



**Kent and Medway**  
NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust



Your news bulletin from KMPT Voluntary services

## Welcome to Volunteer Voices...

Spring is in the air, and we are looking forwards as restrictions begin to ease in England and we can start to offer more services and have more of you on site again.

It's been a busy month with new volunteers starting and preparations underway for various walks, talks and activities in the coming months, which we will be sure to keep you posted on!

Although we've had a lot of successes to celebrate, including the Time and Place book launch (see more below), the past month has seen a lot of sadness for us as a team as two members of the Voluntary services family have sadly passed away. You can read more about Lesley and John in the newsletter, but we want to take a moment to remember them and to send our love and support to their families.

We are continuously overwhelmed by the kindness, thoughtfulness and dedication that our volunteers show, and we hope to continue to grow as a department with more opportunities arising as the year progresses.

Keep taking care of yourselves and remember, we're always at the other end of the phone or email if you want to get in contact with us about your current role, a new role or indeed something exciting you've been doing at home to keep busy during lockdown.

Stay safe.

## Time and Place poetry project

Jess Shaw, one of our student volunteers, joined forces with Keith Oliver, one of KMPT's dementia

envoys, and Liz Jennings, an author and group facilitator, to create the poetry project 'Time and Place.' The concept was a series of five workshops for those living with dementia who were members of our Forget me nots and the SUNshiners dementia groups, where they could develop poetry centred on the history of Canterbury and their own memories.

The project was due to start on 13 May 2020, and run for the consecutive five weeks, with the participants taking part in two hours (on average) long sessions, where they would walk around Canterbury and draw on their own life experiences to create personal poetry. Twelve service users signed up for the project; and with the help of Clare Streeter, KMPT's Empowerment and liaison co-ordinator, Jess managed to recruit more students from her university to volunteer at each of these sessions, so that each person taking part could have one-to-one attention as well as someone who could act as a scribe to help encourage and develop creativity.

And then COVID-19 struck.

The trio decided to go virtual by uploading short videos of poetry exercises to Liz's blog once a week, so participants could work through them at their own pace. As they couldn't walk around Canterbury, Liz suggested they changed the focus from the history of Canterbury to examining the participants' own homes in a new light. Each week they focused on a different room in the house, encouraging those isolated at home to view their environment in a fun way.

As originally planned, the participants were supported by student volunteers who checked-in on them each week and met with them virtually to go through the exercises. There were fifteen primary participants, who came from our Forget me nots and SUNshiners groups, as well DEEP network members (including some people based in Scotland and Wales!). There were six volunteers, including Jess, on hand to support the workshops, and a huge variety of material has been submitted to the blog!

Time and Place in some ways benefited from being taken online instead of being in person as the team managed to write and publish a book of their poetry! The DEEP network (The UK network of dementia voices) kindly provided funding for the works that the participants created during the workshops to be developed into a book with the proceeds going to DEEP. The book is beautifully illustrated by one of the participants, and includes the volunteers' and participants' experiences and thoughts on the project. When the book was published, Keith, Liz and Jess held a virtual book launch, so that everyone involved in the project could celebrate together and catch up.

Although the project has now ended, its legacy lives on! Not just in the form of the book but it's inspired DEEP to consider setting up a monthly poetry group and Keith and Jess have been giving talks about the project to various organisations (with Liz contributing videos about the project).

It's safe to say that the project has grown beyond everyone's expectations and we're so proud of Jess, Keith and Liz for creating not only a safe and creative space for those living with dementia but also for impacting the wider conversation about the types of groups and experiences that should be run to support people in the future.

You can read about the project in full [here](#) and purchase the group's book [here](#).



## Learning more about the history of Webb's garden

You may remember last month that we shared some photos of Webb's garden in the snow, taken by our Voluntary services co-ordinator for east Kent, Zoe Young?

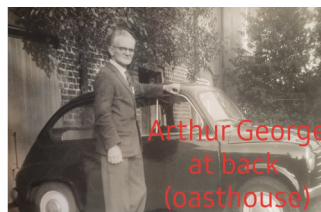
Zoe posted the photos on Webb's [Facebook page](#) and a lady named Sue commented on them saying that her grandfather had been the hospital secretary at St Martin's and she shared some wonderful photos of the site. Zoe continued to speak to her via email, so she could find out more about Sue's grandparents, Webb's garden and her memories of the area.

