

Kidderminster & Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group



*Jon and Ange Gaskell on one of the earlier Rainbow Days at
Cleobury Mortimer Golf Club*



*Bewdley Tractor Run
(Boxing Day 2022)*



*Kidderminster Male Voice Choir concert
(October 2023)*

CELEBRATING THE DONORS

Main Feature (pages 10-14)

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EDITORIAL



No time to rest on our laurels after a busy and eventful 2023. New challenges lie ahead for KWPCSG. Venues are being booked across the county and beyond (e.g. **Ledbury, Cleobury Mortimer**) for our open meetings, Coffee & Chats and our newly-created Partners' Group meetings. At the AGM in January, **Alison Hanson, Nicky Langford and Dan Cook** were elected as trustees and **Jeremy Motteram and Gerard Kenny** as co-opted members, but there are still two unfilled vacancies on the committee. One immediate challenge for all the committee members will be to ensure that 2024 is a year when its finances are back on an even keel (annual accounts available on the website homepage).

Looking back to the early days (say, 2000-2) of our own group, the then **Kidderminster & District PCSG** organised 4 meetings each year at Kidderminster Town Hall. It also published a 12-page Supporter Magazine four times a year. The annual subscription at the time was just £ 5. It still is, even though £ 5 in 2000 is the equivalent of £ 9.09 in late 2023 (BoE calculator). In other words, today's county-wide PCSG is attempting to run 6 open meetings, 6 C&Cs, 6 Partners' group meetings, a 24-page magazine, an impressive website, training for buddies and support contacts and awareness-raising events on an inflation-defying £ 5 per year subscription. The Chancellor would be impressed! That's productivity for you!

Of course, the annual subscriptions are only part of the picture. Today, thanks to the excellent links committee members have established across the county, most of our funding comes from the groups we are celebrating in the middle section of this magazine. **Without our donors our charity could not exist in its present form.**

But let's return to our members. We know some of you are happy to contribute more than £ 5 each year as a standing order and we thank you for that (in 2023 £ 3124 was raised from a **membership of 482**, which works out at an average of almost £ 6.50 per person if everyone paid, which was not the case). Guessing that nearer £ 10 was received from the average paying member, it was decided at committee that there was no reason to change the nominal subscription rate for 2024. We hope that more and more of our members will contribute a minimum of £ 10 per year as a subscription. We also hope that members will realise that all our meetings cost money – for the hire of the venues, the refreshments provided free of charge at the C&Cs, newspaper advertising, posters the list goes on. So, on the one hand, the KWPCSG committee is determined to reduce the cost of its programme without reducing its programme, but, on the other, it will be hoping that a number of these events e.g. the Coffee & Chats, will become self-financing with small contributions on the day from those attending. Look out for our newly-purchased **big blue collection buckets** or, for those who prefer to donate electronically, our new **card reader**.

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

REMINDER

Annual subscriptions of £5 were due on 3rd January 2024

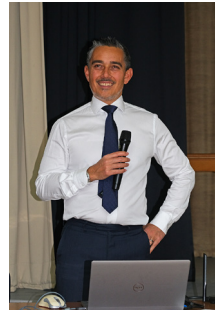
If you have not completed a standing order with your bank, payments can be made either by cheque or cash to any member of the committee. If you no longer wish to remain as a member of the Support Group, please inform a committee member in order that we can amend our records.

FUTURE EVENTS



NEW PANEL DISCUSSION AT PERSHORE

In June 2022 Pershore hosted its first panel discussion with retired GP **Chris Perks** representing primary care, consultant oncologist **Lisa Capaldi** representing acute care and **Simeon Greene** from Wolverhampton acting as the voice of patients. 48 people attended the event, plus 30 others who watched the hybrid event live. This time there will be a new panel assembled at the Wychavon Civic Centre in Pershore on **Tuesday, March 19th. (18.30 for 19.00 start)**. Representing acute care in Worcestershire will be **Consultant Urological Surgeon, Paul Rajjayabun**. He will be joined on the panel by a **Pershore GP** (primary care) and **Paul Hanson** (patient representative), whom we featured in the December Supporter magazine.



Paul Rajjayabun speaking to the group in Kidderminster

REACHING OUT INTO SHROPSHIRE

Our first Coffee & Chat of 2024 sees the group heading over the border into Shropshire to the small market town of Cleobury Mortimer. The event will take place at the Cleobury Mortimer Golf Club, which is featured on page 11 as the home of the annual Rainbow Day charity, the main donor to KWPCSG in 2023. The event takes place on Wednesday, March 27th. (10.30-12.30) and is open to members, their partners and non-members.



So where is Cleobury Mortimer? You can reach it from Bewdley (8 miles away) by driving through the Wye Forest. It's also on the A4117 between Kidderminster and Ludlow. It's just a mile from the Worcestershire border and 12 miles to the Cleve Hills. For those using Satnav, the postal code is DY14 8HQ.

TACKLE MANAGER AT KIDDERMINSTER

The first Kidderminster open evening of 2024 will feature as its guest speaker Sarah Gray from Tackle, the federation representing the 120 UK prostate cancer support groups (PCSGs). Members may be familiar with Sarah Gray, who for more than 3 years has been the charity's National Support and Development Manager. Sarah was our guest speaker at our March 2021 meeting but, due to Covid restrictions, the event was via Zoom. Sarah will keep us updated with PC developments on the national stage. Over the past year Tackle has developed new ways of engaging with the support groups, which include a popular monthly Zoom meeting for PCSG leaders and a monthly Zoom meeting for those with advanced PC. It has also led the way on the Boys need Bins campaign and is pressing hard for greater community PSA testing..



Sarah Gray, guest speaker at the event

MARY'S CORNER



I started getting men with prostate cancer together when they were diagnosed so that they could talk to each other and offer support to them as well as get support. These meetings were just in Kidderminster Hospital where I worked as the Clinic Nurse Specialist in Urology. I had decided that of all the urological cancers that I dealt with, the huge number of men affected by prostate cancer was overwhelming compared to other cancers in urology.

