

# THORNHILL HOUSE

Newsletter May 2019



## EDITORIAL

*Hilary Hull writes*

Welcome to our spring edition of the newsletter. In it we continue our practice of interviewing residents, staff, volunteers and trustees who all contribute in their own ways to the happy atmosphere at Thornhill House. Since the last newsletter there have been several events, one of which was the very successful Christmas fair, when we tried to include more for residents to take part in. We look forward to our summer event on June 15th. We hope you have noticed the bee and butterfly garden from which we and the insects are now benefiting as our plants grow and flower. As we work in the garden we are very excited when butterflies join us and hope that there will be lots of bees, just as there are in the front garden. The insects now have a new winter home attached to the shed. As the Thornhill House Support Committee we are very pleased to help with the St. Giles Church Open Gardens weekend. Our gardens will be open on Sunday June 30th. Visitors are always very impressed by our surroundings and when it is a nice day and residents and their relatives join us, then it is a most enjoyable time. As the days lengthen, I hope you all enjoy the colours, sounds and smells of spring and look forward to the warm days of summer.



## MRS MARY FLETCHER née WOOD

Mary turns 99 on the 19<sup>th</sup> May and has been a resident at Thornhill House for a few months. She was reluctant to give up living in her own home in Ashford in the Water, but a dangerous fall meant that she had to accept that this was a wise move. She had been living alone since the death of her husband in 2006.

Mary grew up and was educated in Sheffield. She passed the 11+ examination and attended the Sheffield Pupil Teacher Centre which became the City Grammar School. She travelled to and from school by tram, even returning home for lunch. She was not only academic but also excelled in sport; playing in the 1st hockey team. After gaining her Intermediate School Certificate, aged 17, she opted to do a year as a pupil teacher, becoming responsible for a full class of children at Crookes Endowed School. This was an excellent preparation for her teaching qualification at Sheffield City Teacher Training College. After qualifying during the war, she started teaching at Prince Edward School, then at Woodthorpe School where she taught subjects across the curriculum including PT (physical training). Most of the male teachers had been called up for war service, so boys were not offered swimming lessons until Mary offered to teach them as well as the girls.

She could only do this if a male teacher was present. The elderly woodwork teacher enjoyed reading his newspaper as Mary taught boys and girls to swim and prepared them to achieve their distance badges and lifesaving certificates. Her responsibilities continued after lessons as she helped to run the after-school youth club, where children could do



distance running outdoors, indoor games, art and craft and ending each session with dancing. She was also on the rota to patrol school buildings during black-out hours to watch for fire bombs. The war was a very worrying time at school and Mary was also worried about her fiancé, Frederick William, who had been called up and was serving first in North Africa and then, as an officer in Burma. In 1946, when he came home and was back in his job as a salesman for Walter Spencer and Co. they were able to be married. Walter Spencer & Co. was a traditional Sheffield company

## COMINGS AND GOINGS

We are very pleased to welcome a new resident, Eileen Nickless. We hope she will be happy in her new home.

We send our condolences to the family and friends of Yvonne Palmer who passed away on 7th April 2019.

We welcome a new member to our caring staff, Nicky Fairburn and wish Dave Stevenson all the best for his health in retirement.

Our very able finance office formerly activities coordinator, Sophie Barker has left for pastures new after eight and a half years here. We wish her well in her new ventures.

Sarah Slack, bank nurse, has left to await the birth of her baby.

***Apologies to Robyn Shattock.  
Your article will appear in the  
next newsletter. Editor***

## STEPHANIE JANE KENNING

Stephanie has been a trustee for Thornhill House for 8/9 years and became its first matron when the house opened in 1994. She was then known as Jane Kenning.

Stephanie comes from and still lives in Sheffield. She trained as a nurse from 1977 to 1980. After qualifying she was unable to take up the jobs offered her in neurosurgery and the stroke unit due to a job freeze in the NHS. However, through contact with the stroke unit, she was able to take a post covering for a sister on two geriatric wards at St George's Hospital in Sheffield. Her experiences there developed her very strong interest in the care of elderly people. She did move to neurosurgery later, but very much missed the relationships she enjoyed whilst working with older people.

