

# A New Start! . . .

*Gail Gumbrell  
Social Worker, Bradford*

**I** am a Social Worker with the Community Team for Adults with Learning Disabilities in Bradford. One of the wonderful things about my job is the

community. Naturally, people are having relationships and increasing numbers of people are deciding that they want to be parents. For us, as social workers,

this raises huge and complex issues that we have to grapple with; can the parents meet the child's needs, keep them safe, set boundaries, stimulate them?

**T**he real challenge for us is that learning

disabled parents overlap two areas of social work: Children's and Learning Disability Services. The families need us as workers to bring together our different areas of expertise and work with them in a holistic way that is fair, supportive and realistic.

variety of tasks I am involved with in supporting learning disabled adults and their families. Of all these tasks, one of the most challenging and rewarding aspects has been my involvement with learning disabled parents.

**T**hankfully, more and more learning disabled adults are leading full and interesting lives in the

**M**y involvement with Browning House began in 2005 when one of my clients, a mum with a learning disability, was offered a residential assessment with her young daughter. The stakes were high as adoption was a very real possibility. I can still remember

the huge sense of relief I felt when I was told that staff at Browning House had worked with learning disabled parents before.

**W**hen I saw the work in practice, I was extremely impressed. They were delivering a service that is 'fair, supportive and realistic'. Chris Mattock's famous pictorial booklets are just what are needed to help parents follow routines. There was lots of praise for both mum and daughter when things were going well and creative suggestions when things were not so good.

**F**or this family there was a successful outcome; they returned home together and have gone from strength to strength. I asked my client how she feels about Browning House and she said, "It was a bit like being in prison being checked on, even at night. I



enjoyed going out on the day trips and going to groups. It was good having the staff to talk to. I felt proud when I could take my daughter home but I really missed the staff."

**A**s a worker, I feel very fortunate that we can access Browning House to offer assessments for learning disabled parents. There is a real need for the commitment, expertise and enthusiasm of Browning House staff. I am confident that the work Browning House does with learning disabled parents will continue to be valued by families and professionals alike.



# Growth and Change at Browning House

Anne Stimpson, Senior Support Worker

**I**t was a very warm Spring Holiday evening in May 1984 when I started my working journey through Browning House. My first solo shift after induction by Auntie Meg (a lovely lady) has stayed with me and is still clear after over 22 years.

**I** was greeted by a very wearing looking resident. When asked if I was the night lady, I revealed that I was, after which she put her arm through mine and said, "Good, because if you wasn't I'd have to knock you!"

**M**rs Needham, the officer-in-charge, greeted me and introduced me to the other young nuns - no dads resident in those days. That was the beginning of my education in Family Support work. And oh boy, what an education of tears, fights and arguments - along with a lot of fun and laughter.

**F**rom night worker I took on the role of cook (what an experience that was, from shopping for food with Sue Ellison, to coaxing the nuns to help me in the kitchen, through which they learned cooking skills, which they ultimately enjoyed).

**M**oving to the role of support worker, I have worked alongside a good team of colleagues and have endured the good and the bad times, but we never gave up on any resident.

**I** have been adopted in the roles of mum and grandma - very flattering, but also sad.

**E**leven years ago Mrs Needham retired and Browning House began its march into the 21st Century.

**B**uildings were converted, a nursery, meeting room block and laundry built, all mod cons replaced the aging ones and the kitchen and dining room were modernised. This also meant that the staff

could give a loud cheer to seeing the back of having to climb ladders to wash the walls and curtains.

**L**ast year a conservatory play area was built and this year the two flats have been transformed from a mishmash of odd rooms to well-appointed and purpose-built.

**T**he ensuite project is next, installing private bathrooms in a further six resident bedrooms.

**W**ell, the time has come for me to bid a heart-felt farewell to Browning House, as I retired in August this year.

**B**oy, the years have flown by, but I will take with me lots of happy memories as well as sad ones. The dramas, tears and lots of laughs. I hope that Browning House continues to provide the service of helping parents to learn how to care and protect their children. Love and best wishes to the management and team. Keep up the good work.

Au Revoir!

**O**n 4 July I clocked four years as an employee at Browning House and in that time have encountered much growth and change. The House itself has changed significantly since I started here in 2002. There have been many improvements and extensions to the building, all of which



*Mark Hawksworth, mastering the flats conversion and ensuite projects*

have made the living conditions for the residents more pleasant and the working areas more practical for the ever-growing staff team.

