

Breastfriends Cardiff and Vale Breast Cancer Support Group

January 2018

Running for my Mum!



In April, Michael Williams (pictured with his mum, Ruth) will be taking part in the iconic London Marathon to raise funds for Breastfriends.

Michael will be joined by his uncle as both men attempt to raise enough money to cover our newsletter costs for a whole year.

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Who are we?

Breastfriends, described by one of our members as a source of instant friendship, is a friendly support group for anyone who has had a diagnosis of breast cancer, whether it was last week, last month, last year or many years ago.

Breast cancer can be isolating and scary, but meeting others in a similar situation and sharing information and experiences can make a real difference.



Walk with us or talk with us

We meet once a month in Cardiff and once a month in Barry as well as meeting regularly for short walks in lovely surroundings. See back page for more details.

We know that walking into a room of strangers can be off putting, so please get in touch if you'd like a buddy for your first walk or meeting.

www.breastfriendscandv.org.uk

Reflexology Lymphatic Drainage (RLD)

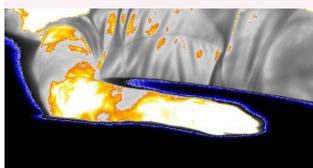
In May 2017, members of Breastfriends who have lymphoedema were invited to apply to participate in a clinical research trial for Reflexology Lymphatic Drainage being undertaken at Cardiff Metropolitan University.



Reflexology is a complementary therapy which uses a special technique of massage on particular areas of the feet. The project was to explore whether reflexology could help relieve the symptoms of lymphoedema. There had been some evidence to suggest that reflexology can help both the physical issues, associated with the swelling of the arm, and the psychological aspects along with general wellbeing.

In June 2015 I had a mastectomy and underwent axillary lymph node dissection. Eight months later, I developed lymphoedema in my left arm. I contacted Judith Whateley (a charming lady), the Research Lead Investigator and was only too pleased when asked to participate in the trial.

I was required to attend once a week for six consecutive weeks.



On the first visit, each of my arms were measured and images were taken of my affected arm using a thermal imaging camera. The camera is used to identify any changes in temperature in the arm whilst having reflexology, highlighting hot areas in red and cold areas in blue.

On each following visit, both my arms were measured and, for approximately 1 hour, I was in a reclining position with my left arm resting on an arm rest. A trained reflexologist worked on my feet and the thermal imaging camera was aimed at my affected arm during the whole procedure. I found this whole experience extremely pleasant and relaxing. All the volunteer staff were very friendly and professional.

On the last day of the trial, I was shown my personal results. It was obvious from the graphs and calculations that there was a definite reduction of the lymph fluid in my swollen arm. After each reflexology session I felt that my arm was less heavy, cooler and not aching so much. I was also able to wear garments that had previously been too tight. This was most encouraging. On a recent routine visit to the Cardiff & Vale Lymphoedema Department, where I get measured for my compression sleeves, I was delighted to learn that the excess fluid in my arm had reduced by 85% (from 326 mls to 49mls) since my initial diagnosis in February 2016.

I strongly feel that these fantastic results could be well due to a combination of the reflexology treatments I have had at the City Hospice (through Velindre), some private sessions and the Cardiff Metropolitan University reflexology trial, together with the daily wearing of my compression sleeve. As there is no apparent cure for lymphoedema, I am personally going to continue with reflexology, which appears to be helping to keep my swollen arm reduced and stable. It has also helped enormously with my general wellbeing!

I am so grateful to be part of the trial at the university. The research that is being performed there to help patients like myself, is extremely encouraging and I warmly applaud all their efforts. **Gill Harris**

Photographs by kind permission of the Complementary Healthcare research team at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Sarah's t-shirt turban

'Sarah's t-shirt turban' as Velindre now call it came out of sheer desperation. I really didn't find my wig comfortable and although I had some lovely cotton scarves, I found that I had to pull them uncomfortably tight to stay on my head.

All specialist headwear was too big for my petite head so I browsed YouTube in the hope of finding a solution. I came across a woman saying she made head coverings from old t-shirts. With a few tweaks my idea was born. Before I knew it, I was buying t-shirts in charity shops and had a colour to match every outfit.



I've been asked to give tutorials in the most bizarre of places from hospitals, coffee shops and a music venue in Womanby Street.

I hope this step by step guide helps someone as much as it's helped me. It's comfortable, stays put, costs next to nothing and there's no sewing involved.

Step 1 — Lie a t-shirt on a flat surface and cut from under one arm to the other.

