

Swaffham: Caring matron an inspiration to all



Mavis White who is retiring as long-serving matron of Swaffham Community Hospital

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SWAFFHAM Community Hospital matron Mavis White was given a surprise retirement party by about 100 of her friends and colleagues on Friday.

Mrs White thought she was having a quiet lunch with her husband, Barry, now practice manager at Great Massingham surgery, when she went to the George Hotel in Swaffham, but was instead greeted by a loud cheer as she stepped into the Pedlar Suite.

Former Campingland Surgery GP Dr

Roger Atkins led the tributes to her, standing in for Dr Malcolm Skinner who died last month.

Mrs White and her husband, then serving in the RAF, moved to RAF Marham from Belgium in 1986, and the following January she joined a small group of district nurses in Swaffham.

Dr Atkins said: "It was clear from the outset that Mavis was somebody very special – wonderfully sensible and pragmatic, unfailingly helpful and cheerful, and prepared to work all hours of the day and night if her presence and skills were required.

"Very unusually she would give her patients her home telephone number and it was not unknown for Mavis to leave her bed at night to unblock a catheter or reassure a distressed patient."

Dr Atkins said Mrs White developed "a great skill and empathy" in caring for terminally ill people and their families and would occasionally take her sleeping bag and spend the night in the house if a death was imminent.

It was not surprising, therefore, that she was at the forefront of developing the Swaffham and Litcham Home Hospice Support Group, a charity of which she was vice-chairman for many years and helped support and train its coordinators and volunteers, he said.

Mrs White became the district nurses' team leader and then, in 1999, was also appointed matron at the town's hospital in a dual role. For the last three years, she has been in charge of the hospital and Cranmer House at Fakenham, a residential care home with 13 nursing beds.

In response, Mrs White thanked all the staff and nurses for helping her enjoy her working life and her family for their patience and understanding over the years.

Among the many gifts she received were vouchers for a London theatre, tea for two at the Ritz and jewellery.