**T**here have been many changes in how we work at Browning House. The most valuable tool that has been added to our working practice is the computer. How we used to record our daily kardex notes seems prehistoric in comparison. My initial fears about how

Sarah Johnson, Support Worker

I would cope with this new technology were soon quashed. Sitting at the PC to record my observations is now a normal part of my day, plus I don't have to go on a biro hunt!

**T**here have been many changes within the staff team in my four years. Notably, we have said good-bye to some loyal and longstanding staff members who have retired from service. I personally will never forget these fabulous women who

have helped guide and support so many, (myself included) in their positions at Browning House.

**T**here have been some new additions to the staff team, including a more balanced mix of the sexes. Steve is no longer the lonesome male on the team! The management team has seen some changes and Karen Keenan is now securely at the helm to lead us through the challenges that we face.

**T**hrough staff training I have been able to reflect on my working practices and I have come to realise how I have changed in my time here. I have learnt so much from the families that I have encountered over the years. I have shared in their joys, heartbreaks and anxieties for the future. Rarely is the path through assessment a straight road and I hope that I have helped some people cope along the way.

**O**ne thing that has not changed at Browning House is the need for a family assessment. We have a constant supply of families coming through our doors to guide and support. The family structures may differ and we may have the newest babies to the most tearaway toddlers to contend with. We share in the joy of seeing a child grow and develop and likewise see their parents grow in their ability to be competent carers.



# Modernisation of Browning House

*Charles Barnes  
Trustee*

Over the years The Trustees have adapted the direction of the charity in ensuring that the work we do is relevant to the needs of the community. This is a continuous process and the Trustees must use reasonable care and skill in their work as Trustees, using their personal skills and experience as needed to ensure that the charity is well run and efficient. This is also necessary when looking at the constitution under which the charity functions.

## *The Old Constitution*

At present the empowering document is a single piece of paper agreed at a meeting on 29 June 1950. Trust Law prevents the use of powers of constitutional amendment for unincorporated charities and this means that the constitution cannot be brought up-to date to meet modern requirements.

The Trustees considered the reasons why they should not change from an unincorporated body and it was evident that the charity was not small, in terms of assets and neither does it have a membership. Existing Trustees elect new Trustees, who are not elected for a fixed time. Also, employees carry out the charitable purpose of the charity.

## *The Way Forward*

The other means of running the charity is by means of a company limited by guarantee. In this

format the Charity Trustees are called a Board, council of management or directors and they initially create a memorandum and articles of association which is agreed and then approved by the Charity Commission.

into contracts in its own name. The directors are agents of the company and as such are not normally liable personally for its debts. The company will also have limited liability, which means in the case of a



*Amy and Melissa of the Children's Team entertain one of their young charges*

A company is a legal person quite separate from its members and directors. This means that the law considers it to be a person in the same way as an individual. Therefore a company can own land or enter

typical charitable company, to the extent which they have undertaken to guarantee them. This is stated in the memorandum of association at a nominal value, such as one pound.

A company is subject to company law, as well as to charity law, and certain duties must be observed, such as the annual filing of accounts with the Registrar of Companies.

However, charitable companies can never be the same as commercial companies. The main purpose of commercial companies is to make profits for distribution to its members. All the property of a charitable company is applicable for charitable purposes.

## *The New Constitution*

The Trustees of Browning House Family Assessment Centre, an unincorporated charity, agreed that it would be appropriate to transfer the assets of the Charity to a company limited by guarantee on the basis that the organisation is not small; it has employees; it delivers charitable services under contractual agreements; it owns land and property; and it would be easier to attract new Trustees and fill vacancies with the commercial liabilities which are currently a personal liability being covered by a company limited by guarantee.

The new constitution will enable future Trustees the ability to change the constitution, subject to approval from the Charity Commission, to meet the changing requirements of the Browning House Family Assessment Centre as time goes on.

# Donkey Sanctuary . . .

**B**rowning House is extremely fortunate in having an arrangement with The Donkey Centre, situated on the outskirts of Leeds in the beautiful area of Eccup. Children with special needs and disabilities in the city and surrounding areas are able to benefit from donkey-riding therapy at this centre and our toddlers and their parents are regular visitors.

**W**e've adopted a donkey called Simon who, for a change, came to visit *us* one memorable day in March. His visit was eagerly anticipated by our children and their parents alike and Simon stood very patiently in our conservatory play room, to give every child an opportunity to stroke his furry ears and sit on his back.



