

# Pilgrims matters

News for Pilgrims Hospices supporters

Spring/Summer 2026



Pilgrims Hospices Lottery  
**30<sup>th</sup>**  
**Anniversary**  
*Together we make a difference*



Celebrating  
**25 years**  
of Care at  
Pilgrims Hospices  
Ashford  
pg 15

## Together we make a difference



# Chair's comment

## Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2026 edition of Pilgrims Matters.

I'm always proud to introduce this magazine because it reflects what Pilgrims Hospices is really about – people, community and care.

In this issue, you'll read a moving article about author David Dye and the way he has supported Pilgrims while navigating his own loss. It's honest and thoughtful, and a reminder that behind every act of support there is a very personal story. We are truly grateful to David for sharing his journey.

You'll also meet Margaret as she follows her musical theatre dreams. Stories like hers show how important it is to keep living well and doing what brings joy, whatever stage of life we're at.

Looking ahead, we're excited to showcase our events for 2026–27. Whether you enjoy a summer fair, taking on the Pilgrims Way Challenge walk, cycling in the Pilgrims Cycle Challenge, or coming together at our in-memory event, Sunflower Memories, there is something for everyone. Your involvement makes a real difference.

I was also delighted to read how our Time to Create group has helped Kevin discover new skills and friendships. It's another example of how support at Pilgrims goes beyond clinical care – it's about connection and confidence too.

Being Chair of the Board of Trustees is both rewarding and, at times, challenging. We are responsible for setting the strategic framework, for decision making and for working closely with our Chief Executive and Executive Management Team to ensure that Pilgrims can meet the growing need for end-of-life care across our community. It is a privilege to serve in this role and to see, first-hand, the dedication of our staff and volunteers.

Thank you for being such wonderful supporters.

Wishing you a warm, bright spring and summer.

*Karen Warden*

**Karen Warden**

Chair of Trustees, Pilgrims Hospices

Are you coping with an life-limiting condition or illness? Find out more about Pilgrims' support by calling our Advice Line on **01233 504 133**.

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## Talk to our team

To contact our Chief Executive or one of our trustees please email [eastkent@pilgrimshospices.org](mailto:eastkent@pilgrimshospices.org) or write to our Canterbury address below.

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Canterbury  
Kent CT2 8JA  
t 01227 459 700/  
812612

Hythe Road,  
Willesborough  
Ashford  
Kent TN24 0NE  
t 01233 504 100

Ramsgate Road,  
Margate  
Kent CT9 4AD  
t 01843 233 920

# A message from our CEO



Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2026 edition of Pilgrims Matters

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Dear Supporters,

As we move through 2026, it is clear that the pressures facing hospices across the UK are continuing to grow. Rising demand for end of life care, increasing clinical complexity, workforce shortages, and the widening gap between statutory funding and the true cost of hospice care are now familiar headlines across our sector. These challenges are real, and Pilgrims is not immune to them.

Despite the uncertainties, I am continually inspired by how everyone at Pilgrims pulls together. Whether it is adapting to new ways of working, supporting colleagues through tough days, developing innovative fundraising ideas, or welcoming families with warmth and kindness, our staff and volunteers keep the commitment to our patients, and their families, at the heart of everything we do.

This year, we are focusing more than ever on sustainability; not just financial sustainability, but the long term wellbeing of our workforce, the experience of patients and their families, and the future of our hospice buildings. Our modernisation plans in Canterbury are a great example of this forward looking approach. In January we submitted our full planning application for the modernisation and redevelopment of our London Road hospice to Canterbury City Council. Investment in safe, modern, energy efficient spaces is essential for charities like ours, ensuring that our buildings keep pace with clinical standards, environmental and sustainability expectations and the complex needs of our patients.

In this issue of Pilgrims Matters, you'll find stories, from across our sites and services, that show the very best of Pilgrims.

You will hear from colleagues who go the extra mile every day, volunteers who give their time so generously, and local people whose kindness and support helps to keep our services running. These are the inspirational moments that remind us that hospice care is everything you would expect and everything you wouldn't.

Across Pilgrims, we are focused, ambitious and determined to ensure that hospice care in east Kent remains resilient for the future. Thank you for being part of that shared commitment and for being part of our story, now and in the future.

With very best wishes

**Helen Bennett, FCIPD**  
Chief Executive Officer



# UPDATE ON OUR PROGRESS

## Pilgrims Hospices Canterbury Modernisation

We're pleased to share that at the end of January we reached an important milestone, our full planning application for the modernisation and redevelopment of our London Road hospice was submitted to Canterbury City Council.

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This follows months of careful design work, conversations with staff and volunteers, and feedback from patients, families, and our local community. It's been a real team effort, and we're grateful to everyone who has taken the time to share their thoughts and ideas along the way.



## What the modernisation will bring?

Modernising our site will ensure that the facilities for patients, families, staff and volunteers at Canterbury will meet the future needs of our community.

