

THERE are many life-affirming moments at Springdene homes, and we had a marvellous one last week when Spring Grove resident Michael Muskett was reunited with his much-loved hurdy-gurdy.



The hurdy-gurdy is a musical instrument whose sound is produced by the friction of a wheel against taut strings. It has a varying number of strings, with six being the most common. Michael is an expert in all aspects of them and enjoys playing in the baroque style.

Now aged 94, with limited eyesight and living with dementia, Michael has been a talented musician all

his life, specialising in playing esoteric and antique instruments, performing across the globe. During the pandemic, he had no access to his favourite hurdy-gurdy, but when it was restored to him last week, he immediately recalled a favourite tune and played it beautifully. It is no exaggeration to say that playing his *Vielle à Rue*, as it is known, brought tears to the eyes of all who observed.

Michael says that being able to play and practise is vital to his identity – “It is who I am,” he says. And it was Michael’s lack of access to live music that inspired his daughter Jennie Muskett to launch the live-streamed “Music with Love” concerts, of which 35 have been brought to us so far. They are taking a spring break just now, but will be back on June 23, with what Jennie says will be a “fabulous” programme. In the meantime, if you would like to make a donation to this excellent project please go to their website

<https://www.artistsandresidents.org>

Music has always been at the heart of life at Springdene and we are hoping that if vaccinations and other measures against the pandemic proceed satisfactorily we will be able once more to stage the Spring Grove Music Festival in January, which has had to be cancelled for the past two years. This highly praised and unique event in the London concert calendar brings together young and old for all that is joyous about music-making. We know you will be pleased to have the chance to be part of it again.

In the meantime, we welcome the return of live music to the homes this week in the form of the ever-popular Roddy Skeaping, who for years has been entertaining folk at Spring Grove and Springview with his delightful accordion and violin playing. Roddy’s return in person heralds the resumption of more outside entertainment, of which we hope to announce further projects in the next few weeks.

For too long the pandemic has forced an embargo on many popular events which folk had grown to love. But in the meantime, we are very grateful to our splendid activities teams - led by Eirlys, Magda, Tegan, Malwina, Steve and Odile – who have found so many inventive ways of putting a smile on people’s faces.

There were certainly plenty of smiles at our parties in all three homes last week to mark Dementia Action Week. Special cakes were baked by the residents, which were also submitted as entries for the latest round of our Bake Off competition, and a fantastic time was had by all. At Spring Grove, the party coincided with Elizabeth Lauder’s 81st birthday (pictured below), where she made a lovely speech that was applauded by everyone.

As for the cakes, they were swiftly demolished after being judged for the Bake Off, which has now reached the semi-finals. How exciting! The colour scheme of blue and yellow forget-me-nots was strongly seen in all three entries. One home went for a simple Victoria sponge, but added a thin layer of marzipan to imbue a hint of almond throughout. Another opted for a blue velvet cake with cream cheese frosting and the other chose a rustic lemon and poppyseed drizzle! All looked stunning.



As always, the judging was a close call, but the winner was Spring Lane, scoring high on both looks and taste. As Eirlys, our chief taster, put it: "Gorgeously presented and a wonderful flavour. This cake had everything going on – a delicate hint of chocolate and vanilla through the blue velvet cake, without being too sweet.

"It was beautifully moist, and the cream cheese frosting was sweet, but not overpowering. The cigarillos around the outside were also delicious and really added to the overall presentation." It's going to be an exciting final next week!

As well as partying and baking, residents have been busy with some exciting new projects. At Springview, Acting Club has been very popular. Malwina produces the scripts and our budding thespians perform – with resident Susan Ritchie impressing in a starring role. Gardening, too, is keeping folk occupied, with Tegan at Spring Grove leading the planting of herbs such as basil and oregano. Come the summer the whole place will be fragrant indeed!

Three cheers to our distinguished residents of the week who, as usual, are pampered with flowers and chocolates, as well as having their wishes indulged.

At Spring Grove our chosen resident Max Ehrenwerth was born in Berlin, then moved to England in 1939. He was evacuated to Northern Ireland, where he stayed until 1947 when he returned to London.

Max became an apprentice tailor, following in his father's footsteps, but also has a degree in economics and worked as a lecturer. He is a quiet and private man who enjoys most rice dishes. He also relishes a glass of Cinzano, so both will be on the menu for him.

Lois Godfrey at Spring Lane hails from Australia and loved going back there on holidays to see friends. She is a big fan of Maria Callas and has a huge poster of Callas in her room. Formerly a pharmacist, she enjoys taking part in activities but likes her private time, too. She also has a taste for reading celebrity magazines and watching documentaries, particularly biographies and geographical films.

Lois loved her flowers and chocolates, but hasn't asked for anything special to eat, as she hasn't got a big appetite. So we'll be giving her some special one-on-one TLC.

At Springview, Pat Crichard is an extremely musically talented lady, who played many instruments in her youth and was a big part of the Salvation Army band. Her main instruments were the French horn and piano, but she is able to play many more as well. Pat mostly enjoys being in her room or spending time with her dear friend Celia (also at Springview). Recently, Pat has given us two talks about her life, which were hugely enjoyed by the residents and staff. As her treat, she has chosen her favourites – fish and chips and fruit cake.

Lastly, we've had some exciting news this week from our sponsored charity Medical Detection Dogs. It seems that the latest weapon against Covid-19 has four legs and a wet nose!

Six animals from the charity took part in a special Covid study. It found that dogs could detect Covid-19 on clothing worn by infected people with up to 94.3% sensitivity– in other words they would correctly identify 94 out of every 100 infected people. This compares with a sensitivity of 58-77% for lateral flow tests, and 97.2% for PCR tests.

However, dogs beat PCR tests on speed, making a diagnosis in under a second. "This includes people who are asymptomatic," said Professor James Logan of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, who co-led the study. To perform the tests, the dogs were given an old sock to smell – providing these

amazing results. When the dogs – delightfully named Millie, Lexie, Asher, Kyp, Tala and Marlow – sniffed out a positive they wagged their tails

It is thanks partly to your generous donations that all this has proved possible, and we will be rewarded soon by the arrival of our sponsored puppy to be named Spring after the theme of our homes. We're excited to learn what breed it is to be – it's possible, we're told this week, that it could even be, appropriately, a Springer Spaniel. When we get the first pictures, we'll be thrilled to share them with you. Woof, woof!
