

# LIFE IS FOR LIVING NEWSLETTER

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**For senior people & those who provide services to them in the Horsham District**

Produced by Horsham Leisure Link, the District Council's Sport, Art and Recreation Development Team

## VALERIE MANOR THREE YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

My word, I can't quite believe it myself! Yes, it has been three years since I came to Valerie Manor and started to live my dream and realise my ambition of running a care home.



Many of you may know my background but for those who don't.....

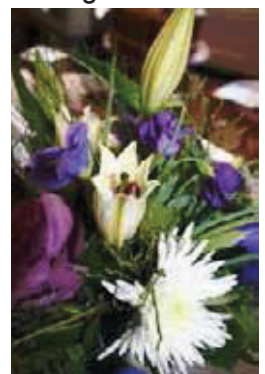
I started working in care homes in my teenage years and decided then I wanted to be a 'Matron' of a nursing home, so when I was able to I started my nurse training. I ended up staying with the NHS enjoying mostly acute surgical nursing and soon became a sister and then a Matron in the hospital. I also enjoyed the management side of things and later became a General Manager in the NHS. This however was an extremely stressful and frustrating role as being in such a large organisation you couldn't make all the changes that you felt were necessary. The experience that I gained as a manager was however invaluable.



Sadly my Nan (mums mum) who lived alone at home and was working in a charity shop had a stroke and ended up wheelchair bound and unable to care for herself. My family went through the difficult time of choosing a nursing home, dealing with her property and managing everything for her. It was at that time that we purchased the 'jalopy', a converted people carrier, for Nan to ensure we could still take her out and enjoy being with us; one of her favourite days out was Seaford by the Sea enjoying the views and ice-cream! Unfortunately the care at the nursing home deteriorated and we had to move Nan to another home. During this time

my dad's dad had a fall at home and also had to be cared for at another care home, his stay however sadly was quite a short one before he passed away.

When my Nan passed away in 2007 my partner and parents asked "couldn't you make a difference in elderly care?" and so in July 2007 I set to it with writing a business plan. With the help and support of my partner and the investment, encouragement and support from my mum and dad we found Valerie Manor, and took over from January 28th 2008.



I haven't looked back since, although there have been some difficult times and it has been a huge learning curve I feel so privileged to have had the opportunity to fulfil my ambition and be able to change some of the lives of the elderly who have to make the difficult decision to move into a care home.

The staff at Valerie Manor have been fantastic and I am so very proud of them being an award winning team. I feel like my family has grown and the residents and their families are all part of the homely environment at the Manor. As you may be aware, we are having a much needed extension built to provide us with new bedrooms and ancillary rooms, along with a conservatory, to allow us to care for people with nursing needs. Along with this the gardens are being landscaped to ensure the residents can enjoy the outdoors more. Although this has been a difficult time all I need to do is go downstairs and see the smiles and enthusiasm on the residents faces each day and it lifts my spirits to allow me to cope with the delays and problems that we have had with the project.



Anyway, here we are, three years on and I love what I do and where I am and can't wait to spend another exciting and rewarding year with everyone at Valerie Manor.

I very much enjoyed the day with the residents, families and friends as we all had a sherry to

celebrate our 3 years – I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to everyone for their support, encouragement and guidance during my time at Valerie Manor. And big thanks too to Maria for the wonderful chocolate cake, to all the staff and residents for the lovely cards and balloons, and to mum and dad for the beautiful flowers - I've been spoilt!

## Nursing Wing Official Opening

I feel extremely privileged and honoured to announce that Dame Vera Lynn officially opened the new nursing wing at Valerie Manor in April. We were all thrilled, it really does mean so much to everyone here, especially the residents who really are at the heart of what we are doing - one resident cried when she heard the news as she was so overwhelmed.



Dame Vera Lynn; affectionately known as 'The Forces Sweetheart' has, since her singing career, devoted much of her time to charities. She is currently President of The Dame Vera Lynn Trust for Children with Cerebral Palsy.

How honoured and excited we all were and a special thank you to Lyn and Jenny, Betty's son and daughter-in-law who made this possible by writing a lovely letter to Dame Vera Lynn about Valerie Manor and what we have been planning. Betty has been at Valerie Manor now for 15 years and was incredibly excited about our special visit.

Thank you so much Dame Vera.