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Media Release

Michael clocks up 40 years service at the RUH

On the 26 November, environment porter Michael Ball achieves two important milestones, he will have been working at the Royal United Hospital (RUH) for an impressive 40 years and he will be about to celebrate his retirement.

In February 1969, Michael started work on the hospital site as a garden labourer, helping to maintain the grounds around the four hospitals in existence then, the Manor Hospital, Bath and Wessex House, Forbes Fraser and The Royal. Michael helped tend the vegetable gardens, which supplied the kitchens with fresh vegetables for the patients to eat. He was a familiar sight driving a tractor and even a snow plough around the site.

Michael says: "The site looked very different then, lots more grass and flower beds. There used to be big glasshouses where we grew plants under the watchful eye of the head gardener Jack Harris.

"It took a few years for me to achieve my first class status ship as a gardener but as my competence grew, I was able to help with propagation and tree surgery. We mowed the grass using tractor mowers and we used to plant up nearly 200 hanging baskets each year. It looked a picture when they were all in flower. I miss the gardening a lot but I have some really happy memories of those days."

The RUH hospital site went through many changes and as it gradually developed into the hospital we know today, the number of gardeners was gradually reduced. Michael adapted to the changes and worked in the environment portering team, responsible for keeping the hospital surroundings and entrances, clean and safe.

On retiring, Michael is looking forward to devoting lots of time to his granddaughter and will continue looking after the beer at the Hamset Cricket Club.

Howard Jones, Estates and Facilities Director at the RUH says: "Michael is very well known to many of the hospital staff and is always helpful and cheerful - we'll miss seeing him out and about. As a valued member of our facilities team he has provided excellent service to the RUH over the years and I'm sure I speak on behalf of everyone in wishing Michael a very long and happy retirement."

Michael is married and has a daughter who is a midwife at the RUH.

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