Therefore, we were able to use the Mill Brook suite, which had a cosy waiting area with tables and chairs, and then we got supplies of coffee and cake from the catering department. I was told by the consultant I worked with that men would not talk to each other, but he was wrong, and he joined us also for a chat. All these facilities are no longer available, so we were lucky to have a good source to start us on our road to forming the Kidderminster Prostate Cancer Support Group.

The reason I am writing this is because we are now offering up to six Coffee & Chat mornings throughout the county, and they have become a success at helping men to talk to each other and also for new men to join us. A simple straightforward event, where partners are welcomed also, and it has helped us increase our membership.

Our AGM is now only held on Zoom so members and the committee do not have to venture forth in late January. The link which had been on our website homepage for a few weeks was correct, but, unfortunately, the link sent out by email to all members a few days before the event was to a previous event. This meant that several members tried to get through without success. It is important that our members have the opportunity to join us for this event. 23 managed to do so, so I do apologise for this error and we will ensure this does not happen again. Thank you to those who managed it.

I hope to meet up with some of you at the events that we have planned for this year and will try to attend most of them.

Our dates for meetings in the north of the county are:

- **Monday 22nd April 2024 at the Harriers Social Club, 7.00 for 7.30 p.m. start**
- **Speakers Sarah Gray (representing Tackle). Discussion will include mental health issues. Alison and Andrea will give an update on the Partners Group**
- **Monday, 15th. July – Harriers Social Club – speaker Adel Makar (Consultant Urologist)**
- **Monday 21st. October - Harriers Social Club – speaker to be arranged**

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

KWPCSG COMMITTEE 2024

Mary Symons	Chair	01299 823166
Dick Herbert	Vice Chair	01299 250598
Paul Markall	Treasurer	01562 751355
Nicky Langford	Secretary	07590 624426
Derek Scully	Support Contact Co-ordinator	01886 833236
Peter Corbishley	Trustee, Supporter Editor	07876 556466
Dan Cook	Trustee, Website Manager	01299 887277
Mark Hall	Minute Secretary	01299 879953
Alison Hanson	Trustee, Tackle rep., Partners	07484 297405
Gerard Kenny	Co-opted Member	07791 137600
Jeremy Motteram	Finance, Co-opted Member	07713 068853

Please contact us if you need support or advice

FUTURE EVENTS

COFFEE & CHAT HEADS TO LEDBURY

Once again, the KWPCSG's Coffee & Chat programme explores new ground in 2024. As you will know from previous articles, we have members who live beyond the Worcestershire borders, including in the Bridgnorth area (Shropshire), Stourbridge and Dudley (West Midlands) and Ledbury (Herefordshire).

On Thursday, April 11th. our second Coffee & Chat of 2024 takes us out of the county and just a few miles across the border into **Herefordshire**. The venue is the **Ledbury Rugby Club**. We realised on our visit there in late January what a superb venue this could be for our group, with a huge free car park, no steps into and within the club house, a large conference room and boardroom, access to and views over the rugby pitches and on-site catering. The site is set on the edge of the town and the address is **Ledbury Rugby Club, New Club House, Ross Road, Ledbury HR8 2LP (tel. 01531 631788)**.

What will be very special about this event is that it will be the first time we will combine a Coffee & Chat with a **Partners' Group** meeting. In other words, partners attending the event are invited to join **Alison Hanson, Andrea Ferns** and others who helped to set up the group at about 11.30 for just under an hour before we reconvene briefly before leaving at 12.30. Perfect timing for some who will have driven a few miles to get to Ledbury to adjourn for lunch in one of Ledbury's impressive pubs or restaurants or – weather permitting – to add in a walk in the Malverns from British Camp just 4 miles away.



Conference room at Ledbury Rugby Club



Boardroom where the Partner Group will meet



The bar area adorned with Herefordshire hops!

FUTURE EVENTS



CHANCE TO JOIN A POP-UP CHOIR

Men who have never sung in public are being urged to join a new choir for a gala performance in **Kidderminster**.

The **Wyre Men Sing** Choir has been launched by the **Kidderminster Male Choir** to mark their 120th anniversary and to raise much-needed funds for the Kidderminster and Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group.

The project almost collapsed before it started when an anticipated sponsor pulled out in December but it has been secured thanks to the generosity of the public and local businesses, covering costs such as sheet music and rehearsal rooms.

Thirteen “have a go” singers have already been recruited but it is hoped to swell the ranks to 40. Weekly rehearsals will start on **Tuesday, 16th April** culminating in the gala performance on Saturday June 29 at Kidderminster’s St George’s Church.

John Parkinson, choir member and communications manager, said members were passionate about letting other men, who have never thought about singing, experience the enjoyment and camaraderie of being in a choir. They are also determined to raise thousands of pounds in tribute of stalwart member Colin Tomkinson, who died from prostate cancer, which is likely to affect one in eight men at some point in their lifetime.

Mr Parkinson added: “Shockingly, one man dies from the disease on average every 45 minutes, and part of the support group’s work is to provide potentially life-saving tests to diagnose prostate cancer, for which the prognosis is good if detected early.”

Wyre Men Sing is free to join, and it is hoped recruits will ask family and friends to sponsor them in aid of the support group. No previous singing experience or ability to read music is needed. Members must simply be able to commit to rehearsals on **Tuesdays from 7.30pm until 9.30pm at the Severns Club, Stourport**, and to take part in the concert, which will also feature Kidderminster Male Choir and perhaps other groups.

To sign up and register, email wyremensing@gmail.com or search **Wyre Men Sing on Facebook**.



Kidderminster Male Choir at a recent concert

Come on, you men! Join our pop-up choir in Kidderminster (see above for details)



NEW TREASURER SOUGHT

Having taken over the role of KWPCSG treasurer in 2011 and approaching what he describes as a 'significant birthday', **Paul Markall** has decided to step down from this important role once a successor can be found.

Paul and his wife, **Val**, who is also a committee member of the support group, rarely miss the group's events across the county. Together they keep a careful check of the funds flowing into and out of the group's accounts. Both were part of the KWPCSG group which worked tirelessly for many years in raising funds for the **Rory the Robot** project.

