

LATEST NEWS...
The new home joining us

The Pilgrims' MAGAZINE

SPRING 2025

Brick by brick
Investing in quality care homes
for older Christians

Pray for us...

DAILY PRAYER GUIDE

NOW AS AN INSERT



Friendly faces

The church visitors who bring joy

A mother's love

Paying tribute to women
wise and wonderful

PILGRIMS'
FRIEND
SOCIETY

Pilgrims' Friend Society exists to provide excellent care and support for older people, inspiring and encouraging them to live fulfilled lives. Rooted in the Christian faith, Pilgrims' Friend Society is committed to creating Christian communities in residential care homes and independent living housing schemes in England and Scotland.



Got a great story?

Email our editor **Helen** on helen.nathan@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

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Or contact us via the details below:

Pilgrims' Friend Society
175 Tower Bridge Road
London SE1 2AL

www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

0300 303 1403

info@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

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News round-up

All the latest happenings from across our organisation

Bethany House joins the family

The latest care home to join Pilgrims' Friend Society is Bethany House in Preston, with the transfer set to be completed this April. The home, run by Preston Bethany Care (PBC), has been providing Christian care in Preston since it opened in 1987. For a number of years the trustees of PBC have been considering the sustainability of the home in the evolving care sector and are pleased to be joining our organisation to ensure its long-term future.

Janet Kay, chair of trustees of PBC, said, "We're delighted that Bethany House will become part of The Pilgrims' Friend Group in the Spring. As trustees we have been prayerfully considering the future of the



home and are pleased that this change will ensure the future of Christian care in Preston for the long term."



Please do be praying for the community at Bethany House as they, together with the Pilgrims' Friend Society team, work together on this transition.

A fond farewell

After 14 years with Pilgrims' Friend Society, Jeanette Davis, Registered Care Manager at Evington Home in Leicester, is stepping down this March.

Jeanette says, "In my time at Evington, the Lord has helped me to grow beyond my expectation and brought us safely through many challenges, from deregistering the home from a nursing home to a care home to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"One thing that has made this role so rewarding has been being able to care for those living with dementia or physical limitations when families just couldn't cope anymore."

We are grateful to Jeanette for all her hard work at Evington and the blessing she has been to so many over the years. Please join us in praying for His guidance in whatever comes next.



New trustees

We're delighted to welcome two new trustees to our Board. Leonie Lucas is a trained nurse who now works for Christian charity CARE. Having known Pilgrims' Friend Society since childhood – her parents are firm supporters and her father Bryan Jarvis is a former trustee – she is passionate about championing older people.

Leonie says, "I love that Pilgrims' Friend Society is Christian not just in name but in DNA. It is our responsibility as Christians to love and care for people in old age and they should never feel like a burden. They should be honoured, treasured and learned from."

We also welcome Tilly Wood. A trustee at Bridgemead in Bath for 20 years, Tilly was closely involved with the transfer of the home to Pilgrims' Friend Society in Autumn 2024. With a background in commercial business, she is especially excited by the opportunities presented by our Growth and Renewal Programme. Tilly says, "The more homes we have, the more people there will be who can receive Christian care."

Please thank the Lord for bringing Leonie and Tilly to our team and pray that they would settle in well.

We also welcome...

Dipika Badar-Ud-Din as Registered Care Manager at Evington Home in Leicester and Amber Stoter as Home Manager at Framland in Wantage. In our Support Office, Mike English joins as Head of IT and Barbara Reynolds as Accounts Receivable Specialist.

In other news

Your Prayer Guide now comes as a separate eight-page insert. Our Supporter Engagement Manager Miriam Baines explains,



“At Pilgrims' Friend Society, we rely on God working through the prayers of you, our dedicated supporters. We've decided to expand our Prayer Guide so we can share more detailed prayer points about life across our homes and housing schemes. We hope you will find this new format helpful – thank you for your support!”

Did you know...?



Our Prayer Guide is available to download as a pdf from our website at www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/pray



For more great stories, follow us on social media:



Bringing church to us

Words: Helen Nathan

Across our care homes, life is enriched by links to local churches, with ministers, regular volunteers and occasional visitors all having a part to play. We found out what this looks like at Shottermill House, our home in Haslemere

With most of our family members now unable to get out to church services and activities, church links have a vital part to play in ensuring those living with us can flourish in their faith and remain connected to the wider Christian community.

At the last count, Shottermill House had links to 13 local churches. "I see it as bringing a beautiful rainbow," says Deborah, the Activities and Community Engagement (ACE) Facilitator at the home. "Our 'family members' [as we call those who live with us] come from a diverse range of church backgrounds and different people respond to different things. Having so many links helps everyone find the spiritual support they need."

Local ministers Revd David Faulkner from Haslemere Methodist Church and Revd Tim Radcliffe from St Stephen's Anglican church lead more formal services.

Every day in the home there are devotions when family members gather for hymns, prayer and a short talk from the Bible. Volunteers from local churches are regular speakers. "Our volunteers help to bring God's Word in different ways," says Deborah. "We have one volunteer, Chris, who often brings in objects to help illustrate the passage. Recently, he brought a lamp from a barge to help share how Jesus is the Light of the World."

Those with musical skills help our family members to enjoy hymns and songs. John from Hope Chapel visits weekly to play the piano during devotions, and Linda from Providence Baptist Church plays the piano once a week for devotions and for any memorial services. Linda also joins forces with Pam from St Nicholas Compton to regularly host a choir practice.

Times spent quietly chatting one-to-one with church volunteers is just as important. "Like all of us, our family members need to be reminded that God loves them and is here for them still," says Deborah. "A sympathetic ear, a kind word, the offer to pray – these are all ways our Christian volunteers can help. I think many don't realise what a difference they make, but it's huge."

“I think many don't realise what a difference they make...”



sense of achievement. One lady can be very withdrawn and so I encouraged her to take part in a pom-pom craft, putting the ball of wool through the hole. Seeing the look of pride on her face when she did it was wonderful."

A recent partnership taking root is with The Guildford Holy Word Church, a Chinese church, with a group of 20 children coming to perform a concert. The children played violins, the cello and the piano, and also sang and shared poetry.

Norah is a Sunday School volunteer who helped to organise the visit. She explains, "We are always encouraging the children to live out their faith by serving the local community and this opportunity was an answer to prayer. The children found it very rewarding – they could see how much the older people enjoyed it. We hope to come back soon."

