

ISSUE 5 · MAY 2025

SOUTHDEAN ESTATE MATTERS

Official Newsletter of Southdean Estate Ltd

Welcome

We have all enjoyed the luxury of two Bank Holidays with weather that has allowed us to get out and about. There has been a lot going on in the local area from the Arundel Tulip festival to celebrations of the 80th anniversary of VE day. The South Coast was a critical part of the preparations for D-Day and contributed a great deal to the efforts to bring the war in Europe to a just conclusion. Many people will have family memories from this time but in this issue we feature a story with a direct link between the Southdean Estate and those members of the forces billeted here. In this issue we also provide a summary of the business of the AGM and some background to L'arche, Bognor, the charity we are currently supporting.

AGM summary

The AGM took place on 23rd March with an encouraging turnout of residents. Full minutes of the meeting are to be found on the Southdean Estate website, however a summary of key points discussed is provided below.

The Chair began his report by commemorating the contribution of Keith Jordan who died in late December. Keith and Charlie, his constant canine companion, were well known: everyone enjoyed stopping for a chat with Keith whilst he was out and about but also looked forward to Charlie's Christmas letter. Keith had been an active member of the the Estate Committee for many years and this was commended by the Chair.

Road maintenance this year has centred on Rose Avenue where resurfacing has taken place from the junction with Elmer Road to just beyond the entrance to Tuscan Avenue. Drainage gullies, including those in the church car park, were cleaned twice in 2024/25.

The Treasurer reported that an estimate had been sought for the resurfacing of the estate roads and this came in at £110,000. The company reported that the roads were generally in a good state of repair and may go on beyond the twenty year expectation. It was agreed that the road rates with be increased to £140 for 2026.

Re-election of the current officers took place en-block.

The Reverend Trevor Marshall from St Nicholas Church introduced himself at the end of the meeting and encouraged estate members to attend social events at the church.

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Contact us

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Post AGM chats



SPENCER AUBREY PRESENTS THE CHEQUE TO A L'ARCHE RESIDENT

L'arche, Bognor Regis

L'Arche consists of nearly 160 communities, present in 37 countries around the world. Each community is rooted in its local environment and at the same time bears witness to the universal character of the lived experience of L'Arche. The organisation aims 'to provide exceptional learning disability support for adults, focusing on inclusive community, mutual relationships and relational care'. L'Arche Bognor is a part of this special organisation. They support approximately 25 adults, some of whom choose to live in their own flat, others preferring to share their home with one or more housemates who have a learning disability and sometimes with the support of assistants. Two years ago the Southdean Estate's committee chose L'Arche Bognor as a local charity to support with any monies made through our social activities. Like many charities, L'Arche has suffered in the current economic environment and our donation, although relatively small, is a huge help to them in delivering the care needed by its community.

Spencer Aubrey, Chair, and Wendy Griffiths, committee member, joined residents for a coffee morning and presented a cheque for £422.70 raised in last year's events. They received a warm welcome from the members of the community who were keen to chat about their life at L'Arche. The staff are keen to strengthen links with the estate and Matthew, pictured above, will be joining us for our beach clean in May.

We would like to thank all the residents who have supported our charity events over the last year and made it possible for us to help such a wonderful charity.

Future Events

Beach Clean
18th May at 10.00
Meet at top of
Southdean Drive
twtitten

Summer B-B-Q
26th July TBC

The reality of war

Not everyone will be aware of the Southdean Estate's 'hosting' role in World War II. From 1942 onwards, hundreds of Canadian troops were billeted in empty holiday homes across the estate and along the Sussex coast. One of those holiday homes was the then recently built 'Breezeway', at the bottom of Southdean Drive and adjacent to the twitten. The house was commandeered by the War Ministry and played host to a number of Canadian troops. We know because Breezeway has never been outside of my family's ownership since it was built in 1936.

Three years ago we embarked on Breezeway's second major refurbishment. This latest renovation included remodelling of the ground floor to create a single open plan layout. As part of the project, all the original ceilings were pulled down to allow for rewiring and replumbing. As the lathe and plaster fell to the ground, a number of other items also floated down from under the bedroom above. Two items were Canadian cigarette packets and the third and fourth were a US cigarette packet and a handwritten letter from the United States enclosed in its original envelope. The letter was addressed to a Sergeant James Jesse, date stamped Ohio, March 1944 and originally sent to an American forces post distribution centre in New York. The letter was from James' mother, Violet, and gave news of all the family, as well as expressing concern that they had not heard from James for so many months.

The letter was headed with the family's full address. Sadly, the family no longer resided in the house. However, determined to find out what happened to Sergeant Jesse, a call to an amateur genealogist friend in Canada paid dividends. After just a few days she returned with a stack of information.

This confirmed that James did leave Breezeway to take part in the Normandy landings in June 1944. Indeed, he landed with the US 120th Army Infantry at probably the most perilous location – Omaha Beach, in the south east corner of the Cherbourg peninsula. However, shortly afterwards a local press cutting in Ohio reports him as being 'missing in action'. But here is the good news. Later records show that he was alive and is included on a passenger list of returning troops to New York dated October 1945. In fact, James had been wounded twice and was later decorated with the Bronze Star and Purple Heart for bravery in action. He got married and my genealogist friend was able to supply a news cutting photograph of his wedding (below). She also found out that he and his wife had seven children, six girls and a boy. James died in 2009.

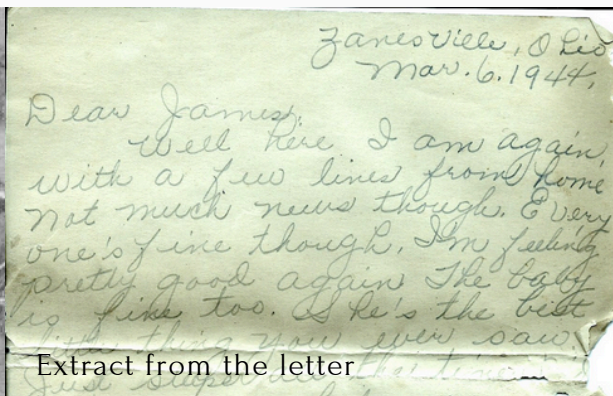
With the help of Google I made contact with his son, James 'Chip' Jesse. A quick Facebook message brought a response after a couple of days. "Hey-that was my dad!"

At last my quest was complete. His son, Chip, made the comment that his dad never really talked about the war - just about the wonderful camaraderie amongst the troops. Subsequent to my telephone chat with Chip I was able to send him pictures of how Breezeway looked in 1944 with an arrow pointing to the bedroom his father occupied plus, of course, the original letter written by his grandmother together with the cigarette pack!

David Paul (current owner Breezeway)



Sgt. Jesse's wedding day



Extract from the letter



Breezeway 1944