

Chair's Report 2013/14

It really doesn't seem possible that we are at the end of another year, and my fourth year as chair of the League of Friends. Looking back, it has once again been a busy and productive year.

The many events organised and run by the League during the year have been exceptionally well supported by the local community. This continued support, and contribution from the community is very much appreciated and crucial to the success of The League of Friends. The League strives to promote public knowledge in all matters relating to the hospital and health related matters, and looks to maintain interest and support from the local community. This year we have had a presence in the pop-up shop in town, with Halesworth Volunteer Centre, promoting the work of League of Friends, and we joined the town in the flower festival at St Mary's Church in the summer to commemorate the start of World War 1. We continue to have regular updates on our website, and we now also have a facebook page.

Our trolley shop continues to operate regularly. Thanks go to our dedicated trolley team: Rosemary, Judith, Mary, and Susan. The trolley runs on a Monday and Thursday afternoon, and it enables patients in the hospital and users at the Rayner Green Resource Centre to purchase sweets, chocolates, crisps, tissues, stamps as well as having another friendly face to chat to.

The League of Friends continues to work with Halesworth Health (HH). Initial discussions were with East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH), the incumbent provider of services in community hospitals and in the community, about the building and running of a new facility in Halesworth. However, in December 2013, due to changes in their senior management, ECCH decided not to pursue this opportunity. Since then, HH have attracted the interest of a variety of independent and not for profit care providers, and have recently interviewed 3 possible providers. Providers are being asked to develop facilities in accordance with the Outline Business Case (OBC), which was approved by the current Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) as well as by the outgoing PCT. The OBC proposes a new purpose built health and care centre incorporating flexible use community beds for long term nursing care, patients with dementia, and people in need of palliative and respite care. This would incorporate the equivalent of the current PSH inpatient beds, commissioned by the NHS. It is vital that the current wide ranging outpatient services operating from the hospital site are maintained and developed. It is also essential that integrated health and social care all on one site in Halesworth is maintained and developed, this includes the Rayner Green Resource Centre. The exciting news is that a suitable provider has now been chosen - Castle Meadow. The plans are still confidential, but hopefully these will be available early next year. HH are working hard to ensure that our excellent health and social care services continue to be provided locally for the benefit of patients in Halesworth and the surrounding villages. I would like to give thanks to all the trustees of HH, especially Chair, Dr Richard Kell and vice chair, Annette Abbott for all the freely given time, expertise and dedication they bring and which has driven the project to the stage is at now.

In December we held a Christmas Fair in St Mary's Church Hall. It was a successful morning with lots of visitors, who were able to purchase cards and gifts, along with the usual tombola, draw, and cakes with seasonal refreshments available. Thanks to Bernard Matthews and the Co-operative foodstore for supporting our draw.

Once again we were kindly invited to Rydal Mount on Easter Sunday by Alan & Kath Witherby. Despite most of the daffodils being over, visitors still enjoyed wandering around the beautiful gardens at Rydal Mount, and

welcomed homemade refreshments in the conservatory, and there were no snow showers this year to hamper proceedings!

