

Hearts and Minds

The Hertbeats Newsletter

St Albans and District Cardiac Support Group
Established 1997



Affiliated to the British Heart Foundation
and Arrhythmia Alliance

secretary@hertbeats.org.uk

Website: www.hertbeats.org.uk



Top: Walking group met in mid-September for the first time in many months

Bottom: Jersey Farm Exercise Group restarted with obligatory precautions

October / November 2020

Information

The 'Hands. Face. Space' public information campaign urges the public to

Wash their hands Cover their face Make space



The objective is to control infection rates and avoid a second peak of coronavirus cases. To make this work everyone needs to comply. Social gatherings of more than six people are now illegal in England.

If you see people not complying you may wish to report them to the police to ensure the safety of us all. Here is some advice on contacting the police.

- Telephone 999 in an emergency where there is a danger to life or a crime is in progress.
- Telephone 101 for non-emergencies where police attendance is required, to report a crime or to report any other incidents.
- Visit www.herts.police.uk/contact to report a non-emergency crime online or chat to a police operator live via the web chat service.

Letters to the Editor

Brian Gibson, a Hertbeats member since 1998, sent an email to Hearts and Minds suggesting a "letters to the editor" page. Here is the first of hopefully many letters to the editor. Contact details are at the bottom of the back page of this newsletter.

Dear Editor,

Having suggested many moons ago that a "letters to the editor" column might be a useful addition to Hearts and Minds I am pleased that it meets with approval.

It occurred to me that this platform would give members an opportunity to express their thoughts in a formal manner to the readership of our excellent newsletter. If published, this note may be the first of what I hope will be a useful, interesting and informative item

Brian Gibson

Chairman, Brian York

The main good news is that, as far as I know, no members have experienced COVID-19. I hope this is correct. Sadly we have also had several deaths from other causes, notably old age. These included Jill Higgs and Norman Heathfield, both of whom had been leading active members of Hertbeats. Please see tributes in this Newsletter.

Of course most of our Hertbeats activities remain suspended. However, during the lock down a Hertbeats cycling 'club' was started and from 25 August the Jersey Farm exercise class has resumed. Unfortunately our group lunches at Oaklands College are not starting again. We thank Rita Atkins for her organisation of the meals until now. If any member wishes to organise alternative arrangements for Hertbeats lunches and/or dinners at restaurant(s), please let me know.

As soon as other activities are able to resume, they will be announced on the website: www.hertbeats.org.uk

It is clear that many members are still reluctant to leave home very often. Jim Green and I have been in touch with St Mary's Church about the possibility of resuming Group meetings. With restrictions and winter approaching we are not optimistic about an early start-up.



Chairman Brian York pictured with National Lottery Draw Master John Willan at the Hertbeats talk on February 18th, 2020.

For many members a key activity of Hertbeats is participating in exercise. Westminster Lodge and Harpenden Leisure Centre are open, but not prepared to allow our classes yet. The future of the Maple Unit classes is outlined in a separate article by Graham Imber. Some members have been able to take advantage of the exercise sessions on Zoom organised by Antonella McMillin and Jacquie Bidwell. In terms of resuming the walks programme and golf, Ed Jones and Vernon Clough respectively have quite rightly been cautious.

The walks programme resumed on 16th September; this is covered in another article in the newsletter.

On a personal note I would like to thank all members who have done so much to keep Hertbeats 'running' in these frustrating times. We are pleased that Rowena D'Rosario is settling in so well in the Treasurer's role. Steve Gledhill has continued as webmaster and continued to edit the Newsletter with its bi-monthly appearance. This is the one Hertbeats 'activity' which reaches every member and 'defied the virus' in that it is still very much up and running. Jim and Doris Green have done a magnificent job in getting it delivered to every member.

Ann Gibson (and Roger) have kept contact with ill and bereaved members. Jean Sharpe has quietly maintained 'trusted traders' and knowledge of appropriate travel insurers, though demand for the latter, I suspect, has been very low.

However, we do need to find a new Outings Organiser, Publicity Leader, and from May 2021 new Secretary and Chairman to replace Roger and me respectively. I have collated information, a sort of 'job description', for each of these posts, available to anyone who expresses an interest. We do also need new Committee members.

Editor, Steve Gledhill

This issue includes a great deal about volunteering; Jill Higgs and Jim Green have been wonderful volunteers in Hertbeats. Our chairman is seeking more volunteers to help the group run effectively. Please consider what you can do. I have made many friends volunteering with Hertbeats which can happen if you get involved.

Jim Green's article later in this issue features past speakers for Hertbeats with some photos. I found a photo of me after I once was a speaker and gave a talk!