Zoe found out that Sue's grandparents' lived in the farmhouse attached to the garden in the 1930s and their names were Arthur and Ellen Webb. There was an oast house attached, which was used as their garage, and an old dairy too. The front door of the house faced into the garden, with a paddock on the left behind the wall, where she gathered mushrooms. On the right was a track down to the pig sties, a barn and fields.

Later on, the NHS put three mobile homes in the garden and the addresses were 1, 2 and 3 Webb's garden which was how it got its name!

Sue has very fond memories of spending time staying with her grandparents and enjoyed her time in the garden. We are delighted that our snowy pictures evoked such wonderful memories and that Sue was happy to share them with us.

This conversation has ignited another project – one of our volunteers, Megan, is going to create a lifestory of Webb's garden. Once this is complete, we will share it and it will be available at Webb's for all to read so watch this space!



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## Reviews are in for our second book club meeting

We had another successful book club meeting this month, with lots of volunteers joining the session via Lifesize. I think it's safe to say that these moments are a lovely escapism for us all from the restrictions of lockdown, and help us all to feel more connected. We continued discussing 'Where the Crawdads Sing' by Delia Owens, and below you can read an honest review from one of our book club members:

*The first book chosen by the book club, 'Where the Crawdads Sing' is a murder-mystery combined with a coming-of-age story together with an overall theme of overcoming adversity and prejudice. The reader is not introduced to the main character at first, as the book opens with the discovery of a body in the marsh. There is rich depiction of nature, in particular the marshlands of North Carolina, interwoven with poignant description of the emotions felt by the main character as the story unfolds.*

*Nevertheless, some of our readers found parts of the narrative too slow, the writer dwelling too much on the surroundings without enough action. Some also found parts of the book completely unbelievable, and a certain degree of suspension of belief is needed as Kya, the heroine of the novel, is taught to read and write, and in a somewhat short space of time without any formal education becomes a published author and illustrator.*

*The readers, who had finished the book, agreed that they enjoyed the two twists at the end. Personally, I enjoyed this book very much and would highly recommend it as a good read.*

Volunteer, Erica Martin has chosen our next book to read which is *The Outrun* by Amy Liptrot. The next meeting will be on Friday 26 March at 2pm.

If you are interested in joining, please email Louise [here](#).

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## National Pet Month

April is [National Pet Month](#).

National Pet Month is a chance to celebrate the wellbeing and benefits that pets bring to our lives. To help do this we'd love for you to send us pictures of you and your pets.

As part of the celebrations, as a Trust we are hoping to run events with our therapy animals that visit our sites – COVID-19 permitting of course.

If you have any pictures or stories you'd like to send us then please do to;  
[kmpt.voluntaryservices@nhs.net](mailto:kmpt.voluntaryservices@nhs.net)

Similarly, if you are one of our therapy animal volunteers, we'd love you to submit something about your experiences with the Trust.



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## A big welcome to a new volunteer

New volunteer, Charis Lam, has just started coordinating and running a book trolley at Eastern and coastal area offices in the reception area. It will be available once a week for staff and visitors to purchase books.

The money raised will go to Voluntary services and will help us to continue developing new and existing services. All books are sanitised and individually bagged in order to meet infection control regulations.

Charis is also volunteering as a Faith volunteer and supporting David Stedman, our Chaplain for east Kent.

Welcome Charis to our family of volunteers and we hope you enjoy your time with us.

If you are thinking of becoming a volunteer at KMPT, then you can take a look at the opportunities offered [here](#).



## Student volunteer to Assistant psychologist - Jack Fakley's journey

During my time at Canterbury Christ Church University as a clinical psychology student it dawned on me that despite learning the ins-and-outs of mental health services and hearing of retrospective cases that many professionals had worked on, I was yet to work with a single service user or individual living with mental ill health. This was when Clare Streeter, Empowerment and liaison co-ordinator, stepped in. Clare helped to open the door to a wide variety of volunteer roles in Canterbury and Ashford that I greatly relished. This included working with a variety of mental health teams, memory services and dementia advocacy groups including the Canterbury envoys and Ashford based Phoenix group, culminating in a Kent-wide envoy-lead dementia day event; all the while working alongside a brilliant variety of welcoming and enthusiastic service users.



