

# Hearts and Minds

## THE HERTBEATS NEWSLETTER



St Albans and District Cardiac Support Group  
Established 1997

Affiliated to the British Heart Foundation and Arrhythmia Alliance

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Windsor Castle

**JUNE/JULY 2016**

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1 <sup>st</sup> June	<b>Golf Society Spring Meeting</b> Little Hay, Bovington Details under Golf Society (page 13)
21 <sup>st</sup> June	<b>Strawberry Evening</b> With 5 piece jazz band to entertain us.
19 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>The New Localised GP Direct Access Echocardiogram and Ambulatory ECG Service</b> Speaker Kevin Dennett from Concordia the company providing the service.
August	No Meeting
20 <sup>th</sup> September	<b>Steve Gledhill</b> Prostate Cancer and Prostate Problems. What men need to know?
18 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>Mrs. P Farley</b> Welcome to your woods Woodland Trust
15 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Christopher Stokes</b> Police Community Support Officer

All Tuesday meetings (unless otherwise stated) will be held in the Hall of St Mary Marshalswick, Sherwood Avenue at **8 p.m.** Hall available from 7.45 p.m.

HERTBEATS is a Cardiac Support Group formed in 1997 to provide practical advice, information and help to cardiac patients and their families within the St. Albans, Harpenden, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield areas. It is also an informal social group that arranges for both patients and ex-patients, trips at home and abroad, regular friendly gatherings with interesting speakers and the opportunity to meet new and old friends. Whilst not offering formal medical advice, Hertbeats members often learn much about their ailments and the practical means of coping with these by talking to other members who have had similar experiences.

## EDITORIAL

"Another Newsletter!" I hear you cry in delighted anticipation. Yes, your Committee and I have been struggling over our keyboards to bring you fresh news for Hertbeats. Meanwhile the bluebells have struggled magnificently to give vast blankets of blue in the woods. What a pleasure to go walking through them.

A lot has happened since the last issue and, since I am writing on the 14<sup>th</sup> May, the results of the A.G.M. are still anxiously awaited. Not another coalition? By the time you read this, those who went to the A.G.M. will know.

Michael Utteridge is doing a splendid job organising outings; they are taken up enthusiastically by many members. From my point of view, I receive trip reports much more regularly (see page 5). These are part of the bread-and-butter of the Newsletter and are much-appreciated by our members. If you do go on a trip, do please try to elect someone to write a trip report for me.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all the work that John Blandford is doing in unravelling the never-ending flow of information on local NHS changes; changes which are likely to impact us all. The latest reports start on page 8.

*Alan*

## NEWS FROM THE CHAIR

I have never been in the position of having to write a sermon, but a vicar once told me that you always had to start with either a text or good news. Well, taking that advice, I start with our motto 'Carpe Diem' and right now outside the sun is shining, starting what we all hope will be a fine summer. We can look forward to our strawberry evening on 21 June. As usual it will be made successful by our intrepid band of organisers like Jill Higgs, Jim Green and Brian Gibson.

I carry around with me one major worry about Hertbeats. What do we do if one of our key members suddenly becomes unable to continue to fulfil his/her role? (I have myself had to miss several Hertbeats events earlier in the year due to hospitalisation and period of recovery.) We enjoy the trips such as the recent one to Churchill's home at Chartwell, organised so efficiently by Michael Utteridge. Dave Tarrant as Treasurer not only spends hours keeping our accounts in order, but also talks at the hospital to those going through cardiac rehab, a major source of new members. As secretary, Roger Miller is the key man in ensuring the continuation and expansion of Hertbeats' membership and activities.

It was therefore disappointing, in response to Roger's (and my) urging for 'new blood to join' the Committee, that no one stepped forward or was nominated for the AGM. It is appreciated of course that some members are very active in other concerns and not able to take on more. We do need more help essentially. As a voluntary organisation we rely entirely on volunteers! Fortunately nearly all members of last year's Committee agreed to stay on. At meetings we also benefit from the experience of our Life President Brian Gibson, and Life Vice-President John Versey. Steve Gledhill also joined the Committee before the AGM and is now acting as our press officer. We also have a small number of people doing significant work behind the scenes, for example Jean Sharpe in organising CPR training. Nevertheless, if we were a public body, or commercial concern, we would have 'succession planning' in place so that in the event of a member of the Committee falling ill, someone was prepared to take over his/her role. Do please come forward so that those who currently do so much for Hertbeats, (but are all getting older!) receive support and help.

