

WINTER '23 ISSUE

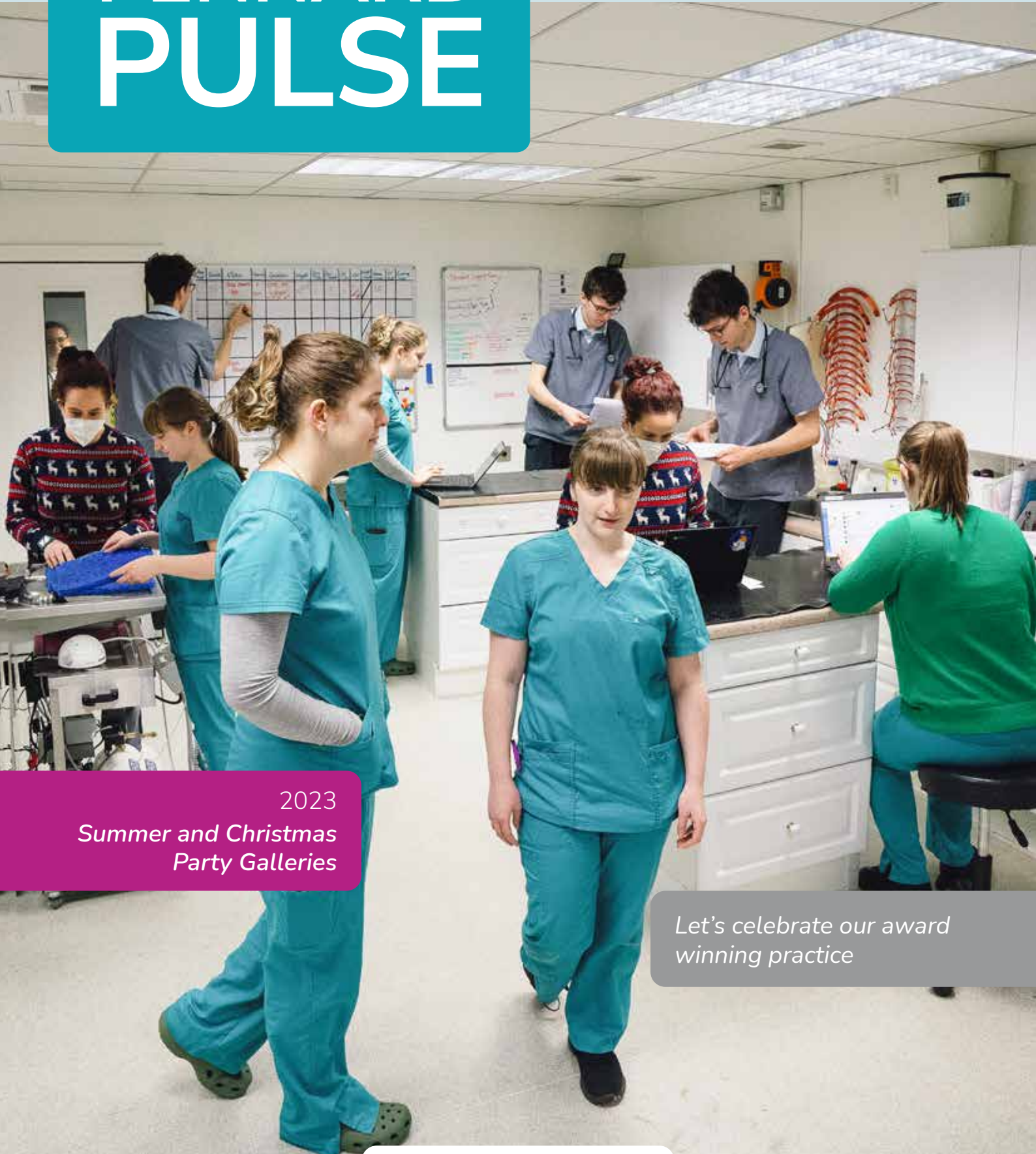
PENNARD PULSE

*Pennard Pacers shine
in night walk*

*Matt Flann
Pembroke Road*

*Georgia Robb
Learning and laughter*

*Michelle Boyer
Our focus on bereavement*



2023
Summer and Christmas
Party Galleries

Let's celebrate our award
winning practice

Pennard Vets
beyond the ordinary



WELCOME TO THE PENNARD PULSE

WE hope you enjoy seeing all the wonderful things you, our award-winning team, have been up to, and the progress your practice has made over the last six months.

