



THE NEWSLETTER FOR CARDIAC FRIENDS



Summer 2017

Notes from the Chairman

Hi everyone

I hope all of you survived the heat wave in June without too much trauma. It always concerns me for those of you who have heart problems, as I am fully aware that cold weather and hot weather can have a very negative effect on you.

On the Friday after the AGM I flew out to Corfu to join a cruise around the Adriatic. I was a little nervous having never holidayed on my own before. I need not have worried, I had an amazing time. For anybody who likes to cruise I could not recommend the Adriatic as a venue more highly. I thought it was truly beautiful.

Once again I have been voted to be your Chairman. I wish to thank all of those who have expressed their appreciation to me for my time in this capacity. I am only too pleased to be the Chairman of such a lovely group of people. I am also very appreciative to the Committee, who have all stood again this year and to thank Adam Kuzminski for becoming our treasurer. He is a very valuable member of the team. I also wish to thank all those who attended the AGM. It is very difficult for us to arrange the AGM to suit everyone but we had a good turnout. For those of you who had concerns regarding the re-naming of Cardiac Friends you all may rest assured that this chapter was closed and there was a decisive vote not to rename the group. Thanks to all who phoned or emailed me on this issue.

The Christmas Party is already booked for the 2nd of December and once again it will be held at Woodside Hall in Hitchin. It is free to all members but the top capacity for the hall is 100 so please put this date in your diary and we hope to see many of you there to enjoy this social event. I love the parties as it gives me great pleasure to meet so many of you and watch you all enjoying the evening. I did raise the issue at the AGM that it would be very nice to have a summer Social and this will be discussed by the Committee at the next meeting. We are looking for other venues to hold events in with adequate parking and a hall large enough to fit up to 60 people, so if any of you can advise of this please could you email me or Heather with the details. It is getting harder to find suitable venues available for one off events.

Once again I would like to thank all the leaders of the groups in Cardiac Friends for without them we would not be the organisation we are. Let us hope that we continue from strength to strength in the coming years and that Cardiac Friends is here for many years to come.

Jackie Quinn

Notes from the Secretary

Dear Friends,

Thank you for re-electing me as your Secretary. I have sent out the AGM Minutes and I hope you will tell me if they need correcting. It was not said at the AGM, but our subscription remains at £5.

At the AGM, John Harbord made the point that some members miss events they would like to attend because they cannot get to the venue. There are good reasons - usually connected with other stops on the trip, or just time available - as to why people cannot give lifts. If you can help, or you would like a lift, I will try and match you so that you can get to the group once; then hopefully you will be able to arrange a lift for the next time. I made a good friend that way, but recently three of us only turned out to walk in pouring rain "Because we were giving/getting lifts". (We went to the cafe instead).



Some members, through distance or mobility problems, cannot be active members. Is anyone interested, perhaps as a subgroup, in contacting these members? Or would you be willing to share your experience with new members or potential members who are new to heart problems? Is this service needed? Tell me what you think.

Finally, the lists compiled from the renewal letters have gone out to Group Leaders, some of whom are very surprised by their membership. You know you are always welcome.

Kind Regards

Heather Cotton

Wednesday Walking Group

Once again the group enjoys better than average weather on 'Our Wednesdays'. I have introduced a couple of new walks in the past few months, one at Roxton in Bedfordshire which is courtesy of Peter Dawes. As I have said previously a number of our 'Friends' are unable to walk the whole route and some just come along to lunch, but at least we are able to maintain our social contact with them. On a sad note our good friend Peter Elmer died recently and you all know that Malcolm Varley has suffered a stroke, he is at home but unable to join us on the walks. More recently both Ian and Christine Druce have suffered health problems but the good news is they are nearing completion of their treatment. We hope that they will soon return and join us if not for the walk then for chats at lunchtime!

I am grateful to Cyril Savage and Kingsley Day taking the reins occasionally and leading a walk either when I am away or to make a change from me! Our last walk led by Cyril was I think on the hottest day of the year (in the 30's) despite which 19 members attended.

My thanks to Mike Morley and Peter Dawes who accompany me on the 'proving' walks, we have the occasional disagreement about which side of the third telegraph pole the footpath goes but we have not come to blows yet, they are both bigger and younger than me!