Colin, who attends St Mark's in Bordon, will spend time with people reading articles from Christian magazines or going through a devotion, something that is especially appreciated by those who have eyesight difficulties. He also pops in to see family members in their bedrooms if needed, ensuring no-one who would like a visitor gets missed.

Family members are grateful for the time given by those who visit. Daphne, 81, shared the following reflection, "Christian volunteers from churches stick out a mile: a) They aren't commercialised, they believe in God like us, so their natural rhythm of concern is genuine and b) They bring the church in to us."

Through simply taking part and encouraging others to join in too, volunteers help our family members stay engaged and experience moments of joy.

Ruth, a volunteer from St Batholemew's, often supports craft times. She says, "I think God has given me the gifts of patience and encouragement. I want every family member to feel that they are special, so I'll go out of my way to encourage them to take part and feel a



Could you and your church partner with one of our care homes? To find out more and to get in touch with the home's ACE Facilitator, visit: www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/volunteer



Welcome to Bridgemead

In October 2024, Bridgemead care home in Bath joined the Pilgrims' Friend Society family. Tyler Sewell-Nicholas discovers what makes Bridgemead such a special place to live

The history of Bridgemead traces back to a deep sense of compassion and a desire to meet a very real need of care for older people. It all began in February 1985 when Gladys, a widow in her eighties, faced an unexpected challenge. Despite a lifetime of active church involvement and volunteering, she struggled to find a Christian care home where she could live out her later years. Unable to find a local Christian facility with space, she was placed in a care home over 100 miles away in Tunbridge Wells.

This deeply moved her local GP, Dr Ray King, who saw Gladys's struggle as part of a much larger need. Many older people, like Gladys, longed for a place where they could receive physical care and spiritual support, surrounded by people who shared their faith. Driven by this vision, Dr King resolved to create a place where older adults could enjoy a fulfilling life in a Christian community.

Today, Bridgemead stands as a testament to that original vision – a place of care, community, and Christian fellowship for older adults. Located beside the tranquil River Avon in the historic city of Bath,



Bridgemead offers a warm and welcoming environment for up to 32 people.

The home itself is thoughtfully designed, combining modern comfort with a peaceful setting. 'Family members' (those who live with us) can enjoy spacious rooms, including en-suite options, ensuring privacy and comfort. The stunning riverside views, landscaped gardens, and nearby parks create a serene environment perfect for relaxation and reflection.

At Bridgemead, spiritual life and community is central to everything. The home maintains strong ties with local churches, offering regular opportunities for worship and prayer. Volunteers and visiting ministers lead weekly services, providing family members with moments of fellowship and connection to their faith.

"The weekly services and prayer times are so uplifting," says Gillian, 82, a long-time family member. "It's wonderful to be part of a community that nurtures my faith and helps me feel connected to God and to others."

Local churches, choirs, organisations and schools play a key role in bringing joy to the family members, especially during seasonal periods. "It's wonderful to see people from the community spending time with them," says Hilary who leads activities at the home. "It brings such joy and helps build relationships across generations. It's a blessing for everyone."

This focus on faith and community is matched by a rich programme of activities that nurtures the mind, body, and spirit. Family members can participate in everything from arts and crafts to quizzes, gardening and music sessions. These bring joy, stimulate creativity, and encourage connection.

The meals at Bridgemead are another highlight. Fresh, nutritious meals are prepared with care, tailored to people's individual needs and preferences.

"The meals here are wonderful," says Jean, 87. "It's not just about the food – it's about sharing time with friends and feeling part of an additional family."

Indeed, friendships are at the heart of daily life at the home. "I've made so many good friends here," says Gillian. "We look out for each other, share laughter, and support one another through everything. It feels like home in the truest sense."

“I've made so many good friends here.”
Gillian, 82



Our staff play an essential role in nurturing this environment. More than caregivers, they are companions and encouragers, dedicated to fostering an atmosphere of warmth, care, and love.

"Working here is a privilege," says Hilary. "It's about so much more than physical care. We can support people spiritually and emotionally. It's a very special place to be."

For many, Bridgemead is far more than just a care home – it's a place of peace and belonging.

"I feel so grateful to be here," says Jean. "It's truly a blessing."

As Bridgemead looks to the future, it remains committed to providing a home where family members can thrive, surrounded by love, faith, and a caring Christian community.



Please pray:

Thank God for the loving community at Bridgemead. Pray for the family members to feel God's peace, for the staff to be strengthened in their vital work, and for the partnerships with local churches and groups to continue bring joy.

Plus, see p.14 for how you can be praying for flood prevention work at Bridgemead.





Thanks, Mum!

With Mother's Day taking place on 30th March, we asked those living with us to share memories of their mothers – the things they learnt from them, the ways they shaped their lives

"My mother's maiden name was Goodman, and she used to read Psalm 37:23 with the emphasis on 'good': 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.' She was interested in all we did at school and at home, and came to our sports days, school plays, prizegivings, parents' evenings etc.

"She believed in old-fashioned discipline. One day, when my brother and I played truant from school and pleaded that the other children told us to do it, she quoted, 'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not' (Proverbs 1:10), enforcing her words with a liberal use of the cane! I thank the Lord for a praying (and strict) mother."

Margaret, 93, Evington Home, Leicester



"She was very good at acting, music and singing which I inherited. She gave me general advice in life. I think I take after my mum."

Pam, 94, Shottermill House, Haslemere

"She was an early riser and she was quiet when she got up so that she wouldn't disturb us. She worked as a teacher, so she would get up to prepare for the evening meal and ensure things got done, including my packed lunch. One thing my mother taught me was independence."

Martin, 86, Shottermill House, Haslemere

"My mother taught me to cook. She was brilliant at looking after us, we were nine children. I went to school to become a cook because Mum taught me to enjoy cooking. I enjoy cooking here [at Shottermill House], mucking about with the ingredients."

Edna, 94, Shottermill House, Haslemere

"My mother was a very kind, loving and generous mum – she would do anything for anyone. She would have given you her last penny if she saw you were in need, and I often saw her going without things for herself, to give to us children or to other families in need.

"In the tiny village where we grew up down in Cornwall she was well known for making the best pasties for miles around, and she always made extra, and plenty of saffron buns too, to give to families whose mums may have been poorly or in hospital. Sadly, she passed away in 2012 at the age of 90. Needless to say, I miss her so much."

Maureen, 78, Strathclyde House, Skelmorlie



"My mother's 'career' was the now sometimes looked down upon role of housewife. Some of her many skills were passed on to me. I learned more culinary skills from her than my siblings, probably because I was often hanging around the kitchen, waiting to be given the cake mixing bowl to scrape. I also showed an interest when she was darning socks, so eventually was given that task.

