

Start of the Court Circular.

Firstly, a welcome message from Cody Aldington, the Design editor.

Thank you. We have had so many stories since the last issue that, this time around we have had to cut out or shorten one or two regular features. It is a huge pleasure to see so much good news. Please keep it coming – especially your life stories. These are of great interest to all.

Next, an overview of articles within the Winter 2017/18 edition.

Articles begin with court news stories which talk of birthdays, anniversaries, awards and celebrations galore from across the courts. Moving onto management and professional matters, articles reveal court refurbishments, director training, new staff joining and council news. Following this, RSL news talks of courts working together and of the AGM 2017. Health articles concentrate on a court's purchase of a new lifting chair and Housekeeping Assistants awarded for their First Aid Training work. Next, an owner shares a 'winter warmer' Feta and Pine Nut Tart recipe. Lastly, within the garden section, Wyevale Garden Centre shares tips and advice on choosing indoor plants to fight the blues and how to care for them.

Before beginning the articles, there are two competitions to mention. Firstly the Court Circular Distribution Prize. Carrs Court has won the latest RSL Court Circular Distribution Prize: £500 towards a Sunday lunch, dinner or BBQ for the owners. The prize is awarded to the Manager who achieves a good level of outside distribution via a diversity of places. Well done Jackie Raleigh. Secondly the competition for the next Court Circular is a poetry competition. Entries to our art competition – along with an exciting announcement are shown on pages 26 and 27. For the next issue we are appealing to all the wordsmiths amongst you. Even if you have never put pen to paper before, please have a go and send us your poem before the end of January.

Moving on to court news articles from around the courts.

First article, from Melton Court is titled, Golf and Pimms to mark the closing days of summer. High-spirited clock golf' on a glorious August Bank Holiday. No fewer than 25 Melton Court owners gathered on a beautiful late summer's day to enjoy a round of clock golf. Organised by score master general Mrs Hall, Duty Manager Michael Cooke made sure that lashings of Pimms & lemonade was on hand, whilst reserving a bottle of Cava – and the winner's cup – for top putter of the day, Mr Parkin. Clock golf involves one hole placed non-centrally within twelve points, so each shot is a different length. Shrubs and other obstacles can add interest!

Next article, from Emmbrook Court, is titled, We can take the heat, Auntie! Owners show BBC TV what to do when it's 34° in the shade. On Midsummer's Day, BBC TV's Duncan Kennedy and team arrived at Emmbrook Court, eager see how owners would cope on the hottest day in 40 years. What would elderly people do when the needle hit 93 degrees Fahrenheit? The answer (broadcast on national news) was: play croquet. Owners Norman, Marilyn, Betty and Bryan were interviewed between shots, before Duncan's team moved indoors to interview Social Group Chairman, Don.

Next article, from Blake Court, is titled, Carpet bowls: Is it time for you to try this active and sociable game? Indoor bowls is growing in popularity within RSL courts. Some play informally using whatever space is available. Several courts which have complete Carpet Bowls sets, which includes a 30' x 6' carpet (as opposed to the 45' carpet of the Short Mat' game or the huge area required for the standard indoor game). Several court groups play regularly and Boat Lane and Carrs courts even held an inter-court tournament. Who knows, with a few more players, there might be enough support for an RSL league! Full sets can be bought for around £1,000 – sometimes much less on Ebay. Caption to the article reads, some fifteen Blake Court owners enjoy indoor bowls every Wednesday. Websites given at the end of the article are: www.bowlsworld.co.uk and www.englishcarpetbowls.com

Next article, from Deerhurst Court, is titled, Pre-1936 pinball wizardry. As sold to the King and the Prince of Wales' proclaimed the original, if tattered, box of the owner's bagatelle board. In the family since before George V's death in 1936, the board game was as ready for action as ever. Twelve owners competed, whacking the balls around the board using its wooden striker, the spring-loaded versions being a later adaptation. And the winner was: Mrs Evelyn Lane, pictured enjoying a victory turn.

Next article, from Ashby Court, is titled, Joyful magic. Ashby Court owners enjoyed an evening of magic tricks and illusions, courtesy of Joy Henderson. What she could do with a balloon was, we are told, amazing!

