



Season's Greetings from the Friends' Chairman 2017

A bumper year for grants

At the time of writing this update, we have not yet reached the end of 2017, and yet already this year the Friends have given grants totalling more than £40,000 – compared with £28,000 in 2016.

As always our grant recipients have been many and varied. In recent months we have shown our support to the GP practices and their patients in the Marlborough and Pewsey areas: Kennet and Avon Medical Partnership (the newly merged Marlborough and Pewsey practices “KAMP”), Great Bedwyn Surgery, Burbage Surgery and Ramsbury Surgery. Our grants to them have assisted with the cost of installing new automatic surgery doors, purchasing ECG and INR machines, blood monitoring equipment, equipment to check blood coagulation levels, and assistance for leg ulcer sufferers.

With many GPs nationwide being overworked and feeling the strain of staff shortages at a time of increasing demand, we are fortunate that, unlike other parts of the country, we have not seen the demise of GP practices in our relatively rural area. The Friends see it as their responsibility to support our local GPs where we can, as this in turn will ensure continuity of healthcare for the local community. At our AGM in May, Dr Anna Collings of KAMP explained clearly the strains being put on local GP practices, the difficulties in recruiting new doctors and the measures Marlborough and Pewsey Surgeries were taking – albeit with limited staff resources – to overcome, or at least reduce, these problems. It would have been difficult for anyone present at that AGM not to feel sympathy and admiration for the efforts our local doctors are making. We have therefore also recently provided financial support for the installation by KAMP of its digital telephone system.

The Friends also applaud the efforts made by local patient participation groups – notably Burbage and Great Bedwyn – on their fundraising efforts for their local surgeries and patients.

Other grant beneficiaries over the past few months have been Brighter Futures with a further £10,000 towards their Radiotherapy Appeal. The Friends were delighted that this grant qualified for matched funding provided by Greenham Common Trust, hence increasing the grant to £20,000.

Alzheimer's Support (which recently won the contract with Wiltshire Council and the NHS to provide their holistic dementia services across Wiltshire thereby enabling people living with dementia to live well in their own homes and stay connected in their communities) received a grant for £7,000 from the Friends. The Great Bedwyn Friendship and Mobility Group has received £1,000 towards the cost of running its sessions. Arts Together has received £4,250 for its Wellbeing Service in the

Marlborough and Pewsey areas. One of our trustees attended an Arts Together session and remarked on the enthusiasm of its members. This was also evident at our AGM when two members from the Marlborough group spoke warmly of the benefits of the services provided by Arts Together.

The Community Nurse Team at Savernake Hospital has also received grant moneys, and we have just approved a grant for Cotswold House (the specialist eating disorder unit at Savernake Hospital).

On a smaller – but no less important – scale, the Friends ensure every year that every patient that has to remain in hospital at Savernake Hospital at Christmas receives a Christmas gift. Some of our patients on Ailesbury Ward are especially elderly and do not have friends or family nearby. The daily trolley shop visit by our volunteers ensures that each patient sees a friendly visiting face and has the opportunity for a chat. These are small gestures, but for someone who is confined to a hospital bed, these gestures are invaluable.

We are always delighted to hear from our grant recipients. Some have been speakers at our AGMs, others have invited us to open days to “showcase” what our grant moneys have been used to purchase or build. Earlier this year our trustees were invited by Julia’s House to an open day at their new children’s hospice in Devizes, for which we provided a grant of £10,000. The Friends will also be acknowledged on a plaque with other major contributors at the entrance to the hospice. More recently we were invited to the preview of the opening of the new Marlborough St Mary’s Primary School. Earlier this year the school was a beneficiary of a £4,000 grant to purchase equipment for a sensory room for two Resource Bases in the school’s new building. These facilities will support about 20 of the school’s children who have a range of special educational and complex needs.

Background to Savernake Hospital – present and past

Savernake Hospital opened in 1866 and, like all cottage hospitals which continue to exist, has evolved greatly over the years.

Savernake Hospital offers a wide variety of clinics and outpatient services, as well as the (up to) 32-bed Ailesbury Ward, Cotswold House, CAHMS Community Services for children and young people, and the Prospect Hospice outpatient centre (established with assistance from the Friends through matched funding in 2015).

The Friends have become enthusiastic collectors of fragments of history relating to the hospital’s past. We feel it is important to keep a record of the hospital’s history and those that have been connected with it, so that others can understand why the Friends continue to support it so passionately.

We have a dedicated history page on our website relating to the hospital’s history, including some fascinating accounts, insights and anecdotes from both former patients and staff. Special thanks go to former committee member, Val Compton, for her work on this history project.

Background to the Friends

The “Friends of Savernake Hospital and the Community” charity was set up in 1958 (then under the name of “The League of Friends of the Marlborough Hospitals”) by a group of public-spirited citizens

to provide financial support to Savernake Hospital and the Children's Hospital. Now only Savernake Hospital remains, but the work of the Friends has continued.

In fact, with the reduction of centrally-provided local healthcare in recent years, we have seen a broadening of the role of the Friends. We now provide grants in the wider community in Marlborough and the surrounding areas – to bodies associated with healthcare, such as Hope For Tomorrow's mobile chemotherapy unit, and have provided defibrillators in and around Marlborough, and are responsible for their upkeep. On top of this we continue to provide support for our hospital, including the hospital shop and shop trolley, both run by a super team of dedicated volunteers and our Shop Coordinator, who also involve themselves in running fundraising events.

If you visit our "Grants" page on this website, you can see the full support we have given to various healthcare related bodies over recent years, as well as apply online for a healthcare-related grant.

Donations and bequests

So often when we – and those close to us – are in good health, we take that good health for granted. It is only when faced with illness or disability that we become aware of the myriad of local health professionals and support organisations – and often it is only then that we appreciate their efforts in making us better or enabling us to manage our illness or disability.

It is heart-warming how many members of the community have fond memories of Savernake Hospital and have become life members of the Friends, and indeed made generous donations or bequests to the Friends.

It is these that have enabled us to embark on a wide range of projects specifically aimed at bringing medical treatment into the community and saving patients from making costly and time consuming trips to hospital, precisely at a time when they wish to be closer to home.

We pride ourselves on our ability to transform a bequest, however small, directly into a healthcare-related benefit.

We need your continued support so that we can continue to provide health grants to benefit those in the local community who need it most. Even the smallest donation can go a long way.

Thank you

On behalf of the Friends' committee I would like to say thank you to the community for your loyal support. Long may it continue.

Wishing you a happy Christmas.

Janet Louth

Chairman, Friends of Savernake Hospital and the Community

louthremovals@talktalkbusiness.net

December 2017