Over his years with the support group, Paul has been instrumental in creating important links with regular donors to the group's coffers, including the **Bewdley Boxing Day Tractor Rally**, the **Bromsgrove MG Owners Club** and the **senior sections of Wharton Park and Bewdley Pines Golf Clubs**. Paul set up the **Shed** at the **Leapgate Farm Activity Centre** near Stourport.

The fact that Paul will retain his position on the committee to concentrate on fundraising activities means that fundraising will not be a requirement of the new treasurer. Maintaining a record of the group's monthly income and expenditure will be the principal task. He is happy to help support his successor, who will also be supported by **Jeremy Motteram**, co-opted onto the committee at the January AGM and whose background is in finance.

Anyone interested in finding out more about this role is asked to phone Mary (01299 823166) or Paul (01562 751355) or email Paul on valpaulmarkall@yahoo.co.uk



Paul Markall (treasurer) and his wife and committee member, Val



..... or join our **Men United in Song** choir in **Worcester** (see page 20 for details)



MISSING MEN PROSTATE AWARENESS



Our grateful thanks to our volunteers for adding to the list of 42 pubs, clubs and hubs in the December magazine. The total has now reached 89 which includes:

Chestnut, Lower Moor, Pershore
Coach & Horses, Worcester
Ounce, Worcester
Dragon Inn, Worcester
Garden Kitchen, Bewdley
Hopley's Farm Shop, Bewdley
Mug House, Bedley
Cock & Magpie, Bewdley (50)
Golden Scissors Turkish Barber, Bewdley
Tesco Express, Bewdley
Retreat Bar, Bewdley
Real Ale Tavern, Bewdley
Co-op Supermarket, Bewdley
Droitwich Library
Droitwich Sports Centre
SW Citizens Advice, Malvern
Crown & Sandys, Ombersley
King's Arms, Ombersley (60)
Cross Keys, Ombersley
Holt Fleet, Holt Heath
Talbot, Stourbridge
Ye Olde Horseshoe Inn, Belbroughton
Swan, Blakedown
The Old House at Home, Blakedown

Station Inn, Kidderminster
King & Castle, Kidderminster
Weavers Real Ale House, Kidderminster
Railway Train Inn, Kidderminster (70)
Chester Tavern, Kidderminster
Nikki's Barbers, Kidderminster
Droitwich Local Centre
Stourbridge Institute Social Club
Stourbridge FC
Stourbridge Golf Club
Bird in Hand, Oldswinford, Stourbridge
Rose & Crown, Burford, Tenbury Wells
The Bridge, Tenbury Wells
The Vaults, Tenbury Wells (80)
Market Tavern, Tenbury Wells
King's Head, Tenbury Wells
Pembroke House, Tenbury Wells
Fountain Inn, Oldwood, Tenbury Wells
Unwind Bar, Tenbury Wells
Simmadown, Kidderminster
The Islandpool, Kidderminster
The Lock Inn, Wolverley, Kidderminster
Persnore Wellbeing Hub (89)

GRAHAM FULFORD CONFERENCE

Back in early December Sarah Gray (Tackle's National Support and Development Manager) and I attended the Graham Fulford Charitable Trust (GFCT) conference at Warwick. The 100 guests were predominantly from other PC support groups (PCSGs) but also included associates with legal and accountancy backgrounds, plus high-ranking officers from both the Hampshire and Hertfordshire Police Force who regularly offer PSA tests to their members.

Just a month previously, GFCT had been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and equivalent to an MBE. The award was created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and is being continued by King Charles. Graham Fulford, the founder of the trust, said, 'We are delighted to receive this very prestigious award on behalf of the hundreds of volunteers who have worked tirelessly for the charity over the past 19 years, giving men in Warwickshire the opportunity to find out more about their prostate and general health.'

As many of our members and readers will know, its own Kidderminster & Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group became the first PCSG in the country to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2017. The award meant so much to the late Paul Brothwell, who was the group's co-founder and chairman until his death in August 2020, and our present chair, Mary Symons as it reflected the work of so many people in awareness-raising, fundraising and supporting members across the county since its creation in 2000.





HEALTHWATCH WORCESTER SPOTLIGHT REPORT

Here is part of the report from Healthwatch Worcestershire based on the surveys carried out at the Kidderminster and Pershore PSA testing events in 2023.

Methodology and Early Results



Kidderminster & Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group

[KWPCSG] is voluntary sector organisation in Worcestershire which supports prostate cancer patients and their families and is a member of HWW's Reference & Engagement Group.

We have collaborated with KWPCSG to survey the experience of access to PSA testing from men who attended 2 events organised by KWPCSG. Those events took place at Pershore in September and in Kidderminster in October 2023. The survey gathered the experiences of 156 men who attended the 2 events as well as the location of their GP practice in the county. Most of the attendees identified as white male aged over 60.

Whilst the responses were mixed with some respondents reporting favourably on access to PSA testing 48 attendees reported that their GP had either discouraged them or refused to provide a PSA test. This included 16 respondents who had a family history of prostate cancer.

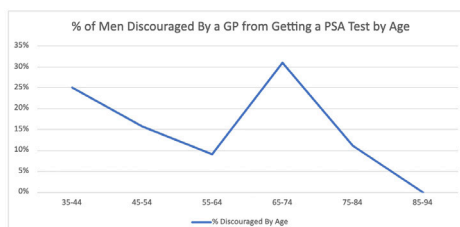
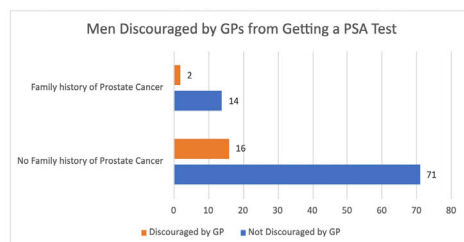
In summary the results indicated that there is an unwarranted variation in access to PSA testing under NHS England's 'Informed Choice Programme' and at this early stage in the project we conclude that the following recommendations could improve access to PSA testing to men over 50 without symptoms:

Recommendation 1

To write to the GP Practices in Worcestershire with a request for assurance that the Practice is complying with NHS England's 'Informed Choice Programme' for PSA testing.

