue and building up a really nice website, full of stories, features and other contributions, that can be enjoyed anytime, anywhere. So, please do visit us at [www.thewellburnpost.co.uk](http://www.thewellburnpost.co.uk)

Not before you read this issue though, which we hope you have as much enjoyment reading as we've had working on it. Happy reading and don't forget to send us your contributions for future issues. Enjoy!

*Rachel x*

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### ◀ MEMORY CHARITY WALK

Staff from Wellburn joined thousands of others to take part in the annual Newcastle/Gateshead Quayside memory walk. Raising vital awareness and funds for the Alzheimer's Society. Our chef from Ryton Towers, Darren Walker was there to show support, completing the walk alongside his wife Michelle and children Amie and Cameron. Together they raised a fantastic £223 LC

### ▶ THE BOXES OF DELIGHTS

As they do at this time every year, residents and staff at Heatherdale have been taking part in the National Shoe Box appeal. The appeal asks for participants to fill an empty shoe box with gifts for children. The appeal is now an established campaign aimed at helping make underprivileged children's Christmases that bit more special.

After filling an amazing 9 boxes, with gifts



donated by staff and families, they were sent on to their chosen charity, the Samaritan's Purse Campaign. Well done all, we're very proud of you. RB



### ▼ HOME FROM HOME

Our St George's home recently de-registered as a nursing home and is now fully concentrating on providing first class residential care. To mark the relaunch, they held a weekend of fun, with entertainment from Katie West and Dave Brewis. Wine and cheeseboard's were enjoyed along with delicious afternoon tea (as featured in issue 1). A great weekend, with lots of old and new faces joining in the celebrations. LC

## WELLBURN FRIENDS

*We've been out and about with our Wellburn friends, working together with our local communities. Here's just the pick of what's been going on....*



### PLAN B IS OUR PLAN 'A'

There'll be a new face around Wellburn homes. Starting in January, Chris Hipsey will be our new exercise and activity training expert. To his post, he'll bring a new approach to the delivery, safety and effectiveness of the participation and interaction of our residents during their activity sessions in our homes. Chris brings with him, a wealth of experience and will be working with our Activity Co-ordinators, bringing them up to date with current best practice and delivering a safe and effective programme of exercises and activities for our residents. Welcome on board Chris. RB



### MAKING NEW FRIENDS

Our St Catherine's home have been making some new friends. We have partnered up with Forest of Galtres Primary School, based in the local village. Our residents have already been enjoying some visits from a small group of ten to eleven year olds with their teacher. Bringing a healthy burst of refreshing youth and vitality to our home. Residents have been listening to stories from the school and joining in quizzes and games. The pupils have been talking about their projects at school and have been spending some downtime, playing games and joining in activities with the residents. Their next visit. Christmas singing! See you all there. LC



### A BANK OF MEMORIES

St Catherine's activities co-ordinator Fran Tagg has been introducing the residents to a series of innovative DVD's. Memory Bank is a set of archival films that bring past events and experiences back to life. The films span six decades, and have been carefully selected along familiar themes to promote shared memories of childhood, growing up, loved ones and family, sense of place, home and work life. The residents have found the experience beneficial in so many areas, that we're now looking to roll them out across all of our homes. For more info visit: [www.memory-bank.org](http://www.memory-bank.org) RB

### REFURBISHMENT IS ON THE MENU

## In focus



Refurbishment at Wellburn means a little more than a spring clean. Every year we invest where necessary to make sure our homes are in tip top shape.

Whether that's converting, extending or building from scratch, our aim to provide our residents and staff beautiful spaces to live and work in respectively, is always our priority.

This year is no different. In fact, this year has been one of our largest spending years to date on refurbishment. One element has been our kitchen programme.

Little known legislations also impact when and how we spend some of this money. A new gas legislation was brought in this year, which meant we had to

remove and replace all of our extraction systems in every home's kitchen.

We had planned to refurb our kitchens this year, so the two coincided nicely. After months of planning, work has begun. Not only installing the new extraction systems, but new ovens, dishwashers and interiors.

That makes for a very happy team of chefs. New kitchens, with all the latest gadgets and luxuries their skills deserve. So far, work is on schedule and on budget, with work completed on four kitchens. Work is continuing through the Winter and Spring to complete all homes.