The group continues to prosper; we have welcomed a number of new members who have joined us since this time last year. On that note there are some who said that they were interested in joining us for the Wednesday walks. I always write them a letter of welcome; however there are about half a dozen who have never replied. They obviously have their reasons for not joining us, but it would be nice to know they **had** received my letter. For those of you new to 'The Friends' we have very set guidelines to which I try to keep. Walks are between 3 and 4 miles, fairly flat. Most important, a good pub with decent food and liquid refreshment, and of course a car park big enough to accommodate us.

So do come and join us, we are a very friendly bunch.

Fred Maryon

Art Group



This group meets on a Tuesday morning 10-12 am, in Christchurch on Bedford Road, Hitchin. The pay as you go charge is £3.00 per session. They could do with a few more members to join this relaxed and friendly group. Why not come along and see what goes on, and if you like it, join! Different art media are used- it is a self-help group, and the new group leader Mrs Muriel Davis is hoping to develop the group further. For more details; email to muriel-davis@tiscali.co.uk Tel. no: 01462 454266

Places of Interest



What a wonderful trip. Our first 'places of interest' trip in 2017 was to **the National Memorial Arboretum** in Staffordshire. Five people (for various reasons) had to drop out within 48 hours of this trip going ahead so a total of 35 (of which 21 were CF Members) set off on the 15th May.

Initial weather outlook was not promising. Heavy rain was forecast for the whole day in Staffordshire. We arrived at 11.30 ready for some refreshments in the modern restaurant. The rain had not yet arrived although there were plenty of dark and heavy clouds in the sky. Included in the trip was a Land Train with pre-recorded commentary which we all enjoyed at 1.00pm and which lasted 50 minutes. Still no rain.

We then had two and a half hours of free time when we could visit some of the 330+ thought-provoking memorials covering both military and civilian associations, along with tributes for individuals.

The rain never arrived and the weather remained warm. I repeat 'What a wonderful trip'.



Theatre Trips

Our first theatre trip of 2017 was to see the romantic musical '**An American in Paris**' in the Dominion Theatre in London on the 31st May. Again a few people had to drop out at short notice. A total of 38 (of which 21 were CF Members) departed mid- morning by coach. As planned we arrived an hour before the show commenced in order that we could have a snack to eat or a tea/coffee or just have a short walk before the show. The seats in the theatre were good. We were seated towards the centre of the stalls with no viewing restrictions. Shows are always a matter of opinion. I would put it in the range of somewhere between good and very good. It was what we expected. There was quite a lot of what one may call 'modern ballet'. However there was not a tutu in sight!

In summary this was a good theatre trip which was enjoyed and we all arrived home safely at about 6.00pm.

Adam Kuzminski Email to: adam@kuzminski.co.uk tel. no. 01462 620317.

Line Dancing

At present we have 13 members in our group and since February the numbers attending the line dancing sessions have fluctuated, but we have averaged 8 over this period of time. At our last session there were only 5 of us, but In the middle of March we had 11 dancing which was fantastic (nearly a full house)!! Looking back at our records I found that the last time we had that number was back in 2014 on Saturday 6 December.

Financially we are sound thanks to the donation we received last year which boosted our kitty.

We are a very friendly group enjoying some good exercise together lead by our excellent teacher Mary. We meet fortnightly on a Saturday morning at the Willian village hall from 10am 12 noon. The cost is £6 per session which includes refreshments.



Our next line dancing sessions are on the 22nd July, 5th (possibility this may be cancelled) and 19th August. Come along and join us you will be made very welcome.

Please contact me if you would like further information:

Janet Savage: E: mail to: cardiacfriends@hotmail.co.uk

Petanque



The Petanque group has already had one fixture this season. This group meets at 'The Waggon and Horses' Steeple Morden. Meet at 2.30pm to order your meal, 3.00pm start, eat at 6.00pm. Future dates are: 21 July, 25 August and 22 September. Give **June Prentice** a ring on **01763 852706** if you need any more information.

Exercise Group



We continue to thrive as a group and this summer has seen some very good attendances. We are always looking for new members as the more of us that attend the cheaper it is for all of us. The benefits of exercise are always being extolled and our workout is suitable for most people. We meet at the Letchworth Leisure Centre on a Thursday afternoon from 2.00 to 3.00 pm. The group is very friendly and lively. Please come and join us we would love to see you! Jackie Quinn

Heartsong

We meet about every 2 months or just 6 times per year for a 2 hour singing session. The group is led by my daughter Katie who runs community choirs and singing for health groups (e.g. for carers and singing for breathing in hospitals - she has worked at Harefield and Brompton in the past) mostly now in south London where she lives.

