

# The Acorn Cancer Support Group

## Chair of Trustees Report for 2012-2013

*I am delighted to report that the Group's progress over the past twelve months has once again been highly encouraging in all our key objective areas: the monthly group meetings, the support and services we offer at them enhanced by the mutual support that they also foster, social outings, sponsorships and sustaining our financial situation, and the dissemination of knowledge about Acorn into the wider community. The Group is well placed to move into the 2013/14 project year, and I have great pleasure in reporting that on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May we will hold a reception at the Dolphin Hotel in celebration of Acorn's 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.*

### Group Meetings

*The monthly group meetings at Huntingdon, Ramsey and St. Ives continued to run extremely well, with an increase in overall numbers. In summary, Huntingdon's average attendance per meeting moved from 44 in 2011/12, to 45 in 2012/13; Ramsey increased from 20 to 22, and St Ives from 21 to 23. The Ramsey and St Ives venues have been buoyant. The total attendance at our support meetings over the last three years grew from 770 in FY 2010/11, to 1032 in 2011/12, and 1079 in 2012/13. Of these some 69% were our clients, the remainder being our own volunteer helpers, health professionals, and therapists. The number of free relaxation therapies - aromatherapy, massage, reiki and reflexology – given at meetings to patients and carers, have also increased over the last three years- from 200 in 2010/11 FY, to 237 in 2011/12, and then 254 in 2012/13. Following trials of creative visualization this is now available at Huntingdon on a regular basis. Some 32 took part in this in 2012/13. Current therapist appointment levels at venues remain as , four at Huntingdon and one each at Ramsey and St Ives. The levels need to be kept under review as demand changes, though facilities at our venues continue to impose constraints on expansion of individual therapy service.*

*In addition, the numbers taking part in seated exercise, increased from 117 in 2010/11 to 160 in 2011/12 and then to 169 in 2012/13. The seated exercise instructor ran sessions at all venues, approx every other month so that this service is at a common delivery level.*

*We also continued with a variety of outside speakers: covering , Healthy Diet, "Living with Cancer" course , and SSAFA.*

*Evaluation of support meetings and therapies show that we continue to meet our primary objectives of alleviating the physical and emotional distress of our clients.*

### Relations with Macmillan

*We continue to have excellent relations with Macmillan. Macmillan nurses provide a main source for referral of patient and carer clients to the Acorn groups Judy York, co-founder of Acorn, remains as a link to the 'Macmillan Hope Course', which explores self management techniques as well as the opportunity to share with others experiencing similar problems following a diagnosis and treatment for cancer.*

## **Social Outings**

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Acorn social events are major contributors to our clients' quality of life. Due to demand, in each of the months June, July, August and September we ran a Ladybird boat trip down the Ouse followed by a free lunch at the Dolphin Hotel, St Ives. The boat trips were enhanced this year by having a speaker on the boat giving a historical account of the main points along the journey. The Xmas lunch, also at the Dolphin was also highly successful, with 65 of our members attending. Following approaches to the respective Music Departments, concerts held at St Ivo School in May, and a Christmas Carol Concert at St Peters School Huntingdon were made open to our clients, families and friends. The concerts also contributed some £1100 to our funds and also increased our profile in the community (see Profile below).

## **Sponsorships and Funding**

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Our success in the last year would not have been possible without the generous support that we have received from donations and grants, including:

- Cheffins Community Fund (managed by Cambridgeshire Community Foundation)
- Huntingdon Freeman's Society
- Waitrose Community (Green Token) Fund
- Elizabeth Coteman Pancreatic Cancer Fund
- Huntingdon Therapists Network
- Hilton Ladies Flower Club
- Old Nene Golf Club
- Yorkshire Building Society
- RAF Wyton Gymnasium Club
- Huntingdon Cromwell Rotary Club
- Huntingdon Samuel Pepys Lodge and their Provincial Headquarters
- Diageo Retiree Scheme
- St Ivo and Sothius Lodges and their Provincial Headquarters

We also benefitted from proceeds raised through two March fund-raising events. The first, a Rock Concert was organized by one of our members, and held at the Commemoration Hall, Huntingdon. At this three local bands performed free of charge. The second event was an Indian Meal at PR Massala, St Ives, with 50% food takings kindly donated by the owner.

I am also pleased to report that our membership of [localgiving.com](http://localgiving.com) continued to produce extra valuable income in 2012/13. This was stimulated this year by matched-funding for regular on-line donations by direct debit made through the website [www.localgiving.com](http://www.localgiving.com). We had 10 donors sign up for the £10 a month direct debit scheme, which led to the doubling of their first 3 month donations.

In addition, we have benefitted greatly from: two memorial donations, a number of personal donations, both money and in-kind (raffle prizes), all of which has added to our sustainability for the future. It is gratifying that donations have also been made by our own clients which is a strong indication that the support we provide is of considerable value to them.

I would like to place on record our sincere gratitude to these grant providers and donors, which enables us to continue providing support to those affected by cancer without worrying about funds unduly, or diverting major effort to raise money. This appreciation is also highlighted on our website.

## **Acorn Profile**

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*The submissions for grants and donations has served to increase the profile of Acorn over the last year. In addition, the two school concerts, and the two other external events, made a major contribution to widening knowledge of Acorn in the community. The attendance at the school concerts, some 150 on each occasion, was mainly comprised of non-Acorn members from the local community. All of these, students, staff, and parents, had a short briefing about Acorn. Good relations continue with Huntingdon Community Radio (HCR). I had the opportunity to speak on HCR about Acorn. Gordon and Cally have also had the opportunity to feature in several programmes - in the run up to the St Ivo concert, and again this February. Articles, pre-and post both concerts, featured in the Hunts Post.*

*To these positive points can be added the data that during 2012/13, some 49 new patients and 24 new carers attended meetings. However, these data would seem to reflect a relatively small fraction of those who would have been diagnosed with cancer in the last year. Cally has recently taken part in a promotion day at Addenbrookes. Promotion in our referral pipeline - with the local hospitals and with GP surgeries - remains important.*

*Acorn has excellent relations with Cambridgeshire Community Foundation (CCF). We featured last year as two of their case studies (1) as an example of good practice in using localgiving.com (2) in a video about our work, which CCF's has made for their own Annual Review.*

## **Thank You**

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*Our charity depends crucially on the input from our volunteer helpers without whom our group would not be able to function. I would particularly want to thank Cally Bussetil and Julia Mitchell who jointly manage the coordination of activity at the three venues. I also want to thank our therapists for the relaxation treatments they provide; the rave evaluation reviews that we get from our clients is testimony to the value of their sessions. Our Macmillan nurses also need special mention: Eileen Murphy who covers Ramsey/Warboys, Sarah Mappedoram at Huntingdon, and Sian Lewis at St Ives. Finally I would like to thank Gordon and Jan, our secretary and treasurer, for the immense amount of time and support they give to the group, particularly in fund raising. The Group has made massive progress in recent times as a result. Gordon and Jan have made this possible by the way they work and together run the charity. Between them they have provided a coordinating role way over and above that which is normally expected of a secretary and treasurer. As trustees we will need to plan for the future with the management committee considering how we will succession plan to ensure that the charity will be as successful in the years to come.*

*Liz Sargeant, Chair Trustees St. Ives Acorn Cancer Support Group.  
26 April 2013 v4*

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