# “Would you like to get involved with the Fun Day?”

Steve Sykes  
Case Manager

**S**ounds pretty innocuous, doesn't it? So, I offered my services freely; and in a weak moment declared that I was prepared to help in any way.

**F**ast forward to the Big Day . . . it was with a bit of anxiety that I viewed the grey clouds skidding across the Leeds skyline as I drove to work contemplating my fate. I had been roped into having large wet sponges thrown at me for the amusement of residents and staff alike . . . I even had to buy the sponges!!

**F**or the princely sum of 50p people had the opportunity, nay pleasure, of hurling three sponges at me. I have to say that the toddlers were the most gentle with me! It is also worthy of note that many of the residents had a surprisingly accurate shot and that soft and squidgy sponges do take on the density of semi-precious metal when hurled at high speed. I did have a rather sore face the following day; however, Claims Direct did not feel I had a case for compensation, despite the photographic evidence!!

**B**y my reckoning, I took a total of £16,00, which equates to 48 sponges plus an additional few perpetrated by two rather over exuberant three year olds! All in the line of duty I guess.

**A**fter I dried myself off and changed my clothes, I sampled the other delights of the fun day. I tested my football skills in 'Beat the

Goalie' and discovered that I remain a fabulous armchair football critic with no tangible skills to speak of! I was able to 'Hook a Duck' before sampling some

fabulous cakes from the cake stall washed down with a delicious fruit smoothie. In my haste to fill my stomach I missed the rush on the tombola which was a real shame as I had my eye on the pedicure set and banana holder (honestly!). I really had to console myself with a delicious burger from the Bar-B-Que which really wasn't hampered by the persistent drizzle - Nigel the Chef did a sterling job.

**A** great day was had by all - roll on next year. I might not be as quick to blindly volunteer next time . . . I hear that someone is required to wear a beard of bees and charm some cobras - bags I do the tombola!!



# Our Day Out . . .

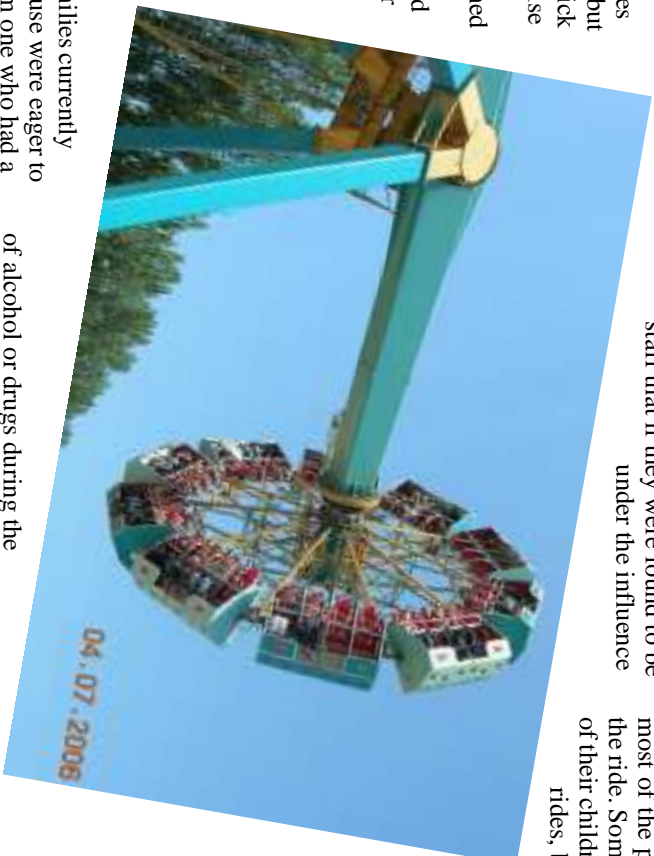
Laura Senior

**A**nne Stimpson normally arranges these trips out, but because Anne was on sick leave I offered to organise our annual trip to Flamingoland. I confirmed the date of 4 July with Ann Kennedy and asked Mel to make a poster for the trip, which I put up on the notice board. I then booked the coach, made a check list for myself to ensure that parents had confirmed they were going, had spoken to their social workers and had paid their £5.00 contribution. All the families currently attending Browning House were eager to go on the trip, apart from one who had a review meeting booked. Five ex-residents brought their children along as well.

**T**he day before the trip I checked with the parents that they had car seats and arranged for the one family who did not have one to borrow a chair from the House.

