



*Celebrating Life,  
Dignifying Death*

# Hospice News

Spring/Summer 2024



## Wedding day memories



VR made a reality  
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# Welcome to Hospice News!

We publish Hospice News twice a year to share the latest Hospice developments and the personal stories of those who have benefitted from our care. It is also a great opportunity to thank you, our supporters, and inspire others to take part in fundraising and awareness-raising activities on our behalf.

We are indebted to the wonderful people who allow us to share their experiences to give a greater understanding of the difference the Hospice makes and the need for continued support. If you have a suggestion for an article or would like to share your own story, we would love to hear from you.

## Sue Massey

Communications & PR Manager



**Front Cover image:** Lauren & Nathan on their wedding day at the Hospice.

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Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 4TA

[www.hospiceintheweald.org.uk](http://www.hospiceintheweald.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 280276



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If you would prefer to receive Hospice News via email, or wish to change or update the way we contact you, please:

- Subscribe to our e-newsletter or visit [hospiceintheweald.org.uk/privacy-preferences](http://hospiceintheweald.org.uk/privacy-preferences)
- Contact the Fundraising Team, on **01892 820 533**, or email [fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk)
- For article or story suggestions, please contact [sue.massey@hospiceintheweald.org.uk](mailto:sue.massey@hospiceintheweald.org.uk)



Nick Farthing, Chief Executive with Kim, Staff Nurse on the In Patient Ward

## Welcome from our Chief Executive

Welcome to our spring edition of Hospice News. Think of this as your window into Hospice in the Weald and what we do. Here, we share the latest news and stories to keep you updated on all the incredible work and activity taking place.

You'll see on page four we've lots to celebrate; our Clinical Director earns a prestigious title and we mark the first anniversary of our service for children, which has expanded to support over 80 people including children and families.

We've also received national recognition in clinical research. This is just one of the ways we are constantly striving to provide great quality care and support.

Touched by the care her husband John received at the Hospice, Sue now volunteers by greeting and comforting families who receive our support. On page six, she shares her thoughts, wanting more people to

better understand how the Hospice can help them.

Learn more about how those attending Living Well can now escape to sunny beaches, bustling cities, and even deep-sea fishing through virtual reality (VR) on page eight. From the comfort of a chair or bed, this new technology helps them relax, explore, and forget their worries for a while.

Our care and support goes beyond medical needs. Lauren and Nathan fulfilled their dream of getting married thanks to the team here at the Hospice, which you can read about on pages 10-11. On pages 14-15, we highlight how Katherine was able to create cherished memories with her family in her final days. These stories show how our staff can help families celebrate life, even in difficult times.

As part of our fundraising campaign 'Every Moment Counts', raise £400,000 in just 36 hours, to make sure no one faces a terminal illness alone. When you or someone you love is faced with dying, every day becomes an opportunity. Every pound raised between 7th-8th April will be doubled. Learn more on page 12 and get involved.

Discover hidden gardens, walk under stars, soar above clouds, or lace up your trainers with our exciting events, previewed on pages 16-17. These help to fund nurses who provide care and support to people and their families in your community.

I hope to meet you at our events and fundraisers you hold throughout the year. On behalf of our patients and their loved ones, thank you for your support.

*Nick*

## Hospice Updates

### Queen's Nurse honour

Congratulations to Clinical Director Jan Thirkettle (pictured left below) for receiving the prestigious title of Queen's Nurse.

Awarded by The Queen's Nursing Institute, it recognises Jan's commitment to high standards of patient care, learning and leadership in community nursing.

"It's a huge honour" said Jan. "I'm particularly proud of how the Hospice has enhanced its role within hospital and community teams to ensure more terminally ill people can die in the place of their choice, whether in their own home, the Hospice or elsewhere."



### Podcast with an inspirational teen

Paul Madden, the Hospice's Care Director, has been interviewed as part of a podcast series that raises awareness of mental health issues.

Tunbridge Wells teenager Malachi Tyler, who is blind and has a brain tumour,

launched his podcast 'Malavision' last year, with previous guests including Dame Kelly Holmes. Paul said:

**"Malachi had some insightful questions – he'd give Louis Theroux a run for his money! It was a privilege to talk about death and dying from a personal point of view and share how amazing our staff are at dealing with it on a day-to-day basis."**



### 25 years of dedication

Congratulations to Maggie Wood on celebrating 25 years at the Hospice. Maggie, a Ward nursing assistant, said: "I joined in 1998 as the Hospice in Pembury opened.