Next article, from Minster Court, is titled, Domesday, Magna Carta and Charter of the Forest. Minster Court owners take their unique opportunity to see three ancient documents displayed together. Lincoln Castle is permanent home to one of just three original, 1215 AD copies of the Magna Carta and to one of two remaining copies of its 2017 'update', Henry III's Charter of the Forest. For a few weeks in 2017, and for the first and probably only time, these two monumentally historic documents were joined by an earlier (1086), perhaps even more socially significant one, of which there is only one copy: the Domesday Book. Taking their chance to see all three documents together, our Minster Court owners were duly impressed.

Next article, from Cathedral Green Court, is titled, Farewell friend. Owners said farewell to a great friend, Gina Goulty, who has lived at Cathedral Green Court for 16 years. Gina is moving closer to her family. Owners celebrated her time and contributions to the court. She will be greatly missed.

Next article, from Greyfriars Court, is titled, Floral Dances. Garlands-a-plenty as a side of female Morris dancers entertain. Greyfriars Court had a fun evening when the Knots of May, a terrific women's Morris dancing side (as the troupes are known) visited to perform shoe dances in the north west tradition, with garlands and sticks. Recent growth in the popularity of Morris dancing has been led by women, who may soon exceed half of the 15,000 dancers in the UK.

Next article, from Gorselands Court, is titled, A 'KIND' visit. Having participated for years in the armchair exercise classes of Sheila Reade, who gives her services free to raise money for Kids In Need and Distress, her Gorselands team' paid the charity a visit. KIND helps disadvantaged children in lots of ways, including providing the beautiful gardens and safe spaces which the Gorselands owners so enjoyed visiting.

Next article, from Kennet and Blake Court, is titled, Kennet's terrific trips thanks to charity minibus. Kennet Court's social club has enjoyed a year of wonderful monthly trips, all using the Earley Community Minibus, a local charity which uses volunteer drivers. Many areas have such charities, so it is worth checking – and getting out and about. Meanwhile, we don't know if the good folk at Blake Court use a charity minibus but, judging by the photos it does look like they had a good day out catching the last of the summer sun, on a trip to Southend-on-Sea.

Next article, from Blundellsands Classic and Boat Lane Court, is titled, Grand design ideas. Boat Lane Court take a look at The Classic's style. Formulating plans of their own, owners from Boat Lane Court visited Blundellsands Classic to see how their refurbishment had gone. In addition to a full tour they were treated to a full three course lunch as well. Boat Lane Court Chairman Mike said they were looked after so well that he will insist upon a 'return match' when redecorations at Boat Lane Court are complete.

Next article, is titled, spooky. Just as we were about to close this issue of Court Circular, these photographs appeared on our computers as if by magic. At least one member of staff was so scared, it turned his hair red! Photographs show owners and members of staff all dressed up in halloween costume from Melton Court, Burcot Court and Tiddington Court.

Next article, from Margaret Court, is titled, 'Last Night of the Proms' soloist performs at Margaret Court. Taking advantage of RSL's sponsorship of the Stratford Music Festival, Margaret Court persuaded the British baritone and composer Roderick Williams OBE to put on a special performance for them. Current president of the Three Choirs Festival Society, Roderick was a soloist at the 2014 Last Night of the Proms, won Singer of the Year in the 2016 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards and was awarded the OBE for services to music in June 2017. Roderick Williams was born in North London to a Welsh father and a Jamaican mother. He was a choral scholar at Magdalen College, Oxford, and then became a music teacher. He resumed music studies in 1993 at the Guildhall School of Music in London and first appeared at The Proms in 1996 (as the Royal Herald in Verdi's Don Carlos). At Margaret Court, accompanied by pianist Susie Allan, Roderick performed works by Vaughan Williams, Butterworth and more.

Next article, from Forum Court, is titled, Not to be outdone... Forum Court turned this year's Last Night of the Proms into a proper party. Just like the audience in the stalls at the Albert Hall, the owners sang and waved their flags – only they could enjoy good food and a drink, too.