Being a volunteer often tested my skills, however, it was the gradual increase in confidence working with service users and focussing on their individual needs that I believe contributed to gaining my first full-time position within KMPT as a Community support worker in Ashford community mental health services for older people. Being fortunate enough to work in this position and gain experience alongside such a fantastic team of passionate and approachable clinicians has helped me to pursue putting my theoretical knowledge in to practice, leading to me gaining a position as an Assistant psychologist within the same excellent team in Ashford. It's the commendable work of the volunteer services team that helped introduce me to the working world of mental health services and ultimately the great work that KMPT does with such a variety of service-users; this experience being just as valuable as any workshop or lecture that I could have ever attended at university.

If you are a student looking for volunteering opportunities, [get in touch](#) with the team and we can talk through the options available.

## In loving memory

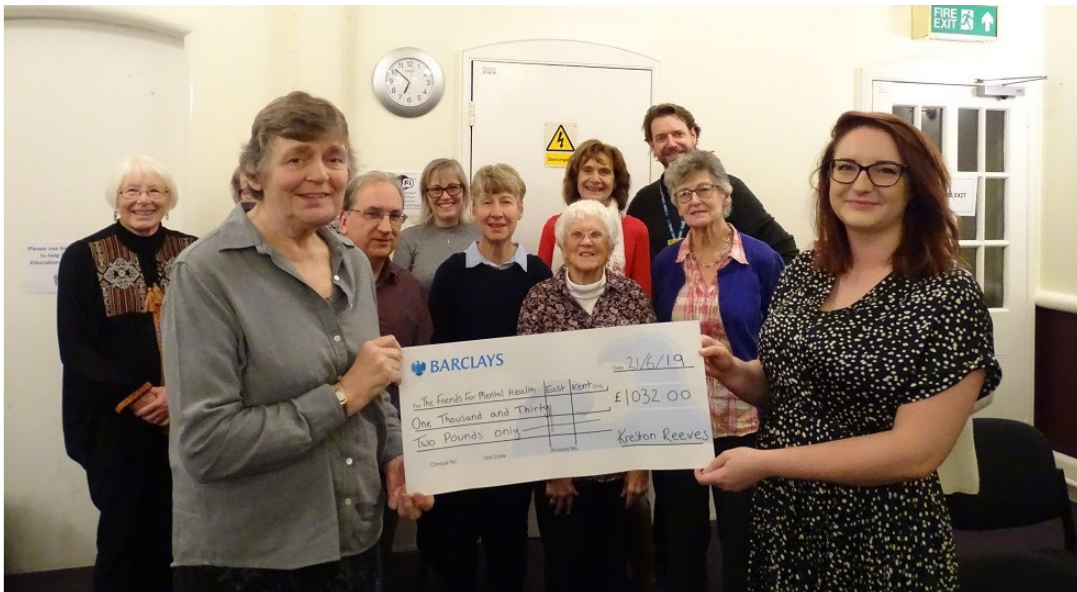
In the last month we have lost two important members of our Voluntary services family – Lesley Mewett and John Hawkins.

Lesley Mewett, one of our much loved and long-term volunteers, sadly passed away on Thursday 25 February at Kent and Canterbury Hospital. She was 69.

Lesley's journey with KMPT began over 20 year ago when she was part of the cleaning services supervisory team at St Martins, Canterbury and then joined the administration team. In all that she did she was exactly the same – organised, reliable, efficient and sociable – a crucial part of the team! On retiring, Lesley continued to support the East Kent Friends and took up the role of Vice Chair of the Friends in 2008. Lesley can be seen in the image below sporting a black jumper in the centre of the image. She will be so missed by all that knew her, including her fellow trustees, the St Martin's staff and everyone who has worked with the East Kent Friends. She also kept the trolley service going at St Martin's alongside Muriel, another much loved volunteer. Lesley constantly went above and beyond to make sure that the trolley was filled with things that our patients needed and wanted – including some great bargains!

