

# BRIDGE BULLETIN

A BRIDGE FROM HOMELESSNESS

BRIDGE TRUST 

WINTER 2018



## Merry Christmas

We wish everyone a very happy Christmas and we give our sincerest thanks to all of you who have supported us in helping so many homeless people this year; people like Spencer... 

### Hi, I'm Spencer and this is my story

Following the premature death of a close family member, someone introduced me to alcohol and I liked it. It then became like a friend to me and I ended up drinking too much, later I realised that it was not my friend after all. I was working building tennis courts at the time, and several times my employer threatened to sack me because I had the smell of alcohol on me.

*...if it wasn't for  
The Bridge Trust  
I probably wouldn't  
be here now...*

After 24 years doing this job the owner retired and I was made redundant. At this time I was sofa-surfing, and was doing this on and off for nearly 30 years. I had been told by the doctor that I needed to stop drinking and after a number of years I stopped but began to have epileptic fits. When I went to my doctor he told me that as my body was used to alcohol that I needed to stop slowly. I went to alcohol support services but found it difficult seeing other people in different stages of recovery so I cut down and then stopped without much help from anyone else.

When I was seven months sober I was feeling bored of staying in different places so my brother suggested I contact The Bridge Trust. My daughter took me to see them in August 2017 and I was accepted into their accommodation in September. I stayed in a couple of different houses while with The Bridge Trust and my keyworker Nick put me on the right track. He was down to earth with me and we did a lot of talking about the choices I'd made. I also did a "Volunteering for All" course while I was there and I still have the certificate.

In May 2018 I agreed with The Bridge Trust that I was ready to leave their house to live on my own and I went to view a flat in North Tonbridge not far from my daughter, grandchildren and my son. I accepted the offer of the flat and picked up some items of furniture that people were giving away, plus the Trust provided me with a bed, mattress and some bedding. Someone gave me some underlay and I got a carpet in the sale. In a few weeks I had done up the flat and was getting on with my new life. Nick has been out to my flat (as part of the Supported Move-on project) and has commented how homely it is.

I often see people that I used to drink with and they try to tempt me into drinking or they ask me what has changed, sometimes I don't even recognise them as I would have been drunk at the time. I think to myself that they could do the same if they wanted to; stop drinking and get help like I did. I hadn't been interested in paying my bills before but now I pay everything I need to. I had pushed my grandchildren away when I was drinking and wasn't interested in them, now I see them. My daughter has been with me all the way. I get on with my neighbours, we are like a little family there. Some of the other residents I shared a house with while at The Bridge Trust live near me too.

I can't even stand the smell of alcohol now and I keep myself away from it. Sometimes I pass by the bench by Tonbridge Castle where I used to spend a lot of time drinking and I think of what I used to be like. I am really happy now and proud of myself but if it wasn't for The Bridge Trust I probably wouldn't be here now, I'd probably be six foot under still with a drink in my hand. They've helped me a lot and I really appreciate it.



## Give and You Shall Receive

I heard a church sermon recently that addressed the subject of giving. Now, the minister did appreciate that giving, particularly giving money, can be an uncomfortable topic and indeed even a divisive one, but he was right to remind our church that the work it does, which we all want to see continuing, has a cost and that cost has to be met somehow; Spoiler Alert – money really doesn't grow on trees!

He mentioned a friend of his who told him that he had set up a standing order to a charity some 35 years ago and had not increased it since day one, and of course the value of that donation in real terms had plummeted over the years and he realised he had to do something about it. This encouraged me to think about my own giving – not just to my church but to good causes generally. My family gives to the church and three other charities and we also give money on an ad-hoc basis; e.g world disasters. Having reviewed these, I am reasonably comfortable that we are giving the right amounts to the right places. Of course we would love to give so much more as there is so much more need in this world but as they say, every little helps.



So what about your giving? As I said, I know this topic can be a bit of a turn-off for people, but at The Bridge Trust we cannot do what we do without money and over half of the money we need has to come from the generosity of the public – our supporters.