**O**n the day of the trip everybody was eagerly up and ready by 9.00 am - unheard of on a normal morning! The coach arrived at 10.00 am and we streamed out the back gate to board and get settled. I took a head count of all the children and adults on the coach so Ann Kennedy could get the tickets on our arrival. The adults were warned by

staff that if they were found to be under the influence



most of the parents bought the photos of the ride. Some parents tried to take some of their children with them on the smaller rides, but were advised not to go on with babies. We then went to look at the reptiles.

**W**e had our lunch in a café; all the parents fed their children before getting themselves food. We then went down to some of the big rides for the adults whilst staff looked after the children.

**W**e enjoyed watching the antics of the sea lion and seals and after the show two families wanted to go to the amusements, so I took them down. We then

went in to watch a show, whilst the parents danced with their children in their arms.

**A**s they were making their way to the exit, some parents stopped to take their children on two last rides at the entrance of the park. As three staff members and two families had arrived back at the coach on time and were waiting for the others, I returned to the park after about ten minutes to round up those who were reluctant to leave. By this time, most of the families were just coming out of the gates. I counted everybody onto the coach and we then all set off back to Browning House, tired but happy.

**O**ur Day Out was (once again) voted to have been a great success and our parents are already anticipating the Christmas trip to Sundown Park!

of alcohol or drugs during the day, they would not be permitted back on the coach and would therefore have to make their own way back to Leeds whilst their children were taken home by staff.

**T**he weather was lovely. When we got off the coach the parents put sun lotion on the children and off we went. Each member of staff escorted a number of those families whose children were on care orders.

**D**awn, Ann Kennedy and I had five families with us. On the way up to the children's part of the park, we stopped off at one of the rides so all the parents could take the children on it, apart from one child, who was asleep;



Laura, on pushchair duty

# Summer Party!

Guests at Yorkshire family law firm, Jones Myers Partnership's Summer Party in June 2006 raised

£1,000 in a prize draw for Browning House. Over 100 guests attended the event, which was held at Room, The Bourse Courtyard, Leeds.

John Myers, managing partner at Jones Myers said: "We are delighted to present a cheque to Browning House, with whom we've worked for a number of years. Thanks to the generosity of our guests, we were able to raise much needed funds to help the team carry on their vital work protecting children."

Karen Keenan, manager of Browning House thanked everyone at Jones Myers for their continued support and especially all their guests who very kindly donated money. A thousand pounds is a significant amount for a small charity like ours. In some cases, children and their parents may end up being separated so we give every parent who attends the Centre disposable cameras to create a life story book for their children. The money has gone towards purchasing more cameras and also a camcorder, so parents can record their children on DVD as a lasting memento.

Jones Myers Partnership, which has offices in East Parade, Leeds, provides a full range of



legal services in both private and public law. It was the first dedicated family law firm to be established in the region and is the only one acting across the board on all issues relating to matrimonial finance and children. The firm is in the top tier, ranked second in the Legal 500 and Chambers listings for Yorkshire.



Ann Kennedy  
Administration Manager

# Trustee Confessions - Inspection . . . friend or foe?

**W**hen I was asked to become a Trustee of Browning House earlier this year, I had a number of preconceptions about what the role might entail. Some of these were formed following conversations with current Trustees and others were ill-informed and stemmed from my expectations of what running an organisation like Browning House would mean..

**N**ow four months on, I would describe my experience as a Trustee as 'what I expected but more so'. So what did I expect and how has the reality compared?

**W**ell, I expected the responsibility of a Trustee to be more onerous than anything I had experienced to date - as a lawyer in private practice, then a City Regulator and latterly as a senior executive in a banking organisation. In all these roles, if my firm got it wrong, the damage to customers, though distressing to the customer, was normally temporary; and at the end of the day the customer never lost out. As a Trustee of Browning House, however, I was acutely aware that if we get it wrong we can do permanent harm to inter-family relationships and to the life experience of those we let down. Having some staff have to make, and the incidents which can and do arise on occasion, I am struck by the narrow lines which may have to be trodden and the very different outcomes - for staff or customers - which lie on each side of the narrow line.

**I** expected my fellow Trustees to be dedicated and committed to serving the objectives of the organisation. And so it has proved. But that dedication and commitment is accompanied by a level of business "nous" which rather ate into the specialist contribution I had expected to make! And I expected there to be caring and professional

staff. But I expected them also to be more detached emotionally where individual cases had a disappointing outcome despite their best efforts. I have been more than impressed by the personal capital invested by the staff in the welfare of each and every customer and the modesty with which they present the Trustees with information about heroic actions on their part in relation to any difficult situations which arise.