It was an exciting time, we were so proud to be part of something new. It can be challenging, but there is also laughter, support and compassion.

25 years on, I am still proud to be part of this wonderful organisation."



"Maggs" working on the In Patient Ward back in 2015



## Birthday celebrations

Hospice in the Weald for Children is proud to have reached its first birthday – and there is plenty to celebrate.

Following its launch last year, the Children’s team now supports more than 80 children, parents and siblings throughout Kent and East Sussex. This includes home visits for respite care, support with hospital visits, memory-making and music therapy.



Expanding to meet growing need, the team recently welcomed a children’s clinical nurse specialist, a new support worker, therapist and specialist social worker.

Future plans include an Easter Egg Hunt in April and the development of a new Children’s Centre this summer.

Tracy Smith, Head of Service for Children and Young People, said:

**“Being able to develop bonds and make a difference to the lives of the children and families we support is a privilege and joy for the whole team.”**

## Award recognition

Hospice in the Weald has been recognised in two national awards.

We have been Highly Commended in our region by the National Institute for Clinical Research for our work in a national trial called CHELsea-II, which assesses whether giving patients fluids via a drip could make the last days of life more comfortable. Staff were congratulated for ‘going above and beyond’ to support data collection.

The Hospice has also been shortlisted for Legacy Campaign of the Year in the Smeed & Ford Legacy Giving Awards.

Promoted on buses, billboards and in local media, the Fundraising team’s campaign raises awareness about Gifts in Wills. Highlighting small acts of compassion that make ‘all the difference’ it features photos of patients and volunteers. Winners will be announced in April.



## The care we received inspires me to volunteer

**Sue, a familiar face on the Ward Welcome Desk, was motivated to support the Hospice after caring for her husband John at Cottage Hospice. The couple had been happily married for 50 years before John died. Here, Sue talks about the support they received, how she has coped with John's death, and why she is passionate about volunteering.**

"The thing I enjoy the most about volunteering here is the people – the staff, patients, friends, and families you see passing by. Being at the Ward Welcome Desk is very much a role where you're in the background, being helpful. But sometimes, I share my experience; maybe making people feel a little bit better or more comfortable.

Most people don't know about the work of hospices in the community, and only associate them with dying - that is why I am

so enthusiastic about raising awareness. I think death is not talked about enough generally - everybody fears death, but we need to be more aware of it and that it can be a peaceful experience for the individual and their loved ones.

**"John's first impression was that the Hospice only gets involved when it's time to die, but this changed once the doctors and nurses started coming to our house."**

Despite suffering ill health for many years, diagnosed first with cancer and then kidney failure, John never complained, never lost his sense of humour and frequently said how contented he was. We had a very good life together, with lots of happy times.

When he became very poorly, John was offered care at Cottage Hospice, where I could stay and look after him too. Archie, our dog came as well and thanks to the support, dying was very peaceful for John. I got a lot of comfort from seeing it through.

Once you get on the Hospice radar, they stay in touch. I was invited to coffee mornings for the bereaved, known as Tea-Junctions and offered counselling. They also suggested coming along to Time To Be, an alternative, holistic approach to counselling, as well as a safe space to talk about my situation.

**“I learned that grief comes out in different ways, and a major part of grieving for me was being on my own. I haven't ever lived on my own, and it takes a lot of getting used to.”**



Generally, the way John coped and the way I was able to care for him in his final week gave me a lot of peace. I can take a lot of strength from that. When I left Cottage Hospice, I was keen to share my story. The whole experience was remarkable – it was a very natural environment, with other families there and other dogs. Mixing with others provided extra support - we had things that we could laugh and joke about but could share difficulties as well.



The reason I volunteered was the amazing support that the Hospice gave and continues to give. I firmly believe that people aren't aware of what they do unless they've experienced it for themselves - the care that goes to the patient and the care that continues with the carer... It's phenomenal."

