

# Holiday help for you

MMHS is closed for the Easter holiday weekend from 2nd-5th April. If you have any emergencies during that time, please phone 020 3848 6020 and speak to Refurbishment

Manager John Bailey. For non-emergencies, please call back after Easter. You can also check our website [www.mmhs.org.uk](http://www.mmhs.org.uk) Happy Easter!



Photo: istock/07\_av

# roof 'n' roots

The Newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society • SPRING 2021

## The wonder of Derek

*MIXING WESLEY WITH PRESLEY SOUNDS LIKE THE WORK OF A CLEVER DJ. BUT IT'S JUST WHAT REVD DEREK ALDRIDGE DID IN BECOMING CHAPLAIN OF UK FAN ORGANISATION STRICTLY ELVIS.*

Derek Aldridge was all shook up when he retired – as a nationwide network of Elvis devotees became his parish.

Brought up in Cardiff, Derek was five when his father left the family home. A new male figure was about to take centre stage – the king of rock and roll.

Like many other kids in the 50s and 60s, 13-year-old Derek heard an Elvis record. It wasn't *Hound Dog* or *Blue Suede Shoes*, but a sentimental ballad *Old Shep*.

A cultural bomb went off in his heart – just as it did for countless other teenagers. As John Lennon said later, 'Before Elvis, there was nothing'. Derek was hooked.

Derek went on to enjoy other key influences, such as a set of drums, Boys' Brigade – which gave him a grounding in faith – and a local preacher's daughter called Janet.

They were different creatures. Janet was part of the Welsh National Opera. She sat



HYMN AND HER: Derek and Janet on their wedding in 1968 and their Golden Wedding just a few years ago.

and listened with her classically trained ear – while Derek spun raw Elvis LPs on his Dansette record player.

The couple attended church, but Derek wouldn't sing. 'Janet's father was the preacher one Sunday,' he recalled, 'and one hymn he chose was *And Can It Be*. On the verse – "My chains fell off" – I burst into song. And that was it.' It was a religious experience for him.

Derek and Janet married at age 20 in 1968. They started a family and had two children, Andrew and Clair. Derek was working as an accountant in the city treasurer's department. But family and friends encouraged him to consider becoming a minister.



The idea grew into a 'it's now or never' calling. He became a local preacher in 1975, linking his sermon points with Elvis songs. Derek studied for ministry at Wesley College, Bristol, in 1976. Finances were tight. Derek found a job to pay his way – in a brewery! 'The college was very understanding,' he recalled.

He was ordained in 1981. Derek led churches in Wales and North-east England, completing nearly 40 years of local ministry until retirement in 2012. The couple also acquired a grandchild, Katy. They became MMHS residents and experienced another big breakthrough.

Derek met David Wade, head of Strictly

**The Society have been beyond absolutely wonderful, we're very fortunate**



# A message from Mairi



In the last two editions of *Roof 'n' Roots*, I talked about love and hope – now for faith!

For me, this was the difficult one to write about. We all know faith is believing and trusting in God. For some, that has really been put to the test 'big time' during the Pandemic, and actually, I am sure most of us will admit to times of struggle with matters of faith.

Here's a Bible verse that I return to from time to time, especially as I can so easily get myself in knots trying to work out what God is doing, in the best of times far less in a time of crisis like now.

Proverbs 3: 5-6 says, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths'.

Faith-filled Christians will be much needed as we turn to tackling the massive societal and other ills caused by the Pandemic and the Lockdowns.

Wishing you a Happy Easter – and do enjoy the Easter Celebration CD 2021 enclosed with this edition of *Roof 'n' Roots*.

Mairi Johnstone CEO

## The wonder of Derek

Elvis, at an event in Cardiff. David invited Derek and Janet on a trip to 'Graceland', Elvis's former home in Memphis. They followed that dream.

While in Memphis, David told him, 'I've been looking for a vicar like you for 30 years'. Wanting a little less conversation and a little more action, he invited Derek to lead a Sunday gospel service at the annual Elvis Festival in Great Yarmouth. Derek was a hit!