It's been a year that started with us coming down from the high of our successful confirmation as a B Corp business, and ended with Matt crooning on stage after our Rising Star award by the Employee Ownership Association. In other words, a good one!

All of our core values are represented in this magazine.

For continuous improvement you'll find stories on how we've established our exotics service and Jeff pays tribute to our seamless transition with Priory Lodge.

Nothing embodies our client and team focus better than our Anna Shadforth, who was crowned the British Veterinary Receptionist Association's Veterinary Receptionist of the Year, after being nominated by the team for what she does for us and our clients.

Another of our superstar receptionists, Michelle Boyer, epitomises our compassion as she explains how our Tonbridge practice is taking a new approach to dealing with bereavement.

And our commitment to clarity is best shown by the very magazine you're now holding – we want you all to feel very proud of yourselves as you read this.

We love showing how you're all going beyond the ordinary to make our practice special. Merry Christmas! ■



Andy Green



Caroline Collins



Matt Flann



BUSINESS UPDATE

By Jeff Gascoyne, Managing Director

WELCOME to another edition of Pennard Pulse!

What better place to start than our award of Rising Star at the Employee Ownership Association Congress – an amazing achievement given the number of competing businesses. Everyone has played their part and we should all feel very proud. We should also celebrate Anna Shadforth's award as BVRA receptionist of the year – well done Anna!

We continue to develop our B-Corp status. Our environmental impact is something we must all be aware of and we're doing everything we can to reduce our footprint. If you see anything you feel we could do better, please talk with us.

We recruited enough vets this year to move our veterinary teams to a four day week – something we've been hoping to achieve for a number of years. Big thanks go to Andy, Meridith and all those who spent time talking with prospective colleagues. I am conscious that we need to do the same for our nursing team. We're doing everything we can to recruit and to not only get us back to having the right numbers for our immediate needs, but to get our nurses to that hallowed four day week by June 2024. I assure you that we're aware of how challenging it is at some practices – you have our sincerest gratitude.

Thank you to the Priory Lodge team for adopting us with open arms – bringing your skills on board has been amazing. The integration of the two businesses has been so smooth that it feels like we've worked together for years, and I look forward to continuing this in 2024 and beyond.



We've extended our Maidstone practice and done a mini-refit on Allington with new flooring and desk area to make the practice look as professional as the team who work in it.

So what's in store for 2024? I hope we'll have shiny new premises, including our new hospital which we hope to open this spring. West Malling and Maidstone are high on our agenda for refurbishment or relocation. I also want us to develop our proactive communications with clients through our communication rooms, PetsApp and also remote consultation services.

Finally, we completed our 2023 survey and while it continued to highlight how amazing we are, there are areas we need to improve. This is why the survey is so important – it shows us where we must improve as well as reminding us what we do well.

I wish you all a peaceful Christmas and hope you will continue to help us be the best version of ourselves we can in 2024. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff', written in a cursive style.



ONE YEAR OF EXOTiCs!

Mark Rowland joined Pennard Vets on January 10th 2023. Here he talks through an exciting first 12 months establishing our elite exotics team.

By Mark Rowland, Veterinary Surgeon

JOINING the team has been a great new experience for me – and I know there's been lots of new experiences for everyone who has worked with me as well!

Getting started in exotics can feel like a steep learning curve when you're breaking new ground by cracking open a tortoise shell for a spay, fishing out bits from the inside and putting it all back together again.

It's been great to see how everyone has responded to the challenge.

There's been loads of interest in getting involved, and everyone has done me proud.

We've had a great start and are now pretty busy. Clients always tend to come out of the woodwork when you set up an exotics centre, plus a few have followed me and we've got some new clients as well.

Hopefully next year we can push on with referrals.

This year was all about bedding in and getting a good crew behind me, and now I definitely have, so we're in a great position to push to make an impact outside of our regular client base too.