A few members have expressed disappointment that there will not be a Hertbeats Christmas Dinner this year. The Committee has therefore decided to have a 'fun/mince pies' evening instead. Someone called it 'a winter strawberry evening'. Of course there will also be the 'replacement' event in summer 2017.

Changes in the NHS locally (as well as nationally) will continue to affect us. Re-organising of West Herts hospitals' services is not now likely to be known until 2017, but rather more certain are establishment of 'hubs' providing more locally some of the services currently carried out at the hospitals. These are likely to be, on current thinking, at the Red House in Harpenden, a developed 'Health Centre' in the middle of St Albans, as well as changes at the City Hospital itself. Our 'Hertbeats' expert' on NHS changes is John Blandford (contact number on the back page). You will find three important and informative articles by John in this edition of the Newsletter: one on 'Direct access Echocardiograms' and other cardiac services, and the other two on development of 'Hubs'.

*Brian Y*

## SECRETARY REPORT

Current Membership. As at 14<sup>th</sup> May 2016, Hertbeats membership stands at 348.

New Members. Since the last newsletter David Wilbraham, Reg Margereson, Derek Walsh, Peter Syson and Yvonne Dawson have joined Hertbeats – Welcome aboard.

Lifts to Monthly Meetings. I have had regrets and several pleas for help from some of our members who cannot attend meetings. Either they no longer have a car or because of eyesight issues are very wary about driving at night. If you regularly attend our monthly meeting and are prepared to give someone a lift then PLEASE let me know.

Membership Renewals. The Hertbeats financial year starts 1<sup>st</sup> April. Within this copy of the newsletter those whose £7.50 has not yet been received will find a reminder renewal slip. So far I have 63 renewals outstanding so please remit your fees as soon as you can. Non-payers will be removed from the database within the next few weeks.

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Training The two CPR courses laid on by Jean Sharpe were well attended. I think it is safe to say that everyone was impressed by the thoroughness of the training. We were all made more aware of how desperately urgent it is to provide CPR where someone has stopped breathing. Even those of us who had been on CPR courses before learned something new as well as being "refreshed".

Jean Sharpe intends to arrange more CPR courses in the coming months. We shall let you know when we have news. (Jean Sharpe 01727 838193; email address: [jeanmarys@aol.com](mailto:jeanmarys@aol.com) )

Roll Out The Wii. In response to a recent email one of our undaunted members replied thus:-

"along with various ongoing problems thus I am unable to do actual physical games. What I do when able, is play tennis, but I hasten to add this is on a Wii games machine. But it is still very physical and one can also play against a partner – it is good fun whilst it gives me a work out. I also manage to do step ups on it!! - Which help to give one steady balance ...I usually end my 1hr or so workout with some Yoga breathing ..this may be of interest to others, with similar problems."

Well reminded! I can absolutely vouch for the "Nintendo Wii". As a grandfather I was most impressed that all generations could join in at the same time and play these

"games" on a level-playing-field. This is true even when injured or like me, sportingly inept. My kids' Wii has been responsible for more FAMILY laughter, some of it breathless, than any TV programme or general get together. If those with internet access log onto the two links below you will see that the spectators also get exercise with the cheering and laughter arising from the Wii.

Cardiac Rehab

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcpWhJ3OSZO>

Gaming Grannies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8AKYpJhpMw>

**Hertbeats Website.** The web site now needs to be publicised to GP practices where we hope to be able to establish a link back to [www.hertbeats.org.uk](http://www.hertbeats.org.uk). This appears to be more difficult than one would expect. Just to remind you, I will not be sending further copies of Hearts & Minds by email as a copy will now appear on the web site. **Hearts & Minds on the website is in colour.** Perhaps more importantly you can magnify the print size on screen if you find that more comfortable for reading or you can print off your own colour copy. You will also be able to find back numbers more easily than in the magazine rack at home. Be assured that the printed version you receive by post remains the principal means of communication with the whole membership.

*Roger Miller  
Secretary*

## OUT AND ABOUT – TRAVEL

### VISIT TO THE BANK OF ENGLAND

Early on March 16<sup>th</sup> Hertbeats set off to London with a full coach of 50 people to visit the Bank of England and the Museum of London. The bank is known as the "The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street". What a day to go as it was Budget Day and the Governor's birthday. The present Governor Mark Carney is the 120<sup>th</sup> Governor of the bank and the first non-British-citizen to hold the post.

As we walked in through the great portals of this magnificent building we saw 2 messengers dressed in their pink livery and top hats. I asked one of them if I could go down into the vaults and view the gold; the answer was no. I was not surprised as there are over 400,000 bars stored there. I also asked if there was any coinage in the vaults and the messenger who had worked in the vaults told me there are sovereigns in packs which were never circulated to the public.

