

# THE FORUM

The Magazine of Cambridgeshire Community Foundation (CCF)



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## THE LARKFLEET HOMES COMMUNITY FUND

Part of a commitment  
to support communities

## VISION4GROWTH

An organisation helping  
blind and visually impaired  
people lead healthy and  
independent lives

## CCF'S YEAR IN REVIEW

The 2016-2017  
financial year  
saw CCF growing  
and establishing  
ten new funds

## GORDON DYER OF THE ACORN CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

*“ There’s always a real  
buzz at our meetings...  
quite remarkable given  
that some of those  
people in the room  
may be quite ill ”*



# ACORN GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH



Attendees at the Acorn Cancer Support Group

## Eight years after receiving its first grant from Cambridgeshire Community Foundation (CCF), Wendy Dear visits the Acorn Cancer Support Group to find out how it has grown

**NO ONE IS** a stranger when people have experiences to share. This is certainly the case at the get-togethers organised by the Acorn Cancer Support Group. The charity, which celebrates its 20th anniversary in May 2018, serves the communities in and around St Ives, Huntingdon and Ramsey.

Statistics show that one in three families will be affected by cancer, and the diagnosis brings a range of emotions and uncertainties. The NHS will be there, of course, to provide excellent treatment, but in between chemotherapy and radiotherapy sessions, patients and their carers face their doubts and fears.

To help them during this difficult time, in 1998, a Hinchingsbrooke Macmillan nurse and a community physiotherapist founded the Acorn Cancer Support

Group. Community based, it aims to alleviate distress through fellowship, encouraging members to express their feelings and to stay in touch with the outside world. Its monthly get-togethers take place in three villages (see box for venues), to which everyone is welcome. Volunteers serve light refreshments, and nothing is asked of anyone except to enjoy being out and in the company of others.

Gordon Dyer has been the group's secretary since 2009. A retired RAF officer who flew on the V-Force, and was later awarded an MBE, he says: "There's always a real buzz at our meetings, and a lot of laughter and smiles. This is quite remarkable given that some of those people in the room may be quite ill."

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Gordon Dyer,  
Acorn Cancer  
Support Group  
Secretary

The meetings are a safe place to unwind and relax, to meet others who know what you are going through. Sometimes relaxation therapy is offered, and there are chair-based exercises, in which everyone gets involved. Occasionally, there are talks by professionals about treatments, and tackling financial problems.

One woman, who had been a carer for both her parents, described Acorn meetings as a lifeline. Another carer wrote to Gordon: "It doesn't matter how strong and powerful you are as a person, there will be times in your life when you need to put your arms out and hold on to someone unconditionally. When you find that person, they are real friends. Acorn Group members are my real friends. Thank you for putting your arms

around me and letting me hold on."

Gordon is married to Janet, the group's treasurer and administrator. As a team they've been integral to Acorn's growth and effectiveness. In 2017, 960 people attended 36 meetings; 600 were patients and carers and the rest were health professionals and volunteers. There were more than 200 individual therapy treatments (aromatherapy, reflexology and relaxation techniques) and group therapy for 250.

Social activities are particularly popular. In 2017, there were 365 individual social outings, with summer boat trips on the River Ouse, festive meals, and monthly film shows at St Ives – all at no cost to members.

Not wanting financial issues to prevent anyone joining, the charity must raise £14,000 a year to cover all its expenses. In 2009, when the budget was just £1,800, Gordon needed £600 for leaflets. He had never attempted to apply for a grant before, but the outgoing secretary suggested he approach CCF, a channel for local businesses to support the local community. Since then, Acorn has received 11 grants, totalling more than £10,000, from a number of different funds managed by CCF. This success led Gordon to approach several other local/national organisations for help, all of which are shown on the website: [www.acornsupportgroup.org.uk](http://www.acornsupportgroup.org.uk). Joining [www.localgiving.org](http://www.localgiving.org) provided another

welcome income stream, and generous donations as well as gifts in kind are regularly received from individuals. A recent award from the Masonic Charitable Foundation's Tercentenary Fund has provided a wonderful contribution to this year's budget.

The charity depends on volunteers. Simon Townend, Chair of the Committee and Trustees group, and his wife Shirley Hand run the Huntingdon Group, the largest of the three; Julia Mitchell is the cornerstone of activity at Ramsey and St Ives, organising lunches and river trips on the boat Ladybird; while Colin Hyams, acting Vice-Chair, keeps the website up to date.

Gordon and Janet have been responsible for the day-to-day running of the charity for nine years, but now they are both standing down from their roles and will be among those who will be thanked at a lunchtime reception at the Dolphin Hotel, St Ives, on 10 May to mark Acorn's 20th anniversary. The guests will include Jane Darlington, Chief Executive of CCF, members of Acorn, and individuals and groups that have helped the charity go from strength to strength.

The Acorn Cancer Support Group, located in the community rather than a hospital, is invaluable for carers who, unlike those suffering from cancer, get little help. Through Acorn, they meet new friends who face the same problems as themselves.

The charity is currently looking for volunteers with plenty of time to take over from Gordon and Janet.

**CAN YOU HELP? WILL YOU JOIN IN THIS WONDERFUL COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE?** Get in touch: [www.acornsupportgroup.org.uk](http://www.acornsupportgroup.org.uk) ■

#### Where To Meet Acorn

**ST IVES:** third Wednesday, 11am to 1pm  
Broad Leas Court, Broad Leas, PE27 5XG  
Tel: 01480 464 948

**CINEMA CLUB,** first Wednesday (booking necessary)  
Field Lodge Hotel, London Rd, St Ives, PE27 5EX  
Lunch 1.30pm, film 2pm

**HUNTINGDON:** second Wednesday, 11am to 1pm  
The MS Centre, Mayfield Road, PE29 1UL  
Tel: 01480 458 688

**RAMSEY:** first Monday (second when first is a Bank Holiday),  
11.15am to 1.15pm  
The Rainbow Resource Centre, 1 Stocking Fen Road, PE26 1SA  
Tel: 01487 710 132

#### Attendees at the Acorn Cancer Support Group