As a team, we are incredibly shocked and saddened by Lesley's death. It never occurred to any of us that she wouldn't get through her illness and our thoughts are with Alan (Lesley's husband), Nicola, Sally (her daughters and their husbands) and Nathan (her grandson).

We will miss Lesley so very much.

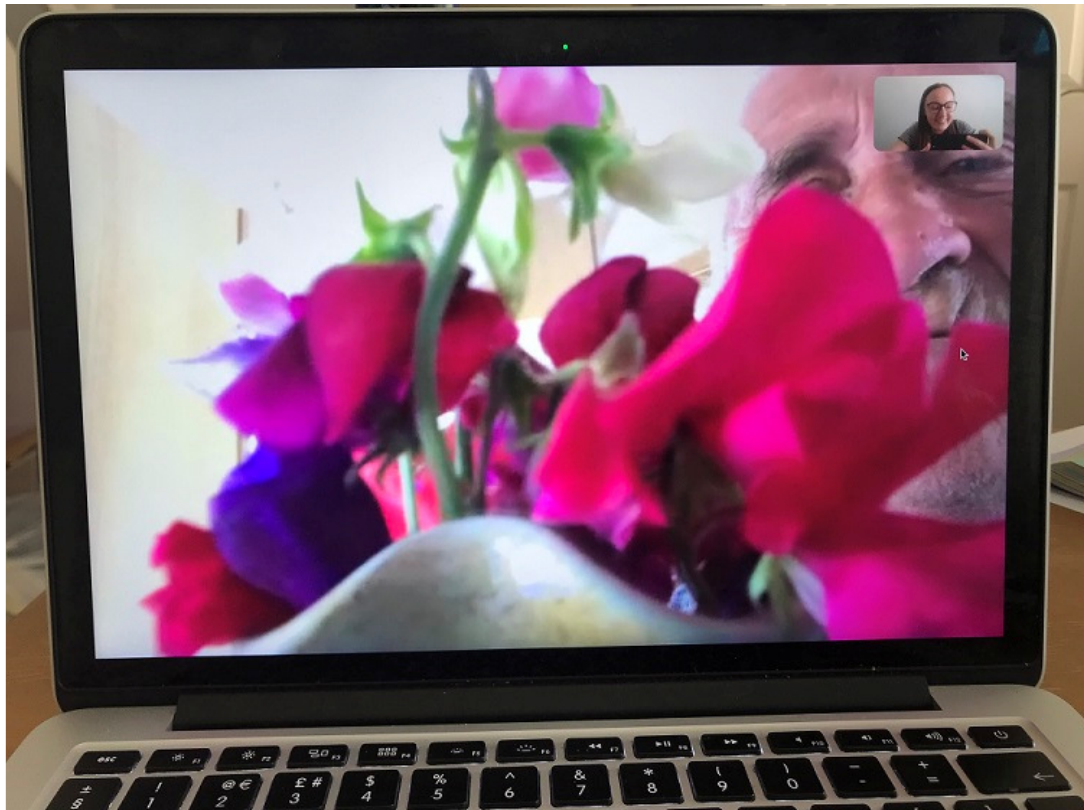


We also sadly lost John Hawkins, a beloved member of our SUNshiners group. John was a family man, who lived in the house next door to where he was born in Aylesham. Having been diagnosed with dementia, John joined our SUNshiners group – you can see John discussing living with dementia in the DEEP videos that were made last year. He was a man of many stories and he spoke at the Canterbury Dementia Day June 2019 in front of over 100 people in the audience. He was motivated and enthusiastic about raising awareness about dementia and was a pleasure to know.

John was also a keen gardener and particularly loved his sweet peas which he'd grown himself. Our Empowerment and liaison co-ordinator, Clare Streeter, had the pleasure of visiting John's garden and described it as: "as an explosion of colour and beauty, immaculately kept."

During the pandemic, John was in regular contact with Laura Smith, one of our volunteer IT buddies, who helped him and his wife to connect with his family and friends via video calling software. You can see an image of John below sharing his beloved sweet peas with Laura via Lifesize.

Everyone in the team who knew John is deeply saddened to hear of his passing, and our thoughts are with his wife, family and friends at this time.



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