Recommendation 2

To inform the CEO of NHS Herefordshire & Worcestershire of the survey results to date and HWW's concerns about the apparent unwarranted variation in access to NHS England's 'Informed Choice Programme' for PSA testing in Worcestershire.





FUNDRAISING



LET'S CELEBRATE OUR DONORS

In the December 2023 magazine we devoted several pages to our **super volunteers**, helping to share the burden in organising and manning Coffee & Chats, talking to people or giving talks at awareness-raising events, ensuring PCUK posters are on display in almost 100 pubs, clubs and hubs across Worcestershire and helping the Partners' group to become established. This time our focus is on our donors.

Kidderminster & Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group is a charity, one of hundreds of thousand of charities up and down the UK heavily reliant on the goodwill of others to allow us to provide services for its members. As a charity we must convince our kind **benefactors** of our key role in the county community – not once, but every year - providing them with details of our membership, our support for them and their families and our increasingly important role in raising awareness of prostate cancer, including our need as a nation to diagnose more men at an earlier stage.

Although several donors choose KWPCSG each or most years as one of their designated charities, we know we have to earn their support. This has led to changes over the years. Between 2012-17 much of the focus of the group was in raising funds towards the provision of **robotically-assisted surgery (RAS) at the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch**. This campaign was documented in great detail in the June 2022 Supporter Magazine and, finally, in October 2022, the first men in Worcestershire were treated 'on home soil' by grace of the Da Vinci robotic machine.

Since 2021 the number of events organised by the group has doubled from 6 to 12, then trebled to 18 in 2024 with the inclusion of meetings for the **newly-created Partners' Group**. The Supporter magazine has doubled in size, too, in those years, and the group is once again organising and funding **PSA testing events**. Membership of 482 (January 1st. 2024) is at an all-time high, but, as we broaden our reach over the county, so our expenditure increases. And this is where we need to raise our own money e.g. at the **Pershore Plum Festival** and the **Bewdley Boxing Day Tractor Rally**, and to turn to our donors for their support – support, however, which we cannot take for granted.



Pershore Brass raising funds for KWPCSG on Christmas Eve at Wyre Piddle

This feature is devoted to some of our key group donors. Some have turned to our group after a relative or one of their own members has contracted prostate cancer. Others have simply become aware of the importance of offering men with PC and their families a new community and one where they will not feel alone. Whatever their reasons for offering us financial support, **on behalf of our Chair and founder, Mary Symons, we thank you all for your generosity and will do all we can to ensure your contributions are spent wisely.**

Peter Corbishley



FUNDRAISING



RAINBOW FOUNDATION : SERVING A RURAL COMMUNITY

When **Ange Gaskell** was planning the 60th. birthday party in 2010 for her husband, **Jon Gaskell**, to be celebrated with golfing friends and family at his beloved **Cleobury Mortimer Golf Club**, little did they know that this modest event would have ballooned 14 years later into the **Rainbow Cancer Care Foundation**, one of the most important charitable events in the area which supports the needs of local charities.

Just a few weeks before that party, **Ange** lost her mother to cancer. The event still went ahead with 40 guests and a collection raised £ 475 for **Macmillans and Cancer Research UK**. Jon and Ange's golfing friends decided this could become an annual event, so the **Rainbow Day** was born, an event which takes place annually on a Friday in late June.



Midlands Air Ambulance (another beneficiary of the Rainbow Charity) at the golf club

The amounts raised over the next few years increased steadily for what was growing in reputation as a well organised, fun event. 'We have a fantastic team,' said Jon, keen to stress how determined they became to raise funds no longer for national charities but for deserving cancer charities in the north of Worcestershire and south-east Shropshire.



Perfect weather for an earlier Rainbow Day event

In 2018 Ange was diagnosed with cancer. At the last Rainbow Day she attended that year in a wheelchair, over £ 25,000 was raised, allowing her to realise her dream of amassing in total over £ 100,000 for cancer-related local charities. 'It was her baby,' Jon added. 'She had taken it on single-handedly and inspired others.' Sadly, just one month later, Ange passed away.

By this time, the event had attracted sponsorship from, among many others, **Steven Eagell Toyota (Stourbridge) car dealership**, **Hills Ford Transit Centre (Mustow Green) dealership**, **Adam Hewitt Ltd. (Harvington)**, **Thermotec Plastics Ltd. (Birmingham)**, **Chris Arnold (Central Accident Ltd., Wednesbury)** and **Streetbike Motorcycles (Halesowen)**. The latter reflects Jon's former career as a professional motorcyclist, winning British and European championships back in the 1980s. 'Without the support year after year of these companies, we would have struggled,' Jon added.

But it wasn't just big-name sponsors. Almost everything they needed to do, from printing application forms and posters to refreshments and prizes, is covered by generous small businesses and individuals in the area, reducing their outgoings to an absolute minimum. 'Every pound we raise goes directly to our charities.'



FUNDRAISING



At the presentation day in October 2023 the record £ 30,015 was shared equally between the following six charities: **Midlands Air Ambulance, Guts UK (stomach cancer charity), Millbrook Suite (Kidderminster Hospital), Acorns, Macmillans and KWPCSG.** The £ 5000 received by our group was the largest donation in 2023 and allowed us, among other things, to organise a PSA testing event in Kidderminster in July and pay for new mics to improve the PA system at our open meetings. We are extremely grateful for the generosity of the Rainbow Trust and wish the event further success over future years.

For any of you golfers reading this and feeling that you would like to support the event in 2024, which takes place on **Friday, June 28th.**, Jon recommends that you **contact the Cleobury Mortimer Golf Club** (tel. 01299 271112) for more details. The first group tees off at 08.30 and the last one at about 14.30. The whole day is devoted to sport, entertainment and great food. This year should be a special one for Jon and his team. 'Our goal is to reach the £ 200,000 mark. We've now reached £ 181,000, so that target is in sight.' One wonders what this incredible, closely-knit group of friends and golfers will go on to achieve, but, at 75, Jon did not sound like a man ready to retire from the inspirational Rainbow Trust.

