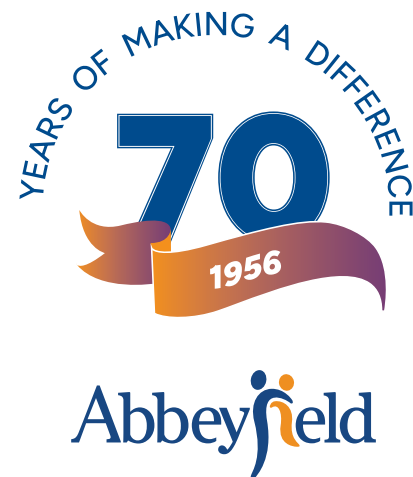


Summer 2026

Abbeyfield Voice



Who's been keeping cool in the sun?



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New expansion at Pilcher’s Field opened by MP in double anniversary celebration



A set of five new apartments at Pilcher's Field in Yelverton, Devon, operated by the Abbeyfield Buckland Monachorum Society (ABMS), was officially opened by Rebecca Smith MP on 26th June, with West Devon Borough Council leader, Mandy Ewings also in attendance. The event marked the end of a seven-year project to help meet local demand for affordable housing for older people in the area.



The new-build development, which extends ABMS’ services and includes communal rooms and extra parking spaces in addition to the five self-contained flats, was made possible due to a significant grant provided

by Homes England.

Abbeyfield Living Society’s (ALS) Head of Growth & Development, Abdul A. Ravat, also present at the event, was key to securing these funds. He said, “We worked proactively to secure grant funding from Homes England, through ALS’ status as an Investment Partner, and provided ongoing expert advice on how to maximise this opportunity for growth and achieve the best outcomes for the local population during the construction phase.”

The opening of the new building was very timely, given the significance of this year. Not only is it 70 years since Abbeyfield was founded, but it is also the 50th anniversary of ABMS, which was created in 1976 by a group of local volunteers led by the vicar of St Andrew’s Church, Rev. Peter Stephens.

Following the establishment and success of the original home in Crapstone, a generous donation of land from local resident Rosemary Pilcher provided the space for a purpose-built development which opened in the 1990s, Pilcher’s Field. The site was significantly redeveloped between 2012 and 2015 to meet the needs of residents and



staff, paving the way for further development plans to be drawn up in 2019. An energy-efficient design has also enabled ABMS to obtain an EPC rating of A for the extension.

Resident June Warren said, “Every aspect just makes sense. What’s not to like!

“I absolutely love it here, and like that a little added support is there when needed. I have met a wonderful group of people that I can do lots of things with and the staff are fantastic.”

Super Sarah goes the distance



Sarah Hutchinson, a Regional Operations Manager at Abbeyfield Living Society (ALS), took on The Wall on 13-14 June, running the entire length of Hadrian's Wall from Carlisle to Newcastle.

The challenge covered 70 miles – one for every year of Abbeyfield’s history – and it was this milestone that inspired her to take on one of the toughest challenges of her life.

She said, "Abbeyfield began with one simple but powerful belief: that older people deserve companionship, dignity and a place to truly call home. Seventy years later, I see every day the difference our houses and care homes make to people's lives. Our residents become part of a family, not just a service.

“Taking on 70 miles felt like a fitting way to mark Abbeyfield’s 70th anniversary. It was a challenging experience, but it also gave me the opportunity to reflect on the remarkable impact Abbeyfield has had on so many lives and the dedication of the colleagues and volunteers who make that possible every day.”



Sarah, who spent months training through rain, wind and freezing temperatures, originally set herself a fundraising target of £500. However, after raising much more well before race day, she raised the bar to £1,956 – a tribute to Abbeyfield's founding year.

Sarah completed the challenge in an impressive 21 hours. Along the way, she was cheered on by colleagues, residents and supporters. After staying at Loveday House in Wigton the night before the event began, she passed Riverhill in Corbridge en route to the finish line, stocking up on the free water, snacks and fruit that the residents had put out for the runners. After crossing the finish line, celebrations awaited her at Hope Bank View in Sunderland.

Sarah said: “I couldn't have completed this challenge without this support along the route. Knowing that residents and staff were cheering me on kept me going when things got tough.”

Sarah has raised over £2,000 to date, and she hopes to raise even more to support Abbeyfield's work with older people across the country.



Sorce and Alertacall volunteers transform gardens

To mark our 70th anniversary year, we invited our corporate partners to support local services across the country through volunteering and community projects.

