



February 2023 Chairman's Report

Here I am again, in another February, sat at my computer keyboard, and wondering where on earth the last year has gone! As you are all aware I have been a patient of our much maligned NHS, who have worked wonders in restoring my body to something approaching full health, but much of that year has been spent in undergoing tests, chemotherapy, surgery and recovery. I have missed many of the activities that I have come to enjoy, and also the Christmas party, which I am led to believe, was a great success and my thanks must go to Adam, who was prepared to step in as master of ceremonies in my absence! Thankfully, after my recovery, I am to be spared the second round of chemotherapy that had been originally planned, and I am now working on recovering my full fitness and stamina. I am walking some 2 to 3 miles each day and have returned to both the Monday and Wednesday walks and the Thursday exercise sessions, all of which I have found most beneficial.

Cardiac Friends have been wonderfully supportive and encouraging to both Ruth and myself during that time, and I feel I should say that without that support, we would have found things much harder to bear, so thank you all from the bottom of our hearts!

On the broader front, we are getting out and about more now, and together with some of our friends made the annual "pilgrimage" to Anglesey Abbey to view the snowdrops at the end of January. It was a really cold foggy day and was during that very cold snap we had at the time. Regrettably, the snowdrops were a little shy in putting in an appearance, just standing with their heads bowed and covered in heavy dew, but the Winter garden walk is always one to delight and lift your spirits and I enclose a few photos that I took on the day.

We always love this copse of silver birches which we always refer to as "Narnia" from The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, and the witch hazel was also in full bloom. Looking forward to the warmer days ahead, we are already making plans for the Sunday London walks, the Sunday coffee mornings and the programme of games of petanque, all of which will feature in their own sections of the newsletter.



I've also managed to book the Stevenage Arts Centre for our **Annual General Meeting** - this was the same venue as last year, and will be held on **Wed 24th May at 2.00 p.m.**



Barry Brown

Notes from the Secretary

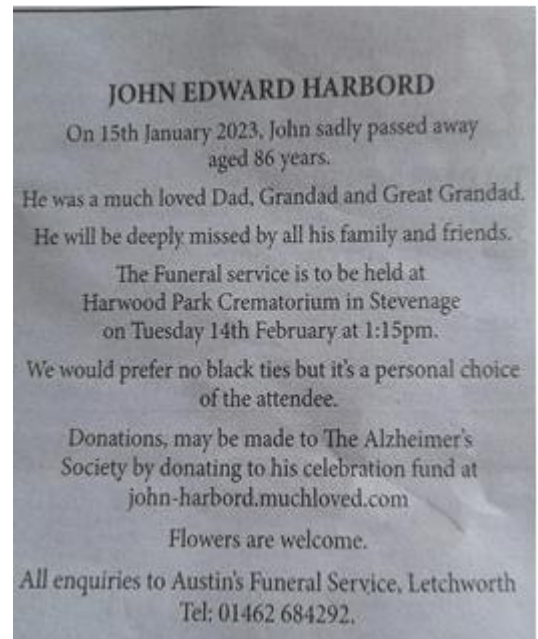
Dear friends, sadly we have lost two members since the last edition of the newsletter; John Harbord, a long term member of Cardiac Friends, he was a member of the committee for a short spell, and Helen Muggeridge.

Helen was a very energetic and supportive member of Cardiac Friends for many years. She supported Line Dancing, Heartsong, London Walks, the occasional coffee Morning and played a starring role in the murder mystery evening held several years ago. Helen's was a sudden death and we are all left reeling from the loss of such a popular lady. Our condolences go out to her family, husband Jim and daughters Rhian and Kate and granddaughter Ava as well as her many friends far and wide. I have sent an email out to all Cardiac Friends with details of her funeral.

With very little else to contribute, I will hand you over to our founder; Dinah Mackellar who kindly attended our 21st anniversary Party, Christmas 2022.