*So where is Cleobury Mortimer? You can reach it from **Bewdley** (8 miles away) by driving through the Wyre Forest. It's also on the A4117 between **Kidderminster and Ludlow**. It's just a mile from the Worcestershire border and 12 miles to the Clee Hills. **The Cleobury Mortimer Golf Club is the location for our next Coffee & Chat on Wednesday, March 27th. (10.30-12.30 – see page 3 for more details).***

Peter Corbishley



Founders and more recent volunteers of Rainbow holding a cheque showing the amount raised since 2010



FUNDRAISING



BEWDLEY TRACTOR RUN

The organising procedure for the **Bewdley Tractor Run** starts at the beginning of October each year. The main co-ordinator is **Ray Attwood**, who has been running the event for approximately 20 years.

The annual event, which seeks to raise money for charity, starts from the **Far Forest Showground at Callow Hill near Bewdley**, takes place on Boxing Day, passing through the Worcestershire countryside, Stourport and finally into Bewdley. Thousands gather to watch the event involving vintage and modern vehicles. The mayors of Bewdley and Stourport are actively involved.

In 2023 a record total sum of £4000 was raised and split between our charity and the **Worcestershire Acute Hospital Charity Trust**. This year's event received TV coverage on the **BBC Midlands Today** programme, **BBC Hereford & Worcester radio** and **local newspapers** which throw the spotlight on the group's activities and raise awareness for prostate cancer.

Paul Markall

FAR FOREST SHOW

The Far Forest Show is a local country show held on two days in August. The event has many local food, wine and craft stalls, together with various displays. There are also competitions for cakes and floral displays. The outdoor arena has activities such as motorbike display teams, dog shows, dancing and birds of prey demonstrations. Also on the showground is a small fair for children, vintage and classic vehicles together with tractor rides around the site, in fact something to suit every age group.

Several of KWPCSG members volunteer with organising the parking of about 1500 cars on one or both days in return for free entry to the show and refreshments. This results in a donation from the Show committee. The Show manager is David Bell, and the Society Chairman is John Guy, from whom we received a letter last year thanking our guys for their help as John stated that we are the first people the visitors meet when they arrive.

Paul Markall

BROMSGROVE & DISTRICT MG OWNERS CLUB

The MG Owners Club was initially formed in 2002 and has moved over the years to a number of venues but now based at the Lickey End Social Club. The committee is headed up by Chairman Dave Alan and ably supported by Secretary Phil McNeil and have been very supportive in making donations to our Group over a number of years.

There are currently 53 MG cars registered at the club with new members joining on a regular basis. The accompanying photo shows members at their recent AGM.

Paul Markall





FUNDRAISING



PERSHORE BRASS AT CHRISTMAS



Christmas Eve in the cold and drizzle in Wyre Piddle

For the first time for several years **Pershore Brass Band** chose KWPCSG as its designated Christmas charity. The band started its programme with performances at the **Georgian Fair** in Broad Street, Pershore, and **Pershore Market** at the start of the month, performing traditional carols and Christmas anthems. Their most successful events in terms of generous donations were at the **Bell in Eckington** at the end of a

Pershore 41 Club dinner and the traditional Christmas Eve finale on the village green at **Wyre Piddle**. Here the efforts of **Carrie Oakley** and her team distributing mulled wine to what seemed like half the village added another £ 400 to the total of £ 1042 which **Marshall Faizey** duly handed over to our group. Many thanks to Marshall and his dedicated band who performed outdoors in cold and sometimes wet conditions.

PERSHORE: LASTING GIFT TO THE TOWN

When **Cllr. Chris Parsons** became Mayor of Pershore in 2018, it was not for the first time. When he completed what became a 3-year period in May 2021, he had amassed no fewer than 11 years as the town's Mayor and 10 as Deputy Mayor.

As Mayor he had opted for cancer charities as his designated charity. In 2018 he chose to donate funds raised to provide support for men with prostate cancer and their families in the Pershore area. Fundraising was very successful in the first 18 months of his period as Mayor, but then most of the subsequent events planned had to be cancelled due to the Covid restrictions.

Nevertheless, over £ 12,000 was raised and a new charity set up bearing the title **Pershore Prostate Cancer Support Fund**. This is administered by **three trustees – Chris, SWPCSG chair Gordon Kingston and Jo Dodd**, chair of the Pershore Wellbeing Hub and a former nurse. Since its creation, the charity has granted contributions towards the **2023 PSA testing event in Pershore**, which attracted 155 men, and the SWPCSG tombola stand at the **Pershore Plum Festival**.

Support can relate to the many ways which can improve the lives and well-being of those affected. Difficulties with travel costs, household chores and daily living can mean that family budgets can be seriously affected. If you or someone you know in the Pershore area could benefit from help of any sort, why not contact us to check whether we can help?

There is no means testing or bureaucratic process to go through. The criteria for assistance are only to ensure that real help can benefit those provided with support.

Call Gordon Kingston on 01386 462253 for further information.



GIVE GENEROUSLY TO WAHT UROLOGY CHARITY

Every year our specialist Urology service performs around 2,500 surgical procedures, sees more than 22,000 patients in clinic and deals with over 1500 emergencies. We are based at the **Alexandra Hospital in Redditch** where we have our Urology Theatres delivering state-of-the-art surgery, plus our specialist wards with world-class expertise and nursing care.

The team of Consultant Urologists, Urology Nurse Specialists and support staff also provide specialist care for patients at all sites across Worcestershire's acute hospitals. We are a **recognised training centre** for Urology - helping prepare the next generation of surgeons and nurses for the future.

The **Urology Charitable Fund** supports additional projects, equipment and service improvements that are not funded by core NHS provision. Funds raised so far have supported our staff to attend additional learning opportunities and training events which then enhance the knowledge and skill set of the whole Urology team - all of which enables our service to provide the very best care for our patients.

