

TICKER NEWS

Official newsletter of the North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation & Aftercare Charity



Understanding heart failure

February is UK Heart Month, so in this edition of the newsletter we're focusing on one of the biggest heart issues in Wales: heart failure

Heart failure is the term used when your heart can't pump blood around your body as well as it should, and needs treatment to help it work better.

It can be caused by damage to your heart – most commonly as the result of a heart attack or high blood pressure. Or it can be due to a problem with the way your heart works, such as a leaky valve.

But in Wales, some 50% of cases are due to coronary heart disease, where the arteries supplying your heart muscle become narrowed by fatty deposits, starving it of the oxygen-rich blood it needs to work efficiently.

The key symptoms are shortness of or fighting for breath, fatigue or lack of energy, and fluid build-up, often noticeable as puffy feet and ankles and unexplained weight gain.

Some 36,000 people across Wales have been diagnosed with heart failure, with close to 3,000 in our region, according to the latest figures from the British Heart Foundation.

But the true number is probably much higher, as many people go undiagnosed until they're admitted to hospital with advanced heart failure and serious complications.

The good news is that modern drug treatment coupled with monitoring by your healthcare team and a programme of regular cardiac rehab exercise can significantly improve and extend the lives of people living with heart failure.

And as an added bonus, regular cardiac rehab exercise can also help you stay out of hospital and reduce their risk of heart attack, stroke and other complications.

When to seek advice

If you recognise the following symptoms – the **3 Fs** – in yourself or those you care for, please seek medical advice.

- **Fighting for or shortness of breath**
- **Fatigue or lack of energy**
- **Fluid build-up**

Remember, early diagnosis and referral to a specialist can significantly improve outcomes – as can taking part in appropriate cardiac rehab exercise.

► To find out more about living well with heart failure visit the **Pumping Marvellous** website (pumpingmarvellous.org).

Words: British Society for Heart Failure

FOR MORE ON HEART FAILURE, READ TONY'S STORY OVERLEAF...



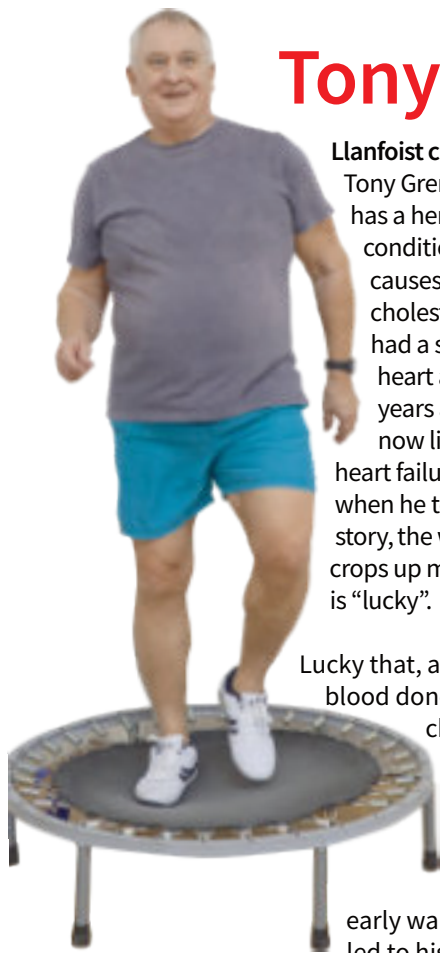
Welcome – and thank you!

Our first newsletter of 2023 is packed with information that I hope you will find useful. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our members for your continuing support. It's greatly appreciated, and means we can continue helping people living with heart disease in our community.

Our five trustees – soon to be six – and the

six amazing people who make up our fundraising team are all volunteers. Without their commitment and generosity we just wouldn't be able to meet our objectives. Our recent successes, including the delivery of our cardiac rehab Health Assessments (see page 2) and our various social and fundraising activities (pages 3-4) couldn't have been achieved without you.

Tony's living well with heart failure



Llanfoist class regular
Tony Grenow, 65, has a hereditary condition that causes high cholesterol. He had a serious heart attack 10 years ago and is now living with heart failure. But when he tells his story, the word that crops up most often is "lucky".

