IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN...

On Saturday 28th September 2013 a soon to be 54 year old mature student gained a degree. It had taken six years of hard work, but after the hundreds of late nights, early mornings and any time in between when an odd half hour studying period could be squeezed in I found myself up on a stage in Portsmouth’s Guildhall shaking hands with the vice chancellor of the university and collecting my degree.

As I sat in the magnificent hall beside my son, who was also graduating, I looked around at all the other graduates, many of them well over 30. I saw ordinary people just like me who never went to university but instead went straight out to work, started a family or just never had the opportunity.

Now, thanks to that great institution the Open University men and women, people from any and all backgrounds, regardless of the usual social and economic barriers which still blight our society, have made the decision to plunge into the world of learning, open our minds and realize our potential. It’s not easy - in fact it's damn hard work, but whether it's to get a job, promotion or just for the fun of it at journey’s end you too will be smiling like a Cheshire cat.

There's a vast community of like minded fellow students out there who, just like me and maybe you have found it's never too late to learn.

John Harris

If, like John, Matthew, your editor and many thousands of other people who have taken advantage of the Open University’s courses over the years, you are inspired to try it for yourself, you can check out the possibilities at www.open.ac.uk

Also in this edition:
- A spring garden in St Kew Highway
- Meet the Tenant Engagement Team
- Prize Competition
- Meet Kate Foster
- News from Community Rooms
This lovely garden at Whitehall, St Kew Highway, used to be just grass, but two residents, Henry and Neil, have turned it into a lovely garden after renting the land from the Council. It looked so beautiful last spring that one of their neighbours was inspired to write this poem:

On opening my eyes this morning  
I spied a host of golden daffodils  
I was not in Wordsworth Country  
Could I be in a dream, or walking in my sleep?  
No, all I saw was the largest amount of flowers that I had ever seen.  
The golden flowers danced in the breeze  
Like jewels in the morning sun.  
Like lots of little children having so much fun!  
These are no stately gardens, where you have to pay a fee.  
Just come down to where Henry lives at the bottom of Whitehall  
For the most beautiful sight that I can always see.

Pat Falzon

Carbon Dioxide is alarming!

Every Cornwall Housing tenant who has gas heating gets an annual check and has now been issued with a CO2 alarm, which means we can all sleep easier knowing that if there are any leaks of this invisible poisonous gas we will be woken before it is too late. Don’t forget, though, that if you have gas appliances which were not provided by Cornwall Housing you do need to get them checked regularly yourself.

PRIZE COMPETITION QUESTION

To enter the competition please write your answer on a postcard and send it to the editor at the address on the front page, to arrive by January 31st 2014. The first correct entry drawn will win a cheque for £25.

The question:

Which afternoon does the Manley Close ‘Knit and Natter’ group meet?

Dolly with one of the ‘boys’

Please remember the Tenants Voice is here for you, the tenants, so if you have any questions or comments, stories or pictures please do not hesitate to drop a line to our Editor. We are still aiming to support our Tenants with help from you.

Pat Jago

THROUGH MY WINDOW

I lost my last big blue cat in July. Within a couple of weeks a friend came to see me with a cat basket held at a funny angle. When I asked her what she had in there she invited me to have a look. And there in the bottom of the basket all curled up was the prettiest kitten I had ever seen! She was cream and beige with a brown tail and ears and blue eyes - a special breed called a Rag Doll.

Now she is a member of my family. The teenagers, that's my black boys, think she is wonderful and lie on the floor to let her run all over them. They are also teaching her to stand up for herself but there are no screams or squeals. I forgot to say her name is Dolly, very appropriate.

Pat Falzon
MEET YOUR TENANT ENGAGEMENT OFFICERS

Cornwall Housing now employs three tenant engagement officers, who are the people responsible for direct contact with tenants and encouraging them to take an active interest in the management of your local area, housing estate or the company itself. There are many ways for individual tenants to get involved, ranging from just completing occasional surveys, through being an area representative on the Tenants Forum Committee or forming a Tenants and Residents Association, to becoming a member of the Board of Cornwall Housing. If you want to get involved, telephone 0300 1234 161 and ask for your Tenant Engagement Officer by name.