Future projects will aim to continue developing the skills of our team as well as provide additional investment for our Urology clinical areas, improving the environment for our patients. Funds will also support provision of additional medical equipment, dedicated to the treatment of Worcestershire's Urology patients.

Thank you for your support

Paul Rajjayabun

You can find out more and donate at <https://wahcharity.org/urology>

(Any donations made on this page will be channelled specifically into the Urology fund)

The attached QR code also links to this unique donation portal.

Or you can text UROLOGY to 70580 to donate £3





MEMBERS



IAN SMITH : A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

2022 was always going to be a big year for my family. My daughter was due to give birth to our first grandchild in the April and I was due to retire on 31st May. Our grandson Milo was duly born on 27th April.

Just 13 days later, my wife Lit died at home at the age of 60. Lit had a rare form of genetic degenerative brain disease called Cerebellar Ataxia, similar in day-to-day living to MND. She had been deteriorating over the previous 15 years and by 2022 was wheelchair bound and took all of her nourishment and drugs via a PEG. I was her main carer but was supported by a small army of carers, therapists, etc. Just organising the weekly timetable for her was a job in itself.

My retirement happened as planned on 31st May, which would have been our 36th wedding anniversary. I had previously been the Chair of a Top 30 firm of Chartered Accounts with 7 offices and about 450 staff.



Me at the Three Counties Showground with my son-in-law

Retirement, or my Third Phase as I prefer, was never going to be quiet as I was continuing with the 4 charitable trust roles I held (3 as Chair) and as a Governor at the University of Worcester.

The day before Lit died, I had received a follow call from a routine medical a couple of weeks previously to say my PSA was raised. Whilst not very high (6.24), it was much higher than each of my 9 scores prior to the pandemic (all less than 0.8).

To cut a very long story short, after an MRI, a transperineal biopsy and a PSMA PET scan, I was diagnosed with Gleason 5 + 4 - incurable Prostate Cancer which had spread to my rectum.

Having not had a good experience with my first urologist, I was (and continue to be) delighted to meet my Oncologist, who has been brilliant, and I feel is treating me as a person rather than a cancer-riddled prostate gland.



My late wife Lit

I started Androgen Deprivation Therapy in September 2022 (Prostap + Abiraterone + Prednisolone + Zoledronic Acid) and had 37 fractions of radiotherapy at Worcestershire Oncology Centre in January and February 2023. I thought the team at Worcester were wonderful.

I have suffered from most of the common side effects: insomnia, hot flushes and fatigue. I have definitely noticed some changes in my personality living without testosterone. However, it is doing what it is meant to do so far, and my PSA has been undetectable for more than a year now.

My charity and University work keeps me very busy. Away from that, I have travelled to Portugal, the USA and the West Coast of Scotland. With some close friends we walked our third annual stage on the South-West Coast Path, walking 110 miles in a week. With my one remaining critical illness policy which paid out, I scratched a 30- year itch and bought a 1976 5.9 litre V8 Bristol 411 to join my existing Morgan. I subsequently did a 700-mile round trip to the Le Mans Classic in the Bristol (with the standing joke being whether I would need to stop more often for a pee or refuelling).

I live in a house we built 25 years ago in the middle of 40 acres on the remains of my wife's family farm and have a number of environmental projects on the go (for example, I am currently planting another 600 trees this winter).

I am lucky that my daughter, son-in-law and grandson live 30 yards away from me on the farm, so I see them every day. The friends who I knew would step up to the plate have done just that - a number of other people have talked a good game but done very little.

I have got involved in some Prostate Cancer UK projects. I did some fund raising during my radiotherapy and topped the Run the Month leaderboard (albeit I walked!). One of my charities provided a six-figure sum to a PCUK research project at Newcastle University which I visited a couple of months ago and sounds very promising. More recently I wrote a personal letter to a number of leaders of Worcestershire organisations and venues about the Boys need Bins campaign and got a brilliant response.

Throughout my illness I have kept my physical activity high: walking a lot (I averaged 17,500 steps a day in 2023), golfing every week, cycling on my e-bike, gym work and farm work. Despite all of that, in the last couple of months I have been suffering from very bad muscle and joint pain and lack of flexibility. They've reduced my steroids, and I am currently having a number of other tests done. I have found that setback hard to deal with.

I have just joined KWPCSG, started going to Men's Space at St Richard's Hospice and playing Walking Rugby with Worcester Warriors Foundation.

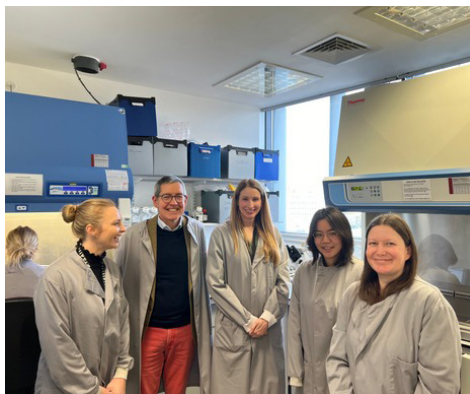
I've also been writing a blog about my experience of living with the disease which has achieved over 90,000 views on LinkedIn so far (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ianjcsmith/>). Writing that helps me, but I know from the feedback that there are men who have now had treatment successfully who would not have found the disease without reading the blog.

As something of a planner by nature, I have been planning for the worst but living the best life I can. I set myself a big stretch target when I was diagnosed, to speak at Milo's 21st Birthday Party – probably ridiculously optimistic, but "Project Milo 21" keeps me going.

Ian Smith



With my family at Hanbury Hall



With Ellie Starbuck (PC UK), Dr Jennifer Munkley and some of her team at Newcastle University



I NEVER SAW THAT COMING!

