

A photograph of a woman and a man standing in a well-maintained garden. The woman, Denise Gleeson, is on the left, wearing a black cardigan over a white top and black boots. The man, Les Reed, is on the right, wearing a black jacket and black trousers. They are both smiling and holding a green garden tool. The garden features a stone birdbath, a wooden fence, and several trees.

Green-fingered Denise scoops award

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Garden competition winner Denise Gleeson
with Les Reed, from Landscape Solutions

Residents win
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Competition feedback

In 2014 we launched a photography competition to mark our 95th anniversary and the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War.

We publicised the competition in our newsletter, on our website and sent a leaflet about it to every resident.

Sadly, we didn't receive any entries, so to try to discover why we carried out a telephone survey of residents who volunteer as armchair monitors and focus group members. This is what they said:

WE ASKED	YOU SAID
Why didn't you enter our photography competition to win an i-pad?	26% said – I don't have a camera 22% said – I was too busy 22% said – I don't remember seeing anything about it 13% said – I'm too ill 9% said – I'm not very good at photography 4% said – I wasn't interested 4% said – I didn't have any opportunity to take a suitable photograph
What kind of competition would you be interested in entering?	27% said – none 23% said – crossword/wordsearch/Sudoku 9% said – art 9% said – photo competition on a different subject 9% said – I don't know Others suggested music, a quiz, home improvement, text an answer, anything on local environment
What kind of prizes would you like to win?	22% said – i-pad/tablet 11% said – camera 11% said – short break Others suggested book vouchers, gift token, digital radio, anything electronic, musical recordings, book club membership, food hamper, mobile telephone

The survey results will be used to help us to design any future competitions.

Silver Line

The Silver Line is a free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people.

It's open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Most callers are over 65 years but there is no age limit.

Specially trained staff offer:-

- information, friendship and advice
- to link callers to local groups and services

- regular befriending calls
- protection and support to those who are suffering abuse and neglect.

Calls are free and confidential. Callers can receive a weekly friendship call or email and join in regular group calls about subjects that interest them. There are also online forums on a wide range of subjects.

Silver Line Friends are volunteers who offer befriending to older people, calling once a week to check they are ok and to have a chat. They are vetted, trained

What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit will replace a number of 'out of work' benefits including:-

- Housing benefit
- Income support
- Job seeker's allowance
- Employment & support allowance
- Child tax & working tax credits.

Universal Credit has already been introduced in Harrogate and is due to be introduced in Darlington, Hambleton, Hartlepool, Hereford, Newcastle, Ryedale & York early in 2015.

If you receive Universal Credit, it will include any housing benefit that you are entitled to so you will be responsible for paying your own rent.

The government expects claims to be made online and will pay universal credit, monthly in arrears, directly into a claimant's bank account.

If you would like advice about getting access to the internet, opening a bank account, paying your rent, managing your benefits monthly or anything else to do with your benefits, please contact us on freephone 0800 0287428 or mobile phone friendly 0300 1230734.



and work in pairs for safeguarding and support. It isn't a counselling service and Silver Line Friends don't meet or know the address of the people they speak to.

If you would like to find out more please call the Silver Line on free phone 0800 470 8090 or mobile phone friendly 0300 4708090 or visit: www.thesilverline.org.uk



Garden competition winner

Green-fingered Denise Gleeson is the winner of our 2014 gardening competition.

Denise's garden in Mainsforth Road, Ferryhill, was one of many put forward for the competition by our gardening contractors Landscape Solutions.

Our residents' focus groups were then presented with a number of photographs and after much consideration they decided that Denise deserved the first prize of £50 worth of high street vouchers and a trophy.

Denise, who works as a hairdresser as well as helping to look after her three grandchildren, says she spends an average of five or six hours each week in her garden.

"When I first moved in seven years ago the garden was in need of some attention and I spent a lot of time just pulling out weeds," she says.

"Over the years I have made further improvements so to discover I had won this competition was a lovely feeling.