Next article, from Plymouth Court, is titled, In the mood for more. Making a return visit to belt out their repertoire of hits from the forties and fifties, the Vintage Class Singers didn't just entertain owners and staff at Plymouth Court – they had them jiving, waltzing and swinging around the floor. It was so enjoyable that the dancers persuaded their guests to carry on – though, as Vintage Class said on their Facebook page “They said they didn't want the party to stop – but 20 minutes later everyone needed a rest! We are told that in 20 years there has never been so much dancing. Brilliant to hear – so much fun – what a way to spend an evening!”

Next article, is titled, Caribbean Queens. It's not just Plymouth Court owners who like to dance. Coincidentally, both Forum and Priory Courts recently held caribbean nights which included music, dancing and caribbean cuisine. Meanwhile, over at Tiddington Court they don't need the excuse of a themed evening – they just like to dance. Photos of owners and members of staff dancing together.

Next article, from Saxon and Ashby Court, is titled, Welcome success. Saxon Court's recent wine and cheese evening, held to welcome no fewer than six new owners was such a success that they have decided to make it a monthly event. In doing so they might take a tip from Ashby Court. They invited their local cheese specialist in who supplied both exotic cheeses (such as charcoal and hot mexican) and an entertaining series of cheese related anecdotes.

Next article, from Tiddington Court, is titled, Bronze win for Tiddington Court at EAC Awards 2017. Selected from 1,180 nominated schemes and judged by comments from over 10,000 residents, staff, volunteers and visitors. Held each year by the Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) charity, the National Housing for Older People Awards were held this year at Edgbaston Cricket Ground. Guest speakers included Chris Knight, MD of Legal and General Retirement, with entertainment from 'Bargain Hunt' presenter Tim Wonnacott and comedian Earl Okin. The purpose of the awards is to showcase, celebrate and build awareness of the wide range of later life housing that we are so lucky to have in this country.” Tiddington Court was shortlisted following feedback provided to the judges by some 20 owners. It was given the Bronze award in the 'Best UK Housing with Care' category for schemes of its size. Mr & Mrs Harrison, Miss Spooner, Jan Carter, Mollie Vizard-Williams and John Bush, all accompanied Court Manager Louise and a delegation from RSL to a splendid and enjoyable event. Next article, from St George's Court, is titled, Cocktail party. Not everyone got the message about the formal dress code for the St George's Court cocktail party! That didn't stop them all enjoying the exotic drinks, plus canapés on cocktail sticks.

Next article, from Boat Lane Court, is titled, Girl Guides launch new badge after trial with court's help. Following a pilot scheme in which Boat Lane Court participated, Girlguiding Manchester has launched a new badge to encourage girls to help tackle loneliness amongst the elderly, a great many of whom live alone. Some 4,000 Rainbows (5-7 year olds), Brownies and Guides can have the chance to be part of reciprocal projects with older people to break down age barriers and tackle loneliness. The pilot scheme started nearly a year ago and included Brownies and Rainbows putting on a play at Boat Lane Court. By all accounts, the girls had just as good a time as their audience and were keen to visit again. As one owner said “It was an enormously enjoyable event for us and, from what we could see, the children, too. I hope it encourages them to take part in more such occasions”. Though it is hoped that this initiative will soon be taken up nationwide, the badge is currently available only to Guides in the area covered by Manchester Health and Care Commissioning. Websites given at the end of the article are: www.girlguidingmanchester.org.uk and www.girlguiding.org.uk

Next article, from Carrs Court, is titled, Marie Curie Cheshire Volunteer of the Year. We are delighted to report that owner Patricia Taylor has been named Cheshire Volunteer of the Year by the Wilmslow Marie Curie Supporter Group, awarded in recognition of her tremendous help with fundraising activities throughout the year. To find out about volunteering for Marie Curie, please see: mariecurie.org.uk.

Next article, from Oaktree Court, is titled, It's a long way down for Gary! Oaktree Court Manager, Gary Baxter – who is scared of heights – over came his fears to abseil down the Northampton Lift Tower and raise £130 for Willen Hospice.

Next article, from Cathedral Green Court, is titled, Gone to the dogs. CGC owners at the Peterborough Greyhound Stadium (above), having sponsored a race and had a good night out.