Your support is helping us shape a hospice that feels welcoming, calm and fit for the future. Our plans include:

- A brighter, more accessible hospice environment, with spaces that feel comfortable and private for everyone who walks through our doors.
- A brand-new Inpatient Unit (IPU), with better access to the gardens, designed to meet the needs of people who rely on our care now and in the years ahead.
- Modernised Victorian buildings, keeping the character of our much-loved site while improving how the space works day to day.
- A new therapy centre, gym, sanctuary space and landscaped gardens, giving patients and families more places for gentle activity, reflection, and wellbeing.
- Environmentally responsible features, such as air-source heat pumps, solar panels and improvements to biodiversity.
- Better movement around the whole site, making it easier for visitors, staff and volunteers to get where they need to go.

These changes will help ensure that the high-quality care we're known for is matched by the setting in which it is delivered.

We'll keep you posted as the planning process continues, and there will be plenty of opportunities for supporters to follow our progress and stay involved.

## Looking ahead together

Pilgrims has been caring for local people from our Canterbury site for more than 40 years. This modernisation is an important step in ensuring we continue to offer specialist end-of-life care to our patients, and their families, in buildings that fully support the work of our teams.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Your encouragement and support for our plans is helping to shape the future of hospice care for your community. You can follow our progress by visiting our dedicated website: [www.phmodernisation.org](http://www.phmodernisation.org)

[Read full article online](#)





# Anniversary

*Together we make a difference*



A new, easy way to play

We're excited to share that you can now buy entries for our weekly lottery draw in all of our Pilgrims Hospices shops. It's still fantastic value at just £1 per entry, with prizes of up to £20,000 to be won.



## 30 years of change and innovation and what a difference you have made

By Shiralee Riddell, Lottery Manager

Since Pilgrims Hospices Lottery began so much has changed. Since launching our lottery in 1996 our services have grown, reaching more local people. In 1996 our Therapy centres supported 200 patients. Today we give compassionate end-of-life care and support to more than 900 patients and their carers each year through our Therapy Centres.

We built our Ashford hospice in 2001 and in 2009 we introduced our Hospice at Home service, offering support and personal care for families looking after loved ones in their last days of life.



By entering our weekly lottery, taking part in our festive Superdraw, buying wedding favours or gift cards, you join thousands of people who help raise more than £1.2 million every year for Pilgrims Hospices.



Later, In 2013, we opened our Education & Training Centre, the Ann Robertson Centre named after our founder, to provide education and training for healthcare professionals. These are just a few of the many milestones we've reached since the Lottery began.

Over the years our Lottery team have been just as busy. With the help of our experienced office staff, volunteers, collectors and promotional team, we've introduced new ways for you to support Pilgrims, including festive Superdraws, scratch cards, wedding favours and gift vouchers.



### Celebrating our 30th Anniversary

This year is the Lottery's 30th Anniversary; our focus is on raising awareness and funds for the care Pilgrims provides through our in-patient units, in the community or in people's own homes.

As part of the celebrations, we've been delighted to welcome many new lottery supporters from across east Kent. Keep an eye out for our promotional team in your area, and please consider joining the growing community who collectively make 21,500 weekly lottery entries and help us make a real difference.

And finally, no anniversary would be complete without mentioning a much-loved member of our team: our little car, fondly named Lotty,

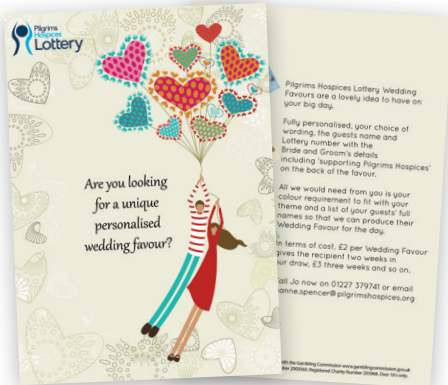
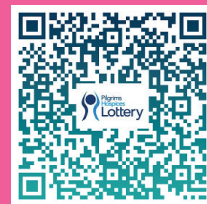
who joined us in 2012. If you spot Lotty zipping around east Kent raising funds and awareness, please give her a wave.

Thank you for supporting us and for helping us provide end-of-life care to our community.

## Support Pilgrims Hospices

Join Pilgrims Hospices Lottery today.

01227 379741  
[pilgrimshospices.org/lottery](http://pilgrimshospices.org/lottery)



In 2014, we made joining our lottery even easier with the introduction of Direct Debit payments and now, in our 30th year, you can buy your weekly draw entries in our shops too.



[Find out more here](#)



You could win up to **£20k**

## A Legacy in Colour:

# Thanet artist donates his life's work to Pilgrims Hospices

Local artist Carl Stafford has pledged to leave his entire collection of paintings to Pilgrims Hospices in his Will, creating a lasting legacy that will help support hospice care for people across east Kent.

When we visited Carl at his gallery-style home in Ramsgate, every wall was alive with colour and surrealist imagination. He shared how his lifelong passion for art, and personal experience of hospice care, inspired his decision.

Carl's father was cared for by a hospice many years ago, and the experience stayed with him.

*"The care was just exemplary. Nothing was too much trouble, and they made the end of his life comfortable and free from pain. They even organised his wedding, which made the end of his life so special for him and those closest to him. That sparked something within me that made me realise supporting special places such as hospices was really important."*

*"I'm a very positive person, and making this gift, I hope, will help many people in the future to take comfort and support from Pilgrims Hospices. I take great pleasure in the thought that my own work will live on and continue to make a difference."*

By choosing to leave his entire body of work to Pilgrims in his Will, Carl is ensuring that his love of art will continue to support hospice care for future generations.

If this has inspired you, or you have already left a gift you'd like to tell us about, we'd love to hear from you! You can use the Gifts in Wills form enclosed, and send back to us in the FREEPOST envelope provided.



[Read full article online](#)

*Do you need to make or update your Will?*

**MAKE A WILL MONTH**

**Support local hospice care and have your Will written during Make a Will Month.**

Each April, local solicitors donate their time to make or update Wills in exchange for payment to Pilgrims Hospices.

**Have you made your will?**

To find out more visit [pilgrimshospices.org/will](http://pilgrimshospices.org/will) or contact the Gifts in Wills team on 01227 782060 or via [giftsinwills@pilgrimshospices.org](mailto:giftsinwills@pilgrimshospices.org)

**FR** Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

[Find out more here](#)

## How Pilgrims Hospices helped author David Dye navigate loss and find purpose

*“Pilgrims Hospices is very special to me. I find it hard to explain why because it’s more of a feeling than something you can describe. But when you’ve been touched by the kind of care they offer, it stays with you forever.”*



For Faversham-based author and Pilgrims supporter David Dye, the journey of grief, healing, and rediscovery began with profound loss and grew into something lasting and meaningful, thanks to the care and comfort he and his wife, Karen, received from Pilgrims Hospices.

Karen died in June 2021 after a ten-year battle with an extremely rare and cruel cancer. Her illness was relentless, marked by aggressive treatments, clinical trials and even a complete blood transplant. “What she endured sometimes felt like more torture than the illness itself,” David reflects. “But she faced it all with dignity and extraordinary strength.”

During the final five years of her life, Pilgrims was a constant source of comfort. “They gave us dignity, peace and a calm, caring environment when we needed it most. The staff and volunteers go far beyond professionalism, they offer true humanity.”

In the early weeks after Karen’s death, David felt lost. Sitting at his kitchen table, searching for something to steady him, he came across a handwritten memoir by his late mother-in-law describing her childhood in South Africa. “Her words were so vivid, I felt I was standing on the lake’s edge beside her. It pulled me out of my darkness.”

Inspired, David began to write. What started as memoir gradually drifted into fiction. Four years later, he has published four novels, with a fifth on the way. Every penny of profit, now totalling thousands of pounds, is donated to Pilgrims. “Karen told me in a dream not to be tight, to give it all to Pilgrims. I’ve learned not to argue with her!”

David still writes entirely by hand. “Using a pen lets me drift into other worlds.” With the support of a local typist and publisher, his stories now reach readers far and wide, always with Karen’s memory at their heart.

Karen, born and raised in Canterbury, was athletic, modest and quietly remarkable, a talented high diver and gifted equestrian who loved animals deeply. One of David’s favourite memories, now woven into his



first novel, tells of Karen bravely rescuing a puppy from coyotes during a sunset trail ride in Arizona. “That’s who she was, brave beyond belief.”



Recently, David donated Karen’s treasured teddy bear collection to Pilgrims to help raise funds. In his garden, crimson-leaved Cercis trees grow in her memory. “If I ever move,” he says, “those trees are coming with me.”

“We’re all in the queue to meet our maker,” David reflects. “But when that moment comes, Pilgrims are there. That kind of comfort is beyond value. I’ll support them as long as I live.”

[Read full article online](#)

# Pilgrims Hospices Events 2026

Get involved here

● Cycling ● Running ● Walking/Trekking ● Challenges ● In Memory ● Community

## Pilgrims Hospices Cycle Challenge

Sunday 3 May



Celebrating the 16th year. Get on your bike to explore the beautiful and varied countryside of east Kent alongside 1,300 cyclists of all abilities.

Ride it your way by choosing one of five ride distances, then celebrate crossing the finish line in our cycling event village.

**Location:** All routes start and finish at our event village at the University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7SR

**Registration:** Standard entry closes 13 April 2026 (entry will close as soon as capacity is reached).

The Circuit – 30 miles (£35)

The Classic – 50 miles (£45)

The Challenge – 75 miles (£45)

The Century – 100 miles (£55)

The Epic – 125 miles (£65)

On the day entry is subject to event capacity, so early registration is advised to avoid disappointment.

**Sponsorship:** As much as you can!

**Website:** pilgrimscyclechallenge.org

## Ultra Challenge Series Throughout the year

Jurassic Coast – 16 May 2026

London to Brighton – 23 May 2026

Lake District – 6 June 2026

South Coast – 5 September 2026

Thames Path – 12 September 2026

**Registration:** Variable depending on chosen distance and funding option

**Sponsorship:** Various sponsorship options available

**Contact:** Events team

## Pilgrims Way Challenge

Saturday 20 June



Enjoy the rural beauty of one of England's oldest and least-trodden national trails. Lace up your walking boots or running shoes for a 25km, 35km or 55km route along the Pilgrims Way from Dover to the historic cathedral city of Canterbury and onward to a coastal finish in Wye. It's the perfect challenge for varying fitness levels, with full event support and a t-shirt included with your entry.

**Location:** Dover to Wye

**Registration:** Standard entry closes 26 May 2026 (entry will close as soon as capacity is reached).

25km – £50

35km – £55

55km – £60

On the day entry is subject to event capacity, so early registration is advised to avoid disappointment.

**Sponsorship:** A pledge to raise at least £100 in sponsorship

**Website:** pilgrimswaychallenge.org



## Tandem Skydive / Wing Walking

Sunday 5 July and Sunday 16 August



**Location:** Headcorn Airfield, Shenley Road, Headcorn, TN27 9HX

**Registration:** £40 per person for either the Skydive or Wing Walk

**Sponsorship:** Minimum sponsorship of £395 for the Skydive and £650 for the Wing Walk.

**Contact:** Events team

## Sunflower Memories

Saturday 18 July



Dedicate a sunflower to someone you love and join us to celebrate their life at our Sunflower Day on Saturday 18 July. Enjoy refreshments and live music in our hospice gardens, and find your dedicated sunflower memory marker.

**Location:** Pilgrims Hospice sites

**Contact:** Individual Giving team

## Summer Fair, Ashford Sunday 26 July



Find a wide range of stalls, games and activities for the whole family. From luxury crafts and hot food, to tombolas and children's games. Not to be missed!

**Location:** Sandyacres, Sandyhurst Lane, Ashford, TN25 4PE

**Registration:** Entry is free, donations welcome

**Contact:** Ashford Fundraising team

## Pilgrims Golf Day Friday 11 September



Tee off for Pilgrims this September at one of Kent's top golf courses. Join us for a day on the fairway as you take on this 18-hole course, including breakfast and two-course dinner.

**Location:** Canterbury Golf Club, CT1 1TW

**Contact:** Corporate Fundraising team

## Thanet Colour Run Sunday 4 October



Celebrating together this family friendly 5k event is an explosion of colourful fun. Take in amazing coastal views as you run, jog or walk through clouds of brightly coloured powder paint around the route. Gather friends and family to join the energetic atmosphere along Thanet's spectacular seafront.

**Location:** Palm Bay Green, Cliftonville, CT9 3NR

**Contact:** Thanet Fundraising team

## Want to register?

If you would like to register your interest in an event, fundraise or help in another way, visit [pilgrimshospices.org/fundraise](http://pilgrimshospices.org/fundraise) or email [fundraising@pilgrimshospices.org](mailto:fundraising@pilgrimshospices.org)

Got a question? Don't hesitate to contact our friendly team! 01227 812 609

Please note: All events will launch on the website closer to the time of the event. Please visit: [pilgrimshospices.org/events](http://pilgrimshospices.org/events)

Your support helps us to make a difference

## Sponsor a Nurse appeal

This Spring we launched the Sponsor a Nurse Appeal, aiming to raise enough to fund three Registered General Nurses, one for each hospice at Canterbury, Thanet and Ashford.

*We'd like to extend a huge thank you to our campaign Pledge Partners who have collectively match funded the first £3,000 of donations.*



Will you Sponsor a Pilgrims Nurse today?

Sponsor a Nurse today

# Pilgrims Hospices helps Margaret to realise musical theatre dreams

Growing up, Margaret Grand had a keen interest in theatre, and she sang in choirs later in life – including with Ann Robertson, Pilgrims Hospices' founder.



As a teenager, Margaret had the opportunity to study at the Italia Conti performing arts institution, but her mother wouldn't let her go. She instead began working at Boots, where she met her husband, John, who was also a musician. Together, they played in bands and performed locally.

"When I was at high school, I was in every play, sung in Canterbury Cathedral, and was part of the Young Marlowe Theatre Playgoers. My best friend, Catherine, was also into theatre. Her father offered to pay for us both to go to Italia Conti, but my mum wouldn't let me. And because I couldn't go, Catherine wouldn't go – I still feel guilty about that! Whenever I go to the Marlowe now, I always say: "I wish that was me on the stage!"

and attended a special event at the Marlowe, where Margaret read a sonnet and talked about her history with the theatre.

Margaret added:

"Before I got involved with Pilgrims, I thought a hospice was a place you go to die. Now I know it's so much more than that, and I tell everyone! It wasn't until my last acupuncture session at the Thanet hospice that I spotted the wards, which goes to show that hospices aren't just beds on a ward."

[Read full article online](#)



Margaret's husband John Grand (second from left) playing with his band.

In 2021, Margaret was diagnosed with cancer and received a life-limiting prognosis. Since being referred to Pilgrims Hospices, she's had a second chance to flex her theatrical prowess through a project with the Marlowe Theatre – showing how hospice care is not only for those at the end-of-life, but also empowers people to live well, and fully, in the time they have left.

Margaret said:

"Everyone at Pilgrims is a friend, it's a lovely community. I've got nothing but praise for the staff; they must see so many people, but they still know your name.



John and Margaret Grand on their wedding day

Putting patients first:  
An update on how data is shaping  
better care at Pilgrims

# Listening, learning, and improving care



At Pilgrims Hospices, caring for people at the end of life is about more than treating illness – it's about comfort, dignity, emotional support, its about helping patients and their families feel less alone. One of the ways we make sure we are giving the best possible care is by listening carefully to the people we support and learning from their experiences.

We ask simple, thoughtful questions about things such as pain, nausea, breathlessness, anxiety and how supported someone feels, their need for information and concerns about equipment and similar. These insights help our teams understand not just what someone is going through, but how care is making a difference day by day. Increasingly, we are also looking at wellbeing (including emotional support and how carers are coping ), gaining a fuller picture of each person's experience.

The learning from this is powerful. Many people come to Pilgrims with difficult symptoms. For example, a significant number of patients arrive experiencing high levels of pain. During their time with us, that changes. We see clear improvements in comfort, with far fewer people reporting severe pain as care continues. Breathlessness and other distressing symptoms show similar patterns of improvement.

Just as importantly, families tell us they feel less anxious. When people feel informed, supported and reassured, they can focus on spending precious time together.

**Aaron Salter, Business Intelligence Lead at Pilgrims Hospices, explains:**

"We're not just looking at numbers we're listening to what patients and families tell us about their symptoms, their worries and how supported they feel. When we see pain levels reduce, nausea or breathlessness ease, or family anxiety fall, that shows us our care is making a real difference. It also helps us learn and keep improving."

These insights help clinical teams tailor care to each individual. If something isn't working as well as it could, they can respond quickly and adapt.

**Dr Pia Amsler, Medical Director at Pilgrims Hospices, adds:**

"These measures help us understand how someone is really feeling physically and emotionally. They guide our teams to adjust care, respond quickly to distressing symptoms and support families as well as patients. It reassures us that what we do each day truly improves comfort, dignity and quality of life because we act on what patients and families tell us is important to them."

This work is also attracting interest beyond east Kent, with other hospices keen to learn from our approach. Ultimately, these insights show the difference your support makes helping people feel more comfortable, more supported and less anxious during an incredibly difficult time.

[Read full article online](#)

## We care about your care

From 1st July to 31st December 2025 we received 286 reviews through I want Great Care, this is what **YOU** told us about **YOUR** experience with Pilgrims.

99%   
had a positive  
experience with us.

On average we scored  
**4.94/5** out of five  
stars.



**286**  
Reviews.



Every bargain found, every bag donated, every volunteer shift given. It all adds up to something extraordinary.

# Shopping with heart: How Pilgrims Shops power hospice care

Every bargain, every bag donated, every volunteer shift – it all adds up to something extraordinary. Across east Kent, Pilgrims Hospices' 33 shops are more than stores; they're vibrant community hubs where preloved treasures find new homes, people shop affordably, and every purchase helps to fund hospice care.

## More than shops: They are welcoming spaces on the high street

### Pilgrims Shops provide:

- Affordable clothing and household essentials
- Friendly, welcoming spaces on the high street
- Opportunities to volunteer, learn new skills, and connect with others

Shopping second-hand also supports the planet by keeping items out of landfill, reducing demand for new products, and

owering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions all while raising income to support Pilgrims Hospices care services.

## Exciting shop developments

**Whitstable:** Horsebridge Books joins furniture and clothing stores.

**Chartham:** Extended the existing shop to include a fashion & home shop, including haberdashery and eCommerce team.

**Ashford:** Discount Store has a permanent home; Media & Homeware Store offers books, music, and films.

**Ramsgate:** Plans to expand into neighbouring units, offering more stock and space.

## Retail events making a difference

Special sales like Kilo, Media, Jumble, Table Top, and Pop-Up events bring new shoppers, create excitement, and raise more for hospice care – all in a fun, community-focused way.

## Volunteer voices

*"I started volunteering to give back, but I've gained so much. The team feels like family, and knowing our efforts help local hospice care makes every shift worthwhile."*

Pilgrims Shop Volunteer

## Be part of something special

**SHOP** Find preloved fashion, furniture, books, and homeware.

**DONATE** Turn unwanted items into someone else's treasure.

**VOLUNTEER** Join our teams and make a real difference. Last year, volunteers donated 124,000 hours, the equivalent of 68 full-time staff!

**Together, we're turning everyday shopping into extraordinary care.**

[Find out more here](#)

## Pilgrims Retail by the numbers – By December 2025, our shops achieved remarkable results:

1,145,646 items sold

297,714 clothing items given a second life

172,065 household items rehomed

122,095 books passed on to new readers

61,208 toys enjoyed by families

10,095 furniture items sold with 1,723 deliveries

4,645 new Gift Aid donors

All made possible by 635 volunteers and 102 staff — every figure tells a story of generosity.

# Celebrating 25 Years of Care at Pilgrims Hospice Ashford

By Martin Kemp, Hospice Services Manager, Ashford

This year, Pilgrims Hospice Ashford marks a very special milestone, 25 years of care, compassion and community since opening on 4 January 2001.

As the youngest of Pilgrims' hospices, Ashford was guided by the lessons learned at Canterbury (1982) and Thanet (1992), but it was the local community that truly brought it to life. By 1998, east Kent needed more specialist hospice care. The tranquil meadows at Willesborough were chosen for a purpose-built hospice offering inpatient care, community services and therapeutic support for patients and their families.

The £3.5 million fundraising target felt daunting, but the community response was extraordinary. Businesses, schools, charitable trusts, groups and individual supporters rallied behind the Hospice on the Hill Appeal 2000. What seemed impossible became reality because people believed hospice care close to home mattered.

At the heart of those early days was founder Ann Robertson OBE, famously taking to a JCB for the 1999 groundbreaking. Her determination mirrored the spirit of the community that built the Ashford hospice from the ground up.

That spirit continues today through staff and volunteers working together to create warmth, dignity and comfort. Reception volunteers Jeanette Woodcock, Pam Pullen and Sue Warren, catering assistant Wendy Wigglesworth, and Health Care Assistant Sarah Smith all remember the hospice from its early days.

Every role, paid or voluntary, is part of the caring community supporting patients and families.

Recent improvements, including the beautifully refurbished lounge, were made possible by community fundraising, local businesses and charitable foundations, offering brighter, more welcoming spaces for families. For the 25th birthday, displays of memorabilia and shared stories have celebrated the many lives touched by Ashford hospice.

"Reaching 25 years is a proud and emotional moment," says Martin Kemp. "It's a chance to feel nostalgia for the past while seeing new projects and plans for the future. This birthday celebrates our community and acts as a springboard into the next chapter."

Ashford's story is one written by its community, past, present and future.

*"I feel very honoured to work at the hospice. I have met some amazing people, patients, relatives and staff over the past 25 years."*

Wendy Wigglesworth

[Read full article online](#)



# Who am I?

At Pilgrims Hospices you will meet several different members of our hospice team, we hope that this guide helps you to identify who you see or who you speak to.

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Hospital blue  
**Staff Nurse**



Navy with spots and red piping  
**Advanced Clinical Practitioner**



Navy with red piping  
**Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner**



Navy with spots  
**Senior Ward Sister or  
Clinical Nurse Specialists**



Navy  
**Ward Sister or Palliative  
Specialist Nurse**



Navy with pale blue pin stripes  
**Nurse Consultant**



Pale blue  
**Health Care Assistant or  
Hospice at Home**



Purple  
**Domestic Staff**



White with green trim  
**Occupational Therapist**



White with navy trim  
**Physiotherapist**



Teal  
**Wellbeing Practitioners**



Green  
**Occupational Therapist  
Assistants**



Royal blue  
**Physiotherapist Assistant**

# Fundraising together, caring together

## Thank you for a record breaking year and here's to 2026

As we move into spring, we're looking back with huge gratitude at what you our incredible supporters helped to achieve. It's been an extraordinary period for Pilgrims Hospices fundraising, and the impact of those funds is already being felt by patients and families across east Kent.

Every event, every step, every pedal, and every donation helps to ensure specialist hospice care is there when people need it most. Behind the fundraising totals are stories of love, remembrance, community and people coming together to honour someone special, give back for care received or to just take part and enjoy a fantastic Pilgrims event experience.

Walking and cycling challenges remained at the heart of the Pilgrims calendar. Supporters celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Cycle Challenge, marking the milestone by surpassing the previous year's fundraising total and raising the highest total to date of **£157,500**.

Then came a truly historic moment: the Pilgrims Way Challenge raised **£197,000**, the largest amount ever raised by a single Pilgrims event. A phenomenal achievement by everyone who walked, volunteered, supported and donated.

There was thrill seeking too, with brave supporters taking part in skydives and wing walks, while runners represented Pilgrims in the London and Brighton Marathons, alongside 10Ks, half marathons and races across the region.

2026 began in style with our ever-popular Christmas Tree Recycling scheme. **The scheme raised an incredible £84,000**, a staggering fundraising total made possible by our wonderful local community, dedicated staff and volunteers, and local businesses who brought their teams, vans and a positive can do

attitude to make the event happen.

### Fundraising magic also thrives in everyday community life.

Across east Kent, supporters organised:

- Bake sales, quiz nights and coffee mornings
- Garden parties and sponsored walks
- Pub events and wheelie bin races
- Supermarket and community collections
- Sports matches, concerts and workplace events

### Together, these efforts help Pilgrims provide compassionate care in people's homes, in our hospices in Canterbury, Thanet and Ashford, and via our 24-hour advice line.

Your support helps manage pain and symptoms, supports families emotionally and practically, and ensures no one faces life-limiting illness alone.

### Looking ahead

If you're interested in running your own fundraising event and would like support from our team, please email [fundraising@pilgrimshospices.org](mailto:fundraising@pilgrimshospices.org) or visit [pilgrimshospices.org/events](https://www.pilgrimshospices.org/events) to see what's coming up in 2026.

Thank you for your continued support. Your energy, kindness and generosity mean that when local families need us most, we can be there – with comfort, dignity and heart.

[Read full article online](#)





# The difference research makes

## Helping us improve care for people with delirium

Find out more here

Did you know that delirium affects around one in three people when they are admitted to a hospice or palliative care unit? A further third may develop it during their stay.

Delirium can cause confusion, drowsiness, agitation, or changes in awareness, and people may seem unlike themselves. It can be frightening and upsetting, not only for the person experiencing it, but also for the family and friends around them. It can also be difficult to spot, as the signs are not always obvious.

That's why improving how we recognise and care for people with delirium is such an important part of our work at Pilgrims Hospices.

### A Pilgrims project is already making a difference

Five years ago, a specialist working group at Pilgrims, led by Advanced Clinical Practitioner Mandy Timms, developed a Delirium Toolkit to support staff in preventing, recognising and managing delirium in the inpatient unit.

#### The toolkit includes:

- A simple step-by-step checklist for staff
- Guidance on the right assessments and questions to ask

- Making delirium part of daily team discussions
- Information leaflets and posters to help patients and loved ones understand what delirium is

Since introducing the toolkit, we've seen fewer people experiencing delirium, and staff tell us it has made a real difference to the care they provide.

### Taking part in national research

Even with this success, we want to do more. That's why Pilgrims Hospices is now part of an important national research study called Dampen-Delirium II.

Being led in the hospice by Mandy, this study is exploring new ways to support hospice staff to work together in recognising and managing delirium. The aim is to improve care and comfort for patients even further.

This study is being undertaken by a research team at the Wolfson Palliative Care Research Centre at University of Hull, and funded by the National

Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR 161360).

Pilgrims is one of 20 hospices across the UK taking part.

Researchers will compare how this new learning approach works in different hospices and explore:

- How it fits into busy care settings
- What helps it work well
- Whether it offers good value
- How it could be used in places like care homes or people's own homes

### Why this matters to you

By taking part in national studies, we are not only improving care here in east Kent, but also helping shape hospice care for people and families across the UK.

### DAMPen-Delirium II



Are you the missing piece?

## Eye Donation – What do you know?

Did you know that many people cared for in hospices are able to donate their eyes after death even if they're not eligible to donate organs?

Research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR 174942) and led by the University of Southampton, working with NHS Blood and Transplant, found that eye donation is possible for many hospice patients. Yet these conversations don't always happen, even though evidence shows people are often open to discussing it.

Eye donation can help restore sight for people living with serious eye disease, injury, or conditions present from birth. Donated tissue is used in delicate operations that can transform someone's quality of life.

Pilgrims Hospices is now working alongside NHS Blood and Transplant to ensure patients who wish to donate are given the opportunity to talk about it and patients and families are provided with clear, sensitive information as part of end-of-life care planning.



It's all about choice ensuring that anyone who wants to leave this special gift has the chance to do so.

To find out more, visit **NHS Organ Donation** [www.organdonation.nhs.uk/cornea](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/cornea)



## How creativity, friendship and love come to life at Pilgrims Hospices

When Kevin Carter first heard about Pilgrims Hospices' 12-week Time to Create group, he wasn't convinced it was for him.

Now, the 58-year-old from Ramsgate wouldn't miss a Thursday for the world.

Kevin attends the Wellbeing and Therapy Centre at Pilgrims Hospice Thanet following a diagnosis of liver cancer. After learning about the support available, he decided to try Time to Create, and found something truly special.

"It's been amazing. I've made friends, tried different crafts, and created keepsakes for my family to treasure."

One creation has captured hearts across the group: a handmade teddy bear named Wonky.

With slightly uneven seams and a gentle smile, Wonky is far from perfect, and that's exactly why Kevin loves him.

**"I thought it would all be drawing, I wasn't sure what to expect."**

"I named him Wonky because he's not perfect, just like us. But he's full of love."

Wonky is a gift for Kevin's nine-year-old daughter, Bonnie. "It matters to me to leave something made with love," he says. Kevin also has a 13-year-old son, Logan, and hopes to make something for him too. "I'm responding well to treatment, so there will be time."

Kevin's idea inspired others to create their own bears, including tiny keepsake versions he now treasures.

Creativity was never part of Kevin's life before Pilgrims. After a career in the building industry, sewing was entirely new, but transformative.

"The group brings me to life. We laugh, share stories, and there's always tea, cake, friendship and care."

Led by Pilgrims' Wellbeing team, Time to Create offers people living with a life-limiting illness a relaxed space for creativity and connection.

Wellbeing Practitioner Kate Brewer says, "Creativity gives people purpose, connection and joy. Kevin's teddy didn't just create something beautiful, it inspired the whole group."

As Kevin reflects, one thing stands out:

"Even imperfect things can be the most treasured. I hope my family remember the love, and the laughter."

Pilgrims Hospices provides specialist care and wellbeing support across east Kent.

[Read full article online](#)

# Pilgrims don't just fade away, they're always there if you need them.

Christine was a keen knitter, a cat lover and an avid line dancer. She was married to Norman for 57 years and they had two children, Mike and Jeannie.

Later in life, Christine was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer; initially cured by chemotherapy, it eventually became terminal.

Mike and Jeannie said: "Mum was hospitalised, where they aimed to fit a stent in her throat. Unfortunately, the procedure didn't work and she went downhill quickly. They moved Mum to a private room where she was asked if she'd like to go into the hospice. We all agreed it would be for the best." After spending five days in the Thanet hospice, Christine died in August 2023.

Norman remembers the hospice being "instantly calm, a completely different atmosphere than the hospital. It was like someone had taken the responsibility of care from us, so that we could look after ourselves."

Jeannie agreed "Pilgrims caters incredibly well for families. It was my birthday whilst Mum was there

and the staff brought me a cake and a birthday card. It's those little things that really make a difference.

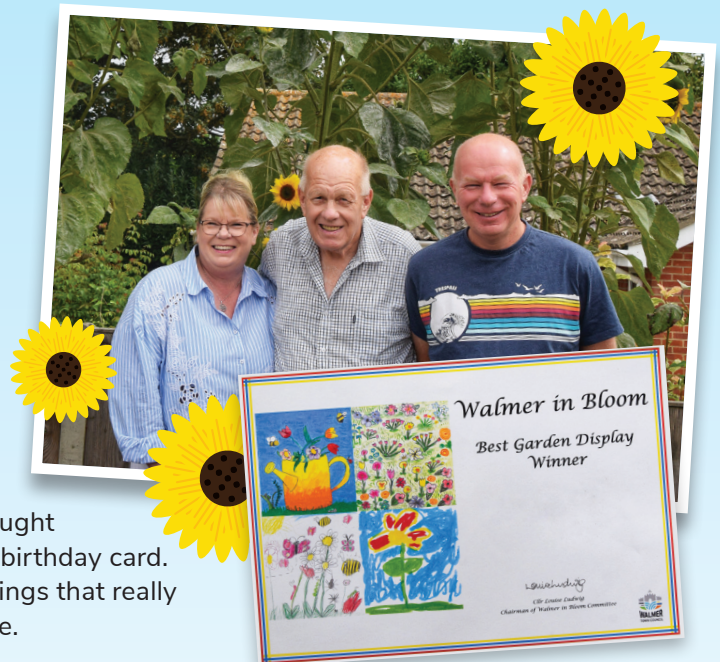
As a family, we wouldn't all usually spend a week together like that. It sounds weird, but after Mum died, I missed us having lunch together, being together as a family. It was a special time. It's one of those things you hope you never have to go through, but it couldn't have been a better experience."

Mike added: "The staff were lovely. We felt the nurses really cared, Mum wasn't just another patient. The focus in the hospice is different; in hospital, they were trying to make her better. But once we knew she was at the end of life it became about keeping Mum comfortable for the time she had left."

Nearly three years on from their first experience with Pilgrims, Norman and his family are avid supporters of the hospice. They take part in our

annual remembrances, Mike and his daughter Eleanor took part in the Folkestone Downs Challenge and his wife Helen, volunteers at the Canterbury hospice as part of the Wellbeing program.

After attending the Sunflower Days in Christine's memory, Norman was inspired – and now he's an award-winning sunflower grower! He entered Walmer in Bloom, and his sunflowers won first prize in the Best Garden Display category! Norman found out he'd won on 6 August 2025, the two-year anniversary of Christine's death, "making a very sad day a little bit happier." He attended an award presentation at Walmer Castle, and he kindly donated his prize money to Pilgrims.



## Who will you remember this summer?

Dedicate a sunflower in memory of someone special and join us for an afternoon of music, refreshments, and celebration in our **Canterbury, Thanet, or Ashford** gardens.

**Saturday 18 July, 1–4pm**

Visit: [pilgrimshospices.org/sunflowers](https://pilgrimshospices.org/sunflowers)  
Email: [sunflowers@pilgrimshospices.org](mailto:sunflowers@pilgrimshospices.org)  
Call: **01227 782062**

Your loved one's name will take its place on a memory marker in the gardens for Sunflower Days.

# Sunflower MEMORIES 2026

Invites to follow in May

