



# park *people*

It's not what life deals you...  
but more how you deal with life

**Barbara Dunn** is an inspiration to all, having chosen park home living to help facilitate life for her and her husband, who now lives with Frontotemporal Dementia



If anybody is familiar with Frontotemporal Dementia they will be aware of, not only the physical degeneration, but also the behavioural problems it brings.

Barbara and Michael Dunn had gone on an adventure to Bulgaria shortly after their marriage 14 years ago. They had first met at church in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Barbara was highly active in local community work; at the same time setting personal targets to study something every year (and still does).

At that time she had completed four years of personal and professional development at university.

The aforementioned adventure was a brain wave of Barbara's to enable Michael to take early retirement and free him from ongoing work pressures. She wanted to find an affordable home and living arrangement that would create a new and exciting experience. Not wanting to do anything by halves, Barbara found a place in the middle of the country in Bulgaria, where nobody spoke English!

## Charity work

It wasn't long before Barbara and Michael had integrated in to the local community and were energetically involved in charitable work to help schools and orphanages. Barbara - along with friends, family and church - would raise funds to provide medical or physical equipment; whatever was needed. Local women also engaged in making cushions, blankets and other comfort items.

Soon Barbara noticed some behavioural changes and inconsistencies in Michael, and his desire to be involved was decreasing. Some of his actions were out of character and often triggered by increased noise, activity and change in routine. Barbara had hoped they had left all stresses behind in the UK, but it became more evident that they needed to return and seek medical assistance.

Michael was diagnosed with Frontotemporal Dementia. Hard fact: it is a progressively disabling condition and, as with Michael, mobility rapidly degenerates, reducing self-sufficiency. An added dimension

is a change in mood and reaction, which can be alarming and harmful.

Barbara had been advised that Michael may not be able to remain living with her and assisted living and residential care beckoned. Distraught at this prospect, Barbara was convinced that if she could find a quiet home with peaceful and unchallenging surroundings, Michael would be happier and remain calm. As Barbara said: 'I can't change Michael's prognosis, but I can change his physical environment to enable him to live the best life he can.'

## Valley life

Barbara's daughter lives in Cardiff and, therefore, living close by in the Welsh Valleys would offer the quiet seclusion she was seeking for Michael. Barbara had not considered a park home but when one came up on Woodlands Park, near Pontypool, she was enchanted by the quaint little site tucked away and engulfed by trees. Furthermore, the home was located at the rear of the

Barbara and Michael Dunn



ABOVE: Michael likes to 'supervise' Barbara's gardening efforts!

## 'I absolutely recommend PHCS – the company is the underfloor specialist.'

park, away from activity or distractions, with heart-filling views of greenery from every window. The delightful and uplifting sound of birdsong permeates everywhere you are around the home.

On the first visit Barbara encountered friendly waves from neighbouring residents, who have continued to be invaluable in their acts of kindness. The lovely librarian who kindly brought Michael fabulous picture books on nature, history and the world; and the three men who got together to help Barbara carry out some heavy garden renovation without any hint of asking. It is the care shown by others that gives Barbara her strength. Even the seller of their park home was delightful and Barbara is still in touch with him today!

### New home

Barbara and Michael moved in to their park home nearly four years ago. Barbara has been constantly changing the home to facilitate Michael's condition and to enable him to be as independent as possible. It has

required a huge amount of thought and planning as Barbara is well aware of what is to come and how best to accommodate it. The toilet has been raised, the shower widened to enable assisted care, hand grips in appropriate places, ramps around the home, furniture strategically positioned and lights in skirting boards that come on if Michael wakes at night. In fact, all rooms are planned and designed to accommodate Michael's changing needs. Lovingly, Barbara has arranged the plantation in the garden so that Michael can view the bird table from his seat in the lounge and from his bed he looks out on to beds of his favourite flowers.

As more and more changes have been made and added to the home, Barbara realised that the underside of the home had been neglected and maybe she should have it checked out! She had a hint that rust was evident underneath and decided she wanted an expert in the field to carry out the assessment. Hence she called on Park Home Chassis Services (PHCS) and from the very first phone call she was impressed by the professionalism of all staff.

'I was very confident in the surveyor and the written report,' explained Barbara. 'The installation lads were friendly, polite and helpful, with no inconvenience or disruption to Michael or myself.'

### Full refurbishment

The home required a full chassis refurbishment including re-supporting with National Caravan Council (NCC)-verified PHCS HD supports.

Barbara continued, 'The home is now stable and fully supported.'

'I absolutely recommend PHCS – the company is *the* underfloor specialist.'

There is no denying the strength and tenacity of Barbara. As a carer she appreciates the support of others including her lovely neighbours as she takes on more and more responsibility. Testament to Barbara, Michael is leading a life where he can still go out in the garden (to supervise!) and on trips in the car to enjoy the outside world and cups of hot chocolate.

Barbara may not have known how skills acquired years ago would be needed but they have proved invaluable in the current situation. Barbara is a shining light: her quest for learning and studying continues and life will change again.

We asked Barbara if she would choose park home living if it hadn't been for Michael's dementia and needs. She said, 'Absolutely – park home living is a wonderful way to live your life! Our park home has more floor space than our bungalow had. Buying a park home can often mean freeing up some money to do things you want to do, whilst you can.'

### Full and active

With great ingenuity and determination Barbara has used park home living to enable Michael's life to be as full and rich as it can be. Hopefully it's an experience that will help others in a similar situation; particularly when they think all options are exhausted.

### In a nutshell

- Barbara chose park home living for its calm and peaceful environment, and ability to adapt the home to accommodate physical needs.
- Barbara is constantly seeing acts of kindness on the site by residents.
- Barbara has made many changes to the home and recognised the need for the chassis and supporting structure to be properly checked and in a safe condition.
- PHCS is an underfloor specialist and works with the utmost integrity: 'Another trusted resource'
- **For more on Park Home Chassis Services Ltd, please call 0333 456 3056 or 0118 984 3107. Alternatively, please email [info@parkhomechassis.co.uk](mailto:info@parkhomechassis.co.uk) or see [www.parkhomechassis.co.uk](http://www.parkhomechassis.co.uk).**



ABOVE: Michael enjoying the views