I want to digress a little here, as I was talking to a group of business people the other week and I wanted to put “giving” into a context that they would be able to empathise with, and I wanted to share this with you too.

One of the best business books I have read is called “The Go-Giver”. This book tells the story of an ambitious young man who, after a downturn in his business, yearns for success and in search of that success he seeks advice from a mentor who introduces him to a series of “go-givers”: a restaurateur, a CEO, a financial adviser and a few others. These teach him how to open himself up to the power of giving. He learns that changing his focus from *getting* to *giving* – putting others' interests first and continually adding value to *their* lives – can lead to unexpected returns – both for his business and for him personally. The book and its message brings a new relevance to “Give and you shall receive”. (Luke 6:38).

Now I appreciate that this all might sound as if I am trying to manipulate you into giving something or giving more to The Bridge Trust, but all I am trying to do, particularly as we start thinking about the meaning of Christmas, is to ask you to open yourselves up to the fact that giving is not only good for others but it's also good for YOU as you will get rewards as well. What those rewards may be I cannot say. Maybe it's just a feeling that you are helping those who are less fortunate than you. Maybe it will encourage you to pay more attention to media articles about homelessness and therefore feel a connection and that you are involved in helping others in this world. Maybe you might receive something back in another way. What I do know is that whenever I have given freely to someone it has never done me any harm, only good and it would do the same for you.

The income The Bridge Trust gets from voluntary donations has dropped by almost £14,000 (13%) over this last year so we really do need your help. If you feel that you can start giving to help us or give more than you already do then please act now – before you forget. Pop a cheque in the post, send us something via on-line banking, set up a regular Standing Order – but please do help us as giving can be a real blessing – to all concerned.

I'll finish with what my minister's sermon reminded us of, something Winston Churchill famously said:

**“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”**

*John Handley, CEO*



## A New Patron

**We are delighted to announce that the new Bishop of Tonbridge, The Right Reverend Simon Burton-Jones has agreed to become a Patron of The Bridge Trust.**

Born a Lancashire lad, Simon moved south in the late 90's to begin serving the Diocese of Rochester, becoming an Archdeacon in 2010. He was ordained as Bishop of Tonbridge this summer.

Simon's patronage of the charity adds to a long line of previous Bishops of Tonbridge who have become Patrons, as well as the Archdeacon of Southwark and Simon's (earthly) boss, the Bishop of Rochester.

## 2018 Annual General Meeting

Following the conclusion of the official business of this year's AGM, the Trust's CEO gave a presentation on the state of homelessness in the country and how this compared to the homelessness situation in the west Kent region.

Using figures from a report by Shelter and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and the Trust's own statistics, it was shown that homelessness in all its forms had increased over the past years and was continuing to do so, and in the context of an often difficult and changing legislative environment.

The presentation concluded with a summary of the Trust's statutory funding that will be removed in April 2019, due to the County Council only contracting with large organisations in the future – with only one provider of homelessness services therefore being contracted for all the homelessness in west Kent.

The CEO reported that it was the Trust's hope that their services would be needed by that one provider and a sub-contracting agreement could be negotiated so that The Bridge Trust could continue providing its current services long into the future. The evening concluded with a lively and interesting Q&A session.

We thank all those who attended the meeting and look forward to reporting on progress at our next AGM.



## Help for Rough Sleepers



**Rough sleeping on our streets is tough at any time of the year but especially so in the colder, winter months.**

With this in mind the 2nd Tonbridge Scouts donated some sleeping bags and ground mats to The Bridge Trust to distribute.

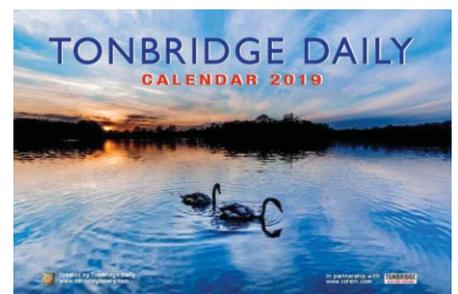
With rough sleeping on the rise and having depleted our previous supply, this has come at just the right time and will be enough to provide warmth to all the rough sleepers we help over the coming year.