Stephanie moved to work for Sheffield City Council as deputy then manager of a care home. Stephanie quickly gained skills in developing new processes and practices. Her design system for administering medication became the practice across all Sheffield local authority homes. At the same time, she trained as a social worker and then became involved in training staff across care homes – a role she loved. Stephanie's interest and commitment to training then extended to her taking responsibility for coordinating social work training across South Yorkshire, whilst at the same time providing direct training to carers. This post was temporarily funded, and

located in the Don Valley, making small tools such as chisels, reamers and files. Promotion to run the London office took the family south in 1954 and by then they had two sons, David and Philip. Initially Mary taught PT part time at Hinchley Wood School, but a further promotion for Frederick brought them back to Sheffield where he eventually became chairman of the company.

Mary enjoyed hiking in the Peak District, so was pleased to come to live in Ashford. Both her sons are happily married and live locally after their careers in university administration and in the police.

*Interview by Phyllis Palmer*

## VOLUNTEERING AT THORNHILL HOUSE

My name is Bev Bradley, I was born in Sheffield in 1958 and worked there in IT until I retired in 2012. In 2010 I moved to Great Longstone, where my partner and I had friends, after falling in love with the village. Wanting to do voluntary work and give something back to the village, about 4 years ago I knocked on the door of Thornhill House and asked if they needed anyone. They said they were looking for someone to do the coffee round on Monday mornings so I agreed to do it. Following the usual forms and checks I was taken

on a coffee round with Di, the matron, and the next week I flew solo. My duties are to prepare the trolley with mugs, tea, coffee, sugar and biscuits, and the kitchen provide a flask of milky coffee. I take the trolley to residents in the dining room or to their individual rooms, although some of the residents need the assistance of carers. I love doing the coffee round and some people are so pleased to see me, it makes my day. I love chatting to the residents and hearing stories about their lives but it can also be upsetting when one of them is unwell.

I also do befriending for Age UK and take an elderly lady out once a week to the garden centre or shopping, and we always have tea and scones in a nice cafe. We've talked about writing a book on where to get the best tea, coffee and scones! In my spare time, I like walking, gardening, interior design, going to the theatre or live music and I do Pilates and Zumba classes. I am a member of the National Women's Register and meet up with the local group once a month to chat about anything and everything! I have no plans to stop doing my coffee round and am even considering doing more to help Thornhill House. Di and all the team do a great job and make Thornhill House a very friendly place to be.

## DONATIONS

The total amount of donations since our last newsletter is £5,191.11 of which £809.55 was raised at the Christmas Fair. Many thanks to all our supporters.

knowing she needed a permanent post, luckily for Thornhill House, in late 1993 Stephanie applied for the post of manager at Thornhill House. She was appointed and began work before residents arrived in 1994. Being matron in a newly established home had its challenges, but she was very much supported by members of the Thornhill family, and by staff as they were appointed. Stephanie laid the foundations of the home we know today. After nearly 5 years Stephanie realised that her initial development work at Thornhill House was completed so moved on to become an inspector where she continued to develop good practice. However, she did not enjoy the creeping regulatory nature of the inspectorate, with more monitoring and less support so Stephanie moved to her current role as a consultant to care homes where her role is to improve care giving.

Stephanie had always kept in touch with Molly Thornhill and once she had moved from her inspector role, she agreed to become a trustee at Thornhill House. As a trustee she brings a wealth of experience, knowledge and training skills from which Thornhill House continues to benefit.

Stephanie's summary is that Thornhill House is a wonderful caring place, one where she would wish to be should the need arise.

*Interview by Hilary Hull*

## RESIDENTS' ACTIVITIES

*Claire Chable writes*

A big thank you to all who contributed to the Christmas fair especially Maggie for her beautifully knitted teddy bears which sold like hot cakes. We used some of the money raised to pay for an afternoon of songs from the Carousel Theatre Company and their "That's Entertainment" show. The cast's costume changes were incredibly fast to our delight. Music from Brigadoon, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers and many more wakened memories.

During Easter week the residents and staff were fascinated to watch our ten "Living Eggs" emerge from their shells. Not only fluffy chicks delighted us, but residents were visited by two badger-faced Welsh mountain lambs for a cuddle and, to continue our Easter theme, everyone received a Lindt chocolate bunny.



Sarah Bright entertained Elsie Green on her 103rd birthday and we all enjoyed a wonderful lemon flavoured celebration cake and Prosecco.

The early warm spring weather had a dramatic effect on our young bedding plants which sprang into life too soon.

Unfortunately the later change in the weather caused some problems, but we still hope to have plants for the garden and to sell at the summer fair on Saturday 15th of June when there

will be music, Pimms, strawberries, cakes, tombola and a raffle as well as our blooms. Our open garden is on Sunday 30th of June.