The bank was established in 1694 during the reign of William III. The first Governor was Sir John Houblon. The bank was charged with raising money for the government; England wanted to be a global power. In the first 12 days of opening £1.2 million was raised and half of this money went towards building ships for the navy. This was the first great push towards the building of the British Empire.

The Bank of England is the second oldest Central Bank (the oldest is Sweden) and the 8<sup>th</sup> oldest bank in the world. It was not nationalised until 1946.

In the museum much is made of how the building of the bank was developed. The architect Sir John Sloane rebuilt the bank after a rioting mob tried to get into the bank during the Gordon Street riots of 1780. The only part of his work that survives is the outer wall. Between the first and second world wars the architect Sir Herbert Baker rebuilt most of the bank which took 14 years and it was finished in 1939. This was

under the stewardship of one of the greatest Governors Sir Montagu Norman who was Governor for 24 years.

The museum displays are very enlightening informing us of the weakness of regulation before the banking crisis and what new controls are now in place. Quantitative Easing was explained as money moved electronically.

I was very impressed with the video presentations explaining aspects of the bank's duties. There were many bank notes and coins on display, also names of Chief Cashiers who signed the bank notes such as Peppiatt, Ford and O'Brien which took me back to my young days. We saw counterfeit notes which the Germans wanted to flood Great Britain with during the war. There is a £1,000,000 note on display. It is not signed by the Chief Cashier but by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We now know we have to look out for the new polymer banknotes, the £5 note will be issued in September 2016 and the £10 note in the second half of 2017.

There was a Roman gold bar on display but what really caused a lot of interest was an actual standard bar of gold which is in a glass case very secure, but you can put your hand through a hole and try and lift it. It weighs 27.4 lbs, value on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016 £349,688. There is a saying "Worth your weight in gold" I worked out that 6 bars were about my weight so I would be worth £2,098,128. Would anybody pay that for me???? (Please do not answer).

Kenneth Grahame the author of Wind in the Willows worked at the bank for 30 years and became secretary of administration. It is said the character of Mr Toad is based on a Deputy Governor; I could not possibly name him could I? There are many things to see and study in this museum but time was running out and we were quickly off to our next stop the Museum of London.

*James Green*

### VISIT TO THE "CRIME MUSEUM UNCOVERED" EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON

After a short journey from the Bank of England Museum we arrived at The Museum of London for a return visit for the "Crime Museum Uncovered" Exhibition. Never-seen-before objects from the Metropolitan Police's Crime Museum from the nineteenth century to the Millennium Dome Diamond Heist were on display but little did I expect to find a family connection with one of the most notorious crimes covered.

The main part of the exhibition featured individual crimes and showed artefacts used in either the crime or its detection as each case involved some unique feature. As we progressed from Dr. Crippen, and the first use of radio to catch the criminal and the telegram confirming his arrest, I commented that his house in Holloway, North London bore a strong resemblance to my late mother's apartment in Finsbury Park, North London. Imagine my surprise when a few exhibits further on was the case of The Seddons who poisoned a lodger, Eliza Barrow, with arsenic taken from flypapers. The house in the museum photograph not only looked like my mother's apartment but this was confirmed in the details of the crime committed at 63 Tollington Park, Finsbury Park. I had no idea that any such crime had been



committed in this house and it was an enormous shock to see my mother's last home featured in this way. Who knows what went on in her Sitting Room with the bay window: had I been drinking tea with my mother where the poor Eliza had been sipping her tea and arsenic?

When Eliza became unwell a doctor prescribed medicine but two weeks later she was dead having earlier transferred all her property and assets to the Seddons. A cousin went to the police and her body was exhumed and the arsenic discovered in her body. Despite a petition to reprieve Frederick Seddon he was hanged at Pentonville Prison in April 1912.

*Michael Utteridge*

### **"TOM THE MUSICAL"**

On Thursday, 7th April we had a musical treat taking a big step back in time to the 60's and a short journey to the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre for "Tom the Musical". The show, which was a completely Welsh production, focussed on Tom Jones' early struggle in the working mens clubs in The Valleys, and his heart stopping voice, who yearned for fame at whatever the cost.

The show followed his life from his teenage romance with Linda who married him at the age of 16 to his first No. 1 with "It's Not Unusual" which we learnt was originally written for Sandie Shaw. The story was interspersed with Tom's singing development from pub singer through the clubs in The Valleys to his eventual international stardom. Much was made of his marriage to Linda and the strains placed on their relationship by the "pressures" of his search for success and all that came with it. It was sad that a week after seeing the show that Linda's death was announced.

