Kidderminster & Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group



Nick Owen (left) with BBC Breakfast presenters Jon Kay and Rachel Burden

NICK OWEN SHOCK NEWS

KWPCSG Patron speaks of Prostate Cancer diagnosis

SUPPORTER

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EDITORIAL





So far this has been a year like no other for KWPCSG. We have already organised 9 public events, all well attended and including our first PSA testing event in Kidderminster for many years, with 5 more get-togethers to come this autumn. We have given talks to companies e.g. Mazak in Worcester, IW groups, H&W Chamber of Commerce events, golf clubs and Rotary, and shared stands with PCUK and Worcester City Primary Care Trust at Worcestershire County Cricket ground (four times) and Worcester Racecourse (twice / see front cover).

In July we shared a stand with **Tackle** at **Shedfest**, the national conference of Men's Shed groups in the UK. In March we welcomed our

1000th. member, **Mike Rochelle**, since the charity was created in 2000 and expect to achieve the target of 50 new members in 2023. Through all this time, however, we have not neglected one of our primary functions, namely, to support men with PC and their families, so we have been busy with **training programmes for Buddies and Support Contacts**.

How do we manage this? Mainly through the hard work of committee members but increasingly through the support of a growing band of volunteers. We have tried with considerable success to get groups of non-committee members to organise publicity for our **6 Coffee & Chats** and run the events on the day. In 2023 the C&C programme extended to **Evesham**, **Tenbury Wells, Droitwich, Malvern, Worcester and Stourbridge**. Back in 2020 our only 6 events that year involved 3 meetings in Kidderminster and 3 in Pershore. Such an expansion over just 3 years has only been possible through more volunteers.

So, step forward and take a bow Phil Rudd, Chris Marsh, John Voyce, Kevin Gillespie, Donovan and Andrea Fern, Julian Brown, Adrian Hodges, John Moss and others who have helped organise these events. Let's not forget Ray Rogers, whose excellent photos grace and bring to life many of the pages of the magazine, nor Hilary Brothwell and Margaret Shakespeare who put the Supporter magazines into about 500 envelopes every three months and also organise the catering at Kidderminster open meetings. In Pershore meet-and-greet is in the capable hands of Sarah Lewis, Kay Barrett and Sarah Kingston. And, of course, about 20 members signed up to man the KWPCSG stand at the Pershore Plum Fayre just a week ago.

But we need more and, critically, we need some of you to join us on the KWPCSG committee at the AGM in January when at least two of our true stalwarts step down after years of great service to the group and to the wider Worcestershire community. We are extremely fortunate in being able to welcome **Dan Cook**, our website manager, to the committee recently. His ideas for the group will, I feel sure, provide a framework for the group's development over the next few years. But we need recently diagnosed men and partners, too, with either traditional skills sets e.g. finance, marketing, or greater digital awareness e.g. data analysis, social media expertise, to ensure we fulfil our mission to press for more PSA testing, even screening, and to support all our members as best we can. Contact Mary or me asap if you feel you want to help in some capacity.

Peter Corbishley / editor@kwpcsg.co.uk / Mob. 07876 556466



GROUP'S FIRST-EVER PSA TESTING EVENT IN PERSHORE

Following the success of the Kidderminster PSA testing day in June which attracted 172 men, attention turns to the south of the county with the first event of its kind underwritten by the Pershore Prostate Cancer Support Fund (see page 12 for more details) on **Thursday**, **September 7th**. **(16.30-19.00)**. Booking for the event is online only (<u>www.mypsatests.org</u>. <u>uk</u>). By the time we went to print (August 14th.) all 170 places had been filled., The tests administered by the Graham Fulford Trust, will be held at the **Wychavon Civic Centre**.

ULTRA-MARATHON RUNNER IS NEXT GUEST SPEAKER

On Thursday, September 14th. Wychavon Civic Centre plays host to a remarkable and inspirational man. Tony Collier from Altrincham (South Manchester) is the South Worcestershire PCSG's guest speaker. It was days before he was due to run in an ultra-marathon (100 km) more than six years ago that Tony was diagnosed with Stage 4 prostate cancer. As someone passionate about exercise and sport in combatting illness and disease, Tony soon became a PCUK Ambassador and has given inspirational talks across the country. Recently Tony was elected as a



Tony Collier

trustee of Tackle and is its deputy chair. Also appearing will be **Sharon Johnson (see pages 10-11)** to talk about her role as Cancer Care Coordinator in Worcester City. Doors open at 18.30 for a 19.00 start.

RETURN TO COUNTY GROUND FOR NEXT COFFEE & CHAT

In April 2022 we organised our first Coffee & Chat at Worcestershire County Cricket Club in the New Road Café. In October we will be returning but, as the café will be closed after



the end of the season, the venue has moved to the Severn Suite. The date is **Wednesday, October 4**th. **(10.30-12.30)**. Members or non-members attending the event can park free of charge on the Premier Inn car park immediately after the bridge. They should then go up the ramp on New Road into the main club reception and enter their registration number. The **Severn Suite** is on the same level, so no steps involved. We hope to see a good number of what we hope will become new members, so please let others know about the event and the **free coffee and cake**.

Worcestershire County Cricket Club

MARY'S CORNER

When my husband and I went to St. Davids in Wales for a week's holiday in mid- June, the weather was good, but by our last day it had changed and seems to have been the same since. Very little chance since to sit outside for long, and my regular dog-walking exercise has been arranged between showers.

I was delighted with our July speaker, **Neil Austin**, who talked quite openly about his problems when diagnosed with prostate cancer and treatment which left him with some major problems. He talked about the most intimate things that were affected by the surgery and told everybody how important it had been to get help when he needed it. His support from his wife, Louise, and family was gratefully referred to by Neil. I think it is important that we work with the wives and partners of our members and help them through the experience of what happens in caring for their husbands / partners. They need support as much as the men in their lives do when dealing with the changes that can occur. I mention this because I am meeting up with two of our ladies shortly, whose husbands have been through quite difficult issues through

treatment and side-effects. Please let me know if you want help or tell your Support Contact.

Please note that our final open meeting in 2023 with guest speaker, **Paul Rajjayababun**, will now take place at the **Harriers' Social Club on Monday 23rd October**, a week later than previously stated. If you have not heard Paul's talk about his role as one of the two surgeons in Worcestershire who do robotic surgery, it is well worth listening to. Both Paul and Adel Makar have pushed things forward for men in our county while respecting the wishes of patients. Both Neil and Paul's talks are on our website videos.