We enjoy quality food at Thornhill Hill house and in our quest to taste the best Derbyshire can offer this year we visited High Peak book shop for tea and cakes and intellectual stimulus then to Matlock Meadows for ice cream tutti frutti and a chocolate flake. Our next trip will be to the Buxton Farmers' Market, a cornucopia for delicious food and beer.

Instead of a well dressing this year we are entering the Derbyshire Open Arts Exhibition held at the Buxton Museum. Our theme will be "Home and Life" based on a map of Great Longstone and on the "Tree of Life". We will make a fabric banner using various printing, painting and collage methods. If our art work is accepted we will visit the exhibition and bask in our achievements but whatever happens we hope to have an art work to display at Thornhill House and we will have enjoyed being creative and expressing our ideas and talents.

### Thornhill House 100 Club Winners

	2018		£s
	6 Oct	Mr M E J Taft	Great Longstone 25
	20 Oct	Mr J W McKenna	North Wingfield 10
	3 Nov	Mrs S M Stephenson	Great Longstone 25
	17 Nov	Mrs J M Rowson	Great Longstone 10
	1 Dec	Mrs M Noton	Bawtry 25
	15 Dec	Mrs A Webb	Great Longstone 50
	29 Dec	Mr B Graham	Grindleford 10
	2019		
	12 Jan	Mrs M R Scott	East Bridgeford 25
	26 Jan	Mrs A Thornhill	Rowland 10
	9 Feb	Mrs S E Carter	Great Longstone 25
	23 Feb	Prof J N Tarn	Stanton in Peak 10
	9 March	Mr J M Beard	Great Longstone 50
	23 March	Mrs J Robinson	Wardlow 25

## A FAMILY'S VIEW

Di Watson and her sister Gill Dengel, moved their mother, Norah Georgina Hall, to Thornhill House in 2015. Norah was born in Stockport in 1916 and lived most of her life there. She was a busy wife and mother but as her children left home and sadly her husband died she was left living alone at 81. Gill lived near her mum and was able to visit frequently and Di and her brother visited as often as they could. Norah managed well at first until her health began to fail. When Norah was 95 she had a fall in which she broke her neck and the hospital advised she needed residential care. The family, with Norah's involvement, looked for a local home and found one where she had a friend. It took time for Norah to be reconciled to leaving her own home but having a friend there helped. The family was satisfied at first as their mother seemed settled but gradually they began to have doubts over a number of issues especially the lack of residents' activities. Norah initially declined the family's idea of moving to a new home, fearing the upheaval would be too great. When younger Norah often visited Di and Ken Watson in Great Longstone to see her grandchildren so when in 2015 Gill, the older widowed sister, visited them she met her second husband, Theo and moved to the village. This meant Norah saw her daughters less frequently. Their mother's isolation worried the sisters so they discussed with her again the possibility of moving nearer to them. She agreed for enquiries to be made for a move to Thornhill House. Fortunately a place there came

up quickly. Nora moved in 2015 at the age of 99 and spent her last 13 months there. The sisters had little previous contact with Thornhill House but their first impressions were of how helpful and cooperative the staff were about Norah's move. They helped with putting

the village hall for the day. Nora asked for everyone to witness her cutting the cake at 4 o'clock. Sadly soon after her birthday Norah became frailer and found personal care distressing. However, she continued to enjoy listening to visiting singers and loved being in the summer



up pictures, moving in personal furniture and getting a phone installed so her son could call daily. The sisters were able to call in each day and got to know the staff. Nora was traumatised by the move at first, but other residents visited her room and went out of their way to make her feel comfortable. They began to help each other. Claire encouraged her to join in activities and when Norah did not feel up to it Claire brought things to her room for her to do. On Mary's 100 birthday Thornhill House organized a party for her. The family hired

garden with Gill and Di. During this difficult time the sisters were well supported by the staff especially during Norah's end-of-life care and the care after her death. The sisters' comment was, "When Mum moved to Thornhill House she had a good quality of life which was important her as well as to us." Having felt so welcome at Thornhill House Di and Gill continued to visit the home and are now volunteers serving tea and coffee to residents once a week.

*Interview by Alison Stuart*

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

The editor welcomes contributions from residents, relatives, friends and staff to the Thornhill House newsletter in Arial font, single spaced and no more than 400 words. Our next edition will be November 2019. Please send your comments or suggestions to the editor [hilary.hull@btinternet.com](mailto:hilary.hull@btinternet.com) or via a member of staff. Deadline: Friday October 25th 2019.