**S**o far so good. Have there been any disappointments? Well, I had hoped that my concerns about the responsibilities I was assuming by becoming a Trustee would be reduced by my ability to rely on the CSCI inspections to which Browning House would be subject. Well-informed and constructive commentary on weaknesses is a major strength to the Trustees and so CSCI inspections should be welcomed in principle. I am too new to say whether that is our experience.

**T**he stock take so far? I am proud to be a Trustee of Browning House: I am still on a learning curve and so have yet to form my own views on what might be the key challenges of the Trustees collectively in the short, medium and longer terms; and I am keen to learn from my fellow Trustees so that I can make a significant contribution to the organisation's welfare.

*Arthur Selman*

**A**s with all homes in the care sector, it is important that standards are upheld and of the highest calibre. In order to maintain standards homes are inspected and to



*Toddler Tearime*

assess whether services are meeting the needs of those who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000.

**S**tandards in Care Homes are regulated by CSCI. The Commission for Social Care Inspection is charged with ensuring that the Homes provide care for the vulnerable they are charged to protect. Furthermore they are asked to ensure that all homes comply with National Minimum Standards.

**B**rowning House is inspected on a regular basis by CSCI and prides itself in attaining the highest standard of care for all residents. The success or otherwise of the House is measured by the

high occupancy, a reflection of the faith that referring agencies have in our service.

**O**n a local level the Trustees are charged with the responsibility of inspecting the House monthly. This is done by Trustees in turn. The benefits to my mind are two fold. Firstly it gives us, the Trustees, the privilege of meeting staff and residents informally. It is too easy to attend a management meeting and not really understand how the Unit works. While inspecting we may sit round a table in the dining room, or talk to parents in the Day Nursery. We hear good things and sometimes points are raised that leads us to modify things in the House. Secondly and probably of more importance is that staff and residents are able to speak freely and openly to members of the Management Committee.

**I**t is to be hoped that standards will be maintained through inspections. Too often inspections are perceived as a mechanism for 'catching out'. We feel confident that there is benefit to be derived from the legislation but we must all be aware that this comes at a cost. My personal fear is that because Browning House is such a unique establishment the mechanism of inspection may not reflect the subtlety of the work.. We have seen that staff are burdened with a huge mountain of paper work. Because of this there is a danger that their valuable time and expertise may be drawn away from the real job of helping the families.

*Diana Finan*

# Browning House . . .

*Robert Dane, Support Worker*

**B**rowning House is a child protection unit, established to assess and promote parenting skills. The staff aim to provide a supportive advocacy role for parents and work hard to develop relationships based on trust and honesty. Browning House is a place of safety and the security and the well-being of the children in the House will always be our paramount concern.

**O**ur aim is to balance detailed monitoring with our work in assisting parents to acquire the insight and the nurturing skills required to care adequately for their children. Parents are supported by the flexible approach of a multi-skilled professionally-trained team. It is the policy of Browning House to provide equality of opportunity for all its families and staff regardless of sex, race, colour, age, social class, religious belief, marital status, physical or learning disability, state of mental health or medical history. We support parents through our training programme. We give positive encouragement to assist them in recognising the needs of their children, building their self-esteem and working towards the provision of a safe, caring, loving, protective and stimulating environment for their children.



**O**ne of the joys of this job is never-quite-knowing-what-to-expect when you come through the doors. There really is no typical Browning House day - but to give a flavour of the Support Worker Role, I have listed alphabetically a few of the tasks we can be asked to do:

**A** is for Ad Libitum - the challenge of being able to multitask and think on your feet.

**B** is for Babysitting - the pleasure of looking after children when parents are in meetings or having time out.

*Hallowe'en Fun!*



**E** is for Eating - encouraging families to cook for themselves and budget for food.

**F** is for Furniture Removals - helping residents move in and out of Browning House when they come in and when they eventually leave us.

**G** is for Games - playing in the conservatory and general silliness and having fun.

**H** is for Haiku - not a Browning House task but an excuse to fit a traditional poetry form into the calendar - so here are the directions to Browning house in a Haiku format: Browning House in Leeds, One Two Six Chapeltown Road, Entrance at the Back.

**I** is for Inventories - keeping records of the contents of rooms and equipping residents with things they need during their stay.

**J** is for Jay Cloths - cleaning and encouraging others to take pride in their living space.

**K** is for Knowledge - sharing information with residents about setting safes, working the washing machines and getting ovens to work after they have been switched off at the plug.