EVERY DAY IS A SCHOOL DAY

We hit the ground running at the start of year when we did surgery to remove a bladder stone from a hamster. There aren't many practices around the country who can say they've done that!

I've kept the stone as it's the smallest animal I've ever taken one out of. And most importantly the hamster made a full recovery.

I'm all for pushing boundaries and trying new things, and when I happened upon an old article that mentioned a drug that was used for treating





By trying new things and exploring new boundaries, I want to put Pennard Vets at the forefront of the industry. ”



horses with gut stasis, which is also a big problem in rabbits, I decided to give it a go. I had a rabbit case in not long after, tried the medication – and it worked a treat!

By trying new things and exploring new boundaries, I want to put Pennard Vets at the forefront of the exotics industry.

As I get more cases I'll be putting CPD material and lectures together, explaining my new protocols, and our team here will of course get first dibs.

When I started out with my interest in exotics it was about finding your own path, as there wasn't much out there to learn from.

Now I've got a fair bit of knowledge and I'm passionate about sharing it, so all of you are most welcome to get in touch with me – I'll be happy to help and hope to spark that same passion. ■



SUMMER BBQ PARTY





A YEAR OF LOWS, HIGHS LEARNING AND LAUGHTER

Georgia Robb MRCVS has been telling the story of her first year working in practice to Vet Times since she graduated from the University of Liverpool in 2022. Here we continue her story, carrying on from our first edition of Pennard Pulse.

By Georgia Robb, Duty Veterinary Surgeon

I absolutely love being a vet and, as the months roll by, the amount I'm continually learning can feel overwhelming.

I left university confident in my ability and will be the first to admit that I was quickly humbled in the first few months of my new career.

I underestimated the everyday challenges of general practice. Communicating with owners, time management – inside and outside work – and exhausting it can be. These are all things that I'm now getting used to.

As time goes by and with each challenge I've faced, my

knowledge base and confidence increase, but I've come to accept that I'll never know everything.

However, that's where textbooks, research and my colleagues can assist, so I'm not afraid to approach them for help. And in the difficult times, I focus on why I wanted to be a vet.

SURGERY – A WHOLE NEW LEARNING CURVE!

In recent months I've done a range of operations, including my first solo bitch spay.

Given that we offer laparoscopic spays, midline bitch spays are a slightly rarer occurrence.



*The good days more than
make up for the bad!*





Having performed midline spays on cats, a canine pyometra and having scrubbed in on other bitch spays, I was confident with the technique, and thankfully there were no complications. The ovary was challenging to remove, but overall, I was happy with the procedure and was proud to have performed it independently.

During university and when I first started in general practice, I never had much of an interest in surgery, but I was excited to perform the bitch spay. Also, I appreciated my colleagues having enough confidence in my ability to allow me to perform the procedure on my own.

I now find surgery really exciting and love trying new things.

During that first operation, I encountered a few stressful moments, but I kept a level head.

The nurse I was working with also did a great job of reassuring me and giving me confidence that it was going well.

Having a supportive team during surgery is so important.

SURGERY HIGHLIGHTS

I've now performed several bitch spays, as well as a canine c-section, grade-four dental work to remove a canine tooth, and a hindlimb leg amputation on a cat.

With the c-section, the bitch whelped two days prior to the consultation. She presented to me because the owner had noticed a bag of fluid coming from her vulva that morning.

On abdominal palpation, I suspected a foetus could still be present, although nothing was

seen in the canal and she was not straining. After performing an abdominal ultrasound, I found a foetus within the uterus and noted a heartbeat – the puppy was still alive.

I performed the c-section that day and I'm very pleased to report the puppy is doing well.

GOOD AND BAD DAYS

As with any career we see ups and downs – but it can seem as though these are amplified in the veterinary profession.

The bad days usually involve the more “difficult” clients who are perhaps less amenable, or when emergencies come in that throw the day's diary into disarray and you end up juggling several things at once.

I do get affected when clients are upset or somewhat difficult with cases. It's hard not to take it personally and despite becoming thicker skinned over the past year, there are still occasions where it really affects my mood.

Thankfully, the good days more than make up for the bad.

When I look back, these are always those days with interesting cases, or a day of consultations where the clients are lovely, or surgeries have gone well.