BUY ONE, GET ONE FREE

15th December 2023 (day 1648 since my diagnosis): Find myself in an ambulance on the way to Worcestershire Royal Hospital. 45 minutes earlier I was undergoing an ECG at the medical centre as part of the investigation into my low blood pressure. I went to stand up from the couch, almost collapsed, so the health care assistant called my GP who decided the only safe place for me was hospital. Landed in the Ambulatory Care section of A&E. Only a 15-minute wait in the ambulance, so things looked good. However, the horror stories started soon after. One patient claimed to have been waiting 48 hours for a bed. A doctor came and saw me after about two hours, then another, a blood sample was taken and a canula fitted in the back of my left hand.

16th December 2023 (day 1649): Awakened from a poor sleep at 00:30 hours. Chest x-ray has been requested. That went well, but then the plot thickened. Another doctor came and listened to my lungs, then informs me that the earlier examination had discovered a crackling noise. The crackling noise and shadow on one of my lungs, along with infection markers in my blood, had an unwanted advantage. I was found a bed very quickly in the Oncology Ward, Laurel 2, as I was half-way through a chemo cycle. The infection needed to be treated as a matter of urgency. Being sent to hospital to investigate my low blood pressure became a secondary task.

18th December 2023 (day 1651): Spent the weekend connected to a series of antibiotic drips to overcome my chest infection. Anyone who has spent time in hospital over a weekend may remember that, apart from routine tasks, not a lot happens, as many of



The doctors claim the antibiotics cured my chest infection, I like to think the coffee and cake helped!

the diagnostic clinics are closed. This led to a mad scramble on Monday morning as I was wheeled along for an Echocardiogram, with wheelchairs and beds vying for space in the corridors. The scan was okay, indicating that my heart was not the cause of my low blood pressure.

19th December 2023 (day 1652): One of life's greatest puzzles was resolved today - did Mark have a brain? I was reading a book when a porter arrived with a wheelchair to take me for a brain scan. Later I told my brothers and friends about the scan which met with a selection of comments. Some printable, including references to looking in other places apart from my head and did they find my brain?

Had never spent more than two nights in hospital prior to this episode, but this was different. Since my diagnosis I have never considered myself to be sick. Yes, I have a life-limiting illness, but I could still get out of bed and walk around. But here other patients were really sick. Some were suffering life-changing conditions, cancer having invaded their spine or joints. One was now going to spend the remainder of his life in a wheelchair. But the most distressing thing was witnessing patients in pain. I have always been assured that, when the time came, I would not be in pain or discomfort as the end approached.

20th December 2023 (day 1653): A day I would never want to repeat. During the junior doctors' strike my own consultant, Lisa Capaldi, was helping on the ward during the morning doctors' rounds. Once finished, I managed to have a chat with Lisa. It was a difficult conversation to start. I wanted Lisa to tell me what to do. I had experienced a lot of side effects with the Cabazitaxel chemotherapy, and the prospect of further cycles was daunting. I was going into the "next" cycle still suffering the side effects from the earlier cycles. With a lot of support from Lisa, I eventually made the decision myself to withdraw from chemotherapy. Sitting on the end of my bed, we joked about things and discussed the possibility of clinical trials. I have no shame in admitting I shed tears when I made my decision, effectively to reduce my life expectancy. I mentioned to Lisa that I was looking for a title for my next Supporter article. Lisa came up with, "Buy One - Get One Free." Thank you for the title and your support, Lisa.

22nd December 2023 (day 1655): My brother, Chris, has just driven down from Blackpool to visit me. I was equally excited to see him and the Americano and cake he brought with him. It was by this time obvious that I would not be travelling north to spend Christmas with him and my niece's family. What I was really going to miss was the

pantomime my niece had booked tickets for on Boxing Day.

23rd December 2023 (day 1656): Chris had spent the night locally and managed to "rescue" my car from outside the GP practice in Evesham and park it outside my garage. Luckily, there were no parking stickers on the windscreen.

The stay was one that I wished I had not experienced. Struggling to find peace, with one patient regularly pressing the call button requesting pain relief or hallucinating and using abusive language towards the ward staff. Another patient seemed to have missed out on life's social niceties, using his phone on hands-free late at night once the lights had been turned off, going through his contacts list to tell everyone that he was in hospital. With such a booming voice I was convinced he did not actually need the phone.



Main entrance to the Royal Marsden Hospital.

25th December 2023 (day 1658): I had never expected to spend what might be my last Christmas in hospital, but the chest infection was being rather troublesome. Just as my temperature and infection markers settled, there would be a temperature spike and we started again with more blood tests and antibiotics. Christmas dinner was adequate. There was even a small gift from the hospital to the patients, a rather nice touch. However, things were looking better later in the day, and, during doctors' rounds, I was informed that, providing there were no more spikes, I would be discharged on Boxing Day.

26th December 2023 (day 1659): The escape committee had met and patients assigned to digging the various escape tunnels. It was amazing how often we talked about escaping from hospital. The simple fact was that we were there voluntarily, but the common factor was we all looked forward to the day of discharge. I got home at about 16:00 hrs and switched on the television. It being Boxing Day, the film had to be "The Great Escape." I had a chuckle!

11th January 2024 (day 1675): Pottering about at home when the phone rang. A nicely-spoken lady introduced herself, saying she was calling from the Royal Marsden Hospital and offering me an

appointment on Wednesday 17th January with one of Professor de Bono's team to discuss my possible involvement in clinical trials. I was caught out initially as I was not aware that a referral had been submitted. I did, however, accept the offer.

17th January 2024 (day 1681): Travelled to Sutton (south of London) on my own by train (about 4 hours depending on connections). First the blood test, then the consultation followed by an unplanned ultra-sound scan to locate a tumour site for a later biopsy. All finished, I headed home, arriving at just before 20:45.

23rd January 2024 (day 1687): Travelled down to London and met Phil, my elder brother who lives in Devon. We travelled up to the hospital together the following day. Checked in at the clinical trials department early in the morning. Knew this was going to be a long day. First the blood tests, then paperwork which would have made a civil servant shudder. Then more blood tests and test from the more unsavoury regions. Then a CT scan, then an ultrasound guided biopsy. A break, then a full-body MRI. All packed into one day. Now the wait for the results.