"I am now planting winter bulbs and generally just keeping the garden tidy ready to start again in earnest in the spring."

“When I first moved in seven years ago the garden was in need of some attention”



Les Reed, from Landscape Solutions, said: "The time and effort Denise puts into her garden is clear for everyone to see and she is very deserving of her prize."

Andrea Abbott, Railway Housing Association's Director of Customer Services, said: "Many of our residents maintain beautiful gardens and Denise's garden is an excellent example."

All change

Our Board of Trustees has decided to reduce the size of our senior management team from five to four members of staff.

This will save a significant amount of money and should also improve services to our customers because the asset management and housing management teams will now be managed by one Director.

Many of you will already know Andrea Abbott (pictured right) as our Director of Asset Management, with responsibility for building new homes and maintaining our existing properties. She is now our Director of Customer Services and will oversee the work of all our staff who provide services to customers including maintenance, lettings, housing and tenancy services officers.



Andrea, who joined the Association as a Development Manager in 2008, says: "This is a new challenge for me as I have gone from managing a team of 8 to a team of 22, but it is one I am enjoying. "By bringing the asset management and housing teams together I am hoping it will result in an even better all-round service for our customers."



Well done Amy



If you have phoned or called into our head office in Darlington, the chances are you will have spoken to Amy Jones (pictured above).

Amy, 19, is on an Apprenticeship with Railway Housing Association and has just successfully completed her National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 in Business Administration.

Amy, who is now undertaking her Level 3, said: "I am really enjoying working for the Association and helping people who come into the office or call on the phone.

"My NVQ Level 3 will involve doing things like presenting to a group of people and helping to organise an event, and I am really looking forward to learning new skills and continuing my professional development at Railway Housing."

Jeans for Genes

Our head office staff in Darlington took part in Jeans for Genes day to raise money for a charity which aims to change the world for children with genetic disorders.

We raised £77.72 by paying to come into work in our jeans, and by buying delicious blue cakes made by Julie McElwee, a member of our finance team.

Residents win mini-bus route

By Hilary Lewis, Great Western Court Scheme Manager

I am delighted that the community at Great Western Court in Hereford have stood up to local authority bus cuts that had taken away all bus services to the scheme and won!

Following the loss of their old 905 bus service in September 2014, the residents and their fellow bus route users continued to protest that they need a bus service into town and now with the help of Lucy Herds, Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate, and Polly Andrews, one of their local councillors, they have accessed the funding for a minibus service from Hereford City Council.

The Dial-A-Ride operated minibus service will also cover other sheltered schemes locally and will be funded four days a week coming to the Great Western Court scheme every Monday and Wednesday, allowing the residents access to travel independently to town and other local amenities such as the railway station and hospital.

This is a great example of people not just accepting things but fighting back and having their voices heard!

“ a great example of people not just accepting things but fighting back ”

Below: Great Western Court residents with Liberal Democrat Parliamentary candidate Lucy Herds and councillor Polly Andrews next to the bus they fought for.



Photograph by Hereford Times



Champion fundraisers

A group of residents living in Hackworth Court, Stockton, have once again proven that when it comes to fundraising they are the champions.

Anne Leck, Joan Todd, Joyce Kendrick, Mary Fraser and Kath Northam (pictured above) regularly raise money on behalf of charity but they went one better recently by holding a whole month of fundraising activities.

“ I know from my experience the vital services that charities such as Macmillan can provide ”

WE ARE MACMILLAN. CANCER SUPPORT

Thanks to just two coffee mornings, they raised an amazing £1,175 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

They chose Macmillan because Anne is herself battling against lung cancer.

She said “Cancer can have a devastating effect on sufferers and their families and I know from my experience the vital services that charities such as Macmillan can provide.

“We were delighted to raise so much money at the various coffee mornings and we would like to thank everyone who supported them.”