I find surgery really exciting and love trying new things. ”



DISCOVERING MORE INTERESTS

Last time, I mentioned my new-found fascination with ultrasound imaging and the excitement of the emergency and critical care (ECC) work in our 24-hour emergency hospital.

One of my colleagues has a certificate in diagnostic imaging and recently gave me a one-to-one day of internal CPD

to practise ultrasonography, focusing on theory in the morning and practical sessions in the afternoon. It was a great to learn some slightly more challenging skills such as imaging adrenals and the common bile duct.

The ECC work is also an ongoing interest, as well as a continual learning curve, as new cases

present themselves that you have to respond to and work with – often with little warning of what's suddenly in front of you.

It's fast-paced, exciting and massively rewarding when it goes right.

HELPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF STUDENTS

It wasn't long ago that I was visiting practices as a student on work experience, and it was in my fourth year at university that I first saw practice with the team, at Tonbridge.

When I returned to university, my friends and I always vowed that once we started work, we'd go out of our way to support students in practice.

Now that I am more confident in my own ability, I find teaching and having case discussions with our students really interesting, and I try to get them involved in consultations and surgeries wherever possible.

“

It feels great to support students in a low-pressure environment. ”

We've also had another intake of new graduate vets into the team and they are doing brilliantly so far. If I'm honest, it feels nice to no longer be the 'newbie' and it has encouraged me to reflect and appreciate how far I have come.

THE SOCIAL SIDE OF WORK

I'm really enjoying making new friends and working as part of our great team, and as I get to

know everyone more, this is only increasing. I can honestly say the people I work with are fab.

Everyone is always very supportive and they made me feel like part of the team straight away, which has been brilliant, and I really appreciate it. I'm a very chatty and social person, so I love a good natter or work event.

I've been watching the creation of our social committee with interest... so, watch this space! ■

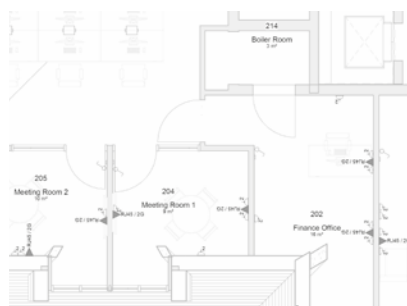


PEMBROKE ROAD IS ON ITS WAY!

By Matt Flann, Director

WORK is progressing nicely at our new hospital at Pembroke Road, 100m up the street from our Sevenoaks site, and as things start to come together we're getting pretty excited at the prospect of getting into our new building.

Once it's finished, our new practice will be one of the largest and most advanced in the South East, with fantastic facilities, a team-friendly layout to make our jobs easier and a wide range of green technology and recycling initiatives.



We're set to finish work on the site and open to clients in spring next year. Watch this space!