Mark Howard

Men United in Song *is* a fresh **Challenge** for men in 2024, inspired by the nationwide

interest in community singing generated by people like Gareth Malone (The Choir) and groups like the Military Wives Choir.

Beginning in March, **Worcester Male Voice Choir** wants **40 local men** to commit to a 10-week project and raise money for **Prostate Cancer UK** by learning to sing together under the direction of a professional Music Director. It will culminate in May with a live performance at the Swan Theatre in Worcester and later a national performance in Nottingham in front of an audience of family, friends and members of the public.

No previous singing experience is necessary, just a willingness to step outside your comfort zone and give it a go. Here is what a previous participant said: "We were just a bunch of ordinary guys from all walks of life, most of us had never sung before, and we sounded awesome! This is something all men should try once in their lives and it's raising money for a great cause too!"

**So, if you would like to know more, please contact menunited@wmvc.uk
We would love to hear from you so you can start YOUR singing journey!**



PARTNERS



FIRST MEETING OF PARTNER SUPPORT GROUP

Fifteen partners of men who have prostate cancer attended the first meeting of the newly-formed **Prostate Cancer Partner Group**. The meeting, in November, was held in the café at **Perdiswell Leisure Centre**. It was an opportunity for the partners to break the ice and chat in a relaxed setting about their personal experiences of living with someone with prostate cancer.

Gwyn Scolari, whose partner has been treated for prostate cancer, said: "I was really keen to come to the meeting, everyone was so friendly and it quickly became obvious that we all would benefit from meeting other people in the same position. It's great to swap stories, but I think the group is going to be a place where we learn from each other too."

The group has been launched through the efforts of **Alison Hanson** and **Andrea Ferns**. Their husbands are both receiving prostate cancer treatment and they were introduced through the Kidderminster and Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group.

Alison said: "It was definitely a success, there was lots of chatter about the issues surrounding prostate cancer for partners but also socialising, which was lovely. I'm really looking forward to the next meeting."

The second meeting was on Friday 23 February at Perdiswell Leisure Centre. The meetings are being held at the same as **Walking Football** which is well attended by men who have or are living with prostate cancer.

Our next meeting sees us heading over the border into Herefordshire. We have been invited to join the first Ledbury Coffee & Chat on **Thursday, April 11th. (10.30-12.30) at the Ledbury Rugby Club (see page 5 for more details)**. At 11.30 those who wish to join the Partner Group will adjourn to the more private setting of the boardroom. As always, coffee and cakes are provided free of charge.

Alison Hanson





MEMBERS



BAND OF BROTHERS - AND SISTERS

We are hugely in debt to our splendid band of both male and female volunteers. Determined to show that we really mean what we say – “We could not operate without you” – we invited them to their own Coffee & Chat events before Christmas.

Two spirited and enthusiastic groups of volunteers attended these sessions at the Worcester Woods Country Park. Constructive suggestions and ideas, embracing areas of improvement and possible future events, spilled out at both sessions.

Below is a flavour of ideas that YOU might wish to support in the coming year. If you want to register your opinions (For or Against) – just go online (www.kwpcsg.co.uk) and fill in the questionnaire:

1. There should be pro-active communication by email & Facebook to increase awareness and improve attendance & links between our website and Facebook
2. A key issue surrounding the interface between oncologists /urologists and CNS nurses and the Support Group needs addressing
3. Need to review Support Contacts work and how peer group work is carried out.
4. Data capture about members and how used needs improvement.
5. Could younger people with older relatives in the “at-risk” group be contacted via a blog?
6. More informal meetings were suggested – should they be (a) on a regular basis, (b) happen on a Saturday morning, (c) do we need name tags?
7. There could be regular collections at supermarkets in part to raise awareness and also to collect funds – but should this be only for specific campaigns such as hospital equipment?
8. Continued raising of awareness, say at sporting events, might actually increase waiting lists for treatment – is this a good idea?
9. Should there be more PSA Testing Events in the county?
10. As we grow and become more better at providing a “Welcome Pack” for new members and gather more member information?

Gordon Kingston



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Supporting Kidderminster & Worcestershire

Prostate Cancer Support Group

Project managed by Kidderminster Male Choir Reg Charity 1176147

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2024

PARTNERS' GROUP MEETING

Friday, February 23rd.

Perdiswell Leisure Centre, Bilford Road, Worcester WR3 8DX

All partners of members and non-members are very welcome to attend the second meeting of this newly-formed group

SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE PCSG

Tuesday, March 19th. (doors open at 6.30 pm for a 7.00 pm start)

Wychavon Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore WR10 1PT

DISCUSSION PANEL

Following the successful Discussion Panel in June 2022

we have a new set of panellists who include:

Paul Rajjayabun (WAHT Consultant Urological Surgeon)

Paul Hanson (recently treated PC patient)

A local GP

CLEOBURY MORTIMER COFFEE & CHAT

Wednesday, March 27th. (10.30-12.30)

Cleobury Mortimer Golf Club, Wyre Common, Cleobury Mortimer,

nr. Kidderminster DY14 8HQ

Free on-site parking

Free coffee and cake for every member, non-member and partner!!

LEDBURY COFFEE & CHAT

Thursday, April 11th. (10.30-12.30)

New Club House, Ledbury Rugby Club, Ross Road, Ledbury HR8 2LP

Extensive free parking, no steps into or within the club house

At 11.30 partners will be invited to a Partners' Group meeting in the boardroom

Free coffee and cake for every member, non-member and partner!!

KIDDERMINSTER & WORCESTERSHIRE PCSG

Monday, April 22nd. (doors open at 7.00 pm for a 7.30 start)

Harriers' Social Club, Stadium Close, Hoo Road, Kidderminster DY10 1NB

GUEST SPEAKER : SARAH GRAY

Sarah is now in her 4th. year as the National Support & Development Officer of Tackle. For those who do not know, Tackle is the name of the National Federation of Prostate Cancer Support Groups. Sarah has managed the transfer of almost 30 groups in recent months from PCUK to Tackle.

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