Next article, is titled, Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning”. Over £1,600 raised. Much coffee and cake consumed. At least seven courts took part in the Macmillan Cancer Care “World's Biggest Coffee Morning” back in September. Over £1,200 was raised in the process, possibly considerably more (not all courts gave us their totals and some were still receiving donations). The seven were Burcot, Cathedral Green, Gorselands, Melton, Plymouth, Priory and Tannery

Courts.

Cathedral Green raised additional funds by holding a raffle and, later, selling bags of cakes which did not sell on the day, whilst Melton held a 'Funny Feet' competition!

Macmillan will be holding the same event next year and offer lots of ideas for how to make your Coffee Morning fun and successful. Website given at the end of the article is: www.macmillan.org.uk.

Inset article from Deerhurst Court is captioned, Elliott: cook and sponge king, whose lemon drizzle cake is "The best ever tasted", Elliott is photographed holding with his sultana and orange sponge.

Next article, from Kennet Court, is titled, Happy 30th Birthday Kennet Court. No fewer than 150 owners and their families, past and present staff plus community dignitaries and RSL executives, attended the Kennet Court 30th Anniversary party, back in August. Special recognition was given to owner Mrs Peggy Pigeon, who has lived at Kennet Court since moving in on the day it opened. Long service awards were presented to Manager Karen Hounsell, HKA Sheila Green, HKA Gill Mogford and the court's gardener/handyman John Chant. Entertainment was provided by the excellent singer, Fiona Cox. Delicious cakes, canapés and drinks were prepared and served by the Kennet Court team, who were, as ever, central to the afternoon being a great success.

Next article, from Bushmead Court, is titled, 15th Anniversary celebration at Bushmead Court. Every year, Bushmead celebrate their anniversary with a meal followed by entertainment. This year's buffet was deemed especially magnificent, made all the more so by stem vases and origami crafted serviettes courtesy of kind and talented owners. It was followed by a good sing-along, led by Sally, complete with dancing. Great fun was had by all.

Within the same article, a separate heading reads, 'And it don't seem a day too much'. Recently celebrating not forty (as in the song) but 65 years of marriage, were Mr & Mrs Oakley of Forum Court and Mr & Mrs Wilkes of Deerhurst Court. Close behind, celebrating their diamond anniversaries were Mr & Mrs Hudson of Gorselands Court and, at Oaktree Court, two couples: Mr John & Mrs Pamela Robinson and Mr Jack & Mrs Jean Ivall. For their double celebration party, the lounge at Oaktree Court was festooned with balloons. The afternoon sun streamed through the windows, lighting up tables set with beautiful china groaning under the weight of cakes from owners and staff, along with presents of flowers and beautifully decorated birthday cakes. The packed room was filled with happy chatter and laughter. Yvonne, one of the duty managers, organised a raffle which raised over £400 for the Willen Hospice.

Next article, is titled, Happy Birthday. Plenty of celebrations around the courts lately, as owners notch up 'significant' birthdays (though, as one nonagenarian owner remarked, "At my age, every birthday is significant!"). As if to demonstrate his comparative youth, Mr Miller of Blake Court celebrated his 80th birthday with the London Gliding Club at Dunstable Downs. He made three separate flights, each time reaching 2,500 feet or more. On the third, Mr Miller piloted the glider for the duration of the flight, bar the take-off and landing. Those celebrating their 90th birthdays included Mr Steve Jones of Forum Court (shown here with his family on the day), Mr Harris of St George's Court, and Mrs Marion Wilkes of Deerhurst Court. Marion's was a double celebration, as she and husband Tom celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary just a few days before. Marion and Tom met at the offices of the CWS furniture factory in Tyseley, Birmingham, where they both worked. Marion says that she and Tom, "... get on very well together and have a happy life. I only wish now we had come to Deerhurst sooner: everyone here is so friendly and kind." At St George's, Mr Harris has been an owner for no fewer than 26 years, having moved there in October 1991. He served as a board member for 24 years (19 as chairman), did the court accounts and introduced keep fit classes. He continues to assist with setting up for court film nights and other events. Being so knowledgeable about St George's Court, he remains a valuable resource for the managers. At Blundellsands, Mrs Babs Robinson reached the dizzy heights of the big 100 in May – only to find others had got there before her! Celebrating alongside her in the photo (left) are, far left, Mrs Mabel Saul who is 102 and, in the centre, Molly McTegart who is 101. Babs moved to Blundellsands three years ago. She has six children, all of whom are regular visitors to the Court. Also marking her 100th birthday, in June, was Mrs Daphne Barson of Kennet Court. Fellow residents gathered with Daphne and her family, including three of her ten great grandchildren, to celebrate, sing "Happy Birthday" and say a few words in her honour – not least about her high-scoring Scrabble games. The following weekend, Daphne's family threw another party, this time for 160, including two of Daphne's sisters and six more great-grandchildren.