Jim Green and Steve Gledhill pictured after Steve gave a talk on prostate cancer in September 2016.

Steve is a volunteer for Prostate Cancer UK having been successfully treated. He urges all men over 50 to ask their GP for a test.

Secretary, Roger Miller

Current Membership. As at 3rd September 2020 the Hertbeats membership stood at 315.

New Members. With the Cardiac Rehab courses on hold, plus the general lack of activity, we have no new members since the last newsletter.

Report. With nearly everything cancelled you will not be surprised that I have even less than normal to report. Strangely there still seems to have been plenty to contend with. Without being able to hold face to face committee meetings we have had to rely on email or phone. The instant response to a comment at a face to face meeting is not there. The simplest discussion takes longer even if everyone replied to a given email. Getting responses from outside agencies has obviously been complicated by both changing COVID-19 rules and the differing interpretations of the rules.

Travel Insurance & Trusted Traders

The ‘Hertbeats Volunteers’ listing on the back cover of this newsletter shows ‘Travel Insurance and Trusted Traders’ which are both looked after by Jean Sharpe. An explanation is useful for those unfamiliar with these.

Travel Insurance Obtaining medical insurance prior to an overseas trip is vital if one wants to avoid having to pay medical bills oneself. Travellers with a pre-existing condition, such as heart problems, find that costs can be very high – especially for long-haul flights. Jean has recently created a new list every February listing the best medical insurance but COVID will make this an almost impossible task in the current circumstances.

Trusted Traders This is for members to share traders, such as builders or plumbers, who they have used and recommend or not recommend. Jean has written, “Unfortunately the traders list is hardly used. I would be very pleased if Hertbeats members would let me know if they have a good trader who they could recommend and just as important someone who wasn't satisfactory.”

Contact Jean: Tel: 01727 838193 Email: jayms500@gmail.com

Treasurer, Rowena D’Rosario

Rowena reports that the Hertbeats auditor, Steve Lindsay, considers that our finances are strong enough now to sustain any negative effect of the coronavirus. However, whilst we are currently in a healthy position financially, the future is generally uncertain. The total cash balance for all accounts as at 31st August 2020 is as follows:

- Main Account: £5,596.64
- Exercise Account: £3,500.30
- Deposit Account: £2,703.60

As we now have full access to online banking, to make the job of Treasurer easier, I will be looking to consolidate the main and exercise accounts. Therefore, we will only have one “Main” account and the “Deposit” account so this will be the last time that the two accounts will be presented separately.

Maple Unit Classes, Graham Imber

Graham Imber writes:

It is now quite clear that we will not be returning to the Maple Gym for the evening exercise classes whilst this pandemic continues, or maybe never.

Given the nature of the exercises we do at the gym, which make extensive use of gym equipment, and the frequency that the exercisers change equipment during a session, it’s simply not practical to disinfect the equipment before each use.

Other venues that provide group exercises overcome this by simply removing exercise equipment from their classes. While this is an option, the Maple gym in addition doesn’t afford sufficient space (100 sq ft. per exerciser minimum) to maintain adequate social distancing for our class sizes.

The hospital will remove all the gym equipment from Maple to a new venue elsewhere locally. I have been in discussion with the Clinical Lead for Cardiac Rehab at West Herts Hospital Trust and they wish us to continue providing our classes. We are liaising with them closely with the hope we may be able to use whatever facilities they eventually use as we currently do with Maple Unit.

In the meantime, we’ll be starting to look for possible alternative venues which are large enough to accommodate our classes within whatever guidelines we have to follow.

Any suggestions would be gratefully received. Watch this space.

Jersey Farm Classes

Roger Miller wrote a longer report, this is an edited version due to space limits.

During the lockdown Jacquie, the Jersey Farm exercise group class instructor, ran successful Tuesday sessions using Zoom which lasted just over an hour. I am sure the exercises did all the participants a power of good with a few smiles!

On Tuesday 25th August the Jersey Farm Community Centre (JFCC) hall was reopened to us with an upper limit of 25 people. All the expected sanitation and social distancing rules apply. All hand weights, door & window handles, emergency door handles & light switches were sanitised prior to the start of each session. All attendees used 95% ethyl alcohol hand spray on registration.

Nine people re-started on the 25th and we had ten on September 1st. Exercises are limited to the area close to each person's floor mat. So, we never bunch up.

Several of the group are understandably cautious about re-joining an indoors session and did not re-start in the hall. Jacquie therefore provides an interim Zoom session on Thursdays starting at 17:30 for an hour.

Contact Roger Miller (see back page) to join classes or the Zoom sessions.