Teams of volunteers from Sorce and Alertacall helped transform the gardens at Abbeyfield Winnersh dementia care home, and sheltered housing schemes Abbeyfield House in Barnoldswick and Abbeyfield House in Stockport, preparing the outdoor spaces for residents to enjoy throughout the summer.



Sorce, a Reading-based technology company which has provided Abbeyfield’s intranet since 2020, was keen to get involved, and chose to support Abbeyfield

Winnersh in nearby Wokingham. Alertacall has worked with Abbeyfield House since last year, providing Housing Proactive® touchscreens which offer enhanced two-way digital engagement and enable residents to contact staff, report repairs and receive news and updates.

The teams spent a day at each location, tackling a range of gardening tasks, including mowing lawns, weeding, pruning, planting, assembling garden furniture and jet-washing patios. Sorce volunteers even created a charming fairy garden at the Winnersh home.

The volunteers’ efforts have helped revitalise the outdoor spaces ahead of a busy programme of summer activities and events. The residents were delighted with the results and have enjoyed spending more time relaxing, walking and socialising in the gardens over the summer.

Louise Huguenot-Bhatti, Programme Manager at Sorce, said, “We had a fantastic day helping at Abbeyfield Winnersh. The staff made us feel incredibly welcome and it was especially lovely to meet some of the residents and hear how much they enjoy spending time in the garden. We’d be delighted to come back in the future,

continue the work and build on those relationships.”

Phil Chatterton, Head of Customer Success at Alertacall, said: “We wanted to support



Abbeyfield's 70th anniversary celebrations in a way that would make a lasting difference for residents. Gardening was a fantastic opportunity to create an outdoor space they can enjoy throughout the year, while giving our team the chance to spend time with residents and support the local community.”



Community mosaic unveiled at Sandwood

The Deputy Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, Amanda Farr DL, representing His Majesty King Charles, unveiled a striking community mosaic at Sandwood Care Home in Sherwood on 5th June.



The colourful artwork, funded by the Nottingham Freemasons, was the culmination of months of creativity and collaboration between residents, staff, families and members of the local community, and was featured on the

Sherwood Art Week Mosaic Trail.

Inspired by themes chosen by the home's residents, the mosaic reflects nature, inclusion, community and – fittingly – the importance of a good cup of tea, alongside Abbeyfield's 70th anniversary.

The final design was created in collaboration with local artist Anna Dixon. She led a series of workshops where residents, families and local volunteers pieced together hundreds of tiles, creating valuable opportunities for loved ones to spend meaningful time together.

Tina, whose father lives at Sandwood, said, "It was such a lovely afternoon and a wonderful way to spend quality time together."

Resident Michael added that taking part was "better than I thought it would be," and that seeing his own ideas reflected in the final design gave him "a feeling of belonging."

Activities Coordinator Mel Spouge, who led the project, said, "The finished mosaic is a wonderful representation of the friendships, creativity and sense of belonging that make Sandwood such a special place."



Adding a deeply personal touch, the mosaic incorporates the handprints of the residents, symbolising the collective effort behind the artwork and the close-knit, family atmosphere that defines life at Sandwood.

The artwork now sits in Sandwood's garden, where it can be enjoyed by residents, staff and visitors for years to come.



Abbeyfield's 70th anniversary – a year of celebration



Abbeyfield houses and homes around the country have been celebrating our milestone 70th year with special events involving our residents, staff, volunteers, families, special guests and friends in the local community. Here are just a few highlights, and you can see more on our social media feeds and at abbeyfieldengland.com/news



Abbeyfield House in Alnwick took their residents on a trip back in time with a presentation about the 1950s when Abbeyfield was founded, exploring the food, music, culture and films popular at the time.



Abbeyfield House in Barnard Castle held a garden party, welcoming family and friends for a delicious cream tea. They also held a raffle, raising an incredible £200 that will be put towards some exciting outings for the residents.



The great weather at The Octagon in Basildon's garden party provided the perfect backdrop for sangria, snacks and live entertainment, with plenty of dancing. The community joined them for a wonderful day celebrating the Abbeyfield legacy.



Prosecco was served at the garden party at Abbeyfield House in Bishop's Castle. Residents enjoyed the local musicians' performance and the exquisite scones, while one resident ran a popular stall selling her own home-grown plants.