The story was performed live on stage by an incredible cast of actors and musicians who seemed to be able to act in one scene and play several instruments and sing in the musical numbers. The lead taking the role of Tom Jones certainly brought the character and the audience to life, although I am pleased to say that we were spared the "knicker chuckers" when the theatre reverberated to the sounds of his most famous hits!

### **OUTINGS TO ELTHAM PALACE AND THE RANGER'S HOUSE AND WINDSOR CASTLE**

Details of these outings on Wednesday, 20th July and Wednesday, 17th August respectively will be sent out to those on my list at the end of May. If you wish to receive details please contact me by email at [michael.utteridge@btinternet.com](mailto:michael.utteridge@btinternet.com) or `phone me on 01582 460880.

### **AN ADDITIONAL DATE FOR YOUR DIARY – 16<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016**

We have reserved seats in the Stalls at Milton Keynes Theatre for the Matinee performance of Alan Ayckbourn's comedy "Relatively Speaking" starring Robert Powell and Liza Goddard. The play was Ayckbourn's first great West End success and turned him into a household name. It promises to be "Two hours of continuous laughter".

Full details of the outing will be sent out at the end of July.

*Michael Utteridge*

## **MEDICAL MATTERS & NHS NEWS**

### **ST ALBANS TO HAVE A CITY CENTRE HUB?**

Hubs (similar to Health and Well-being Centres) are being set up throughout the country to provide co-located clinical, mental health, social care and voluntary services locally and reduce the need for patients to travel to hospitals for treatment that can be provided locally more cheaply. Plans for a Harpenden Hub are already under way – see Red House article on page 9.

For some time now there have been rumours that the Hertfordshire Community Health Trust or the Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group would be setting up such a hub in the centre of St Albans. Now a report on page 3 of the May 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the St. Albans and Harpenden Review of a proposal to undertake a major re-velopment of a large site in St Albans Centre suggests that this may well be true. The development site, which includes housing, retail and commercial use, has an unused police station and a working Community Trust Health Centre on it. Significantly the developers, Angle Property, has included a proposal to build a Health Centre of twice its size to replace the present one. Could this be a hub?

The size and the facilities provided in hubs vary greatly. In our region they are referred to as being minor or major hubs. The Harpenden one is said to be a minor hub and there is a possibility that a major one will also be provided on the St Albans Hospital site.

Some existing hubs elsewhere have GP Practices in them and we have heard that three large local GP Practices have shown interest in moving into a hub in St Albans were one to be provided.

These developments are independent of a decision being made on the future of acute hospital services in West Herts. Recommendations are being reviewed again following very informative and statistically supported presentations from two Dacorum patients groups. These show how facilities in West Herts Hospitals are well below what is normally provided for populations of our present and predicted future size. More of this in a later article.

*John Blandford*

*[Much of this article relies on information provided by the St Albans and Harpenden Patient Group and the St Albans and Harpenden Review newspaper.]*

### **GP DIRECT ACCESS ECHOCARDIOGRAM AND AMBULATORY ECG SERVICE, INCLUDING A CARDIOLOGY CLINICAL SERVICE FOR GPs**

Rather a mouthful heading but the full title of the talk to be given to members at our July 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. A member of Concordia Ambulatory Care, the private company awarded the contract to provide this service, will be speaking supported by a member of Herts Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (HVCCG) that commissioned this service. The CCG had bids from several providers both NHS and private companies from which to choose. The service does what it says on the tin.

This is a very significant development which was trailed in an article in the previous issue of our newsletter. It was due to start in the four West Herts localities on May 9th. In St Albans, Concordia will be providing this service in The Maltings Surgery and all GPs can refer patients there.

So what does it mean? Previously a GP had to refer cardiac patients to a consultant in a local hospital who then decided whether to put the patient on the waiting list to have an echocardiogram and then the patient has to go back to the consultant who sees the patient to discuss the results. The patient had to travel to a local hospital for these three appointments. The time between GP referral and getting the results back to him or her was often lengthy.

Now, although a GP can still refer patients on the old pathway, he can instead make the echocardiogram required decision himself and refer directly to Concordia. The contract stipulates how quickly the patient must be seen and the results reviewed by a Concordia employed consultant who gives the GP an opinion (again time-limited) as to how the patient's treatment should be progressed. Some surgery GPs are also being trained by Concordia on how to better interpret echocardiograms and make decisions on treatment.