Cycling Group, Steve Gledhill

We have averaged four cyclists so would welcome a few more. Routes are off busy roads, mainly on lanes, tracks and bridle ways. If you are interested. email cycling@hertbeats.org.uk or phone Steve on 07785 381912.

Care and Welfare, Ann Gibson

The Hertbeats committee promotes the idea of appointing someone in the group to lend support to members in need if required. Ann Gibson carries out this important function. Her main contribution is to send a card to anyone who would appreciate the fact that Hertbeats is thinking of them.

Ann is only able to contact those in need if she is made aware of the situation. The chairman from time to time reminds members of her role. Every member is encouraged to contact Ann when they hear of any member who Ann could be in contact with.

Contact Ann: Tel: 01727 859127 Email: briangibson276@gmail.com

Jill Higgs, 1931 to 2020



Jill Higgs joined Hertbeats in the early years of the group and contributed a tremendous amount to running it. Sadly we report that she died in Watford General Hospital in August aged 89.

Fellow Hertbeats members, Rita and Brian Atkins, became very good friends of Jill and have written the following tribute.

When we were asked to write a few words about Jill Higgs we wondered how we could do justice to such a lovely person in a few words.

When we joined Hertbeats Jill was the membership secretary and always greeted everyone at the meetings with a very welcoming smile. We got to know Jill really well over the years and she became a very good friend of ours.

Jill worked extremely hard for Hertbeats organising strawberry evenings and other activities. We spent many enjoyable mornings over coffee organising outings when Jill always had many suggestions for places to visit. Afterwards she would organise coaches and collect money etc. and made sure that all participants were greeted with a friendly smile and had details of pickup times and of the day's activities. All was done with a cheerful good humour.

Unfortunately over the last few years Jill's health deteriorated and she had several stays in hospital. For a long time Jill would accept a lift and attend meetings but then she decided that she would have to stop attending as she found it too wearying being out in the evenings. She did still come to lunches at Oaklands because she said it enabled her to keep in touch with Hertbeats.

Jill was a very independent person who was always grateful for any help given but would never ask for help. She found it very difficult during the recent period of lockdown because she could no longer hop on a bus into town but she bore this with good grace and a smile.

Jill will be greatly missed by all her Hertbeats friends.

Roger Miller, Hertbeats secretary has also written about Jill.

“A quiet little lady. A private person who as a long-term committee member quietly got on with the things that made Hertbeats work. On joining the committee I found that Jill was membership secretary, trips & visits organiser and she arranged the speakers for the monthly meetings. Jill was also the power behind the Strawberry Evening.”

Jill’s daughter Jo has described how her mother did not want a funeral, nor a ceremony and she wanted no one to be sad. She had made provision for a party as a celebration of her life rather than a funeral but COVID prevented that from happening.

Jill was laid to rest in the morning of Friday 28th August in a family led informal gathering. The family were sorry that no provision could be made for Jill’s Hertbeats friends to be present. But Jo reports, “Watch this Space”.

Jill Higgs was born on 8th February 1931 and died on 8th August 2020. Jill is survived by her three sons, Steve, Tim and Chris and her daughter Jo as well as her grandchildren.

Brian Gibson has provided some photos of Jill on Hertbeats visits over the years. Below are three from a trip to Vianden in Luxembourg. The bottom one features Jill second from left along with Connie Pearson and Doris Carwell-Cooke.



Norman Heathfield, 1932 to 2020

Brian York writes:

His family announced that Norman had died peacefully in Watford General Hospital on 24 July 2020, aged 88.

Norman was a long-standing member of Hertbeats. For a long period he led the Tuesday exercise class held in St Albans City Hospital. He will be remembered for his good humour and responsibility. His wife Patricia was also a member until 2014 and assisted Norman with the clerical records for the exercise classes. For many years he acted as Hertbeats Information Officer, linking Hertbeats with the British Heart Foundation (BHF). He maintained BHF literature, including its magazine *Heart Matters*, for brochure holders at St Albans and Watford Hospitals ensuring that Hertbeats exercisers and those attending cardiac 'rehab' classes were never short of relevant information. In addition he kept them topped up with copies of 'Hearts and Minds' and membership application forms. Many of us continue to wear red BHF t-shirts for exercise classes. Norman had a great knack of obtaining these for free and distributing them to exercisers in all the Hertbeats classes. Every time we wear one, we will remember him for his enthusiasm and great support of Hertbeats.

Walking Group, Ed Jones

Hertbeats Walking Group restarted on 16th September and intends to resume on the first and third Wednesday of every month at 10:00am apart from December.