Lucky that, as a regular blood donor, his high cholesterol was picked up in his early 50s: an early warning that led to his GP

prescribing cholesterol-lowering statins.

Lucky that a year before his heart attack, he attended an Ambulance Service First

Aid course, and that the trainer's parting words – "never be afraid to call us if someone has chest pains" – stuck.

Lucky that when he developed chest pain he remembered that advice and the ambulance arrived within minutes.

And lucky that it was only when he was in the ambulance and on the way to hospital that he went into full cardiac arrest.

"I thought it was indigestion or trapped wind to start with," says the retired planning officer, who lives in Usk. "But when the pain started spreading down my arm, up my neck and into my jaw I knew it was a lot more serious."

"I don't feel limited"

"The last thing I remember was getting into the ambulance: nothing else until I woke up in A&E at Nevill Hall Hospital."

Tony had an angioplasty at University Hospital Cardiff the following day, to help widen his arteries and improve blood flow to his heart, and after going through the hospital cardiac rehab programme

was referred to our community-based classes for ongoing cardiac rehab support.

Tony admits he's not naturally drawn to exercise. "I played club rugby up until I was 42, but even then, the training was just a means to an end. But I know exercise is an important part of managing my heart failure, so I cycle a five-mile route four or five times a week, and do at least one Cardiac Rehab class.

"Coming to a specialist heart class with trained instructors gives me confidence as I know I'm in a safe environment, with people who understand about heart conditions. I like to make the most of my time while I'm there, but it's nice to catch up with people, too."

"The way I look at it, there's life and there's living. So I still enjoy a beer, and for me, exercise is the trade-off."

"And I'm lucky that even with heart failure I can still do pretty much everything I enjoy. I certainly don't feel limited. And I'm pretty sure that's a lot to do with keeping up with the Cardiac Rehab classes."

Annual Health Assessments – last call!



Our Cardiac Rehab Exercise Instructors
Tom, Callum and Maja have completed the first round of annual Health Assessments for the Llanfoist, Usk, Abertillery, Blaenavon, Tredegar, Nantyglo and Ebbw Vale classes – and the feedback from members has been really positive.

So far 72 members have taken part, including Pam James from the Llanfoist class: "This kind of assessment can help pick things up before they become a problem." Instructor Callum agrees: "Everyone who's taken part so far has said how grateful they are that we've added this service; it's something members really value as it gives them such useful information."

The assessments, which have been generously funded by the National Lottery Community Fund (Wales), take around 20 minutes and include a blood pressure reading, a hip-to-waist measurement

(a useful indicator of increased health risks) and a six-minute walk test to gauge cardiovascular fitness.

"This information is recorded and relayed to participants with an explanation of what it means for them," explains Tom. "The information can then be used as a gauge of fitness and wellbeing when compared to previous Health Assessments."

"Llanfoist class members took part in pilot Health Assessments in January last year, and some of those participants have been very pleased to see how their stats have improved, particularly in terms of the distance they can now cover in the walk test."

"The Assessments are a really useful way for instructors and members to track their progress and monitor improvements – or regressions – together, and take action where needed."



MISSED OUT ON YOUR LOCAL ASSESSMENT?

You can still register for the final round, which takes place with Maja at the Monmouth Leisure Centre on **16 February** from 1:15pm. To take part, speak to your instructor, or contact Maja direct at majab.fitness@gmail.com or on **07852 676 333**.



Pre-Christmas fundraisers add up to a big success

A massive thank you to all our members for supporting our various pre-Christmas fundraisers – from our annual **Grand Prize Draw** and **Guess the Weight of the Christmas Cake**, to the welcome return of our **Cardiac Christmas Market** after a two-year break during Covid.

The **Christmas Cocktail Classes** – a new event for us – were a very lively affair, and our **Cake Baking Competition** provided just the right amount of sweet treats for visitors to the Christmas Market.

Our **Name the Bear** and **Adopt a Bear** fundraisers proved

you're never too old for a teddy. And both the 50p raffle and the fabulous **Pink Raffle**, with its many excellent prizes, generously donated by local businesses and individuals, resulted in plenty of happy winners.

All told, these initiatives raised a magnificent **£4,021.17** – vital funds to help us continue our work supporting people with heart disease in Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent.

Congratulations all round – and of course thanks to our dedicated fundraising team for their energy, enthusiasm and plain hard work.

February

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DATES FOR THE DIARY...

Calon Race Night

We're getting our 2023 social programme off to a flying start with our **Calon Race Night** – a charity horse race evening at Moose Hall, Tredegar on **Friday 24 February**, starting promptly at **7pm**.

Tickets for the evening cost **£10**, including a programme of six races and a delicious buffet. There'll be a licensed bar as well.

And forgot those boring TV-based race nights: this one has old-fashioned hobby

horses (and intrepid riders), and progress is down to luck with the dice – like a giant game of Snakes & Ladders.

Be prepared plenty of laughs, with minimum **£1** bets and winnings paid out on the night.

For tickets, see your Class Assistant **Allen Cleveland**, or call/text **Phillip Miles** on **07485 402 647**, or email **info@cardiac-rehab.org.uk**.

▶ *With grateful thanks to our supporters **Adrian Tuck** and **Moose International No.1 Lodge** for organising, and to our generous race sponsors: **Tuxan Consulting**, **Torque Automotive Engineering**, **Tenneco Walker Ltd**, **Ron Skinner & Sons Tredegar**, **Gareth Davies** and **Viv Miles**.*



March

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DATES FOR THE DIARY cont.

Twice the fun with this year's Potato Growing Challenge

Our perennially popular **Potato Growing Challenge** is back with a twist. This year's event, sponsored once again by our generous friends the **Abergavenny Garden Centre**, gives you (and any green-fingered family and friends) the chance to win prizes in two different classes.

There's the usual **heaviest harvest**, using organic "Colleen" seed potatoes, with 1st and 2nd place prizes for both the children's and adults categories. And – new this year – **funniest spud**, using the knobbly Pink Fir Apple variety, again with 1st and 2nd place prizes for children and adults.

Entry costs **£5 per kit**, with each home-growing kit including:

- 1 x Colleen or 1 x Pink Fir Apple seed potato
- 1 x 10L pot
- Growing instructions

Kits will be distributed via classes during the week of **13-18 March**, or you can pay your entry fee and collect your kit



Above: Chair Jacky Miles with Abergavenny Garden Centre manager Gavin Trinder and this year's kits

direct from our stall at the Garden Centre the same week: just check our website cardiac-rehab.org.uk or the **Ticker Network Facebook page** for the stall rota.

The Grand Reveal and Weigh-in will take place from **3-4pm on 24 June** at the Garden Centre – so you have just over three months to coax your spud to a splendid harvest.

► For more details, and the full rules, speak to Class Assistant **Allen Cleveland** or check the News section of our website, cardiac-rehab.org.uk.



Easter Wreath-Making Course

Get creative with this half-day course, led by our crafting expert **Suzanne Indge**. The course costs **£35 per person** and will take place at the **Abergavenny Garden Centre** from **2-5pm on 1 April**.

The oasis base, plant materials and light refreshments are included in the cost. So all you need to bring are the extra embellishments to personalise your wreath, such as ribbons or bows, Easter eggs or other Easter-themed decorations.

Last year's course sold out very quickly. So to avoid disappointment we recommend early booking. To secure your place, call Suzanne on **07773107237** by **22 March**, or email her at sindge@btinternet.com.

► Please wear warm layers and a hat! The course will be held undercover, but as the space is unheated it may be a little chilly.

April

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Mary's Monmouth Coffee Morning

Head to the beautiful **Monmouth Priory** from **10am-midday on 8 April** for the first of 2023's fundraising coffee mornings. Organised by long-time member and supporter **Mary Wakelin**, the Monmouth Coffee Mornings, held in the Priory's spacious Main Hall, are always a big success, with delicious homemade treats and plenty of lively chat. Free entry.

► The Main Hall is on the ground floor with disabled access and WC. On-street parking available.



And finally...

Watch out for news of our **Spring Bring and Buy Sale** – a great way to bag a bargain and pass on unused gifts and nearly new toys, books and clothing. We're still confirming the date and venue, but in the meantime please start gathering your contributions. We'll be posting updates on our website, cardiac-rehab.org.uk, and on the **Ticker Network Facebook group**.