We always start with a gentle warm up (singing counts as 'gentle aerobics!') involving some stretching and vocal exercises to wake up the voice and then move on to some fun songs.

The important point is that you don't have to be a regular singer or to be able to read music the songs are taught 'by ear' or memory (so it's good for the grey matter too), although the words are provided on a sheet if it's a longer song. And don't worry if you were told at a tender age that you can't sing. Everyone can and is entitled to.

At our last session we sang a range of spirited and atmospheric songs, some old and well-known and some new with some in unison and some in harmony. See if you recognise any of these: **Wimoweh**, **We shall Overcome**, **Drunken Sailor** (ALL the verses, now that was a surprise, particularly the last verse: the captain's daughter? Well I never...), **Day O** (the **Banana Boat song** where we considered forming a Harry Belafonte tribute band...) and **Lights** a new song by Sarah Gray about the harbours lights at night.



Our next session is on Friday 28th July, 2-4pm at Holwell Village Hall, a few miles north of Hitchin just off the A600 Bedford Road. It's an informal and friendly group and there are usually 10-15 people present at each session. Tea, coffee and water are available and we just ask for a £5 donation to cover costs.

If you would like to come along then contact me, John Burden: tell 01462 712187 or email burdjohn@hotmail.com

John Burden



The unexpected experiences of a Volunteer...

Have you ever responded to a request from BHF via Cardiac Friends to volunteer in a research programme or an awareness raising campaign? I've done this a few times and this is what happened to me as a result of volunteering for one of these campaigns...

Back in December 2014 Public Health England (PHE), an 'arms-length' (from Government) body which has oversight of the NHS, sent round a request through BHF via Heather at Cardiac Friends for volunteers to take part in a publicity campaign to raise awareness of breathlessness related to heart failure.

I volunteered as I saw it as an opportunity to do 'my bit' and because I fitted the profile as I had been diagnosed with heart failure the previous year. Heart failure is not the most positive of medical terms, a criticism with which many medics agree, but luckily mine is 'medically managed' so that I can lead a 'normal retired' life.

In the early part of 2015 'Freud's' (founded by Matthew Freud, the son of Clement Freud and great-grandson of Sigmund Freud), a PR company running the campaign for PHE, contacted me and took down the details of my case, the aim of the campaign being to encourage people with breathlessness symptoms to get themselves checked out by a their GP asap.

Over the next couple of years there were annual campaigns involving respiratory symptoms where my details were circulated to local, regional and national media along with those of many other volunteers but nothing much happened. 'Freud's' even arranged for me and several others to be interviewed and filmed at home. Again there was little follow-up for me but the various campaigns had regional and national coverage on radio and TV.

I forgot all about it, so it came as a surprise when at the end of May this year I got another email from 'Freud's'. This year's campaign focused on Coughing linked to breathlessness, heart and lung disease including cancer. Could I make myself available if there was any media interest?

As before I said yes and as before they said that it all depends on current events in the news as to whether they would get a slot. Then I got another email to say they had a possible slot on July 5th or 6th. I said yes again, but wasn't optimistic but after we came back from a short break in Suffolk I got a phone call to ask if I could come for an interview at the BBC the following day, Thursday July 6th. I checked with my wife and the diary - Cardiac Exercise at Letchworth, hmmm - thought long and hard, about 3 milliseconds, and said, yes, I'll do it.

I was collected by car at 8.30am (much better than going by train!) and was met by Laura Eveleigh of 'Freud's' outside the BBC Broadcasting House along with Professor Julia Verne, an expert medic from Public Health England and her PR assistant. Laura put a take away coffee in my hand and we went immediately outside to a small grassy tree-lined square where Professor Verne and I were interviewed separately in a pre-recorded session for editing and broadcasting later. I did the interview on a park bench and afterwards I was also filmed walking up and down in the park and then back on the bench talking informally to the interviewer (who told me she was born in Hitchin...). These 'natural shots' were to be edited in later.