Cardiac Friends - Its formation and early years

Cardiac Rehab classes began in the Lister Hospital in the mid 1980's in the Occupational Therapy Department. The head of Occupational Therapy originally ran the group but within six months she had left and I took over. At this time patients had had a heart attack, but it was before the clot breaking drugs had been introduced (to break up the clots in the heart), so our patients had to learn how to live with the damage that had been done to the heart muscle. Poorly people; two weeks after their heart attack; feeling very frightened; with diminished confidence; little concentration and questioning what they could and could not do in the future. They attended two mornings a week for three months. They attended each of our light or heavy workshop sessions (dependent on how long they had been coming), that included physiotherapy, relaxation and a lecture. Once a month I had an evening session with the family (plus patient), they could come and ask questions. I had always felt the family needed as much help as the patient. Both needed their confidence building up and their worries aired. Coming to the morning sessions was nothing like coming to hospital, I was often told off because of the loud laughter and chat that came from the workshops! Later in the morning I taught them all relaxation and frequently patients would say they didn't want to do it, often those who didn't want to participate said it was the best thing they had ever done. I had a professionally made a relaxation tape for every patient to take and use at home. Through relaxation; our patients were able to learn to listen to their bodies and recognize when they were doing too much.



Over the next few years, the clot-busting drugs were introduced and what a difference this made to our patients. Since then, treatment has changed considerably.

Every Christmas, we had a reunion of present and past patients at the hospital. These were great fun for us all, meeting 'friends' and making new friends. We all looked forward to the next reunion.

Over time the period of rehabilitation was reduced to six weeks! Sad for us all but these things happen! Then in the late 1990's new plans were made for Cardiac Rehabilitation, not by the staff that ran the group but plans made for the hospital in the future. Cardiac Rehabilitation would no longer be using the workshops and the whole ethos of what we did would change. At this time I was not 100% well due to developing Rheumatoid Arthritis a few years before. In 2001 the changes came about and I decided to leave.

I loved my work and the people I was able to help. It was a very happy 16 years that I had 'been the boss' of Cardiac Rehab, helping people to learn to live with any difficulties and finding out more about themselves. Plus having acceptance and moving forward in a positive way in the future.

We had a final reunion at the Plinston Hall during the summer of 2001 as it had already been discussed between past and present patients that they were anxious to continue the reunions and would welcome the opportunity to become involved in future plans. We wrote in our first newsletter October 2001 - *'As all of you who attended the reunion will know, we propose to try and slightly formalize our group so that we could continue the work and friendship that we have generated over the past few years.'* Our first step was to try to formalize, strengthen and maintain all we had done. We initially called the group *'The Friends of the Cardiac Rehab Group'*. We had planned to form a number of Sub Groups and a walking group had already been running for 4 years. Our aim was to start various *'Recreational and Purposeful Activities'* and we hoped that enthusiastic members within the group who were willing and able to help others would volunteer to help. Discussions followed and in the March 2002 newsletter it was noted that the group had grown to some 200+ members!

Groups that were suggested or even already started included the Theatre Group, Bowls, Yoga, Painting, Line Dancing, Golf, Petanque, National Trust Visits, and London Walks.

By August our name had CHANGED to **'Cardiac Friends'**. Our logo, which was explained in our third newsletter August 2002, 'Cardiac' - the heart, 'Friends' - the handshake, and we are all nice warm people - the colours used. Thanks to Bruce Robinson who designed our logo which was used to organize the lapel badges for all our members to use.

Where did all the money in the bank account come from? While I was working with the rehab group, any money received from teas and coffee, raffles, donations, and the money raised from Clive's sponsored walks was deposited in the 'Friends' bank account and used to buy anything the Cardiac Rehab group needed. Who was Clive? Clive went through rehab and then became a volunteer with the Cardiac Rehab group. He was also a big part Cardiac Friends, and was Chairman for ten years.

In total I had four volunteers who helped keep an eye on each patient and also helped anyone who needed any assistance with what they were making. Equipment bought with this money and used in

the heavy workshop was returned to us in late April 2002 after the workshop was closed, and sold to swell the bank balance for Cardiac Friends to £4754.41. A long-standing friend within our group sadly died around this time and his family donated all the money raised in his memory to 'Cardiac Friends'. People were always very generous.