Abbeyfield House in Bramhall enjoyed a spot of line dancing, traditional games and delicious food at their Country & Western-themed 70th anniversary party, complete with cake and cowboy hats.



Cambridge residents at Girton Green were treated to a performance by Assistant Manager, Meera, and her friends from the Natyanjali School of Dance, before burying a time capsule in the garden to be dug up in another 70 years' time.



Riverhill in Corbridge welcomed over 250 guests as part of the charity fundraiser Corbridge Open Gardens event. Younger visitors enjoyed a treasure hunt to find Abbey the bear (see page 9), while the residents were keen to shout about the benefits of living at the house.



Phil Mead House in Coventry brought residents together over tea and cake in the garden to celebrate Abbeyfield's 70th anniversary. Plenty of words of wisdom were shared and some recounted what it was like growing up in Coventry during the Second World War.



Housekeeper Karen Knight challenged Clifton House in Cowes' local MP to a round of 70 hula hoops. Estelle Baker, a resident's daughter, also brought along a selection of 1950s games, literature and clothes to spark a reminiscence session.



Edinburgh Fringe veteran Tom McSharry left residents at **The Old Vicarage, Crosby** rolling in the aisles after a hilarious stand-up comedy set, with homemade sandwiches and cakes rounding off their 70th anniversary celebrations.



The Mayor of Gosport opened **Tamar House, Gosport's** garden fête. As well as enjoying the traditional attractions, residents and guests were given expert tutoring in a range of 1950s dances by Frankie's Dance 'n' Dine, set to some familiar 1950s tunes.



The garden tea party at **Westall House in Horsted Keynes** showcased the talents of the BHOS choir, who performed a selection of musical theatre favourites. Residents and guests also enjoyed glasses of Pimm's and a variety of garden games.



Over 30 guests visited **Holloway House in Quorn** to spend time with the residents and learn more about life at the house at their open day. As always, staff were on hand to offer a range of tasty homecooked food and freshly baked treats.



Sandwood in Nottingham was visited by Vicky McClure's Our Dementia Choir, who had residents singing along to classic pop, rock and musical theatre numbers. Following their performance, the choir stayed for a chat and ice creams.



Residents at **Cresta House in Saltash** were joined by the Mayor for their celebratory tea party, who is also a trustee of the Abbeyfield Saltash Society. The society's Chair led the local church choir in a special performance and gave a talk on the organisations' history.



Hampton House in Solihull held a whole fundraising week for the residents' fund, joined by suppliers Britton Price, who ran a coffee morning, and local church volunteers for a knit and natter group. Resident Richard Bunce also walked 70 laps of the garden for Stride by Stride (see page 10).



Northfield Court in Taunton welcomed the Deputy Mayor to their celebrations. The wonderful two-tier cake, made by a local college student studying catering, rounded off a fabulous buffet enjoyed by residents, staff, volunteers and trustees.



Speedwell Court in Southampton's garden party welcomed the local MP, who presented special thank-you gifts to the home's volunteers. Families and community friends also came along to enjoy a spot of garden bingo, flower pressing and musical entertainment.



Residents and guests from the community tucked into a gorgeous buffet and mocktails at the celebrations at **Hale Court in Tunbridge Wells**, while being entertained by a beautiful harp performance from Iona, who has been volunteering there for 10 years.



Drake Lodge in Tavistock went all in with their 70th anniversary festivities, which included live music, a cheese and wine event, art exhibition and summer fair, all held over a fantastic weekend.



Residents and guests from the community tucked into a gorgeous buffet and mocktails at the celebrations at **Hale Court in Tunbridge Wells**, while being entertained by a beautiful harp performance from Iona, who has been volunteering there for 10 years.



The **Old Vicarage in Wellington** were treated to a garden makeover by volunteers from suppliers Churchill. The repaired summer house and colourful paint job were finished just in time for a fantastic 70th anniversary barbecue.



South Lakes Acapella provided the entertainment at **Nine Oaks in Windemere's** celebrations. The local MP also joined in with the singing, along with all the residents, and they were all so good that they were invited to join the choir at their next rehearsal.





Growing a community

Frances Chalk and Steve Paignton, residents at Burnham Court in Malmesbury, talk to Abbeyfield Voice about how they have rediscovered their love of gardening, and their life as part of the Burnham Court community.

What made you decide to move to Burnham Court?

FC: I moved in around Christmas time last year after a six-month search. In total I must have looked at around 25 different places around the south of England. I had to wait a bit before a flat became available at Burnham Court, which was the best suited to me in terms of the size and location.