"Although I didn't have her musical ability, she did teach me to sing in tune, with the help of a 6d bribe, and I'm now able to hold a bass part in congregational singing and the Royd Court choir. But perhaps more important than any of these was taking my turn to pray when she was leading family worship."

Philip, 83, Royd Court, Mirfield

"My mother advised me as a child to be good and not do naughty things, to be kind to people. My mother gave me advice that I would be ok if anything happened to her, that someone would look after me."

Pam, 82, Milward House, Tunbridge Wells



Building with faith: An interview with Hugh Lambourne

Words: Tyler Sewell-Nicholas

Hugh Lambourne joined us recently as Director of Property Services. We find out a bit about his background, his role overseeing and maintaining our network of care homes and housing schemes, and plans for future developments in property at Pilgrims' Friend Society



Hugh with wife Sally and daughters Beth, 10, and Jessica, 8.

Hugh's career has been defined by a deep commitment to social housing and property management. Initially, he envisioned a career abroad, building homes for communities in need. "I wanted to make a practical difference," he explains. However, as his career evolved, Hugh realised the pressing need for high-quality, affordable housing in the UK where he has dedicated over 30 years of his professional life.

Before taking on his current role, Hugh worked in various commercial property sectors. It was in this context that he began to feel a growing desire for work that aligned more closely with his Christian values. "I was praying specifically about the difficulty of being in a very commercial organisation as a Christian," he says. "I wanted to work somewhere overtly Christian."

When the Director of Property Services position became available at Pilgrims' Friend Society, Hugh felt that God's timing was perfect. "It just seemed to use all the experience I'd gathered over the

years. Every aspect of what I'd done seemed to come together in this one role."

Overseeing property services

As Director of Property Services, Hugh oversees the development and maintenance of Pilgrims' Friend Society's care home and housing portfolio. His responsibilities range from managing existing properties to planning new developments to meet the needs of a growing ageing population. One core area is the Growth and Renewal Programme, which aims to modernise older homes and build new ones to provide high-quality care and accessibility for our 'family members' (those who live with us).

"Growth and renewal involves everything from taking on existing care homes currently run by small charities who find it a challenge to meet the demands of a now highly regulated sector to finding sites for new developments," Hugh explains. "It's about how we provide Christian care in modern, efficient, and safe ways."

This means that part of Hugh's role involves actively seeking out new sites for development and ensuring that they align with our organisation's values. This requires frequent travel to assess building sites. For example, he's currently overseeing a planning application for a new building at Homesdale in Wanstead, working with consultants, architects, and

project managers. Hugh is directly involved in managing reports, public consultations, and coordinating the entire project.

In addition to development work, Hugh oversees asset management, which involves maintaining and improving the existing properties. Each property requires ongoing care to ensure it remains safe, accessible, and conducive to the high standards of care that Pilgrims' Friend Society prides itself on. Hugh leads a team of four property services managers, who each manage multiple properties. "We just went through budgeting for next year, which is complex," he says. "We're lucky to have an experienced team."

Creating high-quality homes

Providing high-quality care and living spaces for older people is more than a job for Hugh. "As Christians, we're called to honour our elders and care for widows and orphans," he says. "Providing high-quality Christian care is a way of living out those values."

The work of providing great care is connected to the environment in which it takes place.



"Care in our homes is different," Hugh explains. "Even in older buildings, the love and person-centred care shine through. But there's a night-and-day difference when you compare older sites with something like Middlefields House. Our Chippenham care home was purpose-built, with wide corridors, spacious rooms, en-suite bathrooms, big windows, and beautiful gardens. It's light and airy, designed for the way we provide Christian care."

Faith-based leadership

Hugh's Christian faith plays a central role in his leadership style. Drawing inspiration from Jesus' example, he seeks to lead with humility and integrity. "In my early career, I focused on building my resumé. Now, I draw inspiration from Jesus as the ultimate example of leadership. His patience and humility guide me. It's about serving others, not seeking personal glory."

At Pilgrims' Friend Society, Hugh values the sense of purpose that comes with working for a Christian organisation. "My goal is to follow God's will for this organisation. It's not about personal ambition but about service – creating environments where people thrive."

Current and future projects

As 2025 gets underway, Hugh has lots to keep him busy. The planning application for Homesdale is in and there is need for flood prevention at Bridgmead in Bath, a home we took on in Autumn last year (see pp.8-9).

Then there's the next stage of the Growth and Renewal Programme to think about. However, building new care homes in the UK in 2025 comes with its own set of challenges. Economic pressures, competition from other providers, and the availability of suitable land all play a role in making the process difficult. "It's a challenging time to build new care homes," Hugh acknowledges. "But the opportunities are still there, and we are committed to providing high-quality homes that meet the needs of older people."

In his spare time, Hugh...

Enjoys family hikes and bike rides in the Welsh countryside and exploring the famous waterfalls of Wales.

A fun fact: Hugh earned his pilot's licence in New Zealand in his 20s and holds both New Zealand and UK pilot's licences and an instrument rating, a qualification that allows pilots to fly at night or above cloud.

Hugh's favourite hymn:

'Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us.'

Hugh says, "It captures the essence of life's challenges and God's guiding hand. The line 'Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us; for we have no help but Thee' speaks to our reliance on God in all situations. It's a hymn that reminds me to trust in His plan, even when the path ahead isn't clear."



"Everyone who hears my teaching and applies it to his life can be compared to a wise man who built his house on an unshakeable foundation."

Matthew 7:24

A favourite Bible verse



The Property Team



Three focus areas for prayer...

Flood prevention project at Bridgemead:

Please pray for the successful implementation of flood defences at Bridgemead, a project that is both costly and complex. Pray for wisdom in planning, provision of resources, and the safety of all involved.

New development projects:

Pray for guidance as we continue with the planning and construction of new care homes, including the upcoming project at Homesdale in Wanstead. Pray for smooth processes, wise decisions, and financial provision.

The Property Team: The team is growing and we have recently welcomed new members. There are four members of Hugh's team: Zena Hicks who is developing our asset strategy and use of data, Nicky Kerr who covers our homes and schemes in the North region, Simon Richardson who looks after our Central region and Stephen Stripp who covers the South and East region. Please pray for unity, strength, and wisdom for the entire team as they work to serve all those who live with us and help maintain high standards of care.