**L** is for Laundry - getting all the bedding washed and returned for the next resident.

**M** is for Medication - distributing, advising on the uses of paracetamol suspension appropriate for the age of child and recording.

**N** is for Numbers - knowing telephone numbers and addresses of Browning House, local doctors, emergency doctor and taxi.

**O** is for On Offer - gaining a reputation for knowing what appropriate foods are



before the twenty-ninth cup.

**D** is for Diarrhoea - the task of examining the contents of nappies and being asked what you think.

**C** is for Coffee, the task of making drinks. And also because I don't function on an early shift

**M** is for Medication - distributing, advising on the uses of paracetamol suspension appropriate for the age of child and recording.

**N** is for Numbers - knowing telephone numbers and addresses of Browning House, local doctors, emergency doctor and taxi.

**O** is for On Offer - gaining a reputation for knowing what appropriate foods are

currently on special offer at local shops and supermarkets and sharing knowledge.

**P** is for Public Transport - knowing the routes, times and cost of all the local buses.

**Q** is for Qwerty - the design of UK keyboards - assisting colleagues with PC-related problems.

**R** is for Requests - all the other tasks we could be asked to do at any time.

**S** is for Swings - trips to parks and realising I have the best job in the world when I get to play rides with children and get paid for it.

**T** is for Teaspoons - my unofficial role of keeping the House stocked with cutlery, can openers and milk.

**U** is for Utensils - the task of going shopping to replace worn-out pans and missing spoons.

**V** is for Vehement - the times when emotions run high and we need to keep calm and level-headed in difficult situations.

**W** is for Work - trying to keep up-to-date with record keeping when there's a queue of people asking for other things.

**X** is for Xylophone - the times spent in nursery entertaining children with musical instruments and encouraging them to try themselves.

**Y** is for Yorkshire Pudding - the days cooking communal house meals and the ensuing discussions about whose grandmother makes the nicest ones.

**Z** is for Zoological - the trips out to Donkey Sanctuaries, Meanwood Valley Farm, Tropical World and Flamingo Land.

# God Save the King!

*Dr Jenny Green, Trustee*

**T**he bad news is that Canon Jeff King will resign from the post of Chairperson of the Management Committee of Browning House at the 2006 Annual General Meeting, after many years of faithful service.

**T**o say 'Canon Jeffrey King' sounds somewhat formal, religious and solemn. The Jeff King we know and love at Browning House is human, warm, caring, approachable and entirely dependable. He has given an enormous amount of his time to House matters. He is full of common sense, fairness and kindness. He has earned our admiration and our trust. We shall all miss him deeply.

**B**rowning House now cares for all denominations, with a similar mix of staff. But, historically, Browning House has had a strong relationship with the Church, being set up originally as a mother and baby home under the auspices of the Church of England, with staff who were committed to the faith. The Vicar of St Martin's Church had traditionally been invited to be Chaplain to the House.

**J**eff read theology at King's College, London and graduated in 1967, training for ordination at St Boniface

College, Westminster in the following year.

He was ordained deacon in St Paul's Cathedral, London, in 1968 and ordained priest in 1969. He came to Leeds in 1971 as the Curate of St Mary's Church at Garforth.

**B**y coincidence I had the privilege of meeting him soon after his arrival in Leeds. Jeff's wife, Ann, and I worked together in the Eye Department of the Leeds General Infirmary from that time on and for many years thereafter and Jeff and Ann have remained valued friends. In 1974 Jeff became the Vicar of St Martin's

Church in Chapeltown and experienced his first association with Browning House. He became the Chaplain to the House and also a member of the Management Committee. He represented Browning House on the Board for Social Responsibility of the Diocese of Ripon. He later chaired this important body from 1985-1995.

**D**espite his many other commitments, he took on the responsibility of chairing the Browning House Management Committee in 1985, a position he has held continuously until now, over 20 years. In 1983 he moved to St John's Church at Moortown as the Team Rector of the Parish of Moor Allerton, where he stayed until 1999, becoming Honorary Canon of Ripon Cathedral in 1990. He remains Vicar of Thorner and Ecumenical Officer for the Diocese of Ripon and Leeds.

**J**eff, all of us at Browning House are full of gratitude for the time and care you

have so generously given, overseeing the huge changes in the life of the House over the years. We hope you will have many happy memories of the place and its people and that you will maintain an interest in its welfare. We wish you well in all you do, and we will miss you. God bless!



