

History of HeartSWell South West

The inaugural meeting of cardiac patients and carers was called by Dr Andrew Marshall and Mrs Audrey Flack. Some 300 persons attended the meeting held in the hall of North Friary Clinic, near the old hospitals in Plymouth in November 1986. A committee was set up and people living in various parts of the area at that time served by Plymouth hospitals agreed to have groups engaged in various activities to raise funds.

Remember there was no cardiac surgery department in the Westcountry - patients (some 600-700) each year travelled to London or Bristol for open heart surgery. By the close of the meeting the title was agreed as *Plymouth & District Cardiology Fund* with the following aims:

- To raise funds for equipment to be used by the Plymouth Dept of cardiology
- To provide counselling to patients who suffer from heart disease and/or have to undergo or have undergone heart surgery
- To create and promote public interest in the establishment of a Cardiac Surgery Unit Centre in Plymouth for the area it served.

Soon fundraising events began to take place. Campaigns to publicise the need for a Cardiac Surgery unit were set up with local media, radio, TV and the press being involved. The local MPs were approached and the regional health authorities were involved.

During these early years the boundaries of the region served by the Plymouth hospitals changed until today it includes the South West Peninsula, the Scilly Isles and the Channel Islands with a population of 1,600,000.

In these years the cardiac department under Dr A Marshall the President moved to the new Derriford hospital and a second cardiologist, Dr Chris Burrell was appointed. It was agreed that a campaign to bring the needs of the people of the South West to the notice of the parliament was needed. A new campaign was mounted and together with David Luckham & Bill Luck, petitions were sent to all groups and clubs in Devon & Cornwall and a total of 195,000 signatures were received. We were still being told there was no need for a cardiac unit in the South West – it was even suggested that Bournemouth should host the unit!!!

In the proposal to provide counselling for patients and their families, Mrs Jennifer Foren was appointed and took up her post in the early 1990's. She was wholly funded by P & D C F for many years. The petition and signatures was taken to Downing Street and the Department of Health in March 1984.

On the 18 May 1994 at 10am, an announcement was made in the House of Commons that a Cardiac surgery unit was to be set up in Derriford Hospital,

Plymouth to serve the people of the South West. This was to take 3 years to plan and build.

In the early nineties the Executive Committee met regularly to discuss policy, fund raising and matters of urgency. Many of the committee & members had travelled in order to have life saving surgery and had been grateful for facilities for relatives in some of the hospitals. We started to make enquiries into what facilities would be available for relatives / carers to stay close to Derriford Hospital WHEN the Cardiac unit was opened (optimists)

Meanwhile as the aims of the charity were fulfilled it was time to move forward and update the constitution & in 1994 the charity became the Plymouth & District Cardiology Foundation Trust.

In April 1996, the appeal was launched to provide accommodation for the relatives and carers of cardiac patients. Together with Plymouth & Cornwall Cancer Fund, we planned, investigated and made lottery applications (we did not qualify for help under any category!) Mrs Remington of the Plymouth & Cornwall Cancer Fund heard of a site that might be available – a green field site off Blunts Lane – 2 fields away from Derriford – A GOD GIVEN SITE. The City of Plymouth granted the lease – the planners, architects, committee and many people set to work.

Some £500,000 - £700,000 of equipment has been donated to Derriford.

On the 3rd November 1997 the Cardiac Surgery Centre opened for patients at the Derriford Hospital with Mr Terence Lewis as its lead surgeon.

In August 2001 the HeartSWell Lodge opened and to date more than 3000 visitors have stayed there after more than £700,000 had been raised. As we all know the Cardiac unit is among the best in the country – and is now undergoing expansion. The HeartSWell Lodge will be expanded with your help – at present there are 43 beds in 27 rooms – with more than adequate facilities.

The name HeartSWell was chosen as the new name for the charity following the enlargement of the area served by the hospitals – it means the HEART IS WELL in the South West.

In this brief summary, I have not named names, - I hope to at a later date . So many people have encouraged and worked with P&DCF and HeartSWell SW to bring this young charity forward. We very much believe PEOPLE MATTER MOST

Encourage

Fund raise

Remember

Spread the good news of HeartSWell South West

Monica M Pearce April 2004