Introducing... Community Cafés

We'd love your prayerful support as we launch this new initiative across our homes



At Pilgrims' Friend Society, we're keen to be embedded in our local communities, sharing our resources and expertise where we can. This year, we're launching our Community Cafés to help reach out and support local people, particularly those who are living with dementia and their caregivers.

Nicole is our The Way We Care Lead at Framland in Wantage. Together with our Activities and Community Engagement (ACE) Facilitator Dave, she is planning the official launch of the Community Café early this year.

Nicole says, "There could be lots of people living in our local area who are really struggling. We'll be offering a safe space where they can come, have a cup of tea and a piece of cake and a chat. If people have questions around dementia, we'll be happy to help, but they are welcome just to come for the company."

The Community Café will take place once a month for around an hour and will also include a simple activity, such as a quiz or some physical exercises, to help break down barriers. 'Family members' (as we call those who live

with us) from Framland will also be welcome to join in. The Community Café will be held in the home's dining room, with tables and chairs to give a café-style feel.



Towards the end of last year, Framland held a trial run of the Community Café, inviting in a couple connected to the home through the parish church of St Peter's and St Paul's. "They seemed to have a good time," says Nicole. "The wife is caring for her husband and I think she just appreciated being able to talk to somebody who understands."

Our Operations Manager Friederike Hamilton is overseeing the initiative across our homes. She says, "The launch of our Community Cafés is a next step in helping us to serve the older people on our doorsteps. We're excited to see how God will use them and are grateful for your partnership in prayer."

As our Community Cafés take shape, please pray:

- That they would reach as many people who need support as possible
- For partnership with local churches in spreading the word to their congregations and beyond
- For wisdom for our teams as they plan



The power of connection

Words: Helen Nathan

Social connection is fundamental to our overall health and sense of well-being, whatever our age or cognitive function. To help measure social connection in care homes, Dr Andrew Sommerlad has been leading a study – the SONNET Study. We found out more

In his role as Consultant Old Age Psychiatrist with the Islington Memory Service, Dr Andrew Sommerlad works closely with older people living with dementia. Often, a move to a care home becomes necessary.

“Coming at a stage in life when a person is uniquely vulnerable, this transition needs to be managed well,” he says. “Care goes beyond the physical, encompassing a person’s mental and emotional needs, and social connection has a big part to play in how well they settle into a new environment.”

In addition to his clinical work, Dr Sommerlad is also an Associate Professor at UCL Division of Psychiatry, specialising in research into the

mental health of older people. In 2021 Dr Sommerlad was approached by Dr Jennifer Bethell, an epidemiologist and health services researcher working in Canada, who was interested in identifying a tool or questionnaire that could measure social connection in a care home setting, with the overall aim of improving the quality of care.

Together they planned and obtained funding for the ‘Social connection in long-term care home residents’ or SONNET Study. They began in 2022 by reviewing existing measures and concluded that none were suitable for use in a care home setting, particularly as they did not take into account the specific needs of those living with dementia.



Elements of social connection

As a first step towards devising a new tool they sought to identify the elements of social connection considered most important to those living in care homes. The team conducted interviews with 67 participants in Canada and the UK, including 18 care home residents (nine of whom had dementia), 32 relatives/friends and 17 staff members and clinicians.

Responses were then analysed with four common themes identified:

1) Becoming familiar with life in the home

Residents valued being connected to ‘normality’ or ‘normal life’ so that they did not feel institutionalised. They liked spending time in meaningful ways that provided opportunities for bonding and social interaction. They also valued the freedom of mobility.

“It makes them happier that we don’t wear uniforms, the night staff [at the care home] wear pyjamas.” – staff member

“I was friends with X not in a big way or anything, but she used to come to my room, oh, two or three times a week when she could. And we had a lot in common really because she was Irish.” – care home resident

2) Physical and virtual access to the outside world

Residents valued exposure to the outside world, with the home enabling them to maintain ties to family, friends and their community by facilitating outings. They also liked being supported to use technology and when their family and friends were involved in the life of the care home.

“Sometimes they take me for dinner, I love it..because then I’m in a normal ordinary



environment and that’s what I love.”
– care home resident

“She requires assistance now to use her phone. And because of the shortness of staff at the home... she feels like she’s a nuisance.” – relative

3) Getting to know residents to deepen relationships

Better understanding of residents allowed for closer and more trusting relationships and tailored care plans. Care was identified as an opportunity for social contact, with the knowledge of family and friends seen as a useful resource. Relationships fostered between residents was also important.

“We do as much as we can to find out about the person before they come in... and then the well-being team really act on pairing them up with somebody... and then they sit together and stuff like that. So that works really, really well. But you’ve got to know about the person.” – staff member

“This woman really enjoyed gardening her entire life and this gentleman really enjoys gardening and so if we invite them both to a gardening group or, you know, maybe perhaps that would kind of begin a friendship.” – staff member

4) Person-centred approaches to build social connection

It was important that communal spaces were used well, facilitated by active encouragement of social engagement within them (e.g. during activities or events). Outside spaces (gardens) could also be used to target interests and encourage social engagement. The importance of promoting a culture that prioritises an individual's psychosocial needs was noted.

"I can't walk [...] but somebody can take me out in the hallway. Some of the ladies will come over and say, 'how are you?'" – resident

"When there's kind of big stuff happening, Jubilee time, Queen's funeral... It was just like 'No, this is a really big deal we're all going to get together and take this in together.'" – staff member

"... where there's a culture around communicating compassionately with people... you can reassure someone who's hugely distressed, you can get to the bottom of their unmet needs and understand who they are as a person." – staff member



Devising a scale

The researchers then used these responses to formulate 12 questions that could be put to residents to assess their levels of social connection. For example, the first question reads: 'How often do you enjoy the company of other residents?' with options 'not in the past week' scoring 0, 'sometimes' scoring 1, 'often' scoring 2 and 'very often' scoring 3. A separate version of the questionnaire can be rated by a staff or family member if the care home resident is unable to answer for themselves due to communication or cognitive difficulties.

Scores are then added up to give scores on two components of the SONNET Scale. One assesses social engagement, meaning the degree to which they participate in activities and relationships, and a second assesses each individual's experiences of social connectedness, or how close they feel to others. The average score for the social engagement scale was 9.8 and the average score for the social connectedness scale was 7.6, meaning that scores above this may be higher than average.

This tool can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of care, including the impact of staff training, and of interventions such as arts-based therapy. It could also track changes in social connection for residents across the time that they live in the care home.