With the COVID precautions in place the walk was organised differently.

- Only six walkers in a group at least one metre apart at all times
- If more than six members want to go on a walk a second group of up to six, with its own leader, can follow at least 30 metres behind
- Hands must be sanitised before and after the walk because walkers may have to open gates etc.
- Obviously, anyone with suspected symptoms should not join the walk

Provisional dates for 2020 walks are: October 7 and 21, November 4 and 18.

Contact Ed to join. Note that dates are subject to change at a moment's notice!

Walking Group	Ed Jones	07745 295691	walks@hertbeats.org.uk
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Future Talks – Jim Green

I know how difficult the last six months have been and wonder if things will ever get back to normal. Obviously I can't say when our meetings will start again or if people will want to come to them. But we must be positive and with that in mind I will tell you about some of the people that were booked for this year and I hope they will come in the future to entertain us. Now don't shoot the messenger if any of them can't come or are unavailable!

The first three are old friends and many of us know them:-

The Doctors Evening: The three cardiologists from Watford Hospital who will give us excellent presentations.

Jolly Jazzers Jazz Band: Will perform for us at our Strawberry Evening.

Alastair Sharp & David Crew: Will give us a Musical Evening - I believe a lady will also be singing with them.

Four other speakers I know will be of great interest:-

Kirk Patel: Eye Care can be a window on your general health

Graham Philips: How to live longer, in the best of health

Ray Saunders: East of England Ambulance Service First Responders

Trevor Gurd: The Naming of a Jumbo Jet "The City of St Albans"

I hope that in 2021 we will be able to invite you and friends to our meetings.

Golf Society, Vernon Clough

After a disappointing 2020 the Golf Society will go into hibernation until Spring 2021 when we hope that COVID- 19 will be under control and our society can safely meet again. See contact details below.



The first Hertbeats Golf Society Summer Competition was held on 8th July 2003 at Batchwood, see photograph.

Golf Society	Vernon Clough	01582 713080	golf@hertbeats.org.uk
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Stable Restaurant Dining, Rita Atkins

Lunches and dinners at The Stables Restaurant

For a number of years Hertbeats' members have enjoyed meals in the Stables Restaurant at Oaklands College. This year because of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic only evening meals were on offer.

Unfortunately, even though we tried to book all these meals very quickly after receiving the dates we again were unable to book the themed evenings and some of the others.

This happens every year and it appears that other groups who only book themed evenings, are given preference over our group. We have therefore decided to cancel all our bookings and no more bookings will be made on behalf of Hertbeats members. Our regular diners already know this, and this article is really to inform anyone who was planning to join us in the future that we are no longer going to offer our support to Oaklands College.

If anyone has any ideas for other venues and would like to organise these events, please advise the Secretary, see rear cover for contact details.

Speaker Reminiscing, James Green

I joined Hertbeats 14 years ago and three years later I was on the committee. At the first meeting I sat next to a lovely lady, Jill Higgs, who asked me if I would like to become the Speaker Finder for the meetings. I said I would give it a go. Jill was a great help to me in the early days and I believe I have invited nearly a 100 people to come along to our meetings and speak or entertain our members.

Many Hertbeats members have been helpful giving me names of speakers that they thought would interest the group. Some Hertbeats members such as John Versey and Brian Gibson gave excellent talks about their early lives. Another member who gave us a brilliant talk was Brian Quinn a retired Deputy Governor of the Bank of England. I could not stop the members asking questions at the end of his talk. I thought the coffee and tea were going to get cold.

Corinne Utteridge gave me the name of two entertainers, singer David Crew and keyboard player Alastair Sharp; they gave us a marvellous musical evening with songs from the musicals.

My wife Doris came home from her ladies club one evening and said, "We had a great speaker tonight. He was a retired police sergeant dog handler from the bomb squad". I rang him and said "I don't know much about you, but I know an awful lot about your dog Dillon"; he said that was usual. I invited him to come and speak.

He came with Dylan and another dog and gave a great presentation and got the dogs to sniff out treats he had hidden in the room. (not bombs I hasten to add.)



Martin Proctor with Dylan

We have a Strawberry Evening every year and I found a jazz band to entertain us." The Jolly Jazzers" were so good we invited them back three years in a row. Every year we have the "Doctors' Evening". Three cardiac consultants from Watford Hospital give us the latest information on new cardiac procedures and answer questions. We are so lucky they continue to come and give us such interesting presentations.

We have had some celebrities both local and national. Two of St Albans' mayors, Geoff Harrison and Annie Brewster, and two BBC personalities, BBC News Journalist Bill Hamilton and National Lottery Draw Master John Willan.