Apologies for cancelling the training for **Support Contacts**, which was booked for Tuesday 27th June at the **Swan at Whittington**, but only four people had signed up. We have moved the date to **Tuesday 3rd October**, same venue and time (10.00-16.00). **Please contact me on 07752 090697 if you would like to attend this course.**

I look forward to seeing you at one or more of our final events in 2023 (see pages 3 and 5 and back cover) and hopefully a good number for the Support Contacts class in October.

Mary Symons (Chair, KWPCSG) / Mob. 07752 090697/ mandmsymons@talktalk.net

MISSING MEN CAMPAIGN UPDATE

With so many events to organise the Missing Men campaign has suffered a little. However, we can report that we have placed A4 or A5 laminated posters in 15 pubs in the Pershore area to highlight the free PSA testing on September 7th. The 80 posters which went all over the town and nearby villages, plus Nick Owen's plea for men to get tested, saw us fill all the slots well ahead of schedule.

In addition, our high profile at events reported on on pages 11, 15 and 25 have led to an influx of new members, so our target of 50 new members in 2023 is now within reach.

Please contact one of the committee if you can persuade your local pub to display our posters and accept a copy of our magazine each quarter so that we reach the 50 target here, too.

FUTURE EVENTS

COUNTY UROLOGICAL SURGEON TO SPEAK AT KIDDERMINSTER

In March WAHT consultant urological surgeon, **Paul Rajjayabun**, spoke to a packed Wychavon Civic Centre in Pershore about how the trust procured the Da Vinci robot for the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch and what differences **robotically-assisted surgery (RAS)** is now making. His talk was so well received by the 70+ who attended in March that we have invited him to speak to our members and their partners in Kidderminster at the **Harriers' Social Club on Monday, October 23**rd. **at Hoo Road in Kidderminster (doors open at 7.00 for a 7.30 start).** We would urge members to make every attempt to attend, especially those who are among the first 60 to have received a RAS prostatectomy.



Paul Rajjayabun

NEW OUT-OF-COUNTY VENUE FOR NEXT COFFEE & CHAT



Stourbridge FC Social Club

The 6th. and final Coffee & Chat of 2023 takes place on **Thursday, November 9th.** (10.30-12.30) at **Stourbridge FC Social Club on the High Street, Amblecote.** This will be our second venture beyond the county boundary (last October we pitched up at Studley Village Hall, sharing the event with the South Warwickshire PCSG) but in an area where we already have a number of members. There is free parking onsite and we hope that we will attract a good number of recently diagnosed men who have yet to join the group.

KWPCSG COMMITTEE 2023

Acting Chair / Secretary

Mary Symons Paul Markall Dick Langley Derek Scully David Underhill Mark Hall Peter Corbishley Dick Herbert Val Markall Nicky Langford Dan Cook

Treasurer Publicity / Website Support Contact Co-ordinator Tackle Representative Minute Secretary Editor Supporter Magazine Trustee Co-opted Member WAHT Fund Raiser Website Manager

Please contact us if you need support or advice



FUNDRAISING

MALE CHOIR SINGING IN KIDDERMINSTER

The award-winning **Kidderminster Male Choir** is gearing up for a concert to **raise funds for KWPCSG**.

John Parkinson, choir member and communications manager, said, "KWPCSG provides a great service for sufferers, families, and friends. We want to help and hope to raise a substantial sum. Indeed, one of our own members, Colin Tomkinson, a stalwart of our choir and I'm sure well known to KWPCSG passed away from this disease. Colin was a good friend of mine and indeed, was instrumental in my joining the choir."

The concert is taking place at **Trinity Methodist Church, Kidderminster, on Saturday, 7th October** and all profits from the night will be going to the charity. joining forces with the very well-respected Leicestershire singers **Loughborough Male Voice Choir**, performing a varied programme from male choir classics to pop hits and music from the shows.

Tickets, priced £12 in advance, or £15 on the evening, can be purchased online via the What's On tab at kidderminstermalechoir.co.uk.

Please do come along and enjoy a night of entertainment, music and song. You will be lending your support to this very worthwhile cause.

See you there.

John Parkinson, Communications Manager, Kidderminster Male Choir



The concert, which starts at 7.30pm, promises to hit a high note with the choir

K RECENT EVENTS

INSIGHT INTO WORCESTERSHIRE ACUTE HOSPITALS TRUST



Over the years South Worcestershire PCSG has invited a wide variety of speakers to its Pershore base. Dr. Steve Allen, the former Chair of Tackle, has been a regular visitor, as has WAHT lead urologist Adel Makar. In June 2022 a packed Wychavon Civic Centre enjoyed the first panel debate involving retired GP Dr. Chris Perks, oncologist Lisa Capaldi and, unforgettably, Simeon Greene as a patient representative from Wolverhampton. In March over 70 members packed into the hall to hear consultant urological surgeon, Paul Rajjayabun, explain life at the Alex with its new robotically assisted operations.

For the June meeting **Dr. Simon Murphy** had been invited to Pershore. Not a medical doctor, but a non-executive director and Deputy Chair of the Worcestershire AH NHS Trust (WAHT) and a former Labour MEP, Simon is a keen supporter of volunteers across the three hospital sites. He reported that the number of volunteers dropped alarmingly over the Covid period. Although numbers are now improving, there is space for many more.

Simon Murphy

Simon shared with his audience the disappointing news that **Matthew Hopkins**, the CEO of WAHT, would soon be moving to a much larger trust in the south of England after more than 4 years in Worcestershire. He praised Matthew for being instrumental in lifting the Trust out of special measures, with Kidderminster now rated as 'good' and Worcester and Redditch 'requiring improvement'.

Next came the news that WAHT would become a member of a group of Trusts which involve South Warwickshire, Wye Valley (Herefordshire) and the George Eliot (Nuneaton). Already an associate member of the Foundation Group, WAHT will remain as an independent Trust and master of its own destiny, but there will be more collaboration and cost-saving working closely with the other Trusts.

Another more exciting development is the move for the Trust to become a university hospital, which will be helped by the **University of Worcester's delayed medical school** starting to take its first students in September. The school will be based at the former Berrows News HQ and print works on Hylton Road, now unrecognisable as another golden addition to the University's City campus on either side of the River Severn.