Wake up and smell the coffee

Residents in Hillingdon, Spennymoor, have started to hold coffee mornings for themselves and the local community, and they are already proving a big success.

They also took part in Macmillan Cancer Support's World's Biggest Coffee Morning, by organising an event which was opened by Town Mayor, Councillor Geoff O'Hehir.

“ the sum raised was substantial given that Hillingdon comprises of only 10 apartments and 4 bungalows ”

This included a tombola stall, table top sale and delicious homemade cakes and savouries. The morning raised £345 and having some food left, organisers decided to take it to their local pub, the Daleside Arms. £100 from the Leek Club and donations from locals raised the total to a fantastic £500.

Organisers Jeff and Ann Hutchinson (pictured above) said: “We thought the sum raised was substantial given that Hillingdon comprises of only 10 apartments and 4 bungalows, so thanks to everyone who took part.”

News from Paterson House

By Betty Anderson and June Thompson

We started our resident exercise class nearly three years ago.

We all put in £1 a week and we now have 20 people taking part. The picture shows all the equipment/games we have been able to buy and we have just added darts to our activities, and we even have money left for meals out!

They are fun and laughter-filled afternoons which are enjoyed by all.

We also recently had the Dove House Choir to entertain us.

We wanted to do something for charity and decided on the choir as they are a self-funded charity. They sang songs from the war and the musicals and we made £290 for a good cause.



Happy birthday Betty

Betty Herridge, who lives in our Springfield Court sheltered housing scheme in York, recently celebrated her goth birthday.

Betty's fellow residents organised a party to celebrate her birthday and they were joined by her two sons, Trevor and Graham, and her daughter Carol (pictured below), who had travelled from Canada to be with her mum on this special day.

The party was held at the Railway Institute Bowls Club and was enjoyed by everybody.



Draw winners

John Hartley, of Kirby House in Driffield, was the lucky winner of a draw of residents who filled in and returned a recent survey on the lettable standard.

Mr Hartley (pictured below), who received £25 worth of high street vouchers, said: “I haven't decided where to spend them yet, it's such a lovely surprise.”





25 years young

On 19th November 1989 our North Eastern Court sheltered housing scheme in Dunston, Gateshead, was officially opened by Sir Robert Reid CBE, Chairman of the British Railways Board.

Among those present that day was May Reed (pictured above), who is now the only resident left who moved in when the scheme first opened.

“when we first moved in, everyone quickly became friends and it was a lovely time”

A party was recently held to mark the 25th anniversary and for 92-year-old May it was a time to celebrate and reminiscence about the quarter of a century she has lived at North Eastern Court.

May says: “I moved into North Eastern Court with my husband Thomas after we sold our house nearby.

“As one of the first to move in we were able to choose our flat so we went for the one where I still live now, which has nice views to the field outside.

“We set up a committee and agreed to pay 50p a month ‘subs’ to enable us to organise events and activities and to buy things for the communal area.

“We used to have lots of activities, including dances, knitting club and parties.

“Even though we were all strangers to each other when we first moved in, everyone quickly became friends and it was a lovely time.

“Thomas sadly passed away 11 years ago but I have continued to make an effort to get involved with what’s going on. I am not as steady on my feet as I was but I still enjoy the coffee mornings and the special events we have, such as the Christmas party.



It’s puzzling

Audrey Wilsden (pictured above), who lives in Martin Cheesman Court in York, enjoys completing a good jigsaw (see example below), some of which are amazing if not a little complicated.

But for those of us who have not enjoyed the relaxation of sitting and doing a jigsaw, here are just some of the benefits:-

- It enhances visual perception
- It hones coordination
- It improves memory
- It develops critical thinking
- It heightens creativity
- It stimulates the whole brain.

Jigsaws can also improve our health by lowering our breath rate, reducing heart rate and blood pressure too – so what are you waiting for, get puzzling!



Open to suggestions

We are delighted to announce the start of a new resident and staff suggestion scheme.