Our Annual Summer Fete was held on Saturday 31st May. We continued with tradition and had perfect weather conditions, and as with previous years managed to increase our takings from the year before. It all began at 1pm when Charlie Haylock, one of Suffolk's leading entertainers, opened proceedings for us, saying a few words and reading a poem written by Halesworth resident Liz Davey. Charlie stayed with us for the whole afternoon, meeting stallholders, mingling with visitors, signing copies of his books, when asked and posing for photographs. The afternoon was compered by our effervescent Dudley Clarke, who kept visitors well informed of proceedings. Entertainment was provided by the Budding Arts Dance Group, performing twice for us during the afternoon much to everyone's delight and by Halesworth Shotokan Karate Group who gave us a fantastic display of their skills. There were a number of stalls and kiddie's corner with Punch & Judy shows to visit, as well as refreshments, a Bar-B-Q and Parravani ice cream. The two new recycled plastic picnic benches that we brought for the patio were put to good use, with many people enjoying their refreshments outside. As were the two wooden picnic benches kindly donated by Alan & Kath Witherby, families sat on them and enjoyed watching Punch and Judy, these will be on the patio at Rayner Green. The local fire crew joined us with the fire engine, which was a highlight for many of the youngsters, and the adults! Charlie Haylock brought the afternoon to a close by kindly announcing the grand draw. Thank you to our First Prize sponsor Spectra Packaging and to all the local businesses that donated draw prizes and sold draw tickets on our behalf: Allens Solicitors, Heads & Curls, Seashell Fish & Chips, Libby Maes, Halesworth Stationers, Gecko Shoes, The Angel, Rodney Fox, Allen's Butchers, Patrick's Newsagents, Boots, Cutlers Hill Pharmacy, Market Place Wine Shop, Bramfield Meats, Halesworth Golf Club, Ridgeons, Chinny's Cue Club, Halesworth Toy Shop and Ann Green Second-hand Books. The first prize of £250, donated by Spectra Packaging was won by Mr A Carr, the second prize winner of £100 was Mrs J Canham and third prize of £75 went to Janet Wilson, with many other lucky recipients of some wonderful prizes. Our thanks go to Charlie Haylock, Dudley Clarke, Budding Arts Dance Group, Halesworth Shotokan Karate Group, Cleveley's Meats, Halesworth Co-operative Foodstore, the Fire Service and Halesworth Business Connections. Thanks also go to the many stallholders who, year after year come along and run stalls for us: Woolnoughs Funeral Services, Blyford Belles, St Marys Church, Halesworth W.I., Spexhall & Wissett W.I., Rayner Green, United Reformed Church, Patrick Stead Hospital and Halesworth Gardeners. Also, thanks to Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund, Halesworth Carers Fund, East Coast Community Healthcare, David Brown – Help the Heroes, Halesworth Museum, Halesworth Scouts, Halesworth Venture Scouts and Theresa Dyer – Phoenix Cards for joining us. Thank you to those that made donations on fete day, and while we were selling draw tickets at the Co-op and Market Place, and following the fete. Finally, thank-you to League of Friends members and friends who work so hard not only on fete day itself but in the months, weeks and days running up to it, a great deal of effort is put in by so many, which produced another enjoyable and successful afternoon.

We supported the Lions at their summer carnival in June, and ran a tombola/plant stall in the town park.

Our final fundraiser of the year was our cake stall in the Thoroughfare, on a warm Saturday morning in July. Once again the goodies produced by our talented bakers proved to be very popular and we were sold out by 11.30!

In addition to various items we have provided, we are also supplying newspapers and magazines for Halesworth Day Centre and have made a donation to Halesworth Carers Fund to support the excellent work they are doing in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society and Cutlers Hill Surgery to establish and run the Dementia Support Project, with a view to further support in the future. The League continues to supply papers to the Patrick Stead and papers and flowers to the Rayner Green Resource Centre, as well as subsidising slippers for hospital patients. The League has also agreed to financially supporting the Rayner Green Resource Centre in the near future, with a currently unidentified project.

All of this would not be possible if it were not for the hard work, time, effort, and commitment given by our members. As I always say, it really is a huge team effort and I would like to thank each and every one of you for your continued support this year. Special thanks to all of our officers, our hard working Secretary, John Lewis, and Yvonne Power, our minutes secretary. Mat Waters has been our treasurer for the last 3 years, and I would like to thank him on behalf of the League for the time he has put in to professionally managing our accounts during this time. We are of course sad to see him go but wish him well with his other trustee commitments.

The League of Friends needs to be forward thinking and aware of health care issues locally as we move into 2015, and in future will continue to support the general work of the Patrick Stead Hospital, patients and former patients, the Rayner Green Resource Centre and others in the community at all times, carefully assessing any requests from the local management to put to our members for funding, as well as identifying other health related projects to support.