Some of the volunteers at Worcestershire Royal Hospital

Speaking in a personal capacity, Simon's optimism for acute care in the county was tempered by his sad reflections of the state of medical care in the UK. 'The NHS is no longer the envy of the world', he stated bluntly. One of his criticisms was that there is too much focus on hospitals, which create headlines and become political pawns, rather than the basic need to keep people healthier longer. WAHT is working closely with the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health & Care Trust on the further roll-out of their excellent Urgent Community Response Teams which has proved to be so successful in South Warwickshire and helped to keep people out of hospital.



Simon (centre) participating in the Malvern Hills Charity Walk in June

Simon spoke in favour of the home health checks where teams visited people who were regular attendees at A&E to gain a more holistic assessment of them. More power should be devolved to pharmacists as part of the H&W Integrated Care System. This could include systematic reviews of medication for the elderly.

With Australia at present recruiting 15,000 doctors from across the world it was no surprise that gaps were growing in acute and primary care, with medics being lured abroad by better pay and conditions. It was not for us to criticise such an exodus, as, he noted, WAHT could not exist without the 300 nurses at Worcestershire Royal alone, predominantly from Kerala (India) and the Philippines.



Simon with some of Worcestershire Royal's international nurses

He advocated a 2-year break from Care Quality inspections and urged patients, if they were able to, to get fitter before operations. Some were surprised when Simon informed us that one-third of managers in the NHS are clinicians and when he concluded that, based on the data, the NHS was still the most efficient part of the British economy. As someone who has lived in Worcester for many years, it was clear that Simon has much still to contribute to the direction of change in the county which will affect us all.

Peter Corbishley



POLICE CHIEF'S PROSTATE CANCER JOURNEY



Retired West Mercia Detective Superintendent Neil Austin was guest speaker in Kidderminster in July

On Monday July 17th.the latest meeting of the group was held at the Kidderminster Harriers Football Club Social Club. It was another chance for existing members and partners of the group to meet up and hopefully for other men to become part of, and benefit from, the group as new members. The total attendance was about 55 men and several partners.

Mary Symons welcomed everyone and also reported that there were 172 men who attended a recent PSA testing event. Mary also reminded the attendees of future events (see back page of the magazine).

The main event of the evening was delivered by our guest speaker, Mr Neil Austin. Neil was a former Detective Superintendent in the West Mercia Police Force, based mainly at the Worcester City station, but with time spent at other locations, including the headquarters at Hindlip, Worcestershire.

Some of you will have read Neil's story in the June issue of the magazine. At this meeting, he initially gave the audience an overview of his career in the police force and then outlined the specific process he went through for PC and the somewhat difficult side effects and complications following his surgery. This was followed by several questions from the floor, with Neil holding nothing back at all in his responses. He was congratulated on his honesty in connection with some very difficult personal issues.

Following on from Neil, we had a presentation from Di Fox, who was encouraging more men (and ladies) to join the Monday morning exercise classes. There was then a buffet for the gathering for which thanks were given to the ladies who organised that, together with the results of the raffle.

A final thanks to the speakers was given by Gordon and Mary, and the attendees were left to continue conversing with each other to conclude the evening.

Phil Rudd



Di Fox (KWPCSG's Monday morning fitness and exercise guru) with Mary Symons

MEET THE CITY'S CANCER CARE COORDINATOR



Sharon Johnson (Worcester City Cancer Care Coordinator)

In October 2022 **Sharon Johnson** was appointed as the **Cancer Care Coordinator (CCC) for Worcester City**. Hers is a post which is funded directly by government through the Integrated Care Board, not the NHS or Primary Care. It is a permanent post, not a short-term contract, and every area in both the county and the country now has such an officer.

Her primary task is to work closely with medical centres and GP practices. It is not to duplicate the work being done by other caring agencies in this field e.g. Macmillans, but to concentrate on prevention. In other words, she expects her initiatives and events to lead to early detection across a range of cancers. Sharon is based at the St. John's Medical Centre in Worcester and her patch covers 130,000 people in the city and outlying villages. Also based there is **Olivia Yapp, Worcester City's Social, Lifestyle and Wellbeing Coordinator.**

One of her most challenging tasks is to engage with hard-to-reach men. These may include men who have no GP or who are ex-Army, homeless or working shifts. Seeking out both men and women who are asylum seekers, refugees or legal migrants and getting them to come forward for tests or screening is also an important part of her brief which is set at local, not national, level, corresponding to the individual needs of the community.

I met Sharon when I volunteered for one of the 4 days she and her team, working in tandem with PCUK, had a stand at New Road on county cricket match days. In the lulls between men approaching the stand, I had an opportunity to interview Sharon. She was born in Southport but moved at an early age to Warrington. She moved down to Braunton in North Devon in 2012 to study first in Barnstaple, then to complete a Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care at Plymouth University in 2016 before making the move to Worcester in 2019, working at **St. Richard's Hospice** in the outpatients' department. Here she was involved in the care of patients with serious, progressive illness, including cancer, in their Living Well Centre.

For KWPCSG Sharon's appointment could be absolutely critical. A recurrent theme in most of our committee meetings and in talks with members is the problem of engaging with some GPs. We don't want a visit to a GP to be a lottery. How many times have we heard the following conversation relayed to us:



Race card at Worcester Races on August 1st. attended by Sharon and the Worcester PCN team

- Patient: Could I be given a blood test to check my PSA levels?
- GP: Is there a history of prostate cancer in your family?
- Patient: No
- GP: Do you have any symptoms like frequent trips to the loo?
- Patient: No
- GP: Then why are you wasting my time?

Such a conversation totally ignores the fact that over 30% of men diagnosed with PC have no symptoms and that men over 50 have a right to ask for PSA test.

Sharon expressed her deep desire to 'support the NHS' long-term plan of having cancer diagnosed at an earlier stage when curative treatment is more likely.' She felt that her experience, particularly at St. Richard's, helped her to focus on the key need for early signposting. 'Caring for palliative patients has given me the passion to do what I do,' she concluded. I'm sure we'll endeavour to work closely with her in Worcester City and with her colleagues throughout the county to help her achieve her aims.