Then we were ushered quickly inside Broadcasting House, security checked and taken up to 'Brian Barron' a small meeting room named after the late foreign and war correspondent. We had a team talk and were made up (no lippy I'm afraid) and quickly ushered in to be interviewed by Julian Worricker (best known as a Radio 4 presenter of programmes such as Pick of the Week, You and Yours and Any Answers) in the BBC News 24 studio. While we waited to go live as part of the 11am news programme (sport was currently showing on the screen) he said he would ask me to tell him my story first (as regards breathlessness) before talking to Professor Verne. As we attached our microphones, Professor Verne quickly told me to face her when talking, not the camera, and to wait until we were told to leave afterwards - and don't forget to take your microphone off!

It all happened in a blur and when we went back to the meeting room I was surprised to learn that the interviews had lasted as long as 7 minutes. The PR staffs were very pleased as was Professor Verne as apparently it's rare to get more than 90 seconds for this kind of slot. All I can say is that Julian Worricker was very good at putting me at my ease and there were no trick questions. I later learnt that he has significant arthritis problems and regularly writes for the journal Arthritis Care so maybe he was sympathetic to medical conditions.

We debriefed and had a coffee and sandwich in Café Nero at the entrance to Broadcasting House. It turned out that what also pleased the PHE team was that the combination of patient and medical expert seemed to work well, as they had hoped, because they felt that the 'message' would have greater impact if told by a patient or sufferer as well as an expert.

Laurel called my 'chauffeur' for the return journey and I was home at 1.45pm. What an experience. It's certainly worth volunteering!

John Burden

Monday Morning Walkers/Tuesday Afternoon Swimmers

These groups are still running and if you would like details of either of them, the contact details are:
cardiacfriends@hotmail.co.uk

London Walks.

The popularity of the London walks seems to be growing all the time with all 4 walks so far this year averaging over 50. We have explored "Gruesome London" in April, "International Soho" in May, and Kensington Gardens in June and by the time you receive this newsletter we will have done July's "Lambeth Walk".

The walks are so popular in fact that for Walk 6 which will cover "Little Venice" and conclude with a boat trip on Regents' Canal, the walk is already full and there is a growing reserve list in case anyone should drop out.

Why so popular? Well anyone who has enjoyed our Blue Badge Guide Kim's insight into the secrets of our Capital will tell you: she has an encyclopaedic knowledge and relates facts that are unexpected, humorous and educational in equal measure. Our practice of using headphones receives Kim's continuous commentary in even the busiest of locations and makes the whole experience an absolute pleasure. Round this off with a pre-ordered leisurely lunch at the Wetherspoon pub "Sir John Oldcastle" near Farringdon Station amongst your friends and be transported there and back by Chambers Coaches of Stevenage, all for a quite modest £18 per head plus the cost of your selected food.

What's not to like??

We have "The Bolton's" in September (where all the rich people live) and to round off this year we have Little Venice and Regent's Canal in October. There are also **three** places left on the Saturday trip to Westminster Abbey on the 5th August whose cost is £37.50.

If you want to see London, then this is a way to do it. Give one of us a call, but you'd better be quick. When we put together next year's trip, we have a feeling the places will be snapped up like hot cakes!

For further details: cardiacfriendswalks@outlook.com



Kim in full flow



The White garden, Kensington Palace, commemorating 20 years since Princess Diana's death.



Peter Pan and Cardiac Friends!

Hot off the press! Doing the Lambeth Walk Oi!

On Walk 4, Kim introduced us to the Lambeth Walk. Here's a group of singers doing just that!



Finally...

The **Cardiac Friends website** has been a success in keeping members informed of the group's activities and upcoming events. It also has a page waiting for members to contribute anything of interest that they would like to share with fellow members. It could be an unusual or amusing holiday or work experience, a poem, anecdote or photos. Maybe you have an interesting or unusual hobby or pastime. Tell us about it.

Please forward any contributions to the website editor.

Pete Howard (Website Editor) at: peterbhoward@ntlworld.com

From the Newsletter Editor

I do hope you have found the newsletter informative, and I look forward to receiving your contributions in the future. If you feel you have something of interest to add to the newsletter, please do send it to me. Also, if you change your email address please let the Secretary have your new address and if you are unable to **open attachments**, then you can have a printed copy, by letting either the secretary or myself know. Due to the cost of postage and printing, and the time it takes to run off printed copies, it is preferable to use email.

P.S. Please do look at the website, as there are some great photos of the National Memorial Arboretum, and more of Kensington Gardens added recently. Also some photos/videos of our last London Walk - The Lambeth Walk.

Ruth Brown