Being a member of Cardiac Friends is exactly that, everyone is a friend to one another, understanding, a good listener, so that you can always be yourself and admit if you are not feeling too good or need to sit down, etc.

I loved being part of Cardiac Friends and enjoyed everything I did for all of you. We were lucky others have generously volunteered to continue running this group for all the years since I had to give up my role as Secretary, writing the newsletter and organizer of many groups. **Thank you to you all.**

Dinah MacKellar - founder and currently a life - long member of Cardiac Friends.

Finally: I am delighted to say that we have 21 new members.

Welcome to: Alan Barnard, Alan and Margaret Byrne, Nigel and Pauline Cady, Neil and Noelle Franklin, Roy and Viv Higgins, Ian and Ewa Honstvet, Pat and Diane Hughes, Brian and Linda King, Duncan and Beverley Lummis, Clive and Yvonne Steele and Mike and Sarah Till.

Ruth Brown (Secretary)

Membership Secretary - Mrs Heather Cotton. Full contact details below.

Dear Friends,

The AGM will be on 24 May 2023 from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. at the Stevenage Community Arts Centre, Roaring Meg Retail Park, Stevenage, SG1 1XN. Individual invitations will be sent out in early April - by the 11th at latest. We also send out the Agenda for the AGM, a copy of our Constitution, and, unless you have joined since Christmas, a Renewal Form and a list of our current activities. Please check the facts on the Renewal Form. As agreed at the 2022 AGM, the membership fee is now £6 each.

The documents will be sent by e-mail, unless you asked for paper copies on your last renewal form. In that case you will receive everything by post. I can post them to anyone else who would prefer them. Just ask.

During Covid - 19 we did not charge membership and I took renewals by e-mail or phone. Last year I asked for paper renewals, and received them.

This year I am happy to up-date the copy I have if you just confirm by E-mail or phone that the details are still correct, and that you have paid your membership fee. If you joined since Christmas you do nothing this year, you have paid until May 2024.

This reduces our postage and stationery costs.

When the form comes through, please take **ONE** of the following actions:

1. Renew by e-mail, phone or letter and post a cheque to me with the renewal fee.
2. Renew by e-mail or phone, and send a BACs payment (a bank-to-bank transfer) either on-line or over the counter in your bank. The details you need will be on the Renewal letter.
- 3) If you do not wish to renew, please advise me at the contact details below.

IN ALL CASES, please advise:

Mrs Heather Cotton, Membership Secretary:

Monday Morning Walkers

The Monday walkers have resumed their perambulations around the local areas of Henlow, Langford, Shephallbury and Fairlands Valley Park, with a coffee stop at the end at Costello's in the park, 'The Watering Can' coffee shop in Cherry Lane Garden Centre (formerly Langford Garden Centre) and 'The Gardeners' Retreat' in Hitchin Garden Centre. If you fancy joining them, the contact details are below. Maggi Bullen



Tuesday Afternoon Swimmers. Our merry little band of swimmers gathers fortnightly on a Tuesday (except during school holidays). Numbers can vary between 5 and 10. These are leisurely sessions where you can swim as much or as little as you like. Afterwards we retire to the café for a coffee and a natter.

Come and give it a try. Pete Howard.

Wednesday Walks

We held our annual ramble in aid of 'Children in Need' from the 'Moon & Stars' in November, and including 'Gift Aid' this amounted to £250.

We had Christmas Lunch at 'The Rising Sun' where about thirty of us sat down to an excellent lunch. As ever, the members were very kind to me providing a large basketful of 'Goodies' to eat and drink. They also provided a large box of chocolates for Joyce my wife as it was her birthday. As usual the weather has been kind to us on our walks. Numbers attending have been down to 12-15, but I think this a seasonal problem in the winter months. That said this month we returned to 'The Plume' at

Ickleford and 24 turned out despite 5 regulars being absent due to unavoidable appointments.

I received notification that 6 members wished to join the walks and I sent them letters of welcome, and Sarah & Mick Till have joined us.