Peter Corbishley

IN THE WINNER'S ENCLOSURE AT THE RACES

One of the events KWPCSG was invited to attend was at the Worcester Races on August 1st. by the Worcester City Primary Care Network (PCN). John Voyce and his wife, Pat (a former nurse), represented the group at a stand allotted to PCUK, linking the charities and the PCN.



Left to right: Pat Voyce, John Voyce (KWPCSG volunteer), Jamie Hudson Small (Next to horse) (director, Worcester City PCN), Watergrange Jack (winning horse), Sharon Johnson (Worcester City Cancer Care Coordinator), Darryl Fern (Worcester City PCN Communications Coordinator), Olivia Yapp (Worcester PCN), and owners

Two races with relevance to the group were the Pershore Plum Festival Land O'Plums race and the Don't Wait Check Your Prostate Handicap Hurdle (honestly – check it out). Details of PCUK and our county group were displayed prominently and frequently on the huge video screen and also on the race card.

Our thanks to John and Pat and also Phil Rudd, Chris Marsh and John again for manning stands with the Worcester City PCN at county cricket matches at New Road this summer.

FREE PROSTATE PSA TESTING EVENTS

The South Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group (SWPCSG) is delighted to announce its first-ever **PSA testing event in Pershore** which was free to anyone who registered in advance. The appointments take place on **Thursday, September 7th., at Wychavon Civic Centre from 16.30-20.00.**

The cost of the event is being borne by the **Pershore Prostate Cancer Support Fund.** This was established after the end of the 3-year period as Mayor of Pershore of **ClIr. Chris Parsons**, who chose the local PC support group as his designated charity. Events organised and collections made during his final period as town mayor raised over £ 12,000 for the fund. Additional financial support has been offered by the **Friends of Pershore Hospital**.



Originally, 120 slots were booked, but these were all filled by August 9th., so 50 more were added. When the magazine went to press on August 14th all 170 slots had been taken, due, in part, to the 'Nick Owen Effect'. Anyone attending without an appointment will not receive the test.

KWPCSG held a recent free event in June in Kidderminster – its first for many years. Again, the appointments were free to all who applied (thanks to the generosity of the group) and 172

of the 175 slots were taken. All participants were informed of the results (the tests are carried out in London) just two days after the testing. Each appointment lasts about 5 minutes.

In recent months, the largest prostate cancer charity, Prostate Cancer UK (PCUK), has moved its position towards more testing, more monitoring and fewer interventions (e.g. hormone treatment, radiotherapy, radical prostatectomy, chemotherapy). In other words, more screening starting at an earlier stage and continuing on a regular basis can prevent men first realising they have prostate cancer when they are already at stages 3 or 4. It is estimated that 10,000 men are being diagnosed too late to be cured each year.

Men over 50 have the right to request a PSA test, even though there is no national screening programme. If there is reluctance by a GP to grant such a test, men should turn to <u>www.nhs/</u> <u>conditions/prostate-cancer/psa-testing</u>. Those who are at higher risk of developing prostate cancer include men who have had a brother or father with the disease; those with a strong family history of ovarian or breast cancer; men from an African-Caribbean background.

Due to increased awareness campaigns in the media and through the NHS, PCUK, Tackle and Macmillans, many people are far more aware of typical symptoms, such as a need to go more frequently to the loo; problems in passing water; a weak flow, and blood in either urine or semen. What is not widely realised is that over 30% of men diagnosed with prostate cancer have had no symptoms whatsoever.

NICK OWEN REVEALS PROSTATE CANCER DIAGNOSIS

Although he had been missina from the BBC's regional flagship programme. Midlands Today, for several months. Nick Owen shocked his many fans on Monday, August 7th. when interviewed on the programme fellow bv presenter, Giles Latcham, and revealing he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer.



Nick before his BBC Breakfast interview on August 8th.

Not only that, but Nick, who is 75, went into a lot of detail about the choices open to him and the path he decided to take. He talked movingly about April 13th. - the day he was told of his condition - as 'one of the worst days of my life. I was told it was pretty serious and (I) had to do something about it soon.' He opted for a radical prostatectomy and has spent several months recovering from the operation, admitting he is not guite fully recovered ('I'm not exactly myself at the moment'. he confessed) but looking forward to returning to our screens in September.

you As most of will know. Nick has been the Patron of Kidderminster & Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group (KWPCSG) since 2012. In October 2022 he was our quest speaker at a packed Kidderminster Town Hall. On that occasion he was interviewed by former ATV presenter, frequent speaker at KWPCSG events and long-time friend of Nick's, Peter Tomlinson. Although the evening centred on his life in television, he did mention that he intended to get 'checked out' soon for PC

The fact that Nick was not only so open about his diagnosis, treatment and gradual recovery but also about his emotional state and the importance of family support meant so much to us as a support group. One of the most crucial moments in his interview that day and the following day on the BBC Breakfast programme was when he revealed he had had no symptoms. His PSA test results were only slightly elevated. but 'my GP insisted that I go and see a specialist just to reassure me he saved my life.' he said.

A pioneer of breakfast TV with former Worcester Girls Grammar School pupil, Anne Diamond, in 1983, Nick, who was born in Berkhamsted. moved to the Midlands to work as a journalist on the Birmingham Post, then on BBC Radio Birmingham before landing his first TV contract with ATV in its sports department. He has lived for many years in Kinver. For more information about Nick's career, please go to www.kwpcsq.co.uk and click onto Magazine where you'll find a review of his talk in the December 2022 issue.

'my GP insisted that I go and see a specialist just to reassure me he saved my life,'

He was full of praise for his wife, Vicki, who has helped him through what he described as his 'bumpy ride'. But his message was clear. 'For goodness' sake, speak to a doctor about it and get it checked, because if it's caught early – and I know that it's a bit of a sort of medical cliché – but if it's caught early, you've got a chance. If it's left too late, you probably haven't.'

Peter Corbishley

SIGNIFICANCE OF NICK'S INTERVIEWS

Once the Midlands Today programme on Monday, August 7th. had gone out, members of the KWPCSG committee were being contacted by members all over the county, asking if we'd seen Nick Owen being interviewed by fellow BBC presenter, Giles Latcham. This is how most people in the Midlands learnt about Nick's diagnosis for PC, treatment (including a radical prostatectomy) and recovery over several months.