Next article, from Pinner Court, is titled, A history of service. The photo shows Pinner Court owner, Mrs Dorothy Sadler, lining up with fellow Red Cross cadets in preparation for the Victory Parade of the Voluntary Services through

Birmingham city centre in 1946. Mrs Sadler joined, aged 15, in 1942. She was given a uniform and, having gained her First Aid and Home Nursing Certificate, was eligible for further training and certificates. Shortly after qualifying, Mrs Sadler began volunteering in the evenings at the Birmingham Eye Hospital and also helped on Saturday afternoons at the Lordswood Maternity Hospital in Harborne – whilst working full time in an office. New heading: WWI cadet origins. Although there was no official activity, young people played an active role in supporting the work of the British Red Cross during the First World War. One of the most important tasks they undertook was collecting sphagnum moss, which was made into dressings for the wounded. In 1918, the British Red Cross supplied nearly two million dressings for wounded soldiers. The “junior” section of the British Red Cross officially began in 1924. It promoted good health, service to the sick and suffering, and the development of international friendship and understanding. Clubs, or “links”, were usually formed in schools. Link members could be from five years old up to school leaving age, though groups were organised in small age ranges whenever possible. New heading: Cadet Units. Cadet units (“youth detachments”) were attached to an adult Red Cross detachment and cadets ranged from 14 years to 17 years old. They formed a much-appreciated connection between school leavers and the Red Cross (Mrs Sadler joined whilst still at school). Cadets helped at first aid posts and at sick bays during a flu epidemic. At hospitals they helped with everything from washing up and laying trays to preparing dressings and talking to distressed patients. They helped after air raids and raised money for the Red Cross’s work. A Junior Gallantry Medal was introduced in 1944 to recognise the young members who showed great courage and devotion or initiative in a sudden emergency. Much like their earlier counterparts during WWI, younger members in the countryside collected herbs and medicinal plants, then dried and labelled them and sent them to botanical drug importers. Older cadets in the countryside helped with evacuated children, amusing and helping to look after them when necessary. Overseas, meanwhile, cadets and Junior Red Cross members in Australia, New Zealand and the USA sent gifts to Britain. British Red Cross cadets distributed thousands of American Red Cross Christmas boxes to children in their area who had suffered or lost their possessions during bombing. By 1944, 18,061 boys and girls were youth detachment members. New heading: Present day activities. Today, the British Red Cross continues to encourage young people to serve. They continue to accept and train volunteers from age 15 and offer a range of internships and work experience opportunities, including overseas. There is a particular emphasis on training young people in relation to the “power of humanity” in emergency situations. More information on British Red Cross opportunities for all ages can be found at their website: www.redcross.org.uk. End of the article caption: Sphagnum moss was used for dressing wounds. Being so absorbent and acidic, it inhibits bacteria and fungi. Native Americans used it for nappy lining.

Next article, from Tannery Court, is titled, Hilda Blythin Memorial Concert. A concert was held at Tannery Court in September, as a memorial to their well-loved owner, Hilda Blythin. The 40-strong Bro Aled Male Voice Choir sang for us in Welsh and English and provided a very moving tribute. The concert was attended by Hilda’s husband Islwyn, his granddaughters, cousins and family. Hilda’s sisters, June and Doreen were there (Doreen and her husband John also live at Tannery Court), together with other family members. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and other local councillors also attended.