As usual I am most grateful for the help I get from Ian Druce, Cyril Savage, Mike Morley and Peter Dawes (and their Carers!) for proposing some of our walks and accompanying me on our 'Proving Walks'. For the third year running we held our little celebration en route with Mulled Wine, Mince Pies and other 'Goodies'.

Fred Maryon

Exercise Group - Thursday Afternoons



The exercise class continues to thrive with numbers fluctuating over the last few weeks with the bad weather and sickness but the loyal troops always rally. We welcome back Barry in to the fold and are all delighted with his return. It is nice to see Audrey back with us as well as Margaret who has just had her new pacemaker implanted! Joan also had surgery but is back now with us.

Seventeen of us enjoyed a very nice Christmas meal at the 'Three Horse Shoes' in Norton just before Christmas. Unfortunately, the weather was rather unkind with a nasty fog making driving uncomfortable. Emma, our instructor, was unable to be with us as her father passed away the week before. In her absence Kate stood in to put us through our paces for which we are grateful. Ironically Kate became a Grand-mother on Christmas Eve to a little girl! Please join us at the Letchworth Leisure Centre at 12.30 on Thursdays and become part of our friendly group to stretch and exercise those muscles. You will find a very warm welcome.

07522452193 Jackie Quinn

Heartsong - Friday Afternoons

Our most recent Heartsong session was on January 27th. As it was close to Burns Night, we had a bit of a Scottish theme with the Glaswegian street song 'Mary Mac' (made famous by the Dubliners, but not sung as fast...), 'My Bonny lies Over the Ocean', 'Keep Me' by Ali Burns, a Scottish composer, and lastly 'Lean on Me' by Bill Withers (well, not everything was Scottish)!

Katie Rose makes our sessions fun and enjoyable. There's no pressure to be able to read music or be an experienced singer. You just need to enjoy singing - or explore that possibility. We always feel good at the end of each session.

We meet every 2 months on a Friday, 2-4pm, at Holwell Village Hall, a few miles north of Hitchin off the A600 Bedford Road. We only charge £6 per session to cover costs and new members are always welcome, so if you want to give it a try, contact John Burden details below.

The next Heartsong session is on March 31st.

John Burden:

Petanque - Friday Afternoons



Being very much a weather-dependent activity, we tend not to book the pistes during the winter months, however now that spring and the warmer weather is on the horizon; we have popped along to the Letchworth Family Golf Centre and made some bookings for the summer season. We have retained the timetable of last year so the games will be held monthly on a Friday between 2.00 p.m. and 3.00 p.m. and the cost remains

the same at £4 per person, payable when you turn up. Boules are provided and there are sufficient experienced players available to school newcomers to the game. The games are often followed by a friendly get-together for a drink and slice of cake under one of the Dimples Café's garden pergolas or inside on the odd occasion when the weather dictates. Come and play with us if you are interested. The course is on Willian Way, Letchworth, and the Post Code for navigators is SG6 2HU.

The following bookings have been made, so all you need is a free hour, a sense of humour and a modicum of luck!!

Friday 14 Apr, Friday 19 May, Friday 16 June, Friday 28 July, Friday 18 August, Friday 22 September and Friday 27 October

Barry Brown

Line Dancing - Saturday Mornings.



It is still hard to believe that we have suddenly and sadly lost our loyal and longtime member, Helen, who joined the line dancing group fourteen years ago in 2009.

Helen will be sorely missed by us all. I have posted a card to her husband Jim and family on behalf of the group letting them know that we are thinking of them at this very sad time.

At the moment we have a break this month as Mary (our teacher) is away on a long-awaited holiday which was postponed a couple of times due to Covid-19. We are looking forward to hearing all about it on her return and back dancing again on the 4 March.

We still have a good attendance, which generally covers the expenses for the morning's session. There have been some new members join Cardiac Friends and a couple of them have shown an interest in line dancing, so hopefully they will come along shortly to see what we get up to.

We meet fortnightly at the Willian village hall for 2 hours on alternate Saturday mornings (10.00 - 12.00). The cost is £6 per person which includes refreshments.