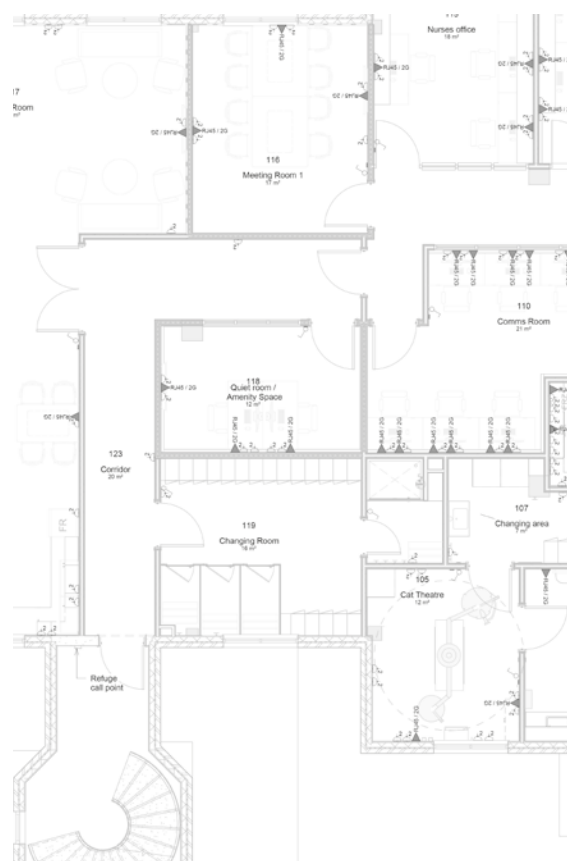
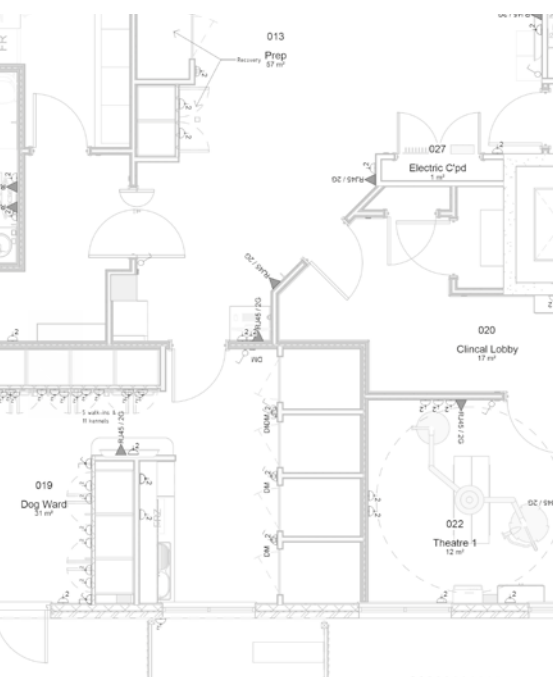
TELL US MORE ABOUT THESE FANTASTIC FACILITIES

With pleasure! We're going to have:

- Separate dog, cat and exotic wards, with all of our canine clinical work on one level and cats given their own quiet part of the building a floor above.
- CT scanner
- Dental suite
- Privately accessed bereavement room
- Our group's 24-hour emergency hospital

Our digital marketing executive Balint has been charting progress through the build with some fantastic time lapse videos. Give him a shout if you want to see how we're getting along.

By the time we release our new Pennard Pulse, here's hoping we'll be updating on our early days in our new hospital. Speak then! ■





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PENNARD PACERS SHINE IN NIGHT WALK

In our first edition we told you about our intrepid Pennard Pacers, our team of charity fundraisers preparing to tackle the *Shine Night Walk*, an overnight marathon or half-marathon around London.

The big night was on September 23rd and our Pennard team did us all proud, with Anne Corson, senior client care at our Tonbridge branch, Balint Hamvas, digital marketing executive, Jan and Bree finishing the marathon walk in 9 hours and 27 minutes, while Tonbridge practice principal Nat Croft did the half marathon with her mum and sister.

All of our team really enjoyed the night, which is a great event and always gets a great turnout. All of the spectators did a really good job of keeping energy high and even the occasional late-night passers-by were full of encouragement.

With so many people there with so many different stories, it's a real celebration – and a big thank you and well done to the organisers, as it can't be easy coordinating 12,000 people wandering around London at night time!

A special mention is needed for Anne, who worked in practice Saturday morning, did the walk at night and then went straight to volunteering at a Sackville School fair and assisting with their dog show on Sunday – all without sleeping! What a trooper.

The team raised a combined £1,670 and are already putting in place plans to tackle the walk again next year. If you're interested in joining the Pennard Pacers in 2024, please get in touch with either Anne or Nat.

Well done team, and we'll check in again next year to see how preparations are getting along as you keep on shining! ■



THE GREAT PENNARD BAKE OFF

WE all had lots of fun baking – and tasting! – sweet and savoury treats for our very own take on Bake Off. Check out some of the showstoppers our team came up with. There'd be a few handshakes given out for these! Well done to everyone who joined in - and we look forward to eating with you again next year! ■



Animal Week



Bread Week



"Cake that doesn't look like cake"

LET'S CELEBRATE OUR AW

By Caroline Collins, Director

THREE CHEERS FOR ANNA!

WE'RE all absolutely delighted that Anna's compassion and hard work has been recognised, after she was named receptionist of the year by the British Veterinary Receptionist Association!

Everyone who has worked with Anna at our Borough Green practice will know how fantastic she is at going beyond the ordinary for our clients and patients, and in support of her team.