When finished, we'll have spent more than £500,000 on the kitchen project alone - DD



### RETIREMENT

## In short

This year has seen many changes at Wellburn, and they come no bigger than this. Founder Simon Beckett and his wife, Gardener Manager Shirley have both retired. And they've been celebrating in style, taking the trip of a lifetime to Antigua. They even managed to indulge Simon in his passion, spending some of the time at sea on a yacht. "It was like Paradise on earth. We've had the time of our lives. I haven't seen Simon



this relaxed for so many years. It was the perfect trip" Says Shirley on their return. With the reigns of the company now in the safe hands of Simon's daughter Rachel and her husband Steve, the future looks very bright. Although they've got quite sometime to wait before they can take that yacht out in Antigua. LC

### BLOOMING MARVELLOUS



Glenholme House, Roker, have won 1st prize in the 'Best Care Home Garden' category for the 10th consecutive year at this years Sunderland in Bloom competition. The awards ceremony was held at the Roker Hotel in November. Well done to our gardener Lee Brown. RB

### FULL OF MEMORIES

The gardeners have been busy sprucing up the gardens at Eighton Lodge this winter. And when the staff caught eyes on some disgarded branches, they came up with the clever idea of painting them and creating a memory tree for the residents. The idea was to ask each resident to write their favorite memories on heart decorations. It now sits pride of place in the lobby lounge and is decorated with dozens of memory filled hearts, as well as some lovely lights. Residents, staff and visiting families love reading each others memories and continue to add them. LC



*Ooh, one last thing...*

This is our second edition of The Wellburn Post, so we'd love to hear what you think of it. Tell us if there's something you'd like to see in our next issue



# back in the day

*Our regular feature goes back in time and picks out some of the most memorable and at times pretty quirky 'back in the day' things. How many of these do you remember?*



## ▲ Barrs iron-bru

### 1960's

A time when we waited for the 'pop' van. Delivering bottles of Iron-bru and dandelion and burdock street by street. The following week, money back for the bottle and so it went on for years. Today, the van has gone, as has the lovely concept of money back for the bottle and even the word pop is becoming a thing of the past. What hasn't gone though, is the wonderful fizzy memories. Pop!



## ► Crunchie bar

### 1950's

The golden honey-combed bar wasn't always as golden, in wrapper terms. The 1950's version a lot less flamboyant, but no less delicious. And it cost 4d. Imagine that? Thank Crunchie it's Friday!

## ▼ Police box

### 1930's

Remember these? No, not because of Dr Who, although the show has made the Police box a global icon. The actual box. It's hard to imagine these populating our streets today, but back in the day, they did. A direct line to the police was a revolution in policing. Now of course, we have mobile phones. Slightly less bulky, but certainly not as iconic.



## ▲ The flying glider

Today, the X-box rules. The Flying Glider takes us back to when standing in the street until there was no light in the day left was what it was all about. Throwing planes into the dusk sky in wonder, until a wing broke and it was back to the newsagent with another 10p for another packet. Glorious.

## Have your say...

If you've got a favourite thing from the past, let us know and we'll add the best suggestions into our next issue

## BACK IN THE FRAME

An extra-ordinary tale of full circle occurred at Wellburn House recently. Irene Harding worked at the House many years ago when it was a home for disabled children. Her late husband, a keen painter, painted a picture of the House, where it hung for years. When Irene retired, the painting was mistakenly left behind.

So, imagine Irene's surprise when she was visiting our home to enquire about residential care for herself and came face to face with the very same painting hanging pride and place. Thanks to one of our residents, who salvaged the painting all those years ago when the home for children closed and brought it with her when she became a resident. Irene couldn't believe her eyes, with the painting bringing back so many happy memories. Very kindly, Irene wants the painting to remain with us for all to continue to enjoy. LC

## IN THIS YEAR - 1982



We couldn't start our winter issue with anything else really. Raymond Briggs 'The Snowman', was first shown by Channel 4 in this year on

December 26. It was an immediate success and has since become a British institution. Over 30 years on and the public's affection for the Snowman is as strong as ever.



In this year on November 2, Channel 4 begins broadcasting. The first programme broadcast was the game show Countdown, hosted by Richard Whiteley. Another

flagship launch programme was soap opera Brookside. Brookside is no more, but Countdown is still going as strong as ever.



Queen Elizabeth II officially opens Kielder Water on May 26. The Northumberland reservoir remains the largest artificial lake in the UK and is surrounded by Kielder Forest, the largest planted woodland in Europe. It took 6 years to complete and today, attracts more than 250,000 tourists a year.



## 'HOMEMADE' FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

## In focus

When Rachel Beckett took up the post of Managing Director in the summer, one of the first things she tasked the team with, was to revisit the menu's at Wellburn's homes.

Working under the guidance of Catering Manager Nick Smith, the team spent time going through and planning the launch of a new, improved menu. Focussing on seasonal cooking, using ingredients that are sourced locally and creating a stronger emphasis on the homemade approach. Making time to discuss and chat through ideas with residents also proved invaluable in the process. The feedback was fantastic, with residents using the opportunity to take a step back into memory lane. Sharing wonderful stories about cooking dishes with their families and sharing family recipes with us.

The cold dark nights of Winter are now upon us and our menu's are in full swing. A vast array of warm hearty dishes are being served up, with traditional favourites such as home roast dinners, cottage pie and liver and onions along with some new dishes such as hunters chicken and salmon en crouete.