## The Tonbridge Daily Calendar 2019

**As reported in our last Bulletin, we are hugely honoured to have been chosen as one of three local charities to benefit from the sale of the 2019 Tonbridge Daily Calendar.**

The Calendar has some wonderful photographs of Tonbridge and at £8 makes an affordable present this Christmas. The calendars are available in many shops in Tonbridge High Street including Tonbridge Old Fire Station.

Buying a copy will benefit us and two other great charities who support the local community.



## For Hire – Tombola Drum

We have a multi-coloured, "Harlequin" tombola drum that we are happy to let other organisations use for their events.

Height – 331mm, length – 418mm, diameter – 313mm, weight – 3.6kg

Hire "charge" – £10 donation

Contact the Tonbridge office for more details.



## Here's an idea...

Do you have any old British or foreign currency you could do with getting rid of?

Why not send it to us and we can turn it into money that can be put to use helping us provide our homelessness services.

Please use the Freepost envelope provided with this Bulletin to send any notes or drop any cash into our Tonbridge office.

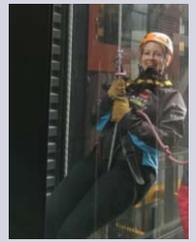




## What to do if you miss the lift!

The “Cheese Grater” (aka The Leadenhall Building in London) is an interesting building anyway, but just to make things even more interesting, in September Liz Roberts joined others in abseiling down its 700 feet to raise over £800 (plus another 25% Gift Aid) for The Bridge Trust.

Working for Brit Insurance, they also donated towards her sponsorship, bringing in a further £1,062. A wonderful result for which all the people we help are so grateful.



## New Tonbridge B&M Store Shows Their Support

In November this year, a new B&M store opened on the Cannon Lane retail park in Tonbridge.

To mark the special occasion of opening their 600th store, we were invited along for a VIP tour and to receive £250 in store vouchers. These will be spent directly on helping the homeless people in our community who The Bridge Trust support.



## Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who has donated. Here are a few since the last Bulletin:

**Charities Aid Foundation Staff – £50**

**St Margaret’s Church, Halstead – £250**

**Tonbridge Parish Church – £300**

**St Luke’s Church, Sevenoaks – £139.95**

**Tonbridge Methodist Church – £135**

**Tunbridge Wells, United Reformed Church – £149.32**

**Holy Trinity with Christchurch, Tunbridge Wells – £350**

**Rotary Club of Sevenoaks – £2,500 (Sevenoaks 10K)**

**Wealden Vocals – £452**

**Plus local schools for their Harvest goods.**

**It costs approximately £450,000 a year for us to provide a home to the homeless. These donations, from both groups and individuals allow us to continue to make a difference in people’s lives**

## Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon 17th February 2019

What better way to work-off the excesses of Christmas and the new year than by getting into training to run the 2019 Hendy Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon, for The Bridge Trust.

We ask that you try to raise a minimum of £50 in sponsorship.

Event Information: [www.twharriers.org.uk](http://www.twharriers.org.uk)



**FREE RACE PLACES!**

## Tonbridge Lions – Support from 2018 Classic Car Tour

Back in July the Tonbridge Lions organised their annual Classic Car Tour and on the suggestion of one of their sponsors – Martin & Co Letting Agents, they donated £500 from the money raised to The Bridge Trust.

A huge thank you to the Lions and to Robert Gordon-James from Martin & Co.



## Pass it on...

When you have finished with this Bulletin, perhaps you could pass it on to a neighbour who may be interested. If you do, you can ask them to contact us if they want to be added to our mailing list.

### CONTACT US

17A Quarry Hill Road, Tonbridge, TN9 2RN.

T: 01732 368363 • 01892 3152823 • E: [Info@thebridgetrust.org.uk](mailto:Info@thebridgetrust.org.uk)

Like us: [facebook.com/thebridgetrust](https://facebook.com/thebridgetrust)

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