For any of our colleagues who haven't come across Anna, follow the QR code to watch her nomination video – and keep a box of tissues handy!

Charlotte and Hayley, two of our Borough Green

vets, entered Anna for the award. Here Hayley's list of the things Anna does that go above and beyond her role:

"Whether its pet sitting for a client while they were at a funeral or dropping medications off to client's homes in her own time – nothing is ever too much trouble for Anna. She calls clients who are vulnerable or alone to check in on them regularly, especially after they have lost a pet. She is always sourcing prescription foods across all eight of our sites when clients run out and arranges for it to get to their nearest practice."

Needless to say, the award was very well deserved.

Thank you Anna and massive congratulations!



ARD WINNING PRACTICE!



YOU'RE ALL EMPLOYEE OWNERS OF THE EOT RISING STAR!

Myself, Matt, Meredith and Claire went along to the Employee Ownership Association (EOA) conference at the end of November, primarily to scope out how different employee-owned businesses supported their teams and to find anything we could bring home to make our practice even better.

The EOA reintroduced their annual awards this year after a Covid hiatus, and we put in a submission because we thought it would be interesting to get feedback on how we were doing as a new employee-owned business.

Shortly before we attended we discovered to our surprise and delight we'd been shortlisted as a finalist in their Rising Star category.

And then on the night we were all in shock to be announced as the winner!

We also didn't know that winners were expected to make a speech – on stage, in front of 850 people!

Matt kindly volunteered and the words came easily as he, like I am, is so proud of you all. The award is an acknowledgement of how well the team has embraced the changes that have come with employee ownership.

We're very proud as founders to accept it on the team's behalf. It really is an award for all of us to celebrate.

For the rest of the weekend we were conference royalty, which was very exciting and capped off by Matt excelling at rockaoke later on in the evening. Check in with him to find out what song he performed!

Congratulations to you all – not only are you employee owners of our practice, but you've now been recognised as being among the best employee owners of business in the country.

I think that deserves a celebratory drink! Cheers! ■

SAYING GOODBYE

How our Tonbridge team are helping our clients through difficult times.

By Michelle Boyer, Client Care Advisor

WHILE neither our Tonbridge team nor our other practices have been doing anything wrong when dealing with bereavements, we decided we wanted to be even better at supporting our clients.

That's why we've made a few subtle changes that have made a really big difference.

Not only have we had really positive feedback from our clients, but it's been a big positive for the team. We all know that helping our clients to say goodbye to their pets is a difficult experience, but the changes we've made have made everything smoother. We all know our roles which improves the way everything flows, from the days leading up to putting the pet to sleep, to the procedure itself.

WHAT CHANGES HAVE WE MADE?

The first thing we've done is establish a euthanasia team, of myself and Anne Corson.

Now, when a call comes in requesting a euthanasia, all of the team knows to pass it on to one of the two of us. We look at the diaries and ensure it's booked in at the most suitable time – first thing in the morning or at the start of a new consulting block.

We try to make sure each call is guided by the client. How much information do they need? Is this the first time they've been in this situation or would they rather not go through things unnecessarily?





We aim to go through as much info as possible beforehand, rather than waiting for the actual appointment when emotions are running high and clients may not be taking things in.

With myself and Anne booking the procedures in, it means we know when they're happening and are able to prepare. It means we can get a room ready prior to the clients arriving, and we can be on the lookout so that we can meet them in the car park.

This means we can escort clients and their pets straight to the consult room, rather than leaving them in the waiting room, potentially sharing space with puppies and kittens, or people chatting and laughing.

We have added graphics to our television asking for respect during the consult as well as the traditional candle on reception, which has made a