Another aspect of this new service is that patients will no longer have to go to a hospital to get a 24 hour ECG monitor. They could go to The Maltings Surgery instead to collect it and take it back there with results going straight to the GP.

This service is expected to be significantly quicker and cheaper and I will be interested to hear from members who have experience of using it.

*John Blandford*

#### **THE FUTURE OF THE HARPENDEN RED HOUSE SITE EXTRACTS FROM RECENT PRESS RELEASE FROM COMMUNITY TRUST**

Plans are already underway for a hub in Harpenden housed in a redevelopment of The Stewarts building on the Red House Hospital site. The Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust (HCT) has recently announced it intends to purchase The Stewarts - a mental health unit run by the local mental health trust. The HCT would sell the rest of the site and the Red House, which it owns, to finance the redevelopment.

Among the services proposed to be offered from The Stewarts Adult Services:

- Bladder and Bowel Care
- Diabetes Service
- Heart Failure Service
- Leg Ulcer Service
- Parkinson's Specialist Nurse Service
- Podiatry Service
- Retinal Screening Service

Children's Services:

- Health Visiting Service (including Baby Clinics and Post Natal Clinics)
- Speech and Language Therapy

The renovation is proposed to commence in 2018 with completion in 2019

*John Blandford*

## **EXERCISE GROUPS**

### **EXERCISE CLASSES UPDATES**

#### **MAPLE UNIT**

Currently there are a few vacancies for the Tuesday 6.00pm class and the Thursday 6.00 pm and 7.15 pm classes. Please do let me know if you would like to join a Maple Unit class whether you have recently completed 'rehab', or would like to start exercising anyway. If the latter you will need a note from your GP confirming basic fitness to exercise. (My contact details on the back page.) All exercisers go at their own pace supervised by an appropriately qualified physiotherapist. Both Thursday classes are taken by Eleanor Hughes, who some will know if they have passed through 'rehab' at the City hospital.

*Brian Y*

#### **WESTMINSTER LODGE EXERCISE CLASSES**

**Monday & Thursday 2.30 to 3.30 £3.30 per session held in Dance Studio 2**

(Note free parking for the first two hours but you must display a ticket on windscreen)

Numbers for the last 7 weeks up to 28th April, 2016 -

Monday class averaged at 12, highest 15 lowest 9;  
Thursday class averaged at 5, highest 9 lowest 2.

We would like to welcome three new members to the Monday Class, Alice Piggott, Mike Clack and Gilbert Carswell. Also regarding the Monday Class unfortunately Chris Bourne could no longer take the class. Although he was only taking the class for 7 months he will be missed BUT the class welcome an old friend of Hertbeats, Antonella, who is now taking the Class.

The cost of each session did rise in April to £3.30 and also the Thursday Class has been renamed from Hertbeats to ForeverFit, but be assured nothing has changed except for the name. The reason Westminster Lodge changed the name is to try and encourage more participants; you can see from the figures above that the attendance is much lower than Monday. Monday remains as Hertbeats.

If any member is interested in joining our happy friendly classes please contact me for a chat on 01727 852610 or email [cjh@stalbansherts.demon.co.uk](mailto:cjh@stalbansherts.demon.co.uk).

*Christine Hill*

#### **ANTONELLA McMILLIN'S EXERCISE CLASSES**

All members are welcome at Antonella's classes.

**The Hertbeats class at Westminster Lodge on Mondays at 2.30pm is now being taken by Antonella.**

The rest of Antonella's classes is:

**Group classes:**

Batchwood Tuesday 11.30am  
 London Conley Wednesday 11 am  
 Harpenden Wednesday 1pm

**Gym classes:**

Harpenden Monday 12.20 to 13.50 + Friday 12.30 to 14.00  
 Westminster Lodge Thursday 10.30 to 12.00

*Brian Y***JERSEY FARM**

Jersey Farm exercise group continues to attract on average 12 participants at any one time, although we have over 20 who attend regularly.

We always have room for more who wish to exercise in a friendly atmosphere, mainly aerobic movement to music and various weights for muscle toning. If anyone would like to come and watch a session, please contact me on 01727858396 or [tarrantdave@hotmail.com](mailto:tarrantdave@hotmail.com).

The price per session is £4, pay on the night.

*Dave Tarrant***HERTFORDSHIRE HEALTH WALKS**

Copies of the current programme are available at Information Points at both St Albans Town Hall and Harpenden Town Hall as well as doctors' surgeries and Libraries.