Most of us realise that, having celebrities such as Stephen Fry, the late Bill Turnbull, Jim Broadbent and Elton John (eventually) speak out about their own 'prostate journey', awareness of the disease which claims the lives of an estimated 12,000 men each year has improved among the general public. What was generally viewed as 'an old man's problem' and became the butt of smutty jokes about rectal examinations and incontinence is now, at last, more generally and more meaningfully discussed on all forms of media.



Nick as KWPCSG guest speaker at Kidderminster Town Hall in October 2022 Photo courtesy of Ray Rogers

Have such well-known TV and film personalities made a difference? The answer to that is an emphatic 'yes'. How do we know? Ask Prostate Cancer UK, which I did several months ago when seeking permission for us to use their posters in our March magazine and 2 pages from their Insights magazine in our June Supporter. There was both a little frustration and, probably, a wry smile when they admitted that Stephen Fry's first interview on the subject had a more dramatic effect in terms of requests for PSA tests than all of their carefully choreographed and slickly produced campaigns over previous years.

That is why Nick's willingness to go public is, not just for us in this part of the world but nationally. so important. Here he is viewed as the voice of the West Midlands thanks to his many years at the helm of Midlands



Nick in Kinver with his wife, Vicki

Today and his ability to communicate and empathise with people from all walks of life. On the national scene he is remembered for his involvement in the groundbreaking TV AM, BBC's hugely successful Good Morning with Anne and Nick (produced from Pebble Mill) and as a sports presenter for ITV.

The critical difference between Nick and others who have championed PC awareness campaigns is that, having been our support group's Patron since 2008, having supported or attended some of our events (he was our quest speaker at a packed Kidderminster Town Hall in October 2022) and having kept in regular contact with our Chair, Mary Symons, Nick has an appreciation of the ongoing struggles to, for example, get men over 50 checked out annually for PC. Being linked to our group over such a long period, he knows more than any fellow celebrity how many unnecessary deaths there have been over the years but, encouragingly, how rapidly PC awareness is now spreading across the country.

In his initial interview on Midlands Today, his appearance on the sofa of BBC Breakfast on August 8th. and follow-up pieces later that week, he commented on the tens of thousands of messages he had received and thanked viewers for their good wishes and shared experiences. At 75 Nick was at the top of his game when he spoke so movingly about the effect the diagnosis and treatment had had on him, but he was utterly determined to get the message out to viewers that:

- Men over 50 should get checked out regularly
- Men should be more demanding if a GP refuses such a request
- All men should realise that at least 30% of those diagnosed with PC have had no symptoms whatsoever

All of us at KWPCSG send our very best wishes to Nick, Vicki and the rest of their families. We will follow his personal 'journey' with interest, with concern but primarily with hope for a full recovery, for a return to work in the autumn and for a long and deeper relationship with our support group and the wider community of such groups across the country who will be inspired by his openness and willingness to add his voice to the growing clamour for more testing.

Peter Corbishley

MANY NEW FACES AT THE CUBE IN MALVERN

After a 2-year gap South Worcestershire PCSG returned to Malvern for its June Coffee & Chat. Not without some trepidation, too, as the attendances at the two previous visits in 2021 had only attracted numbers of 17 and 13 respectively.

Thanks, however, to the efforts of committee member and membership secretary, Derek Scully, ably assisted by John Voyce and Julian Brown, posters were hand delivered across the Malvern area and Facebook groups were approached, so the turnout was much improved. What was amazing, though, was that, of the 29 people who came to the Cube, 10 were non-members and, in most cases, recently diagnosed men. Of those 10 no fewer than 6 have now joined the group.

Their joining means that the number of new members since the beginning of the year is now 32 (August 14th.). This compares very favourably with the excellent number of new members in 2022 (36) and puts KWPCSG on course for another record year in terms of new members and total membership numbers. We are not far off welcoming our 500th. current member which would, we believe, make us the largest group in the country.

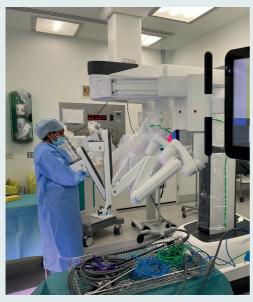
Enough of number-crunching – the important fact is that it was an excellent morning with lots of animated conversation around the tables and plenty of questions to our committee members. It was good to see a few new attendees from over the border in Ledbury and several members from Evesham and Worcester who drove over to join us. Excellent hospitality, as always, was provided by centre manager Nicola Turrell and her volunteers at the Cube. 'With such an incredible turnout, we are excited to plan more events in the future and continue making a positive impact together,' commented Derek, delighted to see the hard work by his team pay dividends.

Peter Corbishley



LAUNCH OF ROBOTIC SURGERY AT THE ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL IN REDDITCH

The first 50 patients have undergone prostate cancer treatment using state-of-the-art robotic surgery at the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch.



Preparation for surgery

Arrival of the surgical robot - named the *Da Vinci* Xi system - in September marked a further addition to the range of high-quality elective (planned) surgical services already provided at the hospital for patients from across Worcestershire and beyond.

The first procedure, now being offered up to three days a week, is robot-assisted surgery for men with prostate cancer. For those patients where the technique is clinically appropriate, Robotic-Assisted Radical Prostatectomy (RARP) can offer equivalent or potentially better outcomes, less pain, smaller incisions, shorter stays in hospital and an accelerated recovery.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust's Consultant Urologists Mr Paul Rajjayabun, and Mr Adel Makar have undergone extensive training in using the robot with additional input from expert surgeons from around the UK for the initial period of operating.

Mr Makar said: "The launch of this new service is a key part in our vision of the Alexandra Hospital becoming a surgical centre of excellence. It's a vital part of our plans for the future of our services and our hospitals and a further demonstration of our commitment to providing the best experience of care and outcomes for our patients."

"The progress of the first tranche of patients who have undergone procedures using the robot since October is being been closely monitored and we are delighted the feedback we have received has reflected high levels of patient satisfaction. In the majority of cases, patients have been able to leave hospital the day after their operation whereas in the past it would have been at least three to five days."

Mr Rajjayabun added: "It's fantastic to see this service up and running after so many years of planning. We are very grateful for the generous and dedicated support of all those fundraisers who helped us get to this point. As well as being of huge benefit to our patients, the arrival of

the robot has been a great boost for the clinical teams involved whilst also offering excellent development opportunities for our surgical, nursing and theatre staff. Innovations such as this make our Trust an even more attractive place to come and work. It's been a real team effort from everyone involved and a great example of how we can work together to improve patient care in Worcestershire."