**“I imagine most volunteers are here because of their own personal experience. It's been a very worthwhile way of spending my Thursday afternoons.”**

## VR made a reality at the Hospice

**Through virtual reality, patients can travel to tropical sandy beaches from an armchair at the Hospice in Pembury – but what’s the benefit?**

Typically delivered through a headset, virtual reality (VR) gives users a sense of physically being somewhere they are not. The immersive experience allows users to ‘escape’ the real world and explore new locations digitally, such as famous sites, beautiful beaches and scenic countryside.

Always keen to give greater choice of patient care, the Hospice’s Living Well team has been offering VR over the past 12 months.



**“It takes me to another place, and I’m a dreamer”**

Allison, a regular at Living Well, is impressed by the realism. “It takes me to another place, and I’m a dreamer,” she said. “I personally like to look around the cities and famous places we can’t get to in real life. It’s almost like ‘smellelevision’ - when you go to Japan you can almost smell the salt in the water!”



Escape to the country.  
Courtesy of Recreo VR

The headsets currently enable patients to ‘visit’ locations, both globally and nearby at local National Trust sites.

“It’s like you are really there – you can look around a house and see a fire, and you feel it,” said Peter, who is new to the offering at the Hospice.

**“It offers you so much in terms of exploring new places and experiences.”**

A major benefit to patients is that ‘travel’ is made possible with the headset, something that can prove freeing and relaxing. There is growing evidence to suggest relaxation techniques combined with the use of VR, can be more effective than relaxation techniques on their own.



“I would certainly make use of it if I was bedbound, especially as I’m hyperactive and have ADHD, so I’m constantly on the move,” Allison said. “It’s fantastic, you can travel around the world from your armchair. You can see the cows; you can almost smell them – although luckily you can’t! It’s just a different world. This allows you to actually see things and visualise places.”

Nursing Assistant Sarah has played a big part in the continued use of VR with patients at the Hospice. “VR is relaxing, people can just enjoy the escapism.” she said. “They can just forget it all. Whether it’s walking in the countryside, looking at animals, or sat in Lanzarote.”



**“Patients can put the headset on and be in a completely different place, forget about what’s going on in the world, and not think about things like a diagnosis.”**



“I would like to keep using VR,” Peter said. “I like fishing so I’d like to see that on there! From a boat, especially deep-sea fishing, and shore. Sarah helps us use it and she’s very good.”

Allison added: “I’d like to see some road journeys, especially in Kent and Sussex with the amazing routes with trees.”

So, what is next for VR at the Hospice? Currently available at both Hospices in Five Ashes and Pembury, upon request, new locations are being made available on the headset each month and staff are monitoring its popularity.



## Wedding memories to treasure

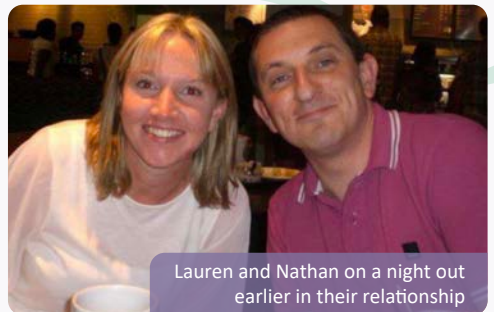
When Nathan's wife, Lauren was referred to Hospice in the Weald last year, they discovered they would not only be able to focus on spending precious time with their young son, but also fulfil their plans to get married. Here Nathan explains why he is supporting the Hospice this spring.

"I have never met a more supportive and caring person than Lauren. She always made sure everyone else was okay before thinking about herself, even when she was dying.

Lauren and I had been together for 13 years. We got engaged early on, but chose to have a child, knowing one day we would have our wedding, then life got in the way. She was the best Mummy to our 8-year-old son, Jamie.

We enjoyed spending time together as a family, making memories on visits to the park and trips to the farm. Movie nights with popcorn were a regular event in our house. Jamie would choose a film for us all to watch. Dorset and Devon were favourite holidays; places we went before Jamie was born, so it was even more special to visit with him.

When Lauren was diagnosed with skin cancer back in 2016 we were so relieved when, following surgery, scans confirmed the cancer had not spread. So it was a complete shock when the cancer returned as a brain tumour.



Lauren and Nathan on a night out earlier in their relationship

**"Thankfully when the Hospice became involved, a huge weight was lifted."**

From the first visit by the Hospice Outreach team, we were supported. Lauren decided she wanted to die at the Hospice, because her priority was always protecting Jamie.