"Our hope is that this scale will help researchers demonstrate the value of different approaches, informing best practice," says Dr Sommerlad. For example, Dr Sommerlad is planning work with colleagues at UCL who are interested in assessing the impact of group activities in care homes, and why these benefit some residents more than others, informing how they could be delivered most effectively.

The scale could also be used by care settings looking to gain an understanding of the level of social connection experienced by residents, with a view to identifying areas for development.

For more information on the SONNET Study and to access the SONNET Scale visit: www.sonnetstudy.com



Links with schools

The Way We Care

As part of The Way We Care, our bespoke approach to care at Pilgrims' Friend Society, we value the power of social connection. Here are some of the ways connections happen across our homes...



Activities inside



Links with churches



Visits out



Events



Activities outside



To find out more about The Way We Care, visit: www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/thewaywecare

Windows in the Psalms



Mary, 89, who lives at Royd Court in Mirfield, has created a beautiful book, *Windows in the Psalms*, featuring paintings she made while her husband was living with Alzheimer's Disease. Tyler Sewell-Nicholas finds out more

In the summer of 2015, Mary arrived at Royd Court on a bright, sunny day. She describes the light that day as "very bright," almost a metaphor for the new chapter unfolding in her life. With macular degeneration affecting her sight and after years of caregiving for her beloved husband, Cecil, Mary sought rest and solace in our housing scheme at Mirfield. Little did she know that unpacking her long-forgotten art folder would open the door to a remarkable creative journey.

Mary's story is one of resilience and love. She met her husband, Cecil, through their shared calling with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, formerly the China Inland Mission. Mary, from Yorkshire, and Cecil, from Londonderry, crossed paths in Malaysia, where Mary taught missionary children in the cool mountains of North Malaya. Cecil, an Anglican vicar at a Chinese church in Singapore, came to the mountains for a brief respite. What began as a fleeting encounter grew into a deep connection. In 1971, Mary agreed to marry him, and their life of faith and service began in earnest.

Together, they raised two children while serving in Singapore and later in the UK, where Cecil became a lecturer at the London Bible College. His passion for working with young people was evident; wherever they went, Cecil gathered

groups of students to share not only theological insights but also laughter, games, and camaraderie. Life seemed full and joyful until the shadows of Alzheimer's began to creep into their world.

The birth of Mary's art

Cecil's diagnosis in 1996 marked the beginning of a long, exhausting journey for the couple. Over ten years, his illness gradually stole his independence, memory, and peace. In the later stages, Cecil became increasingly agitated and aggressive, eventually needing to move into care. For Mary, the demands of caregiving had taken their toll, leaving her physically and emotionally drained.

During this difficult time, Mary turned to art – a gift she hadn't touched since her school days. "I was absolutely worn out," she recalls. "I didn't know what to do. And so, I began to paint." What started as a tentative exploration became a profound source of comfort and strength. Mary describes how the Lord inspired her with clear images and verses from the Psalms (and one or two Proverbs), which she translated into vibrant paintings. "It was a kind of prayer, a conversation – not a very holy prayer, just a normal chat," she says, her faith infusing every brushstroke.

One of her most cherished pieces is inspired by Proverbs 18:10: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." The painting features a towering fortress rising above a stormy sea, vividly portraying the refuge she found in her faith during life's most turbulent moments. For Mary, creating these works was not just art but a form of "art therapy," helping her process grief and connect with God.

From paintings to pages

When Mary moved to Royd Court, a friend helping her unpack discovered her art folder and was astonished. "This is a gift the Lord has given you," her friend exclaimed. "You can't keep it shut away. You've got to share it." And so, the idea to create a book full of her paintings was born.

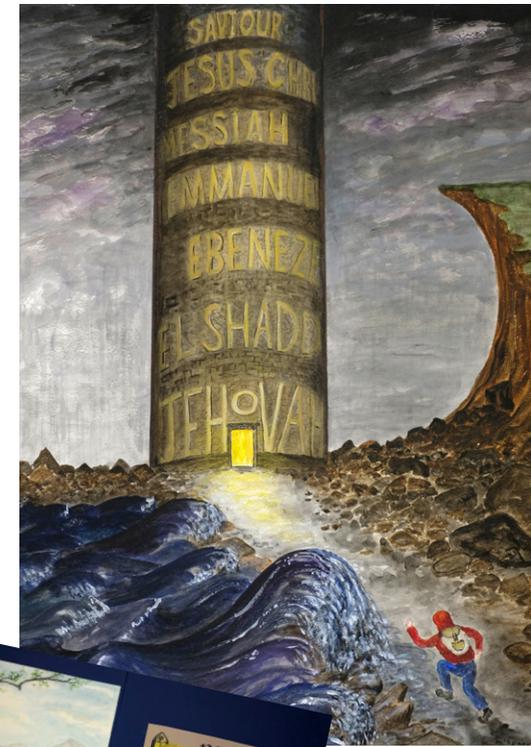
At first, Mary was reluctant. "I never thought of making a book," she says. But with encouragement and practical help from friends, her paintings and the accompanying verses were compiled into a beautiful collection. Over the years, more than 2,000 copies of the book have been shared. Mary doesn't sell the book for profit; instead, she gives it away or allows others to distribute it for a small charge to cover printing costs.

A message of hope

Mary hopes the book helps others feel the Lord's presence as their refuge and strength, just as He was for her during difficult times.

She reflects on how painting became a form of healing during her husband's illness and after his passing. "Whilst I painted, I could talk to Him," she says. "It gave me a peace of mind and heart."

Though her hands are no longer busy with paintbrushes, Mary's spirit remains vibrant, her faith unshaken. As she approaches her 90th birthday, her story reminds us that even in the face of loss and hardship, it's never too late to rediscover old gifts, create something meaningful, and inspire others along the way.



More of Mary's paintings can be seen on our website

Here to stay

WORDS: Tyler Sewell-Nicholas

Lots of staff have been with Pilgrims' Friend Society for many years. We spoke to long-serving team members John, Barbara and Vicky about what it is that's made them stay



John, 42

Kitchen Assistant & Hummingbird, Emmaus House, Harrogate

John joined us 25 years ago after completing his GCSEs. "My dad told me I needed to get a job, so I approached the manager at Emmaus House in Harrogate, who also happened to go to my church," he recalls. John already knew the home well – his grandmother had lived as a 'family member' (those who live with us) before moving to a nursing home. Starting with just a few hours a week in the late 1990s, John's role gradually evolved. Today, he serves as a kitchen assistant in the mornings and a Hummingbird (providing one-on-one support to family members with dementia) in the afternoons. "I particularly enjoy making cakes and puddings for family members," he says.