It was quite a big change for me, as I knew nobody in Malmesbury at the time, and it was also very different living in a flat as opposed to my house. Opening your door and seeing people having a chat outside is a bit strange at first, and it took a while to get used to it. But I'm hoping to get more involved with the local community soon, and I'm looking to join the U3A and some nearby reading groups.



SP: We fortunately didn't have to spend that long looking. My wife Karen and I used to run a caravan and campsite on the other side of Malmesbury. Burnham Court was recommended to us when we decided to move, and we took a look around. We loved it so much that it only took about 10 minutes to ask where we should sign, and we moved in February.

Although we loved it from the off, it's actually exceeded my expectations. The staff are so caring and helpful – nothing is too much trouble for them, and we can never ask too many questions. I'm probably the opposite to Frances in that I immediately loved the community feel. I've never lived over 1¼ miles from the centre of Malmesbury, so I see a lot of people that I know. All my family

and friends are nearby, and they regularly come to visit. Had I known about Burnham Court before, I would have moved in much earlier without a doubt.



How did you start volunteering in the garden?

FC: It wasn't my intention at all when I moved in. I thought with living in a flat there wouldn't be much opportunity for me to be involved in that sort of thing. Although I had done some gardening at my house and even completed an RHS course, I got rid of the majority of my plants and equipment and came to Burnham Court for a nice, relaxing retirement!

It was when I saw the courtyard, which had a lot of dead or dying plants, that I began to get itchy fingers and started to do some work. I then found out through a member of staff that Steve was also a keen gardener, and I hunted him down.

SP: We both looked at the courtyard to see what we might be able to accomplish. Like Frances, I also thought I had left gardening behind, but have rediscovered my passion for it. I love tending to the plants, even talking to them, and it's tremendously beneficial for my wellbeing. It's something I really enjoy, and it gives me a sense of purpose.

FC: We recognise that we are doing this for all the residents as well as our own satisfaction. Contributing to Burnham Court helps us to feel more connected to the community here. The fact that I can do something I enjoy as a hobby to make that contribution is of course a bonus, and I sometimes get frustrated not being able to do everything that I can see that needs to be done!

There are some great things we've been able to achieve between the two of us. For example, we had 200 plug plants that we've

had to plant into pots, and we can now watch them grow. I've had plants going in and out of my lounge if they're not ready to be outside at night! It takes a lot of patience and nurturing, and it's something I enjoy.

SP: We have asked the other residents what they want in their garden and that has inspired what we've planted. Some donated a plant that means something special for them, and we've raised funds from very generous residents – but we always need more! Bright colours were especially suggested – colour is so important and brings a space to life. It's worth it just to hear someone, a member of staff or a resident, say how nice it looks and to see people enjoying it in the good weather.

We're not resting on our laurels though. The garden is never really a finished project; it needs to be renewed regularly and nurtured all year round. Another resident has just moved in who is a very keen gardener, and she is going to help us to make our own compost so we can liven up the soil and grow a greater variety of plants.

How important is community life at Burnham Court?

FC: We see ourselves as residents first, volunteers second, and doing what we do in the garden gives us a greater sense of belonging and helps us to feel part of a bigger whole.

There's a nice array of social activities here to get involved in. I enjoy the regular coffee mornings and I'm an avid reader, so tidying the library gives me satisfaction too – but someone else got there first today!

SP: There's also the Tuesday Club where we do puzzles, and the Thursday social evenings where we can have a proper grown-up drink! It's very sociable, you can talk about anything, and it's nice when you can get together with the other residents.

We're like one big family here and everyone has time for everyone else. Whether you're having a good or bad day, you can always count on the staff and your fellow residents to help you feel at home.



Abbey's adventures



To mark our 70th anniversary, Abbeyfield Living Society has introduced a cuddly mascot – Abbey the Abbeyfield bear. She has been busy this year supporting our special celebrations around the country and beyond – here are some of her highlights so far...



