

A community in harmony

Valerie Manor is a delightful 17th century manor house on the outskirts of Upper Beeding. It has been sympathetically converted to a residential care home where Zoe Bates and her team look after the physical, emotional and social needs of fifteen elderly residents

by Roger Linn

Zoe has very recently become the owner and manager of Valerie Manor and she is very conscious that she is now the custodian of the solid and much admired reputation the manor has acquired over the last 20 years. Together with her family, Zoe who is a qualified nurse and has much experience in NHS management, is determined to go on and enhance the manor's name for high quality care.

The manor has had some distinguished guests in its history. Churchill is reputed to have dined here and one of the earliest visitors was King Charles II. He didn't stay long. Just enough time for a quick cup of something or other and a change of horses, then off to France. Today's residents are

much less frenetic. Life is taken at a gentle pace here and the feeling is very obviously that of a happy family home.

Zoe is passionate about the quality of life of those in her care. "Imagine" she says "if, in your old age, you were forced into an environment where people understood nothing about you and you had to keep only your own company. It happens to too many old people, but it is not going to happen to those in my care in Valerie Manor."

Because the home only caters for a maximum of 15 people, there is absolutely no sense of it being an 'institution'. The lounge for instance feels like a very good-sized family living room, with oak beams, a large inglenook fireplace and small traditional bar. All the individual rooms have en suite facilities and are comfortably furnished, although residents often add items of their own furniture and can dine in their rooms occasionally if they pre-

fer not to eat in the cheerful and sociable dining room.

Zoe explained: "It's so important to ensure that our residents feel engaged with the community in which they live. So we're going to have regular discussion groups and ensure that our residents can continue to live an active life – by going on outings in our specially adapted minibus for example."

A packed activities and entertainment schedule has already been drawn up and some of these, like films, bingo and board games are already taking place. I noticed maypole dancing on this list and expressed some surprise at the level of physical fitness that might be required, but Zoe gently pointed out that it was a demonstration, not an activity.

Visitors will be welcome at any time and there will be regular social events to which residents' relatives and friends will be invited. Visiting services already include those essential to

our well-being like hairdressing and beauty therapy, while other frequent visitors offer physiotherapy, chiropody and much more.

Without question, Valerie Manor is in safe hands and I think its residents can look forward to a safe, caring and sociable future. You can find out more by ringing Zoe on 01903 812105 or emailing zoe@valeriem Manor.co.uk



Zoe Bates:
The engaging
and passionate
new owner of
Valerie Manor.