Over the years, John has witnessed significant changes at Emmaus House, including the introduction of more comprehensive dementia care training. "The insights into dementia have really helped me understand different behaviours and offer better support," he explains.



What's kept John at Pilgrims' Friend Society for so long? For him, it's the relationships. "Spending time with family members, helping them feel better, and seeing them smile is the best part of the job. I'll never forget one family member, Brenda, who once thanked me for being her friend. That moment really touched me."

John also treasures the Christian ethos of the organisation. "It's rare to find a workplace where you can openly pray with people and hold devotions. It's such a privilege to be able to help others in this way."

Humour plays an important role in John's work, too. "There was one lady who lived with us who was partially sighted. She mistook me for someone else and said I looked bigger than last time. We had a good laugh about it!"

Barbara, 60

Assistant Director of Operations, based from home in Caernarfon, North Wales but often on the road visiting our homes

Barbara joined us just over 25 years ago when she took on the role of Care Home Manager at Framland in Wantage. Reflecting on her early years, Barbara says, "I got a good grounding in how Pilgrims' Friend Society works."

By 2016, Barbara had advanced to her current position as Assistant Director of Operations for care and clinical. Her responsibilities include overseeing care

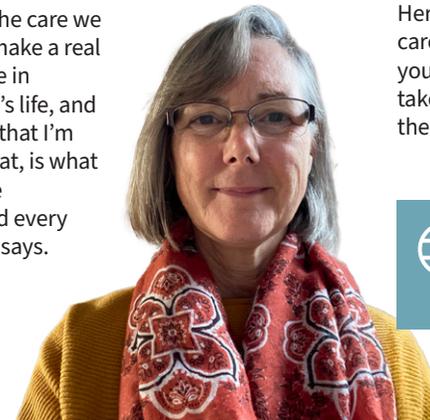
home operations, focusing on quality and safety, and mentoring staff.

Barbara's passion for caring for older people was instilled in her during childhood. Her parents were active supporters of the organisation, raising money for what was then known as Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society.

For Barbara, the opportunity to combine her professional expertise with her faith is deeply fulfilling. "Everything we do is within God's plan," she explains. "We always start our meetings with a thought and a prayer. It's wonderful to surround our decision-making this way."

One of her proudest achievements has been overseeing the transition from paper-based care plans and medication charts to electronic systems. "It was a big shift, but it has made our work much more efficient," she says. She's also played a key role in enhancing staff training, particularly in areas like manual handling.

"Seeing the care we provide make a real difference in someone's life, and knowing that I'm part of that, is what keeps me motivated every day," she says.



Vicky, 59

Senior Care Lead, Koinonia Christian Care Home, Worthing

Vicky's journey with Pilgrims' Friend Society started 16 years ago when she joined as a carer. After two years, she became a senior care lead.

"What drew me to stay at Koinonia was the organisation's values," Vicky explains. "As a Christian, their ethos really resonated with me."

Vicky takes pride in ensuring every family member receives excellent care, especially during challenging moments. "Our focus is always on the quality of care we deliver; my personal motto is 'caring with care,'" she says. While she makes an effort to treat those that live in the home equally, some relationships hold a special place in her heart. One such bond was with a lady named Evelyn P, who has since passed away. "I cherished the connection we shared," Vicky reflects.

Her advice to anyone considering a role in care is straightforward and heartfelt. "Give it your all. Be patient and compassionate, and take the time to do things properly. Following the right procedures is so important."



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A church by the sea

Words: Helen Nathan

At Strathclyde House, our housing scheme in Skelmorlie, plans are taking shape for a church plant in the Home Kitchen café, with our Scheme Manager Tina McKeown and husband Ryan taking on roles as on-site pastors



The café at Strathclyde House already has lots going for it – wide-angle views across the shifting waters of the Clyde (occasional seal included, even dolphins if you're lucky), an expansive menu featuring everything from a full Scottish breakfast to a cheesecake of the day, and friendly staff who are happy to chat.

In 2025, God-willing, there will be a significant new development. Plans are in motion for a church plant at the café to help serve local Christians, including those living at Strathclyde House, and reach the wider community with the gospel.

Previously leased to another owner, the café space became available last summer. Our Scheme Manager Tina and her husband Ryan are part of Home Church Scotland in Kirkintilloch, about an hour's drive away. They knew the leadership were looking to set up a Christian café for outreach and mentioned the space to their pastor, Dave Brackenridge.

"I was immediately interested," says Dave. "We don't want to be a church that stands still

Lots of churches in the area are closing and we wanted to do something that would stem the flow. When I heard about the café space I felt it could be a great location not just for Christian outreach but also a church plant."

After prayerful consideration, Home Church took on the running of the café in August 2024, renaming it Home Kitchen, with a view to eventually holding a weekly service on a Sunday.

"Our hope is that it's going to be really beneficial both for the local community and also to our residents at Strathclyde House," says Tina. "With a church on their doorstep, they'll be able to get there very easily."

Indeed, news of the church plant has been warmly received by residents. Margaret, 95, says, "I'm not able to go out to church anymore so having the church come to me is wonderful." The church's non-denominational stance and the informal café setting also appeal. Maureen, 78, says, "I'm delighted that



it's happening and everyone can come together in a neutral venue."

For Ryan, the launch of the Home Kitchen has marked a new chapter too. Leaving behind his career as a landscape gardener, he has become the café's manager. "For a long time, I've felt a call in my heart to be more involved with the spread of the gospel," he says. "If it was just about running a café and making profits I wouldn't have been interested, but there is the potential for this to be so much more. A successful café means there is somewhere to share Jesus. The motivation is completely different."

Many of the regular customers are older people and Ryan has found opportunities to talk about the café's wider purpose. "People have heard the café is under new ownership and have been asking about it," he says.

He's been surprised by how many have a Christian faith of some kind. "They may not have been to church for years, and they may even have had a bad experience, but many people have a belief and are receptive to a chat. It brings home to me the need for us to be welcoming and encouraging, creating a safe space where people can explore faith."

As the months have gone by, Ryan and Tina have felt a call to become more deeply involved. "We've been praying about how God could use us. It's become clearer that we're not just meant to attend church services," says Ryan.

Under the oversight of Dave Brackenridge, Ryan and Tina will become on-site pastors, a role which will include preaching and leading services and Bible studies as well as looking after people pastorally.

To help them prepare, plans are in place for them to start a preaching course. "I do get nervous speaking in front of people," says Ryan, "But God's hand in this is so clear."