I would like to thank the members of staff who readily gave up time to help, including duty managers Wendy, Joyce, Brenda and Marjorie, our handyman Tony and our cook, Tracey, (as well as beautiful music, we enjoyed a lovely buffet and drinks). Many thanks also for her help on the evening, to our Services Manager Karon Swinburn and, indeed, to Retirement Security Ltd who contributed the food and drink. At the end of the event, St Kentigern’s Hospice was invited to take a collection. This raised £637 for a charity dear to both Hilda and her husband. From Christine Bather Court Manager.

Moving onto Management and professional matters, the opening article is from Cathedral Green Court, titled, Lifting the lid on heavy bins. Court initiative prompts manufacture of double lid bins. When Court Manager Mark Hitchborn contacted the local council to talk about how the weight of their bin lids was a problem for some owners, the council invited him in to talk further. Several months and two prototypes later, they and all other Peterborough residents can have bins with smaller, lighter lids within the main lid. Mark is delighted: “Councils get a lot of criticism, so it’s good to report news of a council being so constructive in their response. And all we did was ask!”

Next article from Marlborough Court, is titled Interior transformation. The restyling and redecoration of the common areas of Marlborough Court is now complete and looking extremely smart. Indeed, Court Manager Tricia says it still makes her stand and stare, every day.

Within the Management and professional matters, there are three inset small articles. The first is from Deerhurst Court, titled, Director Training. Including the latest sessions, RSL is now half way through its current programme of director training. Those involved are getting terrific feedback – ensuring that the next programme will be even more useful. The Second article is from Gorselands Court, Michelle Swindells joined the staff at Gorselands Court in July. Though coming from a background of care-related roles, Michelle says that her new job has given her a different perspective on independent, sheltered living, thanks to “...its homely setting and the warm welcome from the minute you walk through the door”. Lastly, the third inset article mentions a brief summary on, Mortgage benefit ends. The state Support for Mortgage Interest scheme benefits over 60,000 pensioners but changes to a loan in 2018. Talk to your Services Manager or see: www.gov.uk.

RSL news articles begin with, RSL 2017 Annual General Meeting 25th October, Lansdowne Club W1. Nearly sixty court directors, shareholders and RSL directors and staff attended this year. It provided an excellent opportunity for everyone to catch up before going into the meeting, during which, in addition to statutory matters, the directors presented a number of Long Service Awards. A full, separate report on the AGM will be available shortly. Another RSL news talks of courts working together. Tiddington and Margaret courts have been working together on several projects recently including, shown here, exhibiting at the Stratford Engage 50+ Festival. Website given at the end of the article is: www.engagefestival.org.uk.

Moving onto Health articles, Melton Court purchases of new lifting chair. The article begins with: Four hour post-fall wait prompts purchase of new lifting chair. When Melton Court owner Mrs Rosetta West fell in August last year, concerns about her frailty meant that the Court Manager Fiona Smith and her team were unable to get her up. Instead, they waited with her for the paramedics to arrive – which took four hours. Fiona raised the matter with two MPs, Healthwatch Dorset and the SW Ambulance Service Trust (SWAST), leading to coverage on the BBC and the matter being raised in Parliament. Fiona asked SWAST for training so her team could be less reliant on the emergency services. This became urgent when SWAST advised local care agencies that they don't have capacity to attend all falls, but would be happy to train them in the use of raising chairs.

The Melton Court owners decided to buy a special chair designed by the Danish firm, Liftup, called Raizer. Whilst staff still had to be trained and to follow lots of rules about risk assessment and prior permission to use the chair, it does mean that the carers, on their own, can help anyone who has fallen – weighing up to 23 stone – to an almost standing, seated position. The photos show a demonstration of the Raizer to Melton Court owners, with Fiona, assisted by Facilities Manager Nicki Wheeler, constructing the chair to lift Receptionist Anne Stock.

Fiona says it has been quite an adventure, begun by a gruelling ordeal for Mrs West (who is now 97), but that everyone, including Mrs West, is delighted that it has led to real progress in the ability of the Melton Court team to care for and maintain the dignity of the owners. In its first two months, the Raizer has already been required on several occasions and the SWAST have asked Melton Court to present their experience as a case study to the East Devon area. Caption at the end of the article reads: The battery powered Raizer chair is put together around the patient, who must lie on his or her back. The two part back rest is slid under the back, first one side, then the other. The makers (www.liftup.dk/en) have three UK distributors. Each Raizer costs nearly £3,000. Discounts are available for multiple orders, so please tell your court's Services Manager if you are interested.