The aim of the scheme is to encourage ideas that could improve value for money, for example by reducing costs, making processes more efficient, saving energy or reducing waste.

We are aiming to save £50,000 from the suggestions we receive over two years, which will be used to improve the services that are most important to residents.

Everyone who submits suggestions will be kept up to date with what’s happening to them, unless they are submitted anonymously. Suggestions will be considered against three questions:

- Will they save time and/or money?
- Are the potential benefits greater than the costs of putting them into practice?
- Are all the potential outcomes in the best interests of the Association and residents?

All the suggestions that are taken forward will be rewarded with a voucher for £25 and there will be a further award of £100 for the best suggestion each year.

If you have a suggestion you can complete the form below and return it to the address shown on the back page of the newsletter or hand it to a member of staff; telephone us on Freephone 0800 0287428 or mobile friendly 0300 1230734; speak to any member of staff; or email us on info@railwayha.co.uk

Name: Address:

.....

..... Telephone No:.....

Email address (if applicable):.....

Please describe your suggestion:

.....

Please tell us how it will save people time:.....

.....

Please tell us how it will save money:.....

.....








Please tell us anything about your suggestion that you think would help us consider it properly:




.....

Our Performance

Every three months we report on our performance in a number of key areas. As we only publish three editions of RHA News, we are using this issue to publish two performance reports covering the periods 1st April 2014 to 30 June 2014 and 1st July 2014 to 30th September 2014.

The results for 1st April 2014 to 30 June 2014

Income Management Amount of current arrears outstanding – 1.59% (target is 1.90%) 	Estate Inspections Percentage of estate inspections completed within 6 months – 44.4% (target is 90%)  <i>A number of inspections were completed just beyond the 6 months target.</i>
Lettings Average time taken to repair and let an empty property – 46.06 days (target is 25 days)  <i>An external organisation has looked at the way we do things and over the next year we will start to make changes that they have recommended to improve our performance.</i>	Complaints Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage – 60% (target is 95%)  <i>Due to the small number of complaints received, if one or two are not resolved at the first stage this has a big impact on the result of this performance indicator.</i>
Disabled Adaptations Percentage of work completed within 4 weeks – 100% (target is 95%) 	Repairs and Maintenance Percentage of residents satisfied with the repairs service – 96% (target is 97%)  Percentage of repairs completed correctly first time – 86% (target is 86%)  Percentage of repairs completed on time – 99% (target is 95%)  Percentage of new residents satisfied with the condition of their home – 90% (target is 90%) 
Response to Letters Percentage of letters responded to within 10 working days – 99% (target is 95%) 	Value for Money Value for money savings achieved as a percentage of total revenue spend – 0.38% (target is 1%)  <i>This is accumulative and 0.38% was achieved within the first 3 months of the financial year.</i>
Response to Telephone Calls Percentage of telephone calls answered within 7 seconds – 84.3% (target is 65%) 	

Green Performance on target 	Amber Performance below but close to target 	Red Action is needed to meet target 
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The results for 1st July to 30 September 2014

Income Management Amount of current arrears outstanding – 1.84% (target is 1.90%) 	Estate Inspections Percentage of estate inspections completed within 6 months – 73.3% (target is 90%) 
Lettings Average time taken to repair and let an empty property – 49.86 days (target is 25 days)  <i>The increase in the time taken to re-let properties is due to the successful re-letting of 3 long term voids. If these are excluded, the average re-let time was 24 days.</i>	Complaints Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage – 79% (target is 95%)  <i>Due to the small number of complaints received, if one or two are not resolved at the first stage this has a big impact on the result of this performance indicator.</i>
Disabled Adaptations Percentage of work completed within 4 weeks – 100% (target is 95%) 	Repairs and Maintenance Percentage of residents satisfied with the repairs service – 96% (target is 97%)  Percentage of repairs completed correctly first time – 85% (target is 86%)  Percentage of repairs completed on time – 99% (target is 95%)  Percentage of new residents satisfied with the condition of their home – 84% (target is 90%) 
Response to Letters Percentage of letters responded to within 10 working days – 99% (target is 95%) 	Value for Money Value for money savings achieved as a percentage of total revenue spend – 1.75% (target is 1%) 
Response to Telephone Calls Percentage of telephone calls answered within 7 seconds – 84.7% (target is 65%) 	