Rachel and her team have noticed a marked improvement in satisfaction, which has been a reward for the ambitious re-vamp. "We're seeing smiles from our residents. We've even noticed that some of the more traditional recipe's are encouraging our residents to swap stories and reminisce about days gone by and how they used to cook similar dishes all those years ago". Says Nick Smith.

Rachel backs this sentiment up, "The hard work and planning has been more than worth it. To see how much the new menu's are being enjoyed by our residents is heartwarming. But we don't want the interaction with our residents to stop there." Rachel goes on to explain, "We've just launched our first annual Great British Christmas Bake Off competition. The competition will see homes and residents competing against each other, with the overall baker winning the title of Best Baker. It's just the start of creating a culture of delicious food that we can all enjoy, and at times get involved in making. We have lot's of exciting ideas moving forward, so the future looks very tasty. As the old saying goes, the proof is in the pudding. I think this is particularly apt and long may it continue." - LC



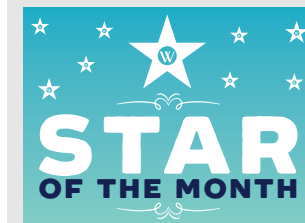
## TEE TIME AT FOURRRR

When keen golfer Ezra Drake came to stay at Ryton Towers, he started taking his club out onto the lawn for a few practice swings. Showing such enthusiasm for something Ezra has enjoyed his entire life, we had to do something to help. With plenty of garden space, we decided to add some holes onto a section of the lawn. Now he's got something to aim at, Ezra's a happy golfer and we're hoping to get more older budding Tigers involved too. Next stop, the Wellburn Masters. RB

## TEAM AWARDS

## In short

We're asking residents, family and staff from all 14 of our homes, to nominate a member of staff that has made a real difference to them. Each month, we'll award one special member of staff with our new **Star of the Month** award and prize. Every month, we'll count up all the nominations we receive from across all 14 homes, and one member of staff will be awarded top prize, along with two runners up. All 3 will receive prizes, and will be automatically entered into our end of year Star of the Year awards. LC



## TOTE'ALLY AWESOME

In issue 1, we mentioned that we're going through a total re-brand programme. It's launch has been hugely successful, with really positive feedback from residents, families, staff and our local communities.

As part of the programme, we've introduced some new exciting initiatives, one of which is our new tote bag.

A beautifully designed bag, with all profits going directly back into the residents funds. So not only will you look splendid with your new bag, you'll rest easy knowing it's for a very good cause. Our tote bags are on sale now for only £1.50.

If you'd like to buy one, simply pop into one of our homes, or alternatively give us a call on: 0191 229 3530. RB



## Oh, one last thing...

We're always looking for new exciting content for issue 3. So if you've got something going on or something to tell us, please send them via post or email and we'll run the best submissions.





# 3 HOMEMADE CHRISTMAS gift ideas



*Christmas is a time for giving. But as we discover, giving doesn't always have to mean a huge cost. Sometimes it's the homemade approach that can make a present extra special. We take a look at 3 crafty ways to cut the cost and add a personal touch to gifting this festive season.*



## ◀ LINDT CHRISTMAS WREATH

Follow our easy to make steps to create our take on a timeless decoration. This delicious and attractive gift will brighten up any home over the festive season and is sure to be a popular hit whatever the age. To make this gift, you'll need the following items:

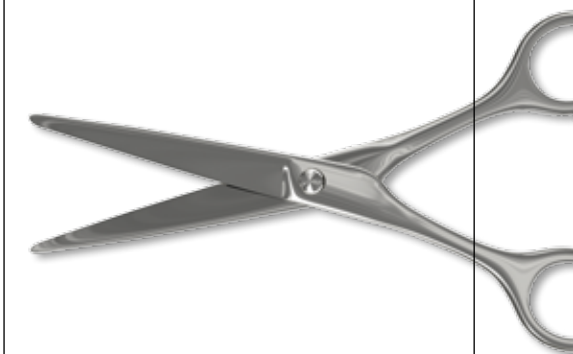
### Materials:

- Lindt Lindor Milk Chocolate Truffles
- 12-20" wire wreath frame/or coathanger
- Floral Wire
- Clippers
- Seasonal winter foliage (we've used spruce, cedar, juniper and boxwood)
- Berries (we've used pepper berries, but holly is nice too!)
- Red or Gold Ribbon
- Ribbon bow



### Method:

- 1 Gather all the materials and lay them out on a large, flat surface.
- 2 Assemble wreath by taking pieces of cut foliage and tying them with wire to frame. Follow natural curve of the branches.
- 3 Continue layering pieces in the same direction, tying tightly. Exposed wire will get covered as you go.
- 4 When you have come all the way around, simply tie wire ends tightly to one another. Cut wire and do a few extra twists to secure.
- 5 Cover any visible wire by using small stems. Add decorative elements.
- 6 String the LINDOR truffles through the wreath and wire in lace. Add bow and secure with floral wire.
- 7 Step back and admire your work!