Janet Savage

London Walks - Sundays

We met with our London Blue Badge Guide, Kim and also the manager of the Wetherspoons pub "Sir John Oldcastle" on 7th February, and discussed the plans for our 10th season in charge.



After much discussion and checking of London's plan of events and our own personal diaries, we arrived at the six walks that we plan to offer for this year. As in previous years, they are spread roughly a month apart wherever possible, starting in

April and finishing in October, with the month of August left free for the benefit of family holidays. Our intention is to retain the use of Richard Taylor Travel for our coach travel to and from the capital and also to continue using the VOX headsets that have proved so beneficial in the past, particularly in busy and noisy areas. We have obtained the latest menu from Sir John Oldcastle and have amended it to suit our personal requirements.

Details of the six walks are as follows:

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|--------|------------------|--|
| Walk 1 | Sunday 30 Apr - | Battersea Power Station |
| Walk 2 | Sunday 21 May - | Disastrous London! |
| Walk 3 | Sunday 25 Jun - | It's not all gardens (A South London Village) |
| Walk 4 | Sunday 16 July - | Palaces, Potter & Puddles (It's a great day in Greenwich) |
| Walk 5 | Sunday 17 Sep - | "Lucky" Limehouse (for the 3 rd , or is it the 4 th time)? |
| Walk 6 | Sunday 15 Oct - | 20 th Century spies - Fact or Fiction! |

If you want more information, please contact us.

Sunday- Monthly Coffee Mornings



I am delighted to report that the two venues we previously used for our Sunday coffee mornings but had closed for business, namely the Orchard cafés at both the Vanstone Park Garden Centre and Letchworth Tennis Club, have now both re-opened separately under new management. Furthermore, the restricted space available at the Cherry Lane garden centre has now been extended to the side, accommodating some additional 20 to 25 seats. This venue will also have an additional area in the future, at the end of the present seating area, which will be useful in the warmer Summer period.

Coffee mornings are all arranged for a 2-hour slot between 10.00 a.m. (when most venues open) and noon, although there is no reason whatsoever why you should not stay longer if you so wish. Some of those attending use this as an opportunity for breakfast out, whilst others are happy to stick with tea and cake. There is also the option to stay later and enjoy lunch. Whatever takes your fancy!

The following dates and venues have been booked:

26 Mar at Vanstone Park Garden Centre, 'The Greenhouse Café'

23 April at Hitchin Garden Centre, 'The Gardeners Retreat'

28 May at Cherry Lane, Formerly Langford Garden Centre; 'The Watering Can'

11 Jun at Family Golf Centre, Letchworth, 'Dimples'

It was suggested that the Stevenage Garden Centre on the Graveley road might provide a suitable venue having been recently extended, but our visit to assess the possibility concluded that the footprint of available space was insufficient to accommodate our group, which can sometimes reach over 30. It is however a location that we will monitor for future use.

Barry Brown

Places of Interest and Theatre Group

On the 10th February we had 22 members who went on a theatre trip to see a musical in London called '& Juliet'. Normally we would only go ahead with a trip if we had a minimum number of 30 members. However, it was decided to go ahead with this trip although a financial loss was made.

It is a little worrying that the numbers applying for recent planned theatre trips have been so low! Only 6 members applied for tickets to see 'Mousetrap' in September 2022 (which I therefore had to cancel) and now we had just 22 members to see '& Juliet'.

Places of Interest

There are currently no places of interest trips planned although this will be reviewed when the weather improves.

Adam Kuzminski

Holiday

On a more positive note, we do have 42 members going on the '4 night/5 day' holiday to Warner's Leisure Hotels at Littlecote House on the 17th April. Everything for this holiday has now been finalised and Warners have now been paid. Kim (our London Walks blue badge guide) will be joining us for the holiday and will be leading us on 2 tours to Bath and Newbury.

Adam Kuzminski

And finally,

A last look at Helen Muggeridge

Photos from April 2022 Holiday to Warner's Leisure Hotels at Sinah Warren



From the Editor

As always, please feel free to send me any material which you think would be suitable for **YOUR** newsletter.

Ruth Brown

[21/02/2023](#)

