

2023

**League of Friends of
Wallingford Community
Hospital Annual report**



**Kate Eveleigh
Chairman**

In 2023 the League of Friends completed 70 years of “being there” for patients and staff.

Being there for someone in their time of need is not a grand gesture Or a heroic act etched in stone. It's the quiet symphony of small kindnesses and the unwavering presence that says, "You are not alone."

The benefits of being there extend far beyond the immediate recipient. It fosters a sense of belonging, reminding us that we are not isolated, but threads woven into the intricate fabric of community. It cultivates empathy, allowing us to step outside our own experiences and connect with the vulnerabilities and triumphs of others. It ignites a spark of hope.



The story so far...

Wallingford and District Cottage Hospital in Reading Road was opened in 1880. Doctors Rue and Bennet in the 1970s developed the concept of this new model of integrated care, increasing the scope and provision of services by small local hospitals¹. In 1970 the hospital was renamed Wallingford Community Hospital and was the first of its kind.

Over the years, the population has grown, between the last two censuses, the population of South Oxfordshire increased by 11.0%, from just under 134,300 in 2011 to around 149,100 in

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6478466/>

2021. Besides a growing population, evidenced with the new housing developments in and around Wallingford, in addition the population is getting older and the health service is helping more residents with a range of health conditions.

The health system is seeing an increase in attendances to Emergency Departments (EDs) and the complexity of patient cases; the average length of stay in our hospitals has also increased.

Currently Wallingford Community Hospital has about 20 in-patient beds, maternity unit, adult mental health services, day hospital, physiotherapy, community dental service, podiatry and ultrasound scanning. Additionally, Consultants from the Royal Berkshire Hospital offer out-patient clinics including Ear Nose and Throat, rheumatology and audiology.

The hospital has a dedicated team of nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists and is supported by medical teams. It also serves as serving as a base for District Nursing Services covering Wallingford, Benson and Goring.

The local Health Authority (now an Integrated Care Board²) is leading a program of Virtual Wards and Hospital at Home services. The aim is to provide safe, efficient hospital care and treatment in a residents home. These services either avoid and admission to hospital or provide support for early discharge. By March 2023, across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West had more than 290 virtual ward/hospital at home beds in place. Expansion of the virtual ward offer will continue throughout 2023/24 and the Friends are keen to keep up to date with the changing needs of patients in light of this development, whilst staying in line with our Constitution.

We thank the various parts of the health system taking an interest in the League of Friends, keeping us up to date with developments in the hospital. We attended the Oxford Health NHS Trust AGM at The Earth Trust and heard more about the Trusts on going work including its sustainability plans. To support their work, we have adjusted our request form to include reference to the sustainability of projects put forwards for funding and the impact on climate change.

On a more local level Wallingford has seen many new homes being built with more to come. The work of the Friends will become more important in supporting the ambitions of The Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) in ensuring good health and social care.

Work of the Friends in 2023

² <https://www.bucksoxonberksw.icb.nhs.uk/>

The work of the Friends includes the appropriate spending of charitable funds and the other a combination of awareness raising and raising funds.

Activities

Our fund raising events have included:-

- A book stall at Wallingford Local Producers Market³ where we raised £300, and for the first time we sold our own charity Christmas cards.
- With the opportunities provided by Wallingford Town Council⁴ we've been able to raise £306 from the Goring and Streetly band concert in the Castle Gardens by providing tea and cakes to the audience (with thanks to Go Global Catering⁵). We're also grateful to them for inviting us to the charities event where we got to network with other charities in Wallingford. Also a thank you to them for hosting our volunteering opportunities on their volunteer webpage⁶.



Band Concert event

- Our webpage is also kindly sponsored by PC Technicians. Besides digital advertising we have also invested in a new pop-up banner and business cards to help promote the presence of the charity.

Other income, totaling £770 has come from bequests, including those using the Much Loved website. Donations have also come from using Amazon Smile (now closed), directly from individuals and our Just Giving page⁷ and through our collection tins at the hospital. We've also received generous donations from Wallingford organisations such as the Wallingford Comrades Club and North Moreton Charitable Trust.

In total for 2022-23 we received a total income of £2712. The majority of our expenditure is on newspapers and gardens and the total expenditure was £5954.

One change we have made is having reviewed our banking arrangements to make more of interest rates.

³ <https://wlpm.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.wallingfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.goglobalcatering.com/>

⁶ <https://www.wallingfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/volunteer-opportunities/>

⁷ <https://www.justgiving.com/wallingfordcommunityhospital-leagueoffriends>

Currently our expenditure is greater than our income as the charity's reserves are generous and it is our intention to reduce this amount. Our new Reserves Policy will outline the amount we will hold in case we can no longer operate, for example if there are insufficient Trustees able to manage the funds or be unable to raise further funds for ongoing work.