## COVER STORY



## ▲ GINGERBREAD CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATIONS

The perfect festive gift for your family and friends to enjoy. Making a lovely addition to any Christmas tree, these delicious decorations will ensure that even if you can't be there in person, you'll be there in festive spirit. To make this gift, you'll need the following items:

## Ingredients:

- 350g/12oz plain flour, plus extra for rolling out
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 2 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 125g/4½oz butter
- 175g/6oz light soft brown sugar
- 1 free-range egg
- 4 tbsp golden syrup

## Decoration:

- Writing icing
- Cake decorations
- Ribbon or string for ties
- Gift box

## Method:

① Sift together the flour, bicarbonate of soda, ginger and cinnamon and pour into the bowl of a food processor. Add the butter and blend until the mix looks like breadcrumbs. Stir in the sugar.

② Lightly beat the egg and golden syrup together, add to the food processor and pulse until the mixture clumps together. Tip the dough out, knead briefly until smooth, wrap in clingfilm and leave to chill in the fridge for 15 minutes.

③ Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Line 2 baking trays with greaseproof paper.

④ Roll the dough out to a 0.5cm/¼in thickness on a lightly floured surface. Using cutters, cut out the gingerbread men shapes and place on the baking tray, leaving a gap between them. For decorations, use a skewer to make a small hole in the top of each biscuit.

⑤ Bake for 12-15 minutes, or until lightly golden-brown. Leave on the tray for 10 minutes and then move to a wire rack to finish cooling. When cooled decorate with the writing icing and cake decorations.

⑥ Tie ribbon or string through the hole to finish off your tree decoration gift.

**“A delightful addition to any Christmas tree, these yummy treats will make the perfect gift”**



## COVER STORY



## ► PERSONALISED FESTIVE KITCHEN UTENSILS

This beautifully simple idea, will add that personal touch to cooking the Christmas dinner and beyond. Put a personal touch on kitchen utensils with paint and write messages with a woodburning pen. They're unique and definitely won't break the budget. To make this gift, you'll need the following items:

## Materials:

- A selection of acrylic paints (Include metallic colours for that extra festive touch)
- Paint brush
- Clear gloss
- Painter's tape
- Woodburning pen

The colour of paint you use is really up to you. You could also use one colour per utensil. You could use two colours or five colors or 10 colours. It's really up to you how you want these to turn out!

## Method:

① Use the painter's tape to mark off the areas you want and don't want paint.

② Start painting. We've used a festive colour palette to make them more seasonal, but you're the designer.

③ Let the painted spoons dry in a cup.

④ Let the paint dry overnight.

⑤ Once the paint is dry, add any handwritten messages to your utensils using a woodburning pen.

⑥ Once you're happy with how your utensils are looking, it's time to apply the clear gloss.

⑦ Step back and admire your work!



## COMPETITION



**Wellburn homes get all crafty in our first annual 'Deck The Halls' competition**

**As we've seen, getting all crafty at Christmas is a lovely way to get into the festive spirit. So, this year sees the launch of our first annual Deck The Halls Competition.**

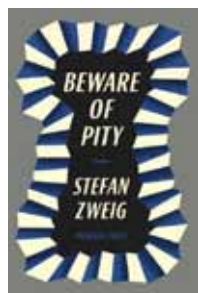
Each home will be competing for the title of best dressed home this year. We're asking each home to get involved. With staff and residents getting involved in dressing their home in festive decor. Each home will be visited by a judging panel and the winner will receive a trophy and a cash prize to spend on something their home can enjoy. Good luck to all and may the best home win! The winner will be announced in the next issue.





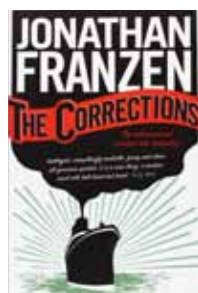
## Book corner

Sit back and enjoy a good read about, well, good reads. As we review three more of our favourite literary offerings.



**BEWARE OF PITY**  
by Stefan Zweig  
★★★★★

Zweig's life was in a constant flux of emotions and this book, recognised as his most accomplished piece, is no less dramatic. An unrelentingly tense tale of emotional blackmail, sparked by an innocent act of attempted charity from a young Hungarian cavalry officer. Things spiral out of control as fast as you'll be able to turn the pages. Our verdict. A book that grips you with a formidable sense of torment, intensity and turmoil. MC



**THE CORRECTIONS**  
by Jonathan Franzen  
★★★★★

Franzen has the unerring ability to find drama in the everyday. Corrections is a tale of an average American family living in a troubled

age. The father, Alfred, is slowly losing his mind to Parkinson's disease. As his condition worsens, his family are plunged into a period of self reflection. Facing up to their own secrets and failures through an emotional journey that will leave you moved to the core. Our verdict. A novel of outstanding sympathy, wit and moral intelligence. Beautiful from the first page to the last. MC