That led to becoming official chaplain of Strictly Elvis. 'Each year we've been going back and it's grown and grown,' said Derek, now 74.

He wrote a prayer using song titles from Elvis's films, and led the crowd to sing along to the performer's gospel songs. Gospel was a significant part of Elvis's life and work. During lockdown, Derek released a sermon on YouTube. Clearly he was always on their minds, as Strictly Elvis folk responded with overwhelming gratitude.

Tragedy hit when Janet suffered a brain



ROCK STEADY: Derek and Janet at Graceland, former home of Elvis Presley

haemorrhage in 2014. But she's recovering – and showing remarkable improvement. Janet, 73, chats away about her experience. 'I was told I'd never speak and never walk,' she said, 'but Derek thinks I take "talking tablets"! And I try to go out every day to walk.'

MMHS have offered the couple more suitable accommodation to help with Janet's health challenges. 'The Society have been beyond absolutely wonderful,' said Janet. 'We're very fortunate.' To quote Elvis, they're movin' on. 🏠

## Residents respond to new decoration grant

Photo: Shutterstock



DECORATING DOSH: If you have problems painting rooms, we might be able to help

**MORE THAN A DOZEN MMHS RESIDENTS HAVE SNAPPED UP OUR BRAND NEW INTERNAL DECORATION GRANT.**

Launched in the Winter 2020 edition of *Roof 'n' Roots*, our latest scheme is underwritten by a unique £100,000 fund to help our more vulnerable residents

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Complete our online form at [www.mmhs.org.uk/decorating-grant](http://www.mmhs.org.uk/decorating-grant)  
Phone 020 3848 6020 option 6 for a paper form

enhance their home with Internal Decoration Grants.

'Pick-up has been steady,' said our Property Director Paul Gillam. 'We've had 13 applications, ranging from claims of £200 up to the full £1,000.'

Paul was expecting more demand. 'But with lockdown, many tradespeople have not been working as restrictions are so tight,' he pointed out.

Some residents may be reluctant to have decorators in their home. However, householders can be confident that MMHS has put in place a strict set of guidelines for all contractors – to ensure masking, hand sanitising and social distancing.

### YOUR WELLBEING

The new Internal Decoration Grant sits alongside our existing Wellbeing Fund, which enables us to offer additional support to residents – particularly in the areas of mobility and independence. For example, it was from this fund that we were able to supply one householder with an Automower to cut his lawn. There are many other ways in which we will continue to assist residents from the Wellbeing Fund.

The Internal Decoration Grant is for MMHS householders who may not be able to maintain their property to a decent standard without friends, family or finance companies helping out. 🏠



PC PROGRESS: Derek Lund is cracking on with his computer skills – thanks to wife Kathleen and the help of AbilityNet

## How to face your fear of computers

Computers would leave him cold. Now Revd Derek Lund is warming to them – thanks to the creative collaboration between MMHS and tech support group AbilityNet.

This 86-year-old Society resident was about to pack in his PC. Then *Roof 'n' Roots* dropped on his mat. Derek read the story about our new initiative and phoned AbilityNet.

They put him in touch with one of their network of 300 volunteers, Scott Thomas. Derek experienced a breakthrough. 'I'm making progress – and sticking with it,' he enthused.

Previously, Derek had tried attending other computer classes. The first session focused on making Christmas cards. 'I didn't even know where the space bar was,' he said.

He tried a second class. 'Everyone knew how to boot up the computer and how to cut and paste – even though it was supposed to be a beginners' lesson. I was out of my depth.'

Derek felt he was the only beginner. 'It was a disaster,' he said. Friends would say, 'You don't want to be bothering with that at your age!' For computer work at home, he'd call on wife Kathleen who used computers when she worked as a nurse.

Now AbilityNet is changing Derek's world. 'I get up every day to see what emails have come,' he explained. 'I've

got an interest in it now.