Hi, I'm **Frankie Addey** and I am the Tenant Engagement Officer that covers the 'Mid Area' of the County (the former Carrick District that includes Falmouth, Penryn, Truro, Perranporth etc). I currently support nine tenants and residents groups in this area, as well as helping out with consultations, focus groups, fundays, community events and projects etc.

If you currently live in the 'Mid Area' and would like some information on how you can get involved in improving your neighbourhood, housing services or anything else, please 'give me a shout'.

Hi, I am **Jemma Warburton**, the Tenant Engagement Officer for the area including Liskeard, Looe, Polruan, Polperro, Torpoint, Saltash, Callington and Launceston. I cover all the little villages in between where we have council housing. I can support you with forming a recognised Tenants and Residents Association, or give advice if you would like to find out more about becoming an area representative.

I would be happy to visit you and tenants in your area to talk about how you can be involved in working with us to improve the services we provide. Call me on the number given above.

Hi, I am **Jo May**, the Tenant Engagement Officer covering Bodmin, Wadebridge, Padstow, Camelford, Stratton, up to Kilkhampton, and all the little rural villages in between. I am here to support you and would love to visit you and have a chat about how you can become involved in shaping the services we deliver to tenants.

In the next few months we are particularly planning to target Torpoint, Millbrook, Bodmin and Rural North Cornwall, to see if there are any tenants who would like to find out more in becoming a member of Cornwall Housing Tenants Forum. Please get in touch if you are interested.

The Tenants Voice is written and produced by the tenants of Cornwall Housing Limited. If you have any comments to make or stories to tell us, please write to the editor at the address on the front page. We look forward to hearing from you and receiving your suggestions.

To contact your tenant engagement officer, or any other member of the Cornwall Housing team, call 0300 1234 161 and ask for them by name or by department.
In her late eighties, Kate Foster still leads a very active life, playing an important role in the Tenants Forum. She lives in a small village on the coast of the Roseland Peninsula. This is her story:

I can remember, as if it were yesterday, the first time I reached the small brow of the hill coming into Portscatho and saw laid out before me Gull Rock, Nare Head and Dodman and the sea, for miles and miles and miles. That was over fifty years ago and my heart still skips a beat at the sight.

Although I have lived in Portscatho a long long time, I did not become a Council Tenant until just over twenty years ago, when my late husband left me behind to live out the rest of my life without him. So here I am, still, enjoying every challenge that the change-over to Cornwall Council has produced so far. It keeps me very busy, but I still value the moments I can look out to sea and remember the first time I saw it.

Now, whenever I find myself at Pencabe point, I think of the old days and remember the Harbourmaster, Morley, "trolling" quietly in his dinghy so as not to disturb the sea bass before he had a chance to catch them. And Charlie, who taught me how to establish my own particular "mark" - those who fish at sea will know what I mean - so that I was never short of mackerel for tea. I had my own little 14ft launch complete with a small Stewart inboard engine - my pride and joy although the carburettor would keep oiling up if I remember correctly. It's now such a long time ago, but it's still all “there” for me.

A couple of years after moving in to the bungalow I decided it was time to rejoin the human race and to put something back in return for all the help and support I had received from the then Carrick District Council. So it was that I first became a Tenant Rep and then in 2003 a Tenant Board Member of Carrick Housing. And here I am, still, enjoying every challenge that the change-over to Cornwall Council has produced so far. It keeps me very busy, but I still value the moments I can look out to sea and remember the first time I saw it.

Later I learned to sail and that took me into the Mediterranean on occasions, helping my late husband to skipper rich people’s yachts, but that’s another story.

Kate Foster

CALLINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE held their Marie Curie Strawberry Tea in August. The weather was amazing, the food was delicious and more than 30 people attended. The total sum raised, including from the raffle and selling off the remaining food at the end of the afternoon, was £200 - nearly double the sum from the year before. Congratulations to them.

BEACON COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE in Falmouth had all its windows decorated for Halloween.

MANLEY CLOSE COMMUNITY CENTRE, Liskeard, has a Craft Group on Monday afternoons and a ‘Knit and Natter’ group on Tuesdays. Pictured below are some of the items they have produced for their Christmas charity sale.

GOT ANY PICTURES FROM YOUR COMMUNITY GROUP? SEND THEM TO THE EDITOR AT THE ADDRESS ON THE FRONT PAGE.