Prior to the robot being installed locally, many prostate cancer patients who wanted this type of surgery had to travel long distances out of the county for it. That meant at least 80 -100 patients each year having to travel away from Worcestershire for their robotic operation in other hospitals.

The delivery of the robot followed the upgrade and refurbishment of a dedicated operating theatre which included reinforcing the theatre floor to take the weight of the robot as well as upgrading the ventilation system, general refurbishment and redecoration.

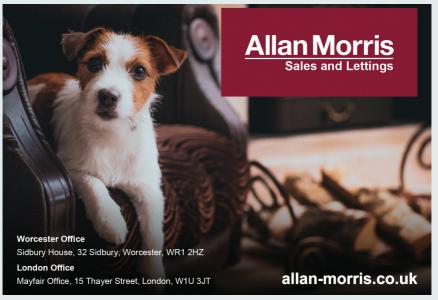
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, which runs the Alexandra as well as Kidderminster Hospital and Treatment Centre



Robotically Assisted Surgery (RAS) in use

and Worcestershire Royal Hospital, is investing more than £3.5 million in the new service. Thanks to the generosity of local supporters led by lan Jukes, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Charity's fundraising appeal in aid of robotic surgery had already raised around £500,000 before plans for the development were paused during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Press Release, WAHT (July)





COMMUNITY



CAN YOU HELP US TO HELP OUR COMMUNITY

Worcester Wheels urgently requires volunteer private car drivers to support our community transport service.

Our objective is to target social isolation and loneliness by providing affordable transport for those in our community who cannot access public transport. We enable our clients to attend medical, recreational and social activities, maintaining their links with their local community. This is very rewarding voluntary work and a key service for the elderly and infirm.

Visit our website to see more about our service www.worcesterwheels.org.uk

Can you spare a few hours a week to support us in this vital work?

When you work and for how many hours is up to you.

You will be joining a very friendly, dedicated workforce and I guarantee you will enjoy your time spent with our clients, who really appreciate our service.

We are a charity and rely on volunteers like you to maintain an affordable and efficient service.

If you can help please contact us on 01905 450654 or email to enquiries@ worcesterwheels.org.uk

Graham Heath

NEWS FROM THE SHED

We had a very pleasant barbecue for Group members and their partners in early June at Leapgate Farm. The weather on this occasion did us proud with wall-to-wall sunshine and a big thank you to David Underhill for organising the meat dishes.



Committee members and wives enjoying the barbecue at Leapgate

We are now seeing the fruits of our labour on the allotment as the crops of potatoes, onions, beans, beetroot, lettuce and tomatoes are maturing well.

Fred Penn, our allotment co-ordinator, has challenged members of the management team at Leapgate Farm to see who can grow the heaviest pumpkin. The competition will involve some of the youngsters who regularly attend the Activity Centre. The weigh-in will be just before Halloween. Watch this space!

We are planning another canal boat trip for Shed members in August. The trip starts from Alvechurch, stopping at the Hopwood Hotel for lunch before making the return to the

moorings. Trevor Albutt, a member of our Support Group, will be skippering the boat ably supported by his wife Wendy as a crew member. The boat trip is only available to regular members who attend the Shed as insurance restrictions limit numbers.

The Award Winning KIDDERMINSTER MALE CHOIR

presents

A Concert In

Support of



KWPCSG

Kidderminster and Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Suppport Groups

Saturday, 7th October 7.30pm

Trinity Methodist Church Churchfields, Kidderminster

Tickets £12 from

www.kidderminstermalechoir.co.uk

Just go to the 'What's On' section and follow the link.

Or £15 on the door

I NEVER SAW THAT COMING!

IT TAKES A LOT OF EFFORT BEING SICK



Vising former HMP Lancaster Castle

I decided to go up to Blackpool to spend my 65th birthday with my younger brother and niece. Once again, I found myself at the bowling alley and crazy golf course. I am not claiming victory at either contest, but I did get a strike and a hole-in-one. The highlight was, however, a trip to Lancaster Castle, formerly HMP Lancaster Castle.

I walked through the gateway and was immediately surprised to see a Norman keep, instantly recognisable by its round window arches. It was all there, various building phases, Norman, Elizabeth I, Georgian and Victorian. The icing on the cake was, however, the unexpected Lancaster Priory, one more notable church ticked off the list. I visited the East Lancashire Railway at the end of June for their Diesel Gala - another trip down Memory Lane. Many of the locomotives present were retired before the millennium, some still soldiering on in service today.

I remember travelling behind many of the locomotive types in the 70's and 80's before BR scrapped them. Some which were saved and purchased by enthusiasts are still in use on heritage railways today.

I recently passed the 4th anniversary of starting my "journey." I had gone to my GP with "tummy ache," expecting a tablet for wind. I left with a two-week wait referral to the colorectal team. The diagnosis was longwinded but eventually I was allocated a standard class ticket for my journey. I mean that in a relatively positive sense, having received that standard of care throughout my journey. I was fortunate in having a reserved seat on the slow, stopping train, going via Edinburgh with numerous stops, rail replacement bus services, engineering works and line closures.



Standing in front of the class 50, 50015 Valiant, at the East Lancs Railway.

I think the biggest change of my life is due to 4 years on hormone therapy – or, more accurately, treatment to prevent the production of testosterone. It would have been curious to have done some baseline tests on my physical and cognitive functions before I started treatment. Without a doubt, there has been a lot of change - fatigue, stamina, loss of strength to mention just a few - but the biggest and most notable change in my opinion is emotion or cognitive function. A few weeks ago, I got in my car, drove out towards the main road, and had a very senior moment. I thought, "Left or right?", then my mind said, "Hang on, it's more basic than that. Where do I want to go?" It was over in 2 seconds, as I made the correct turn to my intended destination.

Having checked my diary every night, I have taken to writing appointments and other activities on an A4 sheet of paper and placing it on the floor in the lounge. There is huge potential for mistakes. As my GP surgery does not send out any reminders about my next Prostap injection, I must arrange it myself, so when I have an injection, I write it in my diary, then write another reminder 4 weeks before the due date to remind me to make an appointment.