All walks are accompanied by experienced leaders however before your first walk you should either turn up 10 minutes early to fill in a form or register online at the website - [www.hertfordshirehealthwalks.org](http://www.hertfordshirehealthwalks.org) Don't forget to wear suitable shoes and carrying a bottle of water is also recommended.

Walks are graded and are between 30 minutes to an hour and a half. For example [1] is an easy walk, 30 minutes, about 1.5 miles, gentle slopes, no stiles. [3] is a moderate walk, about 1 hour (3 miles), moderate slopes, a faster pace and possible stiles. Some examples are:

**Highfield Park:** Meet at Charters Health Club car park, Hill End Lane. Opposite Spar, AL4 0DB: Every Monday, 9.30am. Category [2-3]; Accessible by public transport and refreshments available nearby.

Walks also start at Highfield Park every Tuesday at 1.30pm; Category 2-3.

**Wheathampstead:** Meet at public car park behind The Bull, East Lane, AL4 8BL: Every Tuesday 10.30am. Category [2-3]; Accessible by public transport and refreshments available nearby.

**Hatching Green:** Meet on road in Redbourn Lane, AL5 2JP. Car parking in side road. Every Thursday, 10.30am. Category [3-4]. Accessible by public transport. White Horse pub nearby!

**Greenwood Park:** Meet outside Greenwood Park Community Centre, Tippendell Lane, Chiswell Green, AL2 3HW: Every Friday, 2.00pm. Category [2-3]. Accessible by public transport and refreshments available nearby.

For those up-to-date with modern technology details are also on: [facebook.com/hertfordshirehealthwalks](https://www.facebook.com/hertfordshirehealthwalks) and [twitter.com/hertshealthwalk](https://twitter.com/hertshealthwalk)

*John V***TOO MUCH EXERCISE CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEART – BUT WHAT'S TOO MUCH?**

Aerobic exercise such as running and cycling has myriad health benefits but, paradoxically, there is growing evidence that doing too much can have the opposite effect – at least on the heart.

New, as yet unpublished, research comparing serious athletes with fun runners and cyclists seems to confirm what cardiologists have suspected for some time. There is a U-shaped relationship between aerobic exercise and your risk of heart disease. Do none and you are at high risk – no surprise there – but at the other end of the spectrum the risk starts to rise again. So how much is too much? Where is the sweet spot at the bottom of this U-shaped curve?

Sanjay Sharma is the professor of cardiology at St George's Hospital and the medical director of the London Marathon. He led the new British Heart Foundation-funded study that compared the hearts of 170 veteran athletes with those of a similar-sized group who exercised much less. The athletes had all run or cycled for at least ten hours a week for a decade or more, while the control group averaged just over two hours a week. All volunteers were clean living, otherwise healthy people with an average age of 55 and were investigated using the latest technology to assess the state of their hearts. The results were surprising.

One in six of the athlete group showed signs of scarring of the muscular heart wall, including evidence in at least one of a previous undiagnosed heart attack. The more casual exercisers showed no such scarring. And there was more "furring" (calcified plaques) in the coronary arteries of the athletes' hearts than in those of the fun runners. Indeed the findings suggest that volunteers running more than 35 miles or cycling more than 100 miles a week had similar "furring" of the arteries to people who did no exercise at all.

The study is a small one. More research needs to be done to verify and understand the findings, but it adds to existing data showing that a lot of exercise can put a strain on the heart. This does not just increase the risk of collapsing and dying while competing – as happened to one runner in the last London Marathon – but of long-term complications such as atrial fibrillation (AF), a chaotic heart rhythm that impairs efficiency and increases the risk of stroke.

AF is common in older people, but it tends to develop much earlier in those who compete in events such as marathons and triathlons. In fun runners of my age (53) the chance of having AF is about 1 in 200. In middle-aged marathon runners and triathletes it can be up to five-fold higher at 1 in 40.

Quite why doing a lot of exercise can sometimes damage the heart remains unclear, but it is likely to result from shearing and stretching forces on the heart muscle and the delicate lining of the coronaries supplying it. The higher your pulse rate and the longer you sustain it, the greater these forces are.

However it is important to set these recent findings in perspective. Taking regular exercise is much better for you than being sedentary but you don't need to go mad to derive the benefits. And, from a purely cardiac perspective, if you are a long-distance cyclist, runner or triathlete you may start to lose some of those benefits.

So where is that sweet spot? For mere mortals like me who just want to keep healthy and in shape it's probably best to aim for about two and half hours of aerobic exercise every week at an intensity that means you still have enough breath to just about hold a conversation. And age need not be a barrier; indeed, if anything, benefits

such as weight control and lower blood pressure become more important as we get older.