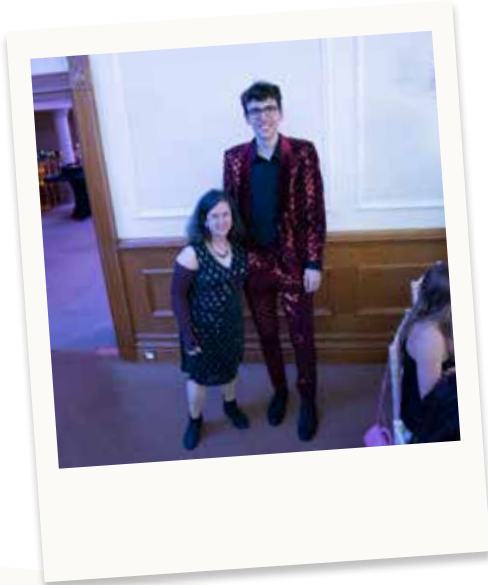
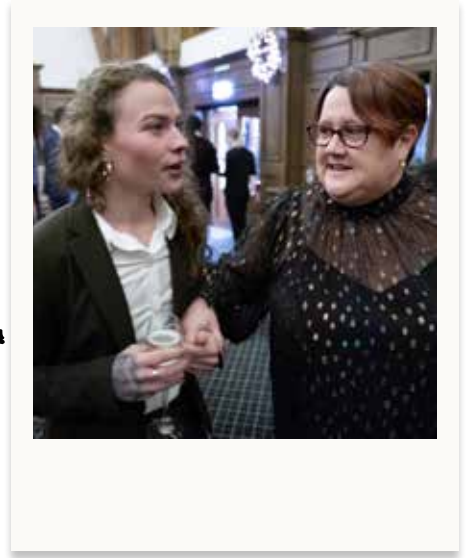
big difference. Previously clients in the waiting room may not have noticed, now we're seeing them being much more respectful, and more understanding if the team are running late.

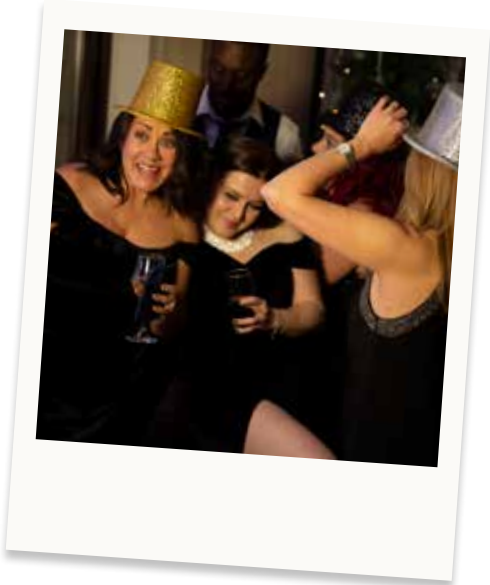
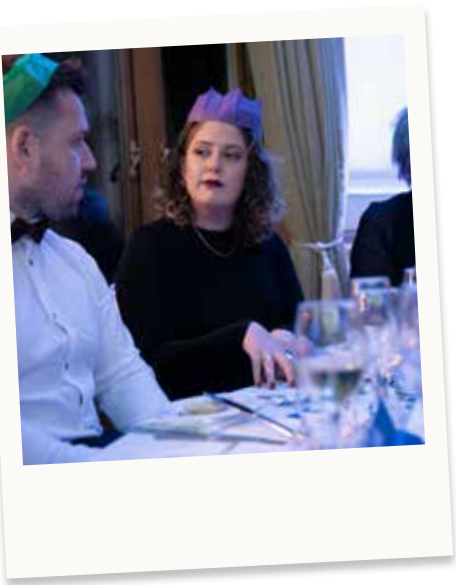
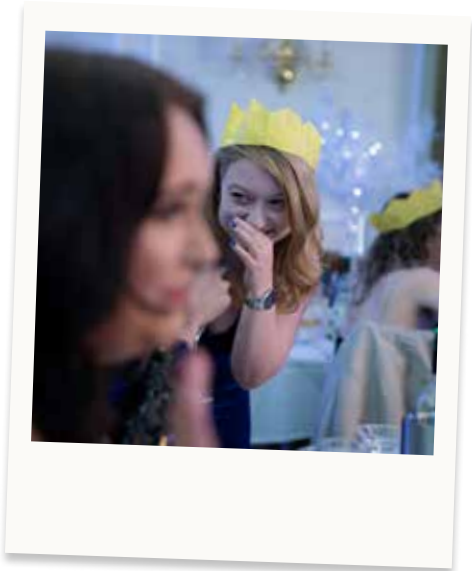
I always accompany our clients in the consult room to give them some additional support. This helps particularly when pets are taken to have cannulas fitted – it doesn't seem right that the owner should be left alone at that point.