I have frequently mentioned my constant battle with emotions and indicated the help I am receiving. For some reason, on the anniversary of my journey starting, a PCUK spokesperson appeared on BBC Breakfast to advise all men in the at-risk group to go for a PSA test. This triggered a stream of insults and swearing hurled at the television. "Thanks for the f...... advice, just 5 or 6 years too f...... late for me!" Fortunately, anticipating some need for support, I had calmed down by the time I got to Cheltenham. It does, however, show how we cannot prepare for every situation. Something will always catch you out.

I could get bitter about my GP's failure to offer any advice about PC. Rather oddly, I was visiting my surgery every year for an MOT and blood test. My practice probably saved £10 every time they failed to tick the PSA box. Let's compare that to my on-going treatment costs:



Me playing crazy golf in Torquay

45 Blood tests 33 consultations 19 Prostap Injections 30 cycles of Abiraterone 6 cycles of Docetaxel, chemotherapy 20 fractions of radiotherapy 8 CT scans 1 CT guided biopsy 1 PET CT scan 1 Bone scan 1 MRI scan

In total over 170 appointments and procedures, not counting the help I have received from Maggie's and St Richard's Hospice. Well done, GP! You saved maybe £100 but look what being metastatic at diagnosis has cost the wider NHS.



Here's some simple maths: at the time of writing, it was 1525 days and 171 formal appointments, not including the calls to my CNS or helpline. 1525 divided by 171? The answer is 8.91. Okay, what does that mean? What it means in simplistic terms an appointment with my GP or hospital teams on average just short of every 9 days, calendar days, nominally three a month, for the last four years. It takes a lot of effort being sick with a life-limiting disease!

Mark Howard

With Jim my brother and Shelly his wife at the Andre Rieu concert in Nottingham

Patient survey on Hormone Therapy

Tackle are supporting a survey sponsored by a pharma company looking at hormone therapy. There are 2 surveys: one taking 60 mins and another just 20 mins. A fee is paid for taking part.

Information gained will be important as part of an application to NICE to approve a new oral form of hormone therapy

Contact info is on the leaflet

tackle



MARKET

RESEARCH



Prostate Cancer Study: Patient Information Leaflet

Contact us

MEDICAL -

you are interested in participating in, or finding out more information bout this study please contact our recruitment team;

engagement@just-worldwide.com

relating to **Prostate cancer** and are looking for patients to participate.



Patients (aged 18+ years) who have been diagnosed with and currently receiving treatment for Prostate cancer.

TESTING IN GOOD TIME

In February 2010 my brother passed away with Prostate Cancer rather than of it but it had had a serious effect on his general health.

However the presence of PC in the family ensured that I was treated with a modicum of urgency when I started to be tested. Prior to 2010 my PSA readings had been 1.7, 3.4 and 3.3.

In February 2010 Worcestershire Ambassadors sponsored a group test at Sixways Rugby Club in association with KDPCSG. There were 188 men tested on the night and 50 the following day. The results of the test showed seven borderline cases and 12 abnormal. Unfortunately mine was one of the abnormal.

Following a visit to my GP, various tests and a discussion with Jonathon Sullivan a biopsy was arranged for March 2010 the results of which showed there was no cancer. A further biopsy was carried out the following year. Again there was no sign of PC.

Two blood tests during 2010 showed the PSA reading going down to 4.3 in October.

A blood test in May 2011 showed a PSA reading of 22.5 which was a surprise to Mr Gill and to me ! At a follow up blood test in June the reading was down to 4.0.

Six monthly blood tests during 2012 and 2013 and annually afterwards showed a reading of between 2.4 and 4.5 with the latest in September 2022 at 1.9 which is consistent with all the latest readings and within the normal range for my age of 81

The main problem during this period has been getting the results of any tests particularly hard copies. I always have to ask.

KEEPING ACTIVE AND POSITIVE THROUGH WOW!

My husband, Donovan, was diagnosed with Prostate Cancer in 2022 and, shortly afterwards, we joined the fabulous Kidderminster and Worcestershire Prostate Support Group where, whilst waiting for surgery, we were directed to **Di Fox's online exercise class**. This soon became something to look forward to every week and something to aim to get back to as soon as possible after surgery.

It is hard to put into words how and why this hour-long, weekly session has had such a positive effect on our lives, but one quick word to explain it is "Di". She truly is a wonder and it is through her and the group that even the "downest" of days are often transformed into positive days as a result of her and her wonderful class.

Through Di Fox, we were introduced to **WOW!** Yet another life-changer. Worcestershire Oncology Walking football (WOWF doesn't have the same impact does it?) is a group that was started six years ago and is open to anyone to come along and have a go at what it says on the tin: **Walking Football**.



Members of the Worcester Oncology Walking football team aka WOW!

There are about a dozen participants who meet once a month at **Perdiswell Leisure Centre** and have a kick-around and a lot of fun and laughs along the way, sometimes followed by a coffee, but always, always with a kindly word of encouragement and support for all who partake. It is a group of people who kick a ball around, yes – but mostly it is a group made up of people who are understanding of one another's plight, which is why warmth and friendliness can be found in abundance at these gatherings.

Sometimes they play other teams and, quite often, other teams tend to have the upper hand as they practice more often. However, WOW can certainly hold their own and I can announce with glee that in a tournament at Claines recently, WOW won the cup!! Oh yes – an impressive, shiny, magnificent cup, saying: "Look what we did, despite our prostate cancer and our challenges. Look what can be achieved with a group of lovely people who all have a positive outlook and can have a bit of fun."

NEW BUDDIES READY TO SUPPORT MEMBERS

One of the many strengths of KWPCSG has been its Buddy programme. This involves newlydiagnosed members being offered the opportunity to be linked to one of our trained Buddies on a one-to-one basis. Where possible, we try to match that new member with one of a pool of Buddies who has had similar prostate cancer experiences. Having this system available to members helped the support group to be presented with the **Queen's Award for Voluntary Service to the Community in 2017**, so far the only PCSG in the country to have been recognised for such an award.

Buddying is a different service to that of Support Contacts. Every new KWPCSG member is, if they wish, assigned to one of 24 support contacts. Group sizes tend to range between 12-20. The support contacts are required to contact each individual member of the group 2-3 times a year to check how things are. Members are encouraged to get in touch with their support contacts at any time if they have problems or require advice.