Taking a ride at The Donkey Sanctuary with Hill House residents



Soaking up the rays on a quick holiday to Majorca



Enjoying a cheeky tipple on Word Cock-tail Day at Abbeyfield House, Bramhall



Having a Baloo-ming marvellous time in the Nine Oaks garden



Taking in the stunning sea view from Whitby Abbey



Receiving the royal treatment at Hampton Court Palace with Lee House



The Great Bear with the Apollo 11 crew at Sherwood Observatory



A flag bear-er for Hampton House to celebrate VE Day



Pawsing for a chat with new friends at the beach in Llandudno



Doing her best King Kong impression in New York



Welcoming the sun at Abbeyfield House, New Malden



Creating panda-monium at the Speedwell Court circus



Getting plenty of bear hugs at the Sandwood Seedlings playgroup

Can't bear to go without?

Follow Abbey's latest adventures on the Abbeyfield Living Society Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn feeds.

Abbeyfield frontline workers honoured at Buckingham Palace

Abbeyfield was one of a select group of organisations invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace hosted by His Majesty King Charles III and Queen Camilla. The King has been a patron of Abbeyfield since 1979 and has long supported the work of the organisation.



Abbeyfield’s attendees were: Dhanif Paramban, Sheltered Housing Manager at Riverhill in Corbridge; Lesley Costello, Care Home Manager at Phil Mead House in Coventry; Fiona Downs, Registered Manager at Grove House in Ilkley; Carole Rodwell, Chair of the Abbeyfield Yarmouth Society; and Wendy Stallwood, Registered Manager of Bradbury House in Beaconsfield.

Carole said, “It was so very ‘English tea party’ on a grand scale.



“The King came over in my direction and spotted the Abbeyfield badge on my lapel. He said ‘Oh, a wonderful organisation. I have been with them for 45 years, as you know, as the Patron. They do some amazing work.’”

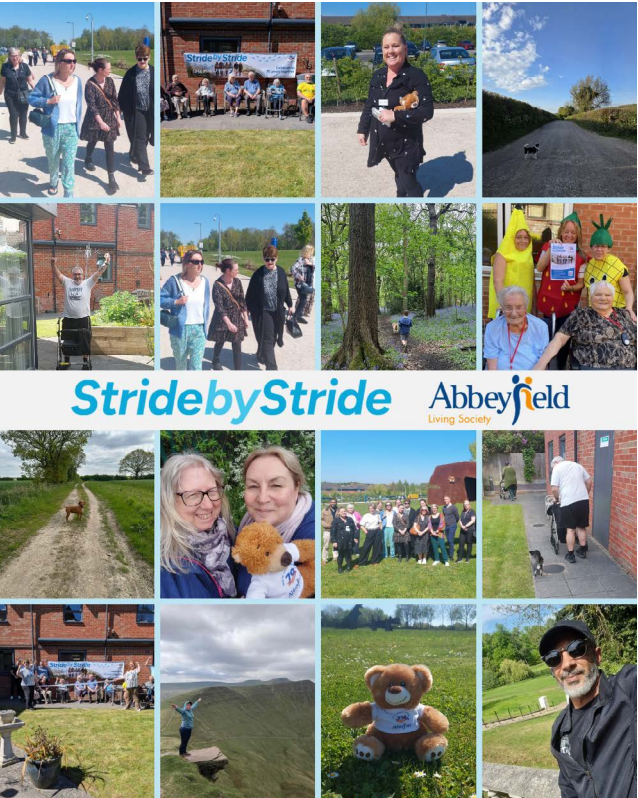
Dhanif added, “It felt like a once-in-a-lifetime moment that we will always treasure. We were very fortunate to have the chance to shake His Majesty’s hand and enjoy a lovely four-minute conversation.”

ALS staff raise funds with walking challenge

In the last issue of Abbeyfield Voice (Spring 2026, page 2), we let you know about a fundraising walking challenge, Stride by Stride, which Abbeyfield Living Society (ALS) took on to celebrate Abbeyfield’s 70th anniversary and National Waking Month in May.

Staff and residents around the country contributed to the challenge, which ran throughout the entire month. Through their combined efforts, they smashed the target of 1,956 miles (a nod to Abbeyfield’s founding year) and raised funds for ALS in the process.

They also sent in some lovely photos of them walking side by side, demonstrating inclusion, connection and community spirit.



Poetry corner

We have received kind permission from **David Howie**, a resident at Abbeyfield House in Warkworth, to print this excellent poem he wrote shortly after moving in. It has been adapted from another poem entitled I’m Fine, Thank You, written by Constance O’Neon in 1953.

How To Grin and Bear It

There is nothing the matter with me, I’m as healthy as can be.

I’ve arthritis in both my knees and when I talk, I talk with a wheeze.

My pulse is weak and my blood is thin, but I’m awfully well for the shape that I’m in.