Sharma has already embarked on a larger study to clarify his team's findings. In the meantime, don't let this put you off trying your first marathon — doing so has transformed many a life — but you might not want to make a long-term habit of it.

*Dr Mark Porter, Times*

## GOLF SOCIETY



The Golf Society Spring Meeting, held in conjunction with the Hemel Hempstead cardiac support group Heart to Herts, is on Wednesday 1st June. The venue this time is the Little Hay Golf Complex, Bovingdon, Hemel Hempstead. Details have already gone out to those that have previously expressed an interest. We expect about 20/30 golfers on the day.

New golfers are very welcome. If you would like to join us or find out more about our golf society please contact Vernon Clough on 01582 713080 or at [vclough@ntlworld.com](mailto:vclough@ntlworld.com)

*Vernon*

## YOUR GARDEN

The daffodils started flowering in December which is quite early and I thought that we would be able to clear them up ready to plant out the summer bedding at the right time, but a cold Spring prolonged their season well into May. Don't cut the late bloomers down too early, plant your bedding between them.

My camellias have flowered extremely well this year but it is now time to tidy up the shape of the shrub. Use secateurs and not shears for the task. The same applies to all shrubs. Keep their heights down to a level for maintenance in the years to come when you may not be so agile.

The grass is now growing well and needs regular cutting. My advice is not to mow too short. A longer sward will protect the ground from getting hot and drying out. If some bare patches develop during a dry period, tap the ground. If it sounds hollow the earth, especially in clay areas, may have shrunk away from the base of the turf, leaving it high and very dry. Prod the ground with a garden fork and try to get water through holes.

You may have emptied your baskets and containers by now. If not, save the primroses and primulas and plant them in borders ready for next spring. Those saved from last year or the one before may be split up and replanted.

By the way, try to find time for weeding. If they are not taken out they will flower, then seed and cause you an even bigger problem next year. Happy weeding.

*Bill*

## OBITUARIES AND EULOGIES

### JOYCE EELES

It is my sad duty to advise you that the note with Charlie Eeles membership renewal reads as follows:

"Only membership for one this year as my dear wife died on 16/8/15 at Harefield on her birthday"

### MAGGIE BRINE

It is my sad duty to advise you that Maggie Brine, who has been seriously ill, has died. The funeral was held on 26<sup>th</sup> April at Harwood Park Crematorium, Watton Rd, Stevenage SG2 8XT.

### GEOFFREY CARTER

It is my sad duty to advise you that Geoffrey Carter died on 12 April 16.

## REFLECTIONS

### THOUGHT FOR FOOD

Please excuse the inversion of a well-known expression, but here's a rhetorical question: do you like good quality, beautifully-cooked and efficiently-served cordon bleu food? Then join us at The Stables Restaurant at Oaklands College in the Hatfield Road.

A number of us have been thinking of setting up a Hertbeats lunch/dining group for some time, but the problems have always been the cost and the difficulty of finding a venue large enough to take a dozen or more of our members. Now we think we have found the answer. Three of us recently dined at The Stables and had a thoroughly enjoyable experience at a very modest cost, namely about £20 a head including a glass of wine or beer. As well as enjoying the food, it was fascinating to watch the students prepare it! The basic cost of a 3-course dinner is £16.95 (£14.50 for seniors). A 3-course lunch costs £12.50 (£10.00 for seniors). At present, The Stables Restaurant is open for lunch on Wednesdays and Thursdays and for dinner on Thursdays and is, of course, only open during term-time.

We three intend to make dinner and/or lunch at The Stables a regular date, but it will be so much better if a larger Hertbeats group participates (the restaurant holds up to 40, and the whole restaurant could be set aside for the exclusive use of Hertbeats if a sufficient number of members attend).

If you are interested, please let me know and I will arrange bookings and keep you informed in much the same way as Michael does for the outings group. You can also get more information directly from [thestables@oaklands.ac.uk](mailto:thestables@oaklands.ac.uk) or by ringing 01727 737357.

*John Coad*

[johnrcoad@gmail.com](mailto:johnrcoad@gmail.com)

01582 764826

(Please leave a message on my answerphone if I am unavailable and I will get back to you as soon as I can.)

### JUST FOR LAUGHS

Advertisement in a second hand shop:

Guitar, for sale..... cheap.....no strings attached.

When I read about the evils of drinking...

I gave up reading

My grandfather is eighty and still doesn't need glasses

He drinks straight out of the bottle.