On June 21st. and 22nd. a group of our members attended a buddying training course run by the **Co-Chair of Tackle, Aidan Adkins**. Thanks to funding received by Tackle and made available to PCSGs across the country, the course was free of charge to both the trainees and to the support group. The course was held at the **Swan at Whittington (Worcester)** in a first-floor meeting room and lasted on both days from 10.00-16.00. Originally there were 7 applicants, but one,, had to pull out and Mike Rochelle was only available for day 1.

I popped along for the 2 afternoon sessions and was not surprised to find how high the standard of training was, having got to know Aidan through his work with **Tackle** over the past two years. For any new members not familiar with Tackle, it is the body which **represents about 100 affiliated PC support groups in England**. The feedback from the trainees at the end of day 2 was very positive and all stated they would be willing to join other buddies in our group.

Peter Corbishley



Andy Hyslop, Aidan Adkins (Tackle co-Chair and Buddy trainer), Colin Maisey, Max Davis, Andrew Judd, John Lowe (absent from photo: Mike Rochelle)

WORCESTER HOSTS SHEDFEST CONFERENCE

The UK Men's Sheds Association (<u>www.menssheds.org.uk</u>) celebrated its 10th year at its annual national conference on July 13th. hosted by the University of Worcester. Over 30 stands and over 300 attendees from all over the country reflected a renewed interest in men's welfare post-Covid and the role that men's sheds can have in improving mental health.

The venue was the University Arena (aka Basketball Indoor Stadium) on Hylton Road. At its previous conference PCUK had flown the flag for the support groups which had men's sheds, but this year the agreement between PCUK and Tackle i.e. that the former concentrates on research and awareness campaigns and the latter devotes its energies to supporting PCSG members post diagnosis, meant that Tackle ran the stand.



Paul Markall (left) and Peter Corbishley at the KWPCSG stand

A longstanding friend of KWPCSG and former chair of Tackle, Dr. Steve



Allen, set up the Tackle stand but kindly invited the county group to join him, knowing we had our own men's shed at Leapgate Activity Centre on Leapgate Farm, Wilden (near Stourport). A couple of years ago the venture was renamed The Shed to respect the role that wives and partners play in the organisation. Paul Markall (KWPCSG treasurer) and Ray Rogers (magazine photographer) created their own stand next door (see

Dr. Steve Allen manned the Tackle stand

photo right). A display of Ray's photos attracted a lot of people to the stand, and it proved to be a great opportunity for networking.

The keynote conference speech was given by the MSA's patron, Chris Fisher, ably assisted by his guide dog, Bamber, and wife, Nicola. Chris talked movingly of a very difficult childhood and then an overnight loss of sight. Some of you will have seen him on TV under his sobriquet The Blind Woodturner. What an inspirational speaker Chris is and what a force for good, given the dreadful events in his life and his determination to overcome them.



Brisk trade at the county support group's stand

Peter Corbishley





Cancer Services Mobile App

What is it and who is it for?

- A free download resource for anybody affected by cancer and those who support people living with and beyond cancer.
- A resource for professionals to support those affected by cancer.

What information does it contain?

- Information about the hospitals, the treatments you may have, and the teams you may meet.
- Information about services that may help you, e.g. Macmillan Cancer Support, Worcestershire Macmillan Citizen's Advice.
- Signposting to other services and organisations that may be able to offer support to you and those that support you.
- An events calendar, keeping you up-to-date on what's happening near you.
- Information about other organisations and services.
- Patient stories and support groups.
- Contact information for services involved in your care.

For more information or to suggest content for the app:

Please contact the Living With & Beyond Cancer Team on: wah-tr.lwbc@nhs.net

Download the Healthzone UK App now!







Cancer Services Mobile App

How to download:

1. Either click on the relevant link below (digital version) or scan the QR code to access the Google Play or Apple App Store to download the app:

Google Play (for Android devices)





2. Install the app: **HEALTHZONE UK**

3. Open the app and search for **WORCESTERSHIRE CANCER SERVICES**:



Apple App Store (for iPhones)





4. You shoul

4. You should be taken to the **Worcestershire Cancer Services App** which looks like this:

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2023

PSA TESTING EVENT (PERSHORE)

Thursday, September 7th. (16.30-19.30) Wychavon Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore WR10 1PT All 170 free PSA tests taken by those who have registered Anyone without an appointment will be refused entry

SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE PCSG

Thursday, September 14th. (doors open at 6.30 pm for a 7.00 pm start) Wychavon Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore WR10 1PT

SPEAKER : TONY COLLIER

(PCUK Ambassador, Tackle trustee and Deputy Chair and Ultra-Marathon Man) Tony is known for his inspirational talks about living with stage 4 prostate cancer. He will share his views about the need for PC screening. An event not to be missed.

WORCESTER COFFEE & CHAT

Wednesday, October 4th. (10.30-12.30)

Severn Suite, Worcs. County Cricket Club, New Road, Worcester WR2 4QQ Free parking in Premier Inn car park / after parking, just walk into the main building via the ramp on New Road and enter registration number at the desk The Severn Suite is accessed just by the reception desk (no stairs involved) **Free coffee and cake for every member, non-member and partner!!**

KIDDERMINSTER & WORCESTERSHIRE PCSG

N.B. NEW DATE : Monday, October 23rd. (doors open at 7.00 pm for a 7.30 start) Harriers' Social Club, Stadium Close, Hoo Road, Kidderminster DY10 1NB

SPEAKER : MR. PAUL RAJJAYABUN

(Consultant Urological Surgeon for Worcestershire Acute Health Trust who will be talking about Robotic-Assisted Surgery at the Alexandra Hospital, Redditch) If you missed Paul's talk in March to a packed Civic Centre Hall in Pershore, please make every effort to hear his latest news about PC treatment in the county.

STOURBRIDGE COFFEE & CHAT

Thursday, November 9th. (10.30-12.30) Stourbridge Football Club Social Club, 85 High Street, Amblecote, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 4HN Free parking on site Free coffee and cake for every member, non-member and partner!!

Free conee and cake for every member, non-member and partners

For the latest updates on events, go to www.kwpcsg.co.uk/our-events

Keep in touch with us via: Tel. 01299 832166 / www.kwpcsg.co.uk / contact@kwpcsg.co.uk