Enjoying a day out with son Jamie

The team understood what was important to us as a family. They went above and beyond to help us spend precious time together, even arranging a special movie night for us all, just like we had at home. As soon as we decided we wanted to get married, the Hospice made it happen. Neither of us wanted a big wedding - Lauren always said she'd be happy to get married at a bus stop - but the Hospice gardens were perfect.

**“All the stress of wedding planning was taken away.”**

The Hospice team did it all whilst making sure Lauren was comfortable. The lead-up to the ceremony was so special; the way we talked and laughed. Lauren focused on what she wanted to wear and who would be there, rather than being ill and dying. She wore her favourite dress and held a bouquet arranged especially for her. On 26th June, our family and friends joined us to celebrate, it was a lovely day. It felt like how life should be.

Lauren died a month later. She was 41. We had so many dreams for our life together, but I am so pleased, that thanks to the Hospice, we were able to get married with Jamie by our side.

**“Jamie and I will be hanging our Remembrance Ribbon in memory of Lauren this spring. By dedicating a ribbon in memory of your loved one, you can provide families like mine with the support they need to be able to focus on celebrating life together.”**



### Dedicate a Remembrance Ribbon

Colourful ribbons bearing loved ones' names will adorn trees in a collective show of remembrance from 26<sup>th</sup> April – 28<sup>th</sup> June. Dedicate a ribbon to your loved one by phone on **01892 820 533** or via our website.

### Remembrance Gatherings

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June:

1.00pm Five Ashes,  
TN20 6HY.

5.30pm Pembury,  
TN2 4TA.

Scan me!





## Blooming marvellous: Open Gardens

An exciting season of Open Gardens awaits, with the chance to enjoy some of the finest private gardens in Kent and East Sussex.

Open Gardens run from May to September, features 28 gardens that are not normally open to the public. Many new gardens are joining our collection, in addition to those back by popular demand.



Glorious additions this year include Pypnpe House, a Tudor manor house in Benenden surrounded by woodlands and meadows, opening on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June. Wander the 3.5 acres, with topiary lawn, cut flower garden and pool garden.

In Fordcombe, on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June, visitors will be welcomed to three gardens in tribute to Sally Hill, who was cared for at the Hospice last year. In recognition of the “wonderful care” her mother received, Sally’s daughter is opening Silcock’s Farm, where her mother created a peaceful, informal garden. Sally’s two friends will open their gardens on the same afternoon.

And don’t forget to make a date in your diary to visit the lovely grounds here at the Hospice in Pembury. Join us on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June to enjoy our landscaped gardens and sculptures, along with live music, delicious tea and cake and plants to buy.

See the full calendar on our website or contact the Fundraising Team on **01892 820 533** to receive your brochure.

**What gardens will  
you visit this year?**

Scan the QR code to discover  
all 28 gardens and more...





# Every Moment Counts

## Help us raise £400,000 in 36 hours

Please help us to raise £400,000 - in just 36 hours - to ensure we can continue being here for our community.

**From 9am on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April to 9pm on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April**, every penny donated

to Hospice in the Weald's 'Every Moment Counts' campaign will be doubled by a group of generous supporters – and we need you to get involved.

When you or someone you love is faced with a terminal illness, every day becomes an opportunity. To live, to laugh, to do what you love, with the people you love. Every Moment Counts. Our care is free of charge and tailored to each and every person who needs us.



### There are three main ways you can help:

1

**Be a Supporter.** Visit [charityextra.com/hospiceintheweald](http://charityextra.com/hospiceintheweald) on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> - Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April to make a donation so that it can be doubled - at no extra cost to you - to help us reach the £400,000 target, enough to fund 12 nurses for the next year.

2

**Become a Champion.** If you can spend a few hours on 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> April telling your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours about Hospice in the Weald, and encourage them to donate, you can be a Champion. Just email [fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk) before Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April to say you'd like to become a Champion, to find out more.

3

**Become a Sponsor.** Are you part of a local business or charitable trust, keen to support a local charity and leverage even more vital funding? From just £250, you can become an Every Moment Counts sponsor. Email [fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk) before Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April to tell us why you want to become a Sponsor, and we'll take it from there.



## Celebrating family milestones together

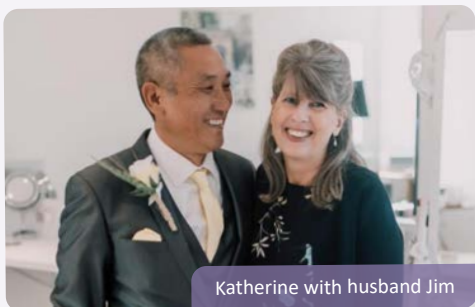
**Katherine, a mum of three who came from Tonbridge, was cared for at the Hospice in Pembury at the end of last year. During that time, Katherine told us how, from the comfort of the Ward, she and her family could still celebrate life's precious moments and make memories to treasure.**

“The staff have made us feel so comfortable. They’re here because they want to make a difference to other people’s lives. It’s been such a warming experience.

**“They have gone above what they are there for. It just stands out. The lovely Laura likes to sing to us... She’s a real character.”**

They take such good care of my children, Samantha, Sophie and Jemma. I’m very well looked after. I think my husband Jim asked the nurses about what we’re allowed to bring in. They said it’s my room to do exactly as I want with, which was amazing. So, we did, we made it our new home.

Within a couple of hours of being here, messages went out to the girls – my daughters – and friends, to gather some Christmas bits and pieces. Everyone close to me knows how much I love Christmas and the fact I could make the room mine was so special.



Katherine with husband Jim

**“I’m not going to see it through to Christmas, which is why they decided to bring Christmas forward for me. It’s been beautiful.”**

For my daughter, Sophie, I’ve recorded a message for her baby saying I’m sorry that I won’t get to meet him, but to know he’ll be very much loved. I’ve recorded a personal note to Sophie and have done the same for Samantha and Jemma. It’s amazing, really.

There is a special one for Samantha’s wedding day where I say, **‘This is what I might have said to you; I wish you all the best and have a long and happy life together.’** I hope that when they’re feeling a bit down, they can hear my voice and take some comfort. It’s been a really good process.

**“I’ve been able to give my family more keepsakes, which I wouldn’t have necessarily had the strength to do.”**

The Hospice staff helped me to create some beautiful fingerprint jewellery. The girls want to now wear that on a pendant.



We were able to use a room here for my daughter’s baby shower. I think we had 38 people. Sophie and her partner Paul already had friends invited and were kind enough to change the venue for me. It gave us the opportunity to invite friends as well. It ended up being a really, really good day.”

**“We can’t thank the Hospice enough - I’ve said that to the nurses. There are no words to describe what they’ve done for us. As a family it’s given us quality time with each other, and you can’t buy that.”**



## Fun, fitness and memories

There are endless ways to support the Hospice. You can dive into a sponsored challenge or celebrate the life of a loved one in our annual Moonlight Walk or Hospice Run. Or bag a pre-loved bargain - perhaps even a wedding gown - in one of our 30 charity shops to help raise funds and help the environment too.

### Come on, dive in

Celebrate a special birthday or remember a loved one by signing up for a **tandem skydive**. Strapped to an instructor, you will descend 5,000ft above the beautiful Kent countryside on **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July**.

This is what Jane, who took part last year, had to say: "A skydive had been on my bucket list for years and I thought, what better way to do it than to raise money for Hospice in the Weald. It is very close



to my heart as my father-in-law spent his final days there and my sister-in-law works there too. It was the scariest thing I have ever done, but I would say to anyone thinking about it, do it - before you get too old!"

### New stores for bargains galore

Bargain hunters now have two new Hospice charity shops to check out. Our new shop in **Grosvenor Road, Tunbridge Wells**, includes affordable dresses for brides and bridesmaids, as well as beautiful accessories and shoes. In **Heathfield**, we have moved to more spacious premises at **57 High Street**, offering even more bargains and treasures. Visit our website to find your nearest shop.

### Pedal power



Join the iconic **Ford Ride London-Essex 100** as it returns on **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May**. One of the UK's most famous challenge rides, cyclists of all abilities cover 100 miles, on traffic-free roads through London and Essex.



## Stars and memories

Dig out those walking boots and join us for a special opportunity to remember your loved ones during an evening filled with beautiful scenery, reflection and celebration.

The atmospheric **Moonlight Walk** returns on **Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> June**, with a choice of three routes leading you through beautiful Knole Park and Sevenoaks' winding streets.



A few surprise stops along the way will keep you refreshed and entertained before returning to our event village to celebrate with a glass of bubbly.

Take on the challenge of 13 miles, try our shorter four-mile walk, or opt for the familiar eight-mile route. Every step you take, and every pound you raise will make a huge difference to patients, families, and carers.

Hospice Run is gearing up for another lap around the calendar on **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September**, so be sure to save the date. Back for its 18<sup>th</sup> year, our iconic event held in Tunbridge Wells is one of the most hotly anticipated closed-road routes in the South East.

Take on the half marathon, 5k or 10k route, or have some fun on the family run. With only 1,000 places available, sign up now to avoid disappointment, and get training!

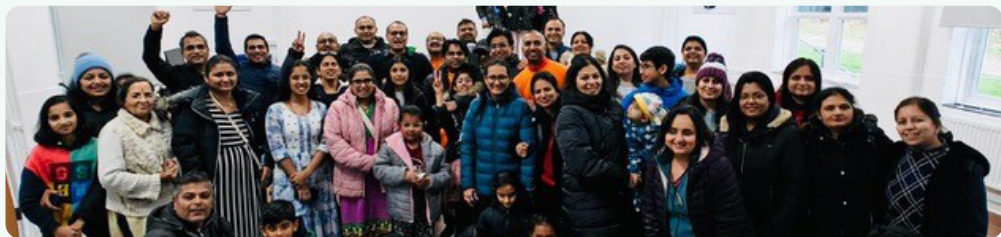
## Hospice Run



To sign up or to find out more about these and any of the Hospice's other fundraising events, visit [hospiceintheweald.org.uk/events](https://www.hospiceintheweald.org.uk/events) or contact [fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk) or call 01892 820 533

## Thanks and inspiration

Here we recognise just some of the extraordinary people and organisations who raise funds for Hospice in the Weald, and extend thanks to all who support us - we couldn't do it without you.



Thank you to the **Tonbridge group of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK** for donating over £500 from their Bharat Food Festival, attended by over 300 members of the Hindu community.

A massive thanks to every **business and volunteer** who made our Christmas tree recycling scheme possible, and to all who donated to have trees collected. Battling rain and snow, our volunteers collected more than 1,700 trees. We are delighted to report that a record £43,000 was raised.



Heartfelt thanks to **Cathy Bird and family of artist and teacher Jonathan Brown** for funds raised through an auction of his artwork. Cathy said: "Jonathan taught at Jessop Farm Studios, Chiddingstone, where young artists responded to his commitment to help them do their absolute best. When he died, I was left with the custody of his treasury of art. We held a silent auction; there was no lower limit and students could choose drawings as presents. With Jonathan's sister, Amanda Clarke, we presented £5,000 as Jonathan's gift to the place where he spent his last days with his family."

A big thank you to all who helped to raise an amazing £5,142 as part of the annual **Coddy Day at Nevill Golf Club** in memory of club members.

Thank you to **Daniel Wheatley and team at SETYRES**, who completed a sponsored one-mile flip of a 100kg tractor tyre in an impressive 47 minutes, raising a brilliant total of £947.25.



Visitors to **Hever Castle** have raised an incredible £9,870 for the Hospice in the past year. Donations added to online tickets, collection pots, and proceeds of themed cupcakes sold in the café all contributed. Staff also got involved with a cake sale. Thank you, Hever Castle, for choosing us as a Charity of the Year.

Congratulations to **David Nunn** on his 12-hour Snooker Marathon at The New Telegraph Club. David was right on cue to win an impressive 23 out of 25 games played, raising just under £2,500.



A shout out to **Jasmine, Lois, and Florence**, who held a cake sale at Mascalls Academy, raising £105.77. They described the care and support Jasmine's uncle John Cheesman received at the Hospice as "truly amazing".

Thank you to our **army of knitters** for creating a beautiful array of Easter donations for our **Knit-a-Chick campaign**.

The cute creations, including chicks, sheep and bunnies, all come with a surprise chocolate egg, and are in selected charity shops and at the Hospice in Pembury.







**HOSPICE  
IN THE WEALD**

*Celebrating Life,  
Dignifying Death*

# The Great Outdoors

Because being in nature makes all the difference

Help us create moments that matter when you leave a gift in your will

Visit: [hospiceintheweald.org.uk/wills](https://hospiceintheweald.org.uk/wills)