I was also pleased to welcome RAF Squadron Leader Rtd, Graham Laurie who piloted the royal family on many occasions; he was the pilot who brought Princess Diana home on her final journey.

I have enjoyed being on the committee, finding speakers, organising Christmas parties, setting up the monthly meetings and being part of the "Hearts and Minds" magazine distribution team. My thanks to all the committee members for their help and encouragement over the years.



Brian York and Jim Green pictured with speakers, Annie Brewster and Ralph Evershed

Recipes, Frances Tarrant

Recipe for Raspberry Mousse

1lb frozen raspberries
or fresh if available
4 eggs
4oz caster sugar
3tsp gelatine powder
½ pint double cream



Place the raspberries in a pan over a low heat until cooked to a mush, stirring occasionally. Push the raspberries through a sieve, keeping the purée and discarding the pips. Whisk the eggs and sugar until thick and pale in colour. In the meantime, soak the gelatine in 3 tablespoons of water for a few minutes then heat gently until completely dissolved. Beat the cream until softly thick and combine all the ingredients. Place in a serving bowl or individual dishes and refrigerate.

When ready to serve, decorate with fresh raspberries and a wafer biscuit if liked. This is an indulgent dessert but is delicious and well received.

Get-together meal, James Green

It is very unlikely that we will be able to have a Christmas meal this year because of the COVID-19 situation.

So let's be positive - if things after Christmas are looking brighter, should Hertbeats consider organising a "Get-together Meal" to cheer everybody up. We could consider the end of February or March or you might think April/May is a better time.

It is difficult to know what people think or how many would be prepared to come. I would be grateful for some feedback on how people feel about it. Contact me, James Green on details below.

Email: jamesgreen.6@hotmail.co.uk

Tel: 01727 830191

Gardening, Bill Whitehead

There are still a few weeks of the flowering season left so make the most of them by continuing to dead head and offer care to the plants.

Continue to cut the grass but not too short. Just leave it tidy.

Cut down the perennials and divide them where necessary. Doing it now will allow them to establish themselves by next spring.

Prune the roses before the frosts start. I cut my bush roses down to about five inches and do not touch them again in spring because I do not like cutting new growth away. The climbing roses are not cut down but this year's lateral growth may be removed from the main framework.

Clear the leaves and other rubbish from the pond, tidy the pond weed and surrounding plants.

When the greenhouse is empty of produce give it a good clean both inside and out. It is not a job I look forward to but it is important.

Keep the hoe working, don't let the weeds take over.

If you grow winter greens like sprouts and broccoli inspect the underside of the leaves for eggs laid by the butterflies and rub them out before they develop into caterpillars and turn your plants into lace curtains. It doesn't take them long.

I hope you have sorted your winter baskets and spring bulbs.

Opinions expressed in *Hearts and Minds* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Editor nor of Hertbeats

Published by Hertbeats, 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 a variety of outings, exercise classes, regular friendly gatherings with interesting speakers and the opportunity to meet new and old friends. Hertbeats does not offer formal medical advice, but members often learn much about their ailments, and the practical means of coping with them, by talking to other members who have had similar experiences.

The group is run by volunteers and is guided by a committee. 'Additionally there are a number of Honorary Officers. Life President is Brian Gibson and Life Vice-President Dr John Versey. Cardiac consultants Dr Masood Khan, Dr Philip Moore and Dr Joban Sehmi are Vice-Presidents with Dr John Bayliss (retired) a Life Vice-President.

Hertbeats Volunteers

Principal Committee Members

	Chairman	Brian York	chairman@hertbeats.org.uk	01727 854072
	Secretary	Roger Miller	secretary@hertbeats.org.uk	01727 766278
	Treasurer	Rowena D'Rosario	treasurer@hertbeats.org.uk	01582 766570
	Speakers	Jim Green	speakers@hertbeats.org.uk	01727 830191
	Exercise Classes	Graham Imber	exercise@hertbeats.org.uk	01727 834907

Committee Members

Care and Welfare	Ann Gibson	01727 859127
Travel Insurance	Jean Sharpe	01727 838193
Trusted Traders	Jean Sharpe	01727 838193
Committee Member	June Gibbs	01582 763526

Organisers

Information & Publicity	Vacancy - please volunteer	publicity@hertbeats.org.uk
Outings	Michael Utteridge	07931 342808 outings@hertbeats.org.uk
Website & Newsletter	Steve Gledhill	07785 381912 webmaster@hertbeats.org.uk

Please send contributions for the next issue by 4th November 2020 to
editor@hertbeats.org.uk or phone 01582 764383