You know your kids have grown up when:

Your daughter begins to put on lipstick..

Or when your son starts to wipe it off.

# WHERE TO GO FOR NHS CARE IN HERTFORDSHIRE



**Feeling unwell?  
Symptoms not going away?**

**GPs & Dentists**  
You can find a local GP surgery or dentist at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Your Local Pharmacy**  
Help & advice for many health issues such as colds/flu, aches/pains

**West Herts Medical Centre**  
(A Primary Care Walk-In Centre)  
See a GP - No appointment needed  
You can also register as a patient

Located at Hemel Hempstead Hospital  
Hillfield Road, Hemel Hempstead  
Open 8am - 8pm, Monday to Friday  
And 8am to 7pm, Sat, Sun & Bank Holidays  
Tel: 03000 33 22 33

**Mental Health Issue?**  
For help & advice phone  
0300 777 0707 (8am – 7pm)  
or 01438 843 322 (5pm – 8am)

**Unsure where to go?**  
Phone 111  
and talk to the NHS 111 service -  
it's free and provides advice  
24 hours a day

**Injured Yourself?**

**Minor Injuries Units (MIU)**  
suspected fractures/broken bones, bites & stings  
Cuts & grazes, minor burns/scalds, sprains & strains  
foreign bodies stuck in ears or nose  
removal of splinters, minor eye or head injuries

**St Albans City Hospital**  
Waverley Road, St Albans  
Open 9am - 8pm  
every day  
Tel: 01727 897182

**Cheshunt Hospital**  
King Arthur Court, Cheshunt  
Open 8am - 8pm  
every day  
Tel: 01992 622 157

**Herts & Essex Hospital**  
Haymeads Lane, Bishop's Stortford  
Open 9am - 4.30pm, Mon to Fri  
Closed weekends & bank holidays  
Tel: 01279 655191 ext 4298

**Need to see a Doctor today?**

**Urgent Care Centres**  
Open 24 hours a day, every day  
Everything except the most serious medical emergencies

**Hemel Hempstead Hospital**  
Hillfield Road, Hemel Hempstead  
Tel: 01442 213 141

**New QEII Hospital**  
Howlands, Welwyn Garden City  
Tel: 01707 328111

**Emergency?**

**Accident & Emergency Services (A&E)**  
For the most serious medical problems  
such as head injuries, stroke or large blood loss

For an ambulance  
Tel: **999**

**Lister Hospital A&E**  
Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage  
Tel: 01438 314 333

**Watford Hospital A&E**  
Vicarage Road, Watford  
Tel: 01923 244 366

## OFFICERS & COMMITTEE MEMBERS – 2016

### HONORARY OFFICERS

LIFE PRESIDENT Brian Gibson 01727 859127  
LIFE VICE-PRESIDENTS Dr John Bayliss  
Dr John Versey 01582 764852

### VICE PRESIDENTS

Dr Masood Khan  
Dr Philip Moore  
Dr Niall Keenan

### OFFICERS

CHAIRMAN Brian York 01727 854072  
TREASURER Dave Tarrant 01727 858396  
SECRETARY Roger Miller 01727 766278  
[secretary@hertbeats.org.uk](mailto:secretary@hertbeats.org.uk)

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CARE AND WELFARE Ann Gibson 01727 859127  
MONTHLY SPEAKERS Jim Green 01727 830191  
INFORMATION & PUBLICITY Brian Gibson 01727 859127  
REHAB LIAISON TALKS Dave Tarrant 01727 858396  
TRIPS AND VISITS Michael Utteridge 07931 342808  
NHS LIAISON John Blandford (Co-opted) 01727 859913  
AND.. June Gibbs 01582 763526  
Roy Titchmarsh 01582 792247

### EXERCISE CO-ORDINATORS

MAPLE UNIT Brian York [b.york@btinternet.com](mailto:b.york@btinternet.com) 01727 854072  
WESTMINSTER LODGE Christine Hill 01727 852610  
HARPENDEN & BATCHWOOD Antonella McMillin 01582 715615  
JERSEY FARM Dave Tarrant 01727 858396  
[tarrantdave@hotmail.com](mailto:tarrantdave@hotmail.com)

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

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TRAVEL INSURANCE COLLATOR Jean Sharpe 01727 838193  
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Please send newsletter articles or letters to the address above or by email to [brittain1547@btinternet.com](mailto:brittain1547@btinternet.com). Newsletters are expected to be published in the first week of February, April, June, August, October and December. **The next deadline is midnight of 14<sup>th</sup> July 2016 for publication in the August/Sept 2016 issue.**