Arch supports I have for my feet, or I wouldn’t be able to walk down the street.

Sleep is denied to me night after night, yet every morning I find I’m alright.

My memory’s failing, my head’s in a spin, but I’m awfully well for the shape that I’m in.

The moral is this as my tale I unfold for you and for me who are growing old:

It’s better to say, “I’m fine,” with a grin than to let people know the shape that we’re in.

How do I know that my youth has been spent? Well, my ‘get-up-and-go’ has ‘got-up-and-went.’

Well, I really don’t mind when I think, with a grin, of the grand places my ‘get-up’ has been.

Old age is golden, I’ve heard it said, but sometimes I wonder as I get into bed,

With my ‘ears’ in a drawer, my ‘teeth’ in a cup, my ‘eyes’ on the table until I wake up,

‘Ere sleep overtakes me, I say to myself, “Is there anything else I can put on the shelf?”

When in my youth and in my prime I looked at sheep many’s the time.

But now I’m old with my hair going grey, I only look at them once a day.

When I was young my slippers were red. I could kick my heels right over my head.

When I grew older my slippers were blue, but I still could dance the whole night through.

Now I am old, my slippers are black. I walk to the shops and puff my way back.

I rise in the morning and dust up my wits and pick up the paper and read the obits.

If my name is still missing, I know I’m not dead. So, I have a good breakfast and go back to bed.