A recent encouragement has been the Christmas carol service, with members from Home Church, residents from Strathclyde House and people from local churches and the local community all coming along. Early 2025 has also seen the launch of an Alpha Course, the start of a weekly Bible study and the live streaming of services from Home Church in Kirkintilloch.

All being well, the first Sunday service will take place in the café on Easter Sunday. We're excited to see what the next months will bring and look forward to updating you with developments. Please do be praying.



Offline *connection*

Alex Drew from our partner charity Faith in Later Life (FiLL) explores how to reach older people who aren't online

In today's fast-paced digital world, staying connected has become instant, cheap, and easy – at least for those who are online. However, millions of older people remain excluded from these benefits. Despite a growing number of seniors embracing technology, Age UK's 2023 analysis showed us that over half of those aged 65 and over either struggle to use the internet safely and successfully or are entirely offline.

The statistics are striking. Among the 5.8 million people found unable to complete the most fundamental online tasks, 69% were over 75, and 30% were between 65 and 74. These numbers are even more significant when we consider that those most likely to be offline are often the most vulnerable – those living in rural areas, or from lower-income households.

The impact of being offline

For those who remain offline, the consequences are profound. Essential services including medical appointments and prescription services, utilities, and local authority services increasingly require internet access, leaving those without the means or skills to navigate them at a disadvantage.

My neighbour Jean, 89, experienced this firsthand, and it was a real eye-opener to me. When her landline stopped working, she discovered that logging the issue with her telephone provider required setting up an online account and completing two-step verification using a mobile phone. Jean had neither a mobile phone nor Wi-Fi!

While we resolved the issue together using my smartphone and internet, the experience was a reminder of how the rush by some to go fully digital is leaving many older people behind.

Church life is affected too. Many churches and Christian groups now rely on emails, websites, and social media to let people know what's happening. While these tools are invaluable, they risk leaving offline members in the dark unless intentional steps are taken to bridge the gap.

How Christians and churches can help

At Faith in Later Life, we asked our Church Champions what they do to connect with older members and friends who aren't online. Their insights show creative and compassionate approaches to staying in touch outside of in-person gatherings:

- **Printed resources:** Church leaders and volunteers are printing emails, event invitations, prayer guides, and even sermon scripts. Large-print versions are being created for those with visual impairments.
- **Landline communication:** Prayer chains, buddy systems, pastoral call rotas, and the DailyHOPE phone line (0800 804 8044) remain invaluable. Landlines provide a lifeline for sharing news, prayer needs, and encouragement.
- **Community outreach:** Local magazines and newspapers are being used to share stories about what's happening in the life of the church community, and to advertise events and services, reaching well beyond the congregation.
- **Face-to-face visits:** Delivering printed materials, offering pastoral visits, and simply spending time with older members is helping to foster meaningful connections.

Encouraging digital inclusion

While bridging the gap offline is important, helping older people embrace technology can open up new possibilities for connection and independence. One of the delightful things I noticed during the pandemic was that older friends who had not previously kept up to date with the latest communication technology were being helped by family members and church friends to use platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom to stay connected and even make video calls. This was a great example to me that for some

people it's not too late to get online.

Individuals and churches can play an important role in empowering older members to gain digital skills:

- **Partner with initiatives:** Age UK's Digital Champion Programme recruits volunteers to help older people improve their digital skills. The programme also provides loan technology to those without access.
- **Leverage local resources:** Check with your local council or library for digital inclusion schemes.
- **Host tech-tea afternoons:** Churches could also host "tech-tea" afternoons where volunteers assist seniors in learning new skills over a cup of tea.
- **Facilitate intergenerational learning:** For some churches it may be possible for the Youth Ministry and the Seniors Ministry to come together to share skills and encouragement.
- **Offer personalised support:** Offering one-on-one help from patient volunteers can make all the difference for someone hesitant to engage with technology.

By combining offline care with efforts to include older people in the digital world, we can help them to manage their day-to-day life better, and to stay connected with church and family life, ensuring that nobody is left behind.



Resources

Here are three resources suitable for use by or with older people and those living with dementia...

Bible Reflections for Older People, £5.55

Published every four months by BRF, these reflections are written by older people for older people. They are in large font, and each reflection aims to apply the wisdom of the Bible to people's everyday circumstances. Each issue contains 40 reflections and prayer suggestions to use and revisit as often as is needed. Centre pages feature inspiring stories, poems and articles of interest.

The latest edition, January to April 2025, includes the following series of reflections:

Jesus Stood Up by Ro Willoughby

Exploring the times when Jesus stood up and why, for example in a boat, to heal, to read etc.

Jeremiah's Journal by Martyn Payne

Charting the emotional turmoil of the prophet as he wrestles with the words God gave Him.

In hope and trust by Lin Ball

Ranging across the Bible, Lin draws out inspiration for times of transition.

Fun and games by Derek Morgan

Linking popular childhood games – snakes and ladders, marbles – to Bible truths.

Available to buy from

www.brfonline.org.uk/collections/bible-reflections-for-older-people

From Pilgrims' Friend Society.....

Worshipping with Dementia, £8.50 by Louise Morse

This practical book explains how Christians can care spiritually for people who may not be able to show their response. For people with dementia, simplicity is paramount. These simple daily devotions are designed for use by caregivers, those living with dementia, families, church groups, and medical professionals.

Each devotion includes a Bible verse, a short meditation, a prayer and a hymn. Themes covered include 'A contented mind', 'Feeling all at sea', 'Making our steps firm' and 'Safe in God's hand'.

Brain and Soul Boosting, £20

Devised by Louise Morse and Janet Jacob, this small-group resource is designed to deliver cognitive and spiritual stimulation for older people, including those with dementia.

Themes include everything from celebrations to gardens, birds and holidays. Each session follows a carefully planned sequence that works well, leading participants into discussions and ending with a story from the Bible that illustrates the theme.



For the full range of our resources covering everything from living with dementia to growing older together, visit:

www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/resources

Alternatively, ☎ 0300 303 1403



My Story: HAYDN

Words: Helen Nathan

Haydn lives at Evington Home in Leicester. Hailing from the mining village of Glyncoerwg in South Wales, he became a headteacher and then a minister in the Church of England. He's a man with many a tale to tell



Haydn and his first wife Dorothy

Part of the skill of a rugby player is to keep your eye on the ball while adapting to the opportunities that come your way. Over his 92 years, Haydn has had cause to draw on these qualities on many occasions, both on and off the rugby pitch.