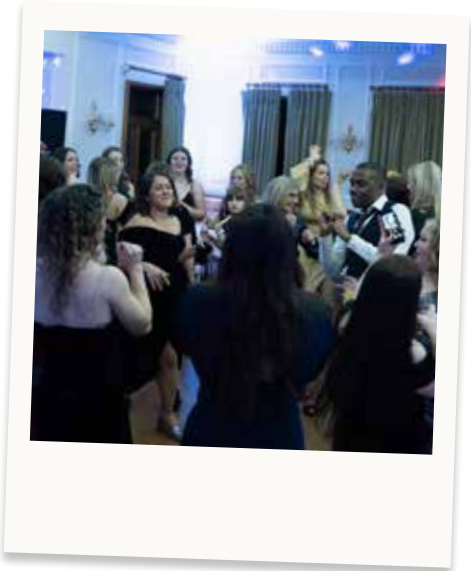
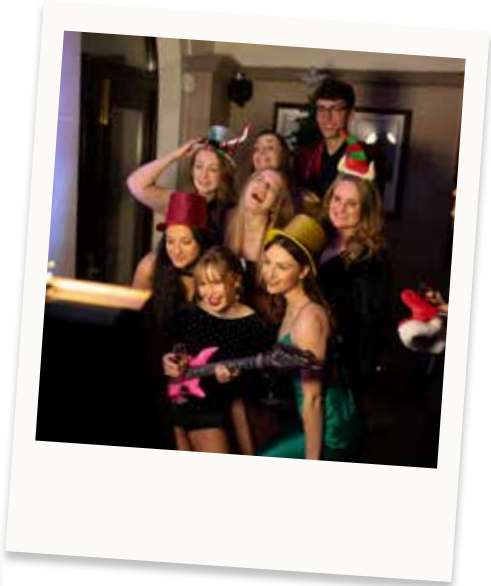
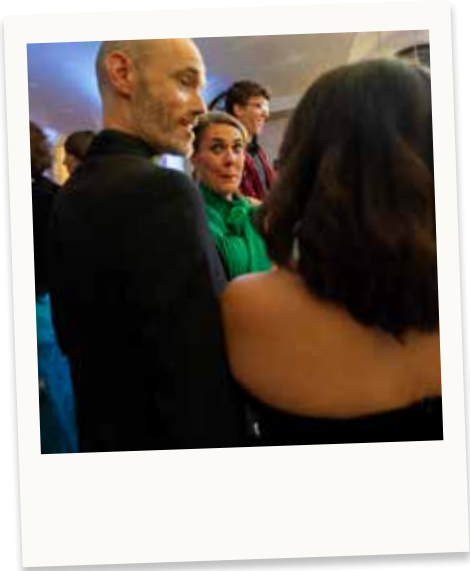
This can be a powerful experience, tears are often shed, but it's a powerful bonding experience that I really believe shows our clients how much we care.

Everyone here at Tonbridge are so happy we've made the changes we have done, and we fully support our other practices doing the same. Feel free to get in touch with myself or Anne if you'd like to discuss how you can do so! ■

CHRISTMAS PARTY









AWARD WINNERS



CLIENT CARE ADVISOR OF THE YEAR -
CHLOE RASHBROOK



VET NURSE OF THE YEAR -
CHLOE-JANE SHERBURN



VET OF THE YEAR -
HAYLEY STENNING



SUPPORT TEAM MEMBER OF THE YEAR
CHELSEA PAGE



BEYOND THE ORDINARY AWARD
ANNA SHADFORTH



TEAM PLAYER OF THE YEAR
TENIELLE MOODLEY



BEST NEW TEAM MEMBER AWARD
MATTHEW HARDEN



DIRECTORS' CHOICE AWARD -
KAT FISHWICK



PRACTICE OF THE YEAR -
BOROUGH GREEN



SPREAD THE WORD!

We've welcomed lots of lovely new faces as employee owners over the last year. If you know anyone who would love to join our team, direct them to [careers.pennardvets.com](https://pennardvets.com/careers). See you in 2024!