**THE 100 YEAR OLD MAN**  
by Jonas Jonasson  
★★★★★

Waiting in his room in a care home, Allan Karlsson decides he doesn't want to hang around for his own 100th birthday party. So he escapes through his window. What follows is a completely crazy and incredibly funny adventure. Our verdict. A laugh out very loud read. MC

### Interested?

All books are available to order online at [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk). If you've read a book that you'd like to recommend for book corner, please let us know: [thewellburnpost@wellburncare.co.uk](mailto:thewellburnpost@wellburncare.co.uk)



## LETTER OF THE ISSUE

### Dear Wellburn Post

Last September my father passed away, inevitably but suddenly. As a family we knew he was poorly but despite this, we believed he would go on forever. Dad had been married to Mum for nearly 60 years, and for the last 7 years of his life he was Mum's carer, she has Alzheimer's Disease.

Dad was an organised man and had made arrangements for one of my brothers and myself to undertake the role of managing Mum's affairs. Whilst reeling from the shock of Dad's death, we were responsible for decisions about Mum's care and well-being. Twenty four hours later, it became apparent that remaining in her own home was unrealistic and untenable, so we agreed to look into a care home.

During the summer, Dad and I had conversations about care homes for mum in the long term. I just remember Dad asking me, '...but will they cuddle her?' At that moment, I was unable to answer him.

The day after Dad's death, I phoned the couple of places I had already visited in Newcastle, during the summer, one of which could only accommodate Mum for a couple of weeks, and insisted on the completion of an assessment booklet, just short of 'War and Peace'. A Harrogate home which was suitable had a waiting list, but with mum's condition,

waiting time was just something we didn't have.

I'd already ruled out care homes under large corporate banners, merely based on my own professional experience of working with large healthcare organisations. I felt that some places get so big, the quality can't be managed.

We visited Whorlton Grange, at 7pm, with Mum (and Dad's dog which I wasn't ready to surrender at that time).

Marie, Leighanne and the staff at Whorlton Grange were so receptive and responsive to the complex family decision we were faced with; They greeted us and our situation with such overwhelming sensitivity and kindness. I remember there was an immediate sense of familiar warmth and falling in to the arms of a 'rescuer'.

A hard decision made very easy, thanks to the kindness and professionalism shown by the staff. I know Dad would be happy where Mum is; and now I can answer his question, 'Yes, they do cuddle her.'

Clare Lockett, Newcastle

### Have your say...

If like Clare you have something to share with our readers, send your letters to us in the post or via email, making sure it's no more than 300 words long.

# THE WINTER CHILL



*Alan Beck is a freelance writer, who has worked for the BBC and The Times – here he explores how things keep moving at Wellburn care homes throughout the harshest of seasons*

Winter is the season of contrasts. From the frosty snap of a brisk walk in the December air, to hand-rubbing by the fire and something warming in a mug (or better still, a glass!), it is the relationship between cold and hot that defines our experience of this year's end and the new one beginning.

And the festive season reinforces this distinction – the snow and ice that provide us with such memorable Yuletide imagery can be as disruptive as they are

beautiful. How many Christmas cards will we receive this year with images of beautifully snowbound cottages, where the only creatures able to get around are robin redbreasts?

Even the Christmas story itself is the tale of a young couple triumphing memorably in unpromising circumstances. Surrounding the uplifting main event of Jesus' birth is a hard-earned victory for the human spirit over chaotic travel and accommodation logistics. ►



◀ At Wellburn, we know how much joy this season can bring to our residents and how important it is that the double-edged sword of the winter weather doesn't disrupt our daily routines. Whether it be food deliveries to the kitchens, minibuses for daytrips or maintenance of the gardens and buildings, ensuring the smooth running of our services is a major priority for our staff and suppliers.

#### Safety first

Wellburn site technical manager Davey Dryden is well aware of the challenges posed in winter and co-ordinates teams across our care homes to minimise disruption in adverse weather conditions.

"Myself and facilities director Steve Buckland always keep an eye on the weather and we will send out emails to home managers in the case of weather warnings, advising to stock up grit bins, have people on call to clear paths etc," he says. "We have handymen in each of our buildings who look for signs of damage – and even before winter comes on they will be checking for leaves blocking guttering, that sort of thing."

These are the nuts and bolts of winter operation, tailored to each care home, but some instances of weather damage necessitate company-wide action.

"We had a big incident a couple of years ago when the high winds got up," Davey recalls. "A tree fell and crashed into the side of a building at Riverhead in Drifffield. It smashed in a couple of rooms, the roof was all broken in and residents had to be evacuated. So we did a full tree survey, right across the company. Now we have a tree safety report covering every home."

#### Seasonal planting

Those trees frame the gardens and grounds that are a source of year-round pleasure for our residents and their families and even – or rather, particularly – in these dormant weeks, the plants, lawns and paths require specific care to remain open and accessible to all.

Gardener Lee Brown looks after the gardens at four Wellburn homes and says it's a busy time for the staff outside as winter comes on.

"The first thing we look at is winter planting," he says. "It's a major operation as it's important for the gardens to look as



good - if not better - in the winter than in the summer. We want to see nice colours and a wide range of seasonal plants, like primulas, holly and ivy."

Lee says families and residents alike feel the gardens are a vital source of well-being and their upkeep is high on the list of the care homes' priorities.

"We get a lot feedback from the families. Some of them are very knowledgeable about their plants, so they'll comment on how the gardens look. We want to have that diversity in the planting, and plants that bring in the wildlife like birds, as well. Not all the residents will go outside in the winter, but you want them to feel as if they're in their own home, cosy and warm, looking at the cold outside."

The North-east is prone to some of England's harshest winter weather and some care homes are more exposed to the elements than others. One of Lee's homes – Eighton Lodge, near the Angel of the North – has seen considerable snowfall in the past, sometimes enough to isolate it completely.

"We've had to get a JCB digger in before now to clear the snow, so yes it can get cut off if there's really bad snow. But usually, if we keep the paths well gritted, people can get in okay on foot even if it has snowed."

With Christmas nearing, Lee likes to



give his gardens a festive look – as we spoke, he was mopping his brow from the effort of erecting – with a little help from two willing volunteers - a 20-foot Christmas tree at Eighton.

"Mostly we have artificial trees inside the homes, but I like to have a real tree outside and get some Christmas lights up on it and around the door to give the place a nice festive feel."

As grand as the Christmas fir tree might be, it's for a much less imposing plant that Lee retains particular affection in the tough winter months.

"You'd be amazed at the hardiness of some of the plants here," he says. "If we have a really bad winter, the baskets and



## "Just like gardener Lee's pansy, there's always beauty amid the hardship"

containers just freeze solid – but even a little bit of a thaw, and you'll see things come back to life. Look at pansies – they look so fragile, you'd never think they were so tough. Really, you've never seen such a hardy plant – they bounce right back."

#### Festive feasts

One of the principal delights of the festive season is, of course, the food. Alongside the sumptuous feast of Christmas Day, there are pleasures to indulge throughout the winter months. Hearty stews and soups help keep out the cold, while it's never too early (or late) to add a mince pie to your afternoon cup of tea.

Making sure our homes are well stocked and provided for over the winter

months is a job for catering manager Nick Smith who keeps a close eye on the supply chain across the company.

"We don't often have problems with deliveries in the winter. In general, our suppliers are very decent and reliable on delivery times and dates, but if there is a problem – say, with heavy snow – we would be able to change the menu and use what we have in the kitchen. We always have plenty of stock in case of emergencies."



And there's more to the winter menu than may meet the eye. We may think of radiators and thick clothes when it comes to keeping warm, but Nick stresses the importance of heating from the inside...

"During winter we give residents more carbohydrates and more protein, so there are more calories to burn. It's a really important part of the overall package in keeping residents warm and comfortable. You don't want to be sitting in a coat all day, so the food really makes a difference."

Nick explains how the holiday season brings some sparkle to the homes, with special menus designed for Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day, plus the all-important Christmas party for residents and families.

"The activity co-ordinators help the residents with Christmas activities, making baubles and decoration for the tables. It's one of the most important times within our homes, and all the families are invited for the Christmas party, with entertainment, music, singers – it's a great get-together for everyone."

It's that sense of community which lies at the heart of Wellburn's approach to care, and one in which all our staff play their part. The winter months (especially in the North-east) will always provide a challenge, but like gardener Lee's pansy, there's always beauty amid the hardship. ■



Our Wellbeing expert  
**Jane Hughes-Cook**  
believes it's the little things that matter.

**As we've seen, running our homes during the Winter months provides physical challenges that we plan hard for. Of course, the season can also throw up emotional challenges too. As with the physical, we leave no stone unturned and our experienced staff are here to offer support.**

For most of us, Christmas will evoke happy memories, but for some, this time of the year may not be such a joyous time. It may be their first Christmas without a late husband or wife, or simply missing children or grandchildren.

Our staff recognise that some of our residents will need this extra emotional support, and try to focus on the positives. Lovely presents, the delicious food with fabulous entertainment. All of which surrounded by friends who care deeply about each other.

Our staff also recognise that some people need to have some quiet reflective time and there may be some tears shed for absent friends. Some people choose to go to church others celebrate in house when the local vicar visits.

In truth this is no different for the rest of us, Christmas means different things to us all, joy, laughter, sadness, happiness. Our staff are very skilled at supporting our residents, and are there no matter how they're feeling over the festive period. Of course, you don't have to be a trained expert to make a difference to someone.

So, as we will be doing, whilst we're all enjoying Christmas in our own way, spare a thought for someone you may know that might find this Christmas particularly hard. Simply sending a card, picking up the phone or popping in to see them could make a huge difference. After all, it is the season of peace and good will.



We are so much more than a row of photographs on a timeline. As one lady once told me: "Just because you know all of the things I've done in my life doesn't mean you get me!". How true.

We are more complicated and subtle than a list of likes and dislikes but every piece of shared information means that everybody benefits-the person being cared for receives better care, the person caring feels more confident and able to strike up a conversation and the family knows that they have ensured that everybody is better informed.

Sadly, all too often this is left to chance. So many drawers and attics are left filled with photographs gathering dust & helping nobody. These could be icebreakers & used to reinforce who a person is if they have problems with their memory. Here music, smells, tastes and stories can prove invaluable acting like a time machine.

Since writing my book "Dear Dementia" I have worked all over the UK for care companies, Yorkshire Ambulance Service, local authorities and the Care Quality Commission. In that time I haven't seen a more beautiful and caring document to ensure the smooth transition from home to new home than son Kim Ward and daughter-in-law Sue prepared for Grimston Court. This was not your usual pro-forma tick sheet-instead it gives you a true feel for who their Mum is. The front cover reads "I



**Ian Donaghy**

*A view from our homes  
through the eyes of  
a field specialist*

like to be called Peggy". The couple put it together after invaluable conversations with Dementia Forward in York.

Inside is a trip through her life from birth through schooldays to work life to courting to marriage to motherhood to being a grandmother to retirement to where she is today. Complete with fully labelled pictures of who everybody is on the photos and the relationship they have with her.

"Peggy's story" is presented in an old fashioned ring binder its great for staff to dip into, but is also very tactile and simple

to share with Mum when she is struggling to recall her surroundings or family events"

Tablets such as ipads or cheaper competitors can be filled with a lifetime of photos, all of your favourite songs and even family videos at your fingertips to swipe through at will. Peggy's room is full of reminders of a life filled with love and laughter. Blank magnolia walls may be inoffensive but are of little use in reinforcing who we are. Often our trinkets turn our houses into homes.

Creating a new home takes time, love and care as we strive to do the same things slightly differently. Peggy's life story hasn't been written nor sent to the printers as there are many new chapters to be written at Grimston Court. She is a lady with a past, a present and a future with her family as important as ever.

As beautiful as our homes are we are fully aware they are merely piles of bricks without the relationships forged between our residents, families and care team. The more we know, the better the chance we have of getting the small things right that are so important. To put it into a nutshell "We will respect all of your wishes....as long as we know them."

*Ian Donaghy is a freelance member of the team and his responsibilities include training and mentoring our staff in the field of dementia care.*

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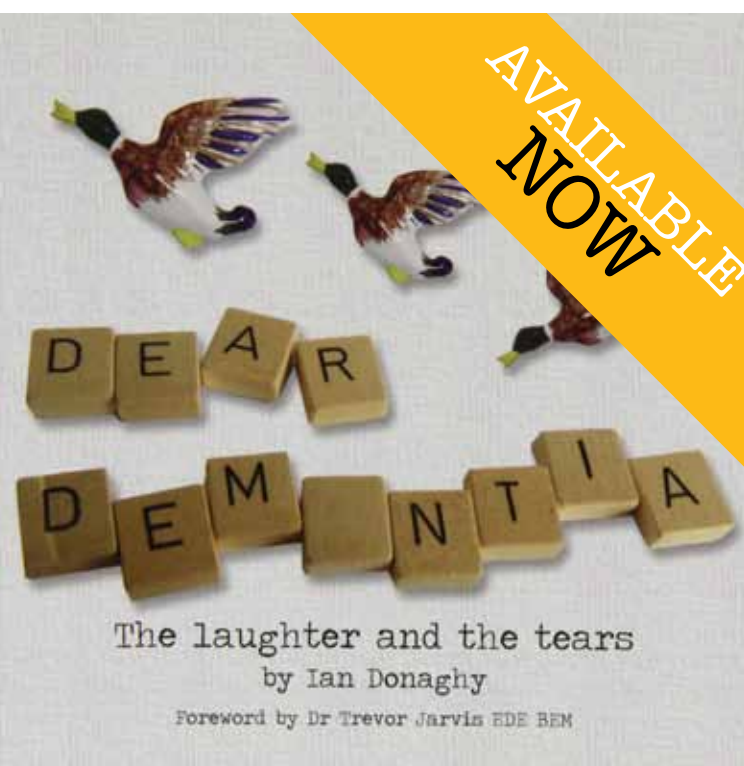
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**STAR  
PIC**



*and the winner is...*

Congratulations to Ann Callaghan. Her stunning shot of the Tyne Bridge was taken on her phone while out jogging. Two hobbies at the same time is impressive work Ann. Your prize of £50 worth of M&S vouchers are in the post. A big thank you to all those that entered this issues competition. There was some stiff competition and the standard was superb. Our judges had a tough job. If you'd like to enter our next issues pic competition, send you pics to: [thewellburnpost@wellburncare.co.uk](mailto:thewellburnpost@wellburncare.co.uk)



Mary Eleanor Palmer, known to everyone as Nell, was born on bonfire night, the 5th November 1915 at 47 Tennyson Street, which was off Sunderland Road in Gateshead.