There's his name, for a start. He began life as 'Hadyn', named after his father's best friend. At the time, his parents couldn't afford an official birth certificate but the 11 Plus made one necessary. When the certificate came back, there was a mistake – the 'd' and the 'y' had been switched making him Haydn. Amending it could have been complicated, so Haydn he became.

Throughout his schooling, this flexibility and a refusal to give up in the face of setbacks saw him through. "I actually did the 11 Plus twice," he recalls, "I didn't get enough O-levels the first time to stay on for sixth form so I had another go. Then, when I was doing my

A-Levels, I found out that Glamorgan were giving grants to students with three A-Levels but I had only two, so I had to stay on an extra year. I was in school until I was 19."

Rugby was his great love and he was part of the school team, happy to slot in where needed. "I played every position except hooker and wing. One because I couldn't bend enough, the other because I wasn't fast enough."

A chance opening led to him being appointed captain – the intended captain, a prodigious talent,



Haydn served on three Labour councils



Captain of the rugby team - front row, centre



At teacher training college - 2nd row 2nd from left

had got on the PE teacher's wrong side by opting for a local soccer trial instead of rugby and was kicked off the team. Thanks to Haydn's intervention, he was later reinstated. "I told the teacher we'd lose the next match without him and so he changed his mind."

One of four children born to dad Clifford, a miner, and mum Nora, Haydn was the first in his family to go to university, gaining a place at Aberystwyth, then part of the University of Wales. However, even then it wasn't plain sailing.

"I was doing Geography but I failed the course about the weather - I couldn't understand the chemistry. For the second year, I changed to History and discovered I had to answer questions in French and Latin and I had none. I switched to Economics but then the grant ran out. I had enough courses to gain a degree, but it was a pass rather than with honours."

Headmaster at Viscount Beaumont's - front row, centre



Was it disheartening to come up against so many obstacles?

"To be honest, I was more interested in the sports," says Haydn. "I'd play rugby at the weekend and as it ended I'd think 'I've got to wait a whole week before I can have another game'."

After university, Haydn began a PGCE and was placed in a secondary modern school. One day, he caught a boy smoking and reported him to the headmaster. "I was present for the boy's punishment and actually found the boy's answers quite amusing," Haydn recalls. "He said that I was 'mistaken' and that he'd been 'in the motions of lighting up' rather smoking itself."

The headmaster did not see the funny side and gave the boy double the number of strokes with the cane. "He really laid in to him and I didn't like that at all. I asked for a transfer and when I didn't get one I resigned."

Changing his course once again, Haydn took a role in a primary school and there he found his calling. "I loved teaching kids who wanted to learn," he says.

He knew his first wife, Dorothy, from childhood and they married on 11th April 1955, settling in the Coalville area of

Leicester. Dorothy was also a teacher and they had two sons, Stephen and Mark.

Haydn eventually became the headmaster at Viscount Beaumont's primary school. It was a small school of only 37 and he made a point of hearing every pupil read aloud to him each day. Mathematics teaching was also rigorous. "When they went on to secondary school, my students were always in the top set because they knew their times tables," says Haydn.

Haydn threw himself into his work and also served on three local councils as a Labour councillor. The death of his father when he was 39 triggered what Haydn believes would now be called a breakdown, forcing him to take three months off school. At that time, he called himself an atheist.

One day, he went out for a walk and passed the local church. Feeling tired, he tried the door and went in. It was then that he heard a voice saying, "O Lord of the Harvest, send labourers into the field. Send some to reap and some to sow and some to clear the ground and plough, and if You will, send me."

He went home and told Dorothy and she said, "About time."

"She reckoned I'd always believed in God and I'd been pushing it away and that might have contributed to the breakdown," says Haydn.

Haydn retired from teaching early and enrolled on a ministry training course. However, although he got through the course his calling wasn't accepted by the church straight away. Instead, in 1995, the bishop ordained him as a deacon. It was only when the new bishop came in 1998 that he was ordained as a priest.

Haydn served first as a curate at St Mary's Church in Anstey before transferring to Coalville to serve as the incumbent's colleague at St David's, Broomleys. After that, he took services in churches across the deanery of



North West Leicestershire before retiring at the age of 88.

Sadly, Dorothy died in June 2006. Haydn then met Jill who had lost her husband at a similar time. Haydn and Jill married in January 2008.

Ill-health led Haydn to move into the care home in 2023. "It was a hard decision but I knew Jill wouldn't cope caring for me. She visits often, but it's harder for her as she's on her own at home. At least I'm around people."

During this change in circumstances, Haydn's ability to adapt has stood him in good stead once again. That and his characteristic good humour. He has nothing but praise for the staff team who look after him and enjoys taking part in the activities. "Barbara [our ACE Facilitator at Evington Home] gets us doing some fantastic things."

He shows me a paper cup pig made with a student visiting from a nearby school and a cardboard sailing boat that he made and then raced across the floor. Ever the sportsman, Haydn had worked out the best technique for winding in his string.

"It looked like I'd be the clear winner," he says, "But then the string got in a muddle and I was pipped at the post. Still, that gave everybody a good laugh. You can't win them all!"



Haydn and second wife Jill

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...CONTINUED



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Bridgemead, BATH

0300 131 9115

bridgemead@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Carey Gardens, KIRBY MUXLOE

0300 303 8455

carey.gardens@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Dorothea Court, BEDFORD

0300 303 1490

dorothea@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Emmaus House, HARROGATE

0300 303 8450

emmaushouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Emmaus House, WHITEHAVEN

0300 303 1440

emmauscumbria@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Evington Home, LEICESTER

0300 303 1455

evington@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Finborough Court, GREAT FINBOROUGH

0300 303 1450

finboroughcourt@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

(care home) or housingmanager.finborough@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk (housing)



Framland, WANTAGE

0300 303 1470

wantage@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Homesdale, Wanstead, LONDON

0300 303 8485

homesdale@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Koinonia Christian Care Home, WORTHING

0300 303 8480

koinonia@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Luff House, WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

0300 303 1495

luffhouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Middlefields House, CHIPPENHAM

0300 303 8470

middlefieldshouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Milward House, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

0300 303 1460

milward@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Pilgrim Gardens, LEICESTER

0300 303 8455

andy.harrison@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Royd Court, MIRFIELD

0300 303 1480

roydcourt@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Shottermill House, HASLEMERE

0300 303 1475

shottermill@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



Strathclyde House, SKELMORLIE

0300 303 8465

strathclyde@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk