

Dates for the diary

Feb

17-25

Ready... Set... Grow!

Our Annual Potato Growing Challenge is back, with an earlier start than usual this year to give you extra growing time and more chance of a really good crop of spuds.

Sponsored once again by our good friends at the Abergavenny Garden Centre, this year's challenge will be to grow the heaviest harvest from a single "Swift" seed potato.

Swift is a "first early" variety, and Garden Centre manager Gavin Trinder says it's one of the fastest-maturing potatoes available, quick to produce heavy crops and ideal for container growing. So we're looking forward to seeing the results!

"It's also a really tasty spud," says Gavin. "It produces smooth, white-skinned, round to oval tubers with waxy flesh and a delicate flavour – perfect for home-made potato salad."

As with previous years, we're running separate classes for Children (aged up to 16 years) and Adults (16+), with prizes for 1st and 2nd place in each class. Entry costs £5, and includes your potato-growing kit: 1 x Swift seed potato, 1 x 10-litre pot, plus growing instructions.

Kits will be available from Class Assistant Allen Cleveland from 17-25 February. We'll also be selling kits from our stall at the Garden Centre on the weekends of 17-18 and 24-25 February.



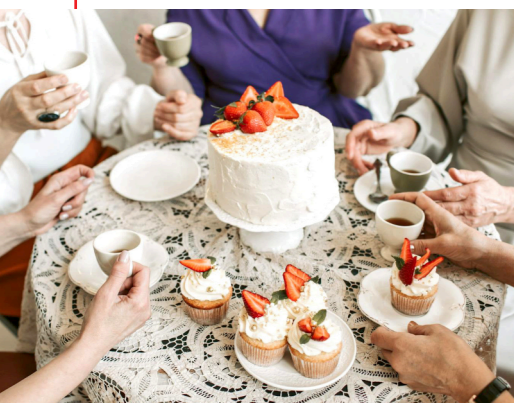
Above: Abergavenny Garden Centre Manager Gavin Trinder with our Chairperson Jacky Miles MBE and a lucky find: a heart-shaped "Swift" seed potato!

For details of times, check the Ticker Network Facebook page closer to the date or visit our website, cardiac-rehab.org.uk.

The Grand Reveal and Weigh-in will take place from 3-4pm on Saturday 22 June at the Garden Centre. Here's to a great growing season!



We're truly grateful to the many people who support our fundraising efforts – both through donations and by taking part in our events. It's because of this incredible generosity that we've been able to continue providing our classes for more than 30 years!



Make a date for a coffee and cake

Staying active socially is good for both our physical and mental health, and plays an important part in ageing well. But post-Covid, many of us have simply got out of the habit.

So why not make 2024 your year for getting out more, meeting up with old friends – and maybe making some new ones, too?

A coffee morning's a great excuse for a catch up, and we're currently putting together a fundraising pack to help you organise your own.

In the meantime, Monmouth's Mary Wakeling and her team of volunteers have coffee mornings planned for March (date to be confirmed), 17 May, 22 June, 26 October and 7 December.

March

tbc

March

16

Fancy a flutter?

Join us at the Moose Hall in Tredegar on Saturday 16 March for the 2024 Calon Race Night. Doors open at 7pm, and we've got a packed programme of seven races planned, with proceeds in aid of our charity.

This fun evening was a runaway success last year, and our stable of lively steeds (aka hobby horses) and our jolly jockeys are all champing at the bit for another chance at the course.

Tickets cost £10 per person, including the Moose's famous buffet, and there'll be a paid bar as well. Feeling lucky? Buy a race horse ahead of the event for £10 and you could boost your winnings even more!

Expect an evening of laughs and luck, with progress on the course based on the roll of the dice. Bets are a minimum £1 (don't forget to bring those £1 coins or cash!), and all winnings will be paid out on the night.

For tickets and more details just ask Class Assistant Allen Cleveland, or call Jacky Miles on 07484 658319 or email info@cardiac-rehab.org.uk



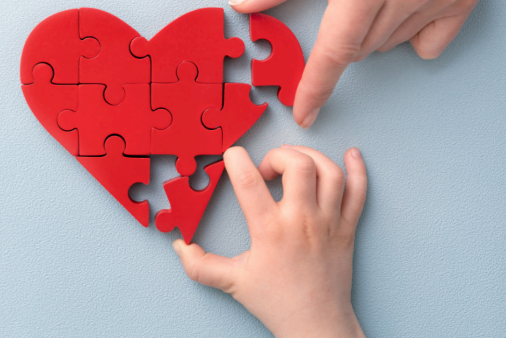
North Gwent
Cardiac Rehabilitation
and Aftercare Charity

Charity reg no. 1056887
Registered address: 56 Holywell Crescent, Abergavenny NP7 5LG
cardiac-rehab.org.uk | Email: office@cardiac-rehab.org.uk
Tel: 07856 692148

JANUARY 2024

TICKER NEWS

Official newsletter of the North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation & Aftercare Charity



Exercise: your key to good health

When it comes to exercise, we all start the new year with good intentions. But if you're coming unstuck, here are five good reasons to make regular exercise part of your daily life...

1 It improves your heart health. Studies show that regular exercise can help lower blood pressure and improve your cholesterol levels. For people with heart conditions, these benefits are especially important as they help manage symptoms and reduce the chances of you having a heart event. Exercise also helps your heart and other muscles work better, making them stronger, improving blood flow and helping them use oxygen more efficiently. This reduces demands on the heart and makes everyday activities easier and more enjoyable.

2 It reduces the risk of heart problems and hospitalisation. We know that people with heart conditions who follow structured exercise plans have a lower risk of future heart problems. A big study in the Journal of the American College of

Cardiology found exercise training reduces the chance of people dying or being admitted to hospital as a result of heart-related issues. Exercise is also important for keeping lean muscle mass, something we lose as we age, making us weaker and more likely to fall. And that's why we include muscle strengthening and balance exercises in our classes.

3 It helps you prevent or manage Type 2 diabetes, which is often linked with heart problems. Regular exercise can help control blood sugar levels and make your body's natural insulin work better. This helps reduce inflammation in your blood vessels – a known risk factor for heart disease.

4 It helps you maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight is a risk factor for heart disease, so it's important not to pile on the pounds.

Exercise alone might not be enough to make you lose weight, but with healthier food and drink choices and a more active lifestyle, it plays an important role in helping you maintain a healthy weight.

5 It's good for your mental health. Being diagnosed with a heart condition can be stressful and may lead to anxiety and depression, which can harm heart health. Exercise releases natural mood boosters called endorphins and lowers stress hormones, which can make a real difference to how you feel. Many of our members also say the friendship and support found in our classes has played an important role in getting them back on an even keel.

▶ To join our classes, please ask your hospital team or GP for a referral. Or call us on 07856 692148, or email info@cardiac-rehab.org.uk



Annual Fitness Assessments: the results are in!

Our latest round of Annual Fitness Assessments shows real gains for people attending our classes. Our chairperson, Jacky Miles MBE, sums up the highlights

Towards the end of last year, 31 class members took part in their second Annual Fitness Assessment. Even though it's only a small number so far, most of these members (74%) can now walk further over a period of six minutes than they could a year ago, and all of them found it easier! What's more 58% of them had improved blood pressure readings.

We're also pleased that members get other important benefits from taking part in our classes. They tell us that meeting people who've had similar heart problems, and the support and encouragement this gives them, is invaluable. Many long-term friendships have been made this way.

These results help reassure our members – and us – that our classes are worth it. And for those who didn't do as well as expected, it's good to know that their Cardiac Rehab Exercise Instructor was on hand to give them expert tailored advice.



“58% of members who took part had improved blood pressure readings”

Our instructors are all highly qualified and very experienced. As well as teaching our classes, Helen, Tom, and Callum all work as part of NHS Cardiac Rehab teams, and Maja has an excellent reputation achieved through her classes and as a personal trainer.

So it really is a no-brainer! The two best things you can do to stay out of hospital once you've finished NHS Cardiac Rehab are:

1. Continue to exercise with support and friendly, expert advice. This makes exercise safe and enjoyable.
2. Get your partner, family or carer involved: this is hugely important as it helps them understand how vital exercise is in helping you stay fit and healthy. And they'll benefit from the exercise too!

▶ *If you missed out on your Annual Fitness Assessment and would like to take part in the next round, just speak to your Instructor.*

New Trustees bring valuable skills

A warm welcome to our two new Trustees, Neil Gregory and David Owen



Neil returned to South Wales in 2005, following a long career in various sales and marketing roles in the pharmaceutical industry. He's now director of

Blaenavon-based GOS Tool & Engineering Services, a privately owned company that specialises in the design and manufacture of innovative equipment for the railway industry.

In his spare time, Neil works with the Department of Business and Trade to help support Welsh businesses looking to export their products. And he's an enthusiastic STEM Ambassador, encouraging Welsh schoolchildren to see the benefits of studying Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths and to consider careers in engineering.

Neil is a regular member of our Saturday morning classes in Llanfoist and, with a

long family history of heart conditions, says he's keen to support our charity in any small way he can.

David was born in Taff's Well and spent most of his career working in finance, based with international companies in Europe and the United States.



Now retired, he lives in Abergavenny and plays an active role in local policing and crime prevention groups.

David's daughter has a little-understood condition called microvascular angina, and this has given him a keen personal interest in learning about cardiovascular conditions and their treatment.

Together, our two new trustees bring valuable additional skills to our team, and we're grateful to them for volunteering their time.



AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Our Grand Christmas Draw is always popular and 2023 was no exception, with members snapping up tickets for themselves, family and friends, and raising a whopping £2,318 for us in the process.

Many thanks to everyone who took part – and to Kathy and Allen Cleveland for running the draw so efficiently.

The lucky winners were:

- 1st Prize (£300): JM, Abergavenny
- 2nd Prize (£150): KD, Monmouth
- 3rd Prize (£75): VM, Ebbw Vale

3 advances in heart health you need to know about

Speaking at our AGM back in November, local consultant cardiologist Dr Nishat Siddiqi focused on three developments she believes will have a big impact on treatment for Heart Disease. Here's what she told us...

1 SEMAGLUTIDE
Also known as Ozempik, this new drug was developed as a treatment for Type 2 diabetes, but it's also showing promise for people who are overweight and have cardiovascular disease (CVD).

The drug works on two fronts. It slows digestion, reducing your appetite and helping you lose weight. And it also helps your body produce insulin and reduce blood sugar levels – an important part of managing CVD.

Dr Siddiqi said that over the course of one big three-year trial, patients on semaglutide lost, on average, almost 10% of their body weight, and fewer died from cardiovascular causes than those who weren't on the drug.

Semaglutide is given once a week as an injection. It can cause digestive problems for some people, and it's also very expensive, so at the moment, the NHS is only giving it to people who are very overweight and having health problems as a result. But going forward, Dr Siddiqi says it could be an effective alternative to treatments such as gastric-band surgery.

2 LEADLESS PACEMAKERS
Implanted pacemakers have been around for more than 50 years and have helped millions of heart patients lead long, full lives. But fitting the devices and feeding the leads into the heart is invasive and 16% of patients go on to



develop complications including infections, which can be fatal.

So the development of a new leadless pacemaker is good news. Just 16mm long – the size of a large vitamin capsule – this remarkable little device is 93% smaller than traditional pacemakers, with a battery life of 8-13 years.

It's inserted directly into the heart through a vein in the leg, so there's no need for a chest incision. And because there are no leads, the procedure is generally quicker and there's less chance of complications or infections. There's also no scarring or visible evidence of the pacemaker under the skin.

Fewer than 100 leadless pacemakers have been fitted in Wales so far, but Dr Siddiqi expects them to become the norm over the next few years.

3 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)
AI is increasingly being used in medicine. Dr Siddiqi gave the example of working out the volume of a patient's left and right ventricle following a cardiac MRI. Currently this can take a consultant up to 20 minutes – but new AI programmes (not yet available to the NHS) can do the maths in seconds.

Dr Siddiqi also explained how AI can be better at spotting problems. This is because AI is “trained” using hundreds of thousands of real-life examples – way more than a consultant would ever see in their lifetime. It can also examine scans more minutely than the human eye.

One area where this could help is in CT coronary angiograms, which are used to look for narrowing of the arteries. Researchers are currently testing a new tool that uses AI to check scans for signs of fat build up and inflammation in the blood vessels – key risk indicators for Heart Disease. Results so far suggest that up to one-third of patients currently assessed as low risk may actually be at high risk of having a heart event.

It's still early days for this technology, but Dr Siddiqi says AI has the potential to speed up diagnosis and treatment, and predict risk more accurately – and that's good news for everyone!

▶ *Look out for news of our next guest speaker event, coming soon.*

Fundraising music nights a hit!

Music lovers had a double treat back in November. First up was our **Sixties Dance Night** at the Moose Hall in Tredegar. Local covers band **Now & Then** took us back through time, with hits from The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and more. It was great to see so many people up on the dance floor, and everyone enjoyed the delicious buffet.

Altogether, the Dance Night raised **£585** for our charity.

Thanks to Jacky Miles for organising, Now & Then for some fab music, and to the

volunteers at Moose Hall for a really well-run evening.

Our second event was at the Royal Oak pub in Monmouth, with local Irish music band **Celtic Collectors**. The night was sell-out, with 90 people packing in for a fabulous evening of music and classic Irish humour. Better still, the event raised a very welcome **£562** for our charity, including raffle money of £134.

A big thank you to Monmouth member Mary Wakeling and Celtic Collectors' Dave Andrews for organising the event.

▶ *Watch this space for news of more music and dance nights later this year.*