Puzzle Page

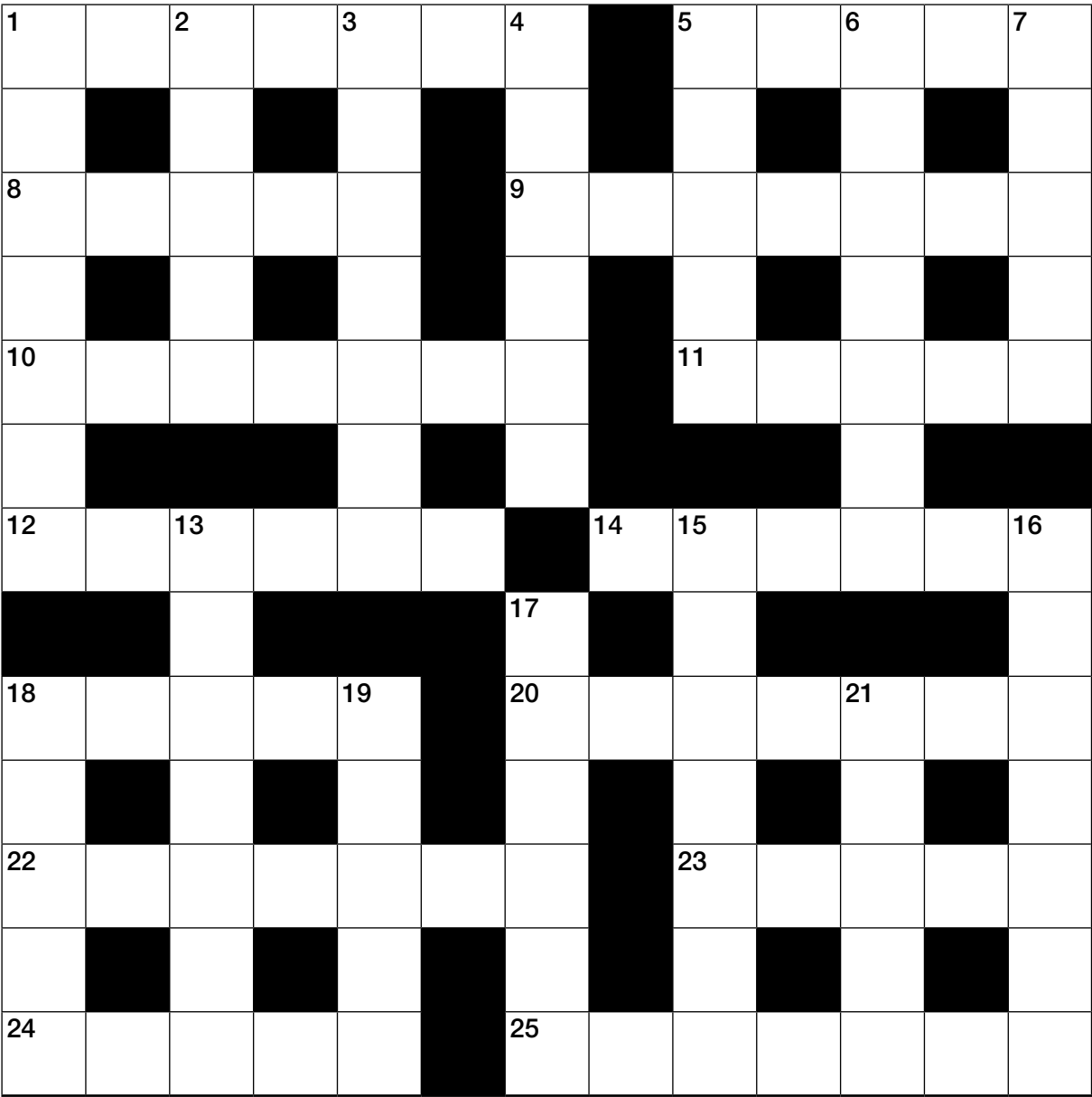
crossword

Across

- 1 Ancient writing material (7)
- 5 Hooded snake (5)
- 8 Rope fibre(5)
- 9 Move forward (7)
- 10 Fine wool fabric (7)
- 11 Circular (5)
- 12 Cure (6)
- 14 Established way of behaving (6)
- 18 Defensive players (5)
- 20 Foolishly sentimental (7)
- 22 Doubtful (7)
- 23 In the vicinity (5)
- 24 Upright (5)
- 25 Without tears (3-4)

Down

- 1 After 1945 (7)
- 2 Difficult question (5)
- 3 Akin (7)
- 4 Beer and lemonade mixture (6)
- 5 Insurance (5)
- 6 Sumptuous meal (7)
- 7 Modify (5)
- 13 Fruesome (7)
- 15 Normally (7)
- 16 Mixed (7)
- 17 Entertained (6)
- 18 Move (5)
- 19 Talent seeker (5)
- 21 Fortunate (5)



sudoku: medium

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sudoku: hard

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	5					3	6	4



60 seconds with Mark Homewood

We spoke to Mark Homewood, Abbeyfield Living Society Regional Operations Manager, to find out more about his role.

What was your career before coming to Abbeyfield?

I worked for Hanover and then Anchor following the merger of the two organisations. All my roles there involved working with older people – first working in Extra Care, followed by an Area Manager role in Retirement Housing, then in Leasehold from 2016. All these roles gave me plenty of relevant experience for my role at Abbeyfield, which I started in January 2025.

What is it about Abbeyfield that makes it a special organisation to work for?

I love Abbeyfield’s clear commitment to residents and the service they receive from top to bottom. It’s definitely instilled in the company.

In my first month, we went to meet with new residents whose house had been taken over by Abbeyfield Living Society. What could

have been a blanket single residents meeting instead was a series of individual resident one-to-one meetings to inform them personally of the changes. Administrative staff, regional management and the director were all present and involved, indicating the special emphasis ALS places on ensuring residents feel safe, secure and at home with us.

What is your typical day-to-day job?

Every day I like to be available for staff, to provide support and guidance when they have concerns. I’ll answer my emails, book in audits, deal with complaints, and generally overseeing the great performance of my houses. I’ll always try to stay positive, and hope that rubs off on the team.

Which part of the job do you most enjoy?

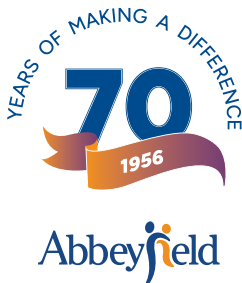
As well as working with the team, I enjoy getting out and about across the patch to see everyone – especially our amazing residents.

What are the most significant challenges you face in your role?

Covering staff who are off sick or when a vacancy hasn’t been filled is always a challenge.

How do you work with your staff team to support, motivate and inspire them to deliver the best possible service for their residents?

I try to be myself and be visible when on site and listen. I like to make sure there isn’t an ‘us and them’ feeling – everyone’s opinion counts and everyone’s needs are important, regardless of their role or how often they work on site in a week. I feel like I show an unguarded authenticity while on site.



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The Voice is produced in partnership with Abbeyfield England and Abbeyfield Living Society.

Want more stories?

If you’d like to find out more about what’s going on at our services around the country, take a look at our blog at www.abbeyfieldengland.com/blog, or follow us on social media.

puzzle solutions

P	A	P	Y	R	U	S		C	O	B	R	A
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medium

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hard

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