How funds have been spent



Art materials for Adult Mental Health Team



Christmas presents for patients

The funds you donated helped us to:

- Offer a quiet reflective space in the two well tended and stocked courtyard gardens.
- Provide newspapers to enable residents to stay connected to the outside world.
- Provide Christmas presents to patients who find themselves in hospital away from family.
- Supply art materials to those attending the South Oxfordshire Adult Mental Health service.

Remember, the support you give us at a book stall or putting some money in a collection pot, might seem small, but it adds up to enable us to be there in a variety of small but meaningful ways.

Our friendship extends beyond our eight trustees and members to our friends who support the work of the charity.

Green Acre Garden Maintenance⁸ have been working with us on the two courtyard gardens at the hospital since the Spring. Green Acre Garden Maintenance is a Style Acre social enterprise, established to provide work opportunities and training for people with learning disabilities and autism. Besides paying for this service we also allocate funds for plants for the gardens.

Many patients enjoy watching the birds visiting the gardens and the bird food is kindly supported by Blakes Pet food suppliers⁹ in Crowmarsh who provide a discount on our purchases.

There are a number of future projects under consideration for funding over the next two years which will require a larger expenditure of our funds. This may include art murals within the hospital and possible improvements to the palliative care area. As more care moves to within the community, in peoples homes, there may be a greater call on our reserves.

Friends Past and Present

Veronica Port: A Legacy of Warmth and Service

Earlier in the year Veronica Port a previous Chair passed away. A remarkable woman who dedicated over two decades to enriching the lives of patients and staff alike.

Veronica's involvement began long before her official roles – her compassion and organizational skills naturally gravitated towards those in need. For over 20 years, she served as a vital member as her dedication documented in Mike Broadie's 2015 chairman's report.

Veronica wasn't simply a leader; she was a force of nature. Her warmth and friendliness permeated every room she entered, putting everyone at ease with her genuine smile and infectious laughter. She was an efficient organizer, capable of transforming chaos into well-oiled machines, and a hard worker who never hesitated to roll up her sleeves and get things done.

Her leadership skills shone through during her tenure as chairperson of the Friends. Who can forget the AGMs with Veronica's thoughtful touch – a couple of bottles of wine to loosen tensions and foster friendly conversations. Those were just a glimpse into her ability to bring people together and create a sense of community.

Veronica's crowning achievements, however, were the unforgettable hospital fetes she organized. Not only were they financially successful, but they were also uproariously fun, brimming with laughter and shared joy. Her knack for charming local celebrities like John

⁸ <https://styleacre.org.uk/what-we-do/work-programme/green-acre/>

⁹ <https://www.blakespets.co.uk/blakes-team/>

Nettles to attend added an extra sparkle to these events, ensuring lasting memories for all who participated.

Her impact on individual patients, staff, and volunteers alike is immeasurable.

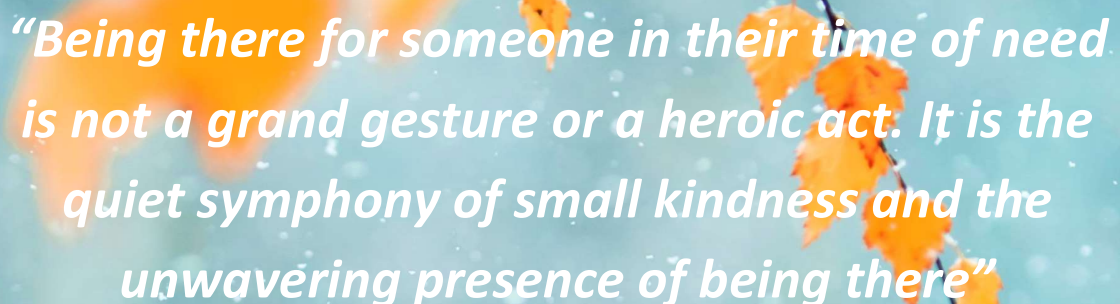
Andrew Taylor, our previous Treasurer stepped down as a Trustee after many years of consistent and diligent service. We wish him all the best and extend our many thanks.

Our “Flag Day”, the day where we head out onto the streets of Wallingford with our collection tins have been ably organised by Jacquie Pritchard since at least 2015 and have raised at least £1500. I would like to thank Jacquie for her time and dedication over the years, completing the paperwork liaising with Triangle Travel and sorting the rota!

In summary, the work of the Friends relies on a range of people who are prepared to “be there” and we couldn’t do what we do with out them! As ever, we are always looking for one or two more trustees, as well as members or “friends” who can help out at various one off events. Please get in touch at wchlof@gmail.com, check out our website or follow us on Facebook.

To close, there is constant change in our community and in the organisations that support them. The League of Friends will need to keep abreast of those changes and adjust accordingly in order to stay relevant and deliver on the objectives of the Constitution. However care is provided to patients of Wallingford Hospital it is my sincere wish we are able to continue to “be there” for the community in the coming years.

Chairman - Kate Eveleigh January 2024



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