'If I want to contact MMHS, I can send them an email rather than phoning or posting a letter. There's still a long way to go, but Scott will keep teaching for as long as I need.'

Scott is a software consultant, and works on a voluntary basis with AbilityNet. 'Derek is very easy and very calm about it,' he said of his student's attitude.

Fear stops older people from making friends with technology, said Scott. 'It's fear of the unknown – the fear that they're going to break something and it's going to turn out badly.'

The key is to help older people move beyond that fear and realise they can't break anything. 'As soon as they get going,' said Scott, 'you can't stop them!'

Soon, Kathleen can rest a little as husband Derek does more computer work on his own. As we were going to press, the couple were celebrating their Diamond Wedding! Maybe Derek ordered the flowers on his computer? 🏠

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Call** AbilityNet on 0800 048 7642 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
- **Email** AbilityNet at [enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk)
- **Tell us** your current preferred email address by contacting [data@mmhs.org.uk](mailto:data@mmhs.org.uk)



# Take the strain off your drain

There's no doubt about it. It's the forgotten task. It's a drain on your resources. No one wants to clear their gutters.

We agree! So get a local contractor to do it for you. As an MMHS resident, you're entitled to a free gutter clean once a year. Simply submit the invoice to us for payment or reimbursement – total cost should be under £100.

Don't leave it until danger signs develop. Blocked gutters can lead to far more complicated structural problems, as damp sets in and eats away.

Generally, it's accepted that late autumn or early spring are good times to get this job done. Right now is ideal – after such a long, wet winter that we've had recently.



Photo: Shutterstock

PIPE DREAM: Make your gutters sing softly and sweetly - and MMHS will hand over the notes

You can see for yourself. Step outside when it's raining – with an umbrella, of course. Take a look from your doorstep or driveway. Is water overflowing or leaking from the gutters?

If rain is dripping over the edge, there's a blockage. That's because gutters are designed to collect water off the roof and lead it safely down the drainpipe –

away from your house.

Leaves, twigs, moss and dirt can build up. The leaves break down into compost for seeds and weeds. Before long, you could have a mini-rainforest up there!

Prevent any more serious issues happening to your home. Book your annual clean and let a local contractor take the strain off your drain. Then we'll pipe down about it. If you have any questions, phone us on 020 3848 6032. 🏠

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

*Gutted about your gutters?  
Book a local contractor.*

*If you have any problems, phone us  
on **020 3848 6032***

## How lockdown led to opportunity

### REFLECTION BY REVD PAT BILLSBORROW

Opportunity would not be the natural word to turn to in the circumstances in which we've found ourselves over the past year. And yet, let me share some experience with you, as we start the journey out of lockdown.

We've had the opportunity to see the creative world take over in a way I have never seen it do before. The leaves of the trees untainted by pollution, the birdsong reverberating and so loud because of the lack of traffic noise, the birds and wild animals being more forward in interacting with their human companions almost as if they sensed that the world was becoming a different



Revd Pat Billsborrow is a former radio journalist and a past board member of MMHS. Her reflection is adapted, with permission, from the book *Lockdown: Lexicon & Legacy*, published by Church in the Market Place Publications.

place – these are all part of our experiences now.

Then there have been the opportunities to get to know new people as we've passed their gardens talking over the fence in a way there was never time for before, becoming receivers as well as givers when a person called and left a gift on the step, smiling at you from the gate. But also we've become givers in a

very different way - by speaking more frequently to friends and relatives on the phone because there is time to do so. There has been the opportunity to read more and reflect more on the creative nature of God and of the commitment we have made to the journey Jesus calls us to, giving us the strength and courage through his Holy Spirit.

Opportunity is not the first word that comes to mind in these circumstances.

But if we have eyes wide open, they are there to be found every day, as we journey through and out of lockdown. 🏠

**We've had the opportunity to see the creative world take over in a way I have never seen it do before**

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

*Share your story of lockdown. Your experience could encourage and inspire others. Email **feedback@mmhs.org.uk***