The second health article from Blundellsands Classic, is titled, HKA training First Aid at Work. Congratulations to HKAs Lisa Taylor and Moira McLaren, who have both successfully completed their Level 3 First Aid At Work training. Part of on-going efforts by Training Manager, Anne McElhoney, to keep staff training up-to-date, Lisa and Moira said they found the course very helpful. Being a night HKA, Lisa also said that she enjoyed learning alongside colleagues. The board have been fully supportive of Anne's programme of training and team development. Lisa and Moira are pictured smiling whilst holding up their certificates.

The final section of the Court Circular is the gardening article. Wyevale Garden Centres provided an article titled, Fight the blues with green: Five houseplants to help beat the seasonal blues. The article begins with, Summer is over and the days are getting colder and darker, and our moods often follow suit. Combat this feeling by inviting houseplants into your home this season, and enjoy great colours, gorgeous scents, and even air-purification for longer. Our thanks for this article to Wyevale Garden Centres. With over 150 centres, Wyevale is the UK's largest garden centre retailer. Heading: 1 Peace of mind. Banish any stuffy air and breathe easier with a *Spathiphyllum*, also known as a peace lily.

Despite its size, this particular plant has been proven to pack some major air-purifying abilities, alongside a delicate scent. Avoid buying in bulk as peace lilies work best when they are the solo feature piece in a room. Heading: 2 A prickly customer. For those who require houseplants with little maintenance, cacti are the perfect addition to your home. Not only do they come in a variety of shades, but because of their desire for a dry environment you don't have to worry about forgetting to water them. Terrariums are a huge trend this year and are fun and affordable to create at home: any glass container will do, and you can plant as many different types of cacti as you want. They also make ideal gifts! Heading: 3 Scent-sational. Feeling in need of a comforting remedy? Choose lavender! This particular botanical has often been used as a solution for ailments such as fatigue and insomnia due to its soothing and calming scent. Place pots of lavender around your home for a more relaxing feeling that will see you through the miserable weather. Heading: 4 Itsy bitsy Spider. Despite its name, the Spider Aloe shouldn't be avoided! The succulent spikes, interesting texture, and rich green colour make it a standout plant for your home. The versatility of this plant means that you can put it in most pots and watch it flourish. Though just like the child's song, avoid overwatering – this plant hates being left in stagnant water. Heading: 5 King of the Jungle. If you're looking for a mass of lush foliage that you can keep anywhere in the house, look no further than the Calathea. Accustomed to growing in shady areas of the Amazonian jungle, this plant is perfect for combating the seasonal blues by making your house look like a tropical paradise. Whilst it requires a little more maintenance than other houseplants, the large patterned leaves are guaranteed to brighten up your home. Heading: Top tips for winter houseplants: Don't overwater – the soil should be moist but not wet. Most indoor plants prefer being dry, but always consult your local centre for individual plant needs. Maintain a happy temperature – some will prefer being warm whilst some prefer a cooler shade so if you have lots of different plants best to find a happy medium. Prune dead leaves – ensures that healthy leaves have enough room to grow and keeps the plant looking healthy. Research repotting – different plants have different repotting cycles so do your research to avoid repotting too early/late. Choose the best pot – pretty pots will cheer up a room but always make sure it has the correct drain-age to avoid drowning your plant. Pick the best location – this will depend on your plant's needs but most will prefer a dry area with plenty of sunlight for the winter. Don't move your plant around too often – it takes them time to acclimatise to surroundings so moving it too much will stunt growth. Clean the leaves – plants gather dust when indoors that can stop sunlight from penetrating the leaves so wipe any dusty leaves with a damp cloth. Do not feed – most houseplants are dormant throughout this season and you don't have to worry about feeding them until spring – so relax!

A small last gardening inset is from Goreslands Court, titled, Looking to the stars. Courtesy – we assume – of the local bird life, this sunflower's seed found itself in the gutter and grew spectacularly heavenwards. It had to be removed for the gutter to work but was, we hope, replanted elsewhere.

End of the Winter 2017/18 edition.