When she grew up, she went to Sunderland Road school, along with her two sisters. She loved school, but remembers getting into regular trouble for talking too much (some things never change). After leaving school at 14, she went on to work at the Co-operative shirt factory in Pelaw.

Her two sisters went to work at Carr's sweet factory at the bottom of Gateshead, near the Tyne Bridge, which was managed by her Uncle. Nell became a seamstress at the shirt factory. She remembers it being a great atmosphere to work in despite the noise of all the sewing machines and loud chatter. She eventually left her job, to join Jacksons the Tailors at the top end of the High Street.

It was at this point, Nell had the very lucky opportunity to visit her Aunt, who had emigrated to America. Travelling over the Atlantic on the Queen Mary ocean liner in 1952. Remarkably, Winston Churchill was on the same crossing.

Whilst in America, she had to have an emergency operation to remove her appendix. The operation was so expensive, she had to borrow the money to pay for it and ended up staying in the US for 6 months.

On her return, she decided to stay at home and look after her parents, while her sisters moved away to marry.

At the time, Nell would escape for holidays with her best friend Verna to places like Butlins. She enjoyed ballroom dancing and used to go to the Oxford Galleries, where both women would meet their future husbands, who coincidentally, were best friends too. Verna married Jimmy and Nell started to court Jack.

Nell's Dad passed away in 1956 and then her mother a year later, just as she was planning to get married. A bitter sweet moment for Nell. Walking down the aisle with neither parent to give her away was sad for Nell, but Jack as always, was there for her and guided her through the day, like the true gentleman he always was.

They were married in the Venerable Beads church off Sunderland Road and had their reception at The Springfield Hotel on Durham Road, which at the time, was thought of as being a rather grand place to be seen socialising.

## Life story

In our second edition of 'life stories', Wellburn's Rachel Beckett discovers the life story of 100 year old resident **Nell Palmer**.



After getting married, Nell left the tailors and had taken a job at Fenwicks Department Store as a demonstrator in the kitchen department.

She laughs now, but remembers clearly, demonstrating non-stick cookware which had just come out. She would also show customers how to do things like ice cakes. She remembers receiving gifts from the manufacturers, if the items she was demonstrating sold well.

Jack had a passion for gardening, and could often be found in their allotment growing vegetables and remarkably, the allotment even had enough space to keep hens. Nell smiles as she recalls never being short of eggs in the kitchen.

In 1959, Nell and Jack found out they were expecting. Nell gave up work and on 9th July 1959, her beloved son Keith was born.

Nell recalls there being an unusually high number of children being born in the street in the same year, so there was plenty of kids for Keith to play with growing up. Nell remembers the street being a wonderful place to be. So much fun and children

everywhere. She also remembers a more innocent, trusting time. Jack would leave for work at seven in the morning and the front door was left open all day with just an inner door pushed closed but never locked. The front door wasn't locked again until it was time for bed.

Neighbours and friends would just call around, popping their heads through the door. "It was just the way it was back then", Nell recounts. "It was wonderful".

In 1962 their Street received electricity for the first time. Nell remembers buying a fridge and renting a 'telly' from Rediffusion. Today, this sounds pretty standard, but back then, it was exciting times.

In 1965, the council were demolishing the old terraced houses and offered Nell and her family a brand new house on Lanchester Avenue in Wrekenton. The move coincided with the purchase of their first family car in 1968 and by 1970 they started taking caravan holidays, exploring the coasts of Wales and Scotland as well as much of England.

Nell later started work delivering leaflets and free samples door to door, as part of a team. She loved the company and the hours suited her. When Jack retired in 1987, they spent time together dancing, going out for day trips and holidaying in Scarborough. Jack wasn't just Nell's husband, but her best friend. Unfortunately all that came to an end in 1991 when he contracted colon cancer and passed away. Nell was devastated.

Eventually she picked herself up, making a point of going out every day, shopping and having lunch out. She fondly remembers getting the bus to Chester le Street on a Friday for the market But, tragically, all that would stop. Nell, now in her 90th year, had her handbag stolen along with her house keys too.

The robbery affected Nell more than she first thought. She lost all confidence. She completely stopped going out, and her memory started to fade. By the time she was 92, it was all becoming too much for Nell, forgetting to switch things off and getting herself in a muddle. It was then that she and her son Keith decided moving into Eighton Lodge was the best solution. Somewhere she could feel safe and get the care she deserved.

Nell, has just celebrated her 100th birthday amongst friends, family and local dignitaries. "If you ask me," Nell says, "I will tell you, I have had a very good life, and am still having it..." ■

# no one should have no one at Christmas

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