Recipe: Chicken and vegetable pasta soup

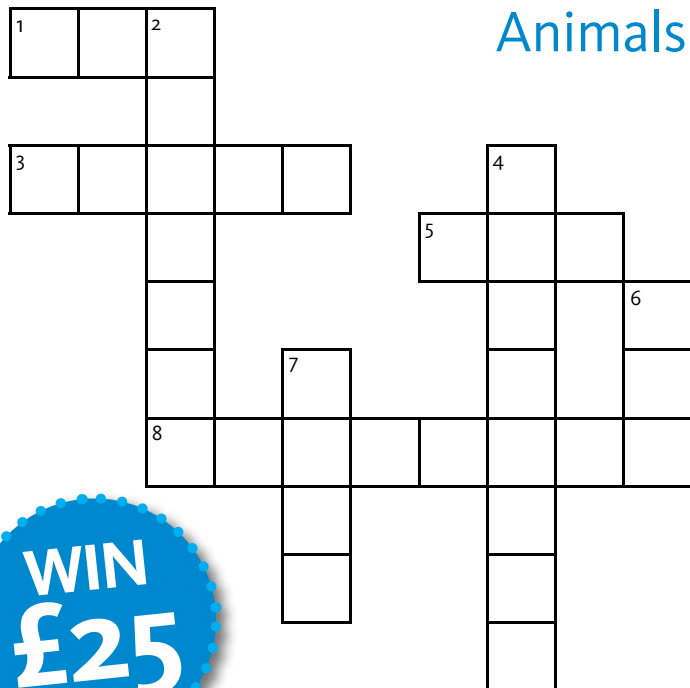
Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3 pounds chicken drumsticks
- 1/4 cup uncooked barley
- 1/4 cup uncooked elbow macaroni
- 1 (20 ounce) package frozen cauliflower and broccoli
- 1 (10 ounce) package frozen corn
- 2 (28 ounce) cans whole peeled tomatoes
- 2 (28 ounce) cans tomato sauce

1. Melt the butter in a large pot over medium heat. Stir in the onion, and cook until browned. Place the chicken in the pot, and cover with water. Bring to a boil, and cook 45 minutes, until the chicken is cooked and meat is easily removed from the bone.
2. Remove the chicken legs from the stock, and debone. Skim stock, and return meat to the pot.
3. Mix the barley and macaroni into the pot. Stir in the cauliflower and broccoli, corn, tomatoes, and tomato sauce. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally, 30 minutes, or until barley is done.



Animals



Kids Crossword

We have devised this crossword with our younger residents in mind, so if you have children or grandchildren why not encourage them to enter?

ACROSS

1. Man's best friend
3. Red Rum was a famous one
5. Likes to chase mice
8. Has a trunk

DOWN

2. Has a very long neck
4. Has a pouch
6. Flying mammal
7. Bambi was one

To stand a chance of winning £25 in our prize crossword draw, please cut out and send your completed crossword to us at Railway Housing Association, Bank Top House, Garbutt Square, Neasham Road, Darlington, DL1 4DR. Please remember to include your name, address and contact number.

Mrs Rowntree, Martin Cheeseman Court, York, is the winner of the crossword competition printed in the last edition of RHA News. She receives a cheque for £25.



Contact information

This newsletter can be made available in other languages, or other formats such as Braille, large format, or audio tape, on request.
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 Tel: 01325 482125 | Fax: 01325 384641 | Web: www.railwayha.co.uk
 Registered Social Landlord: A1855 | Registered Charity: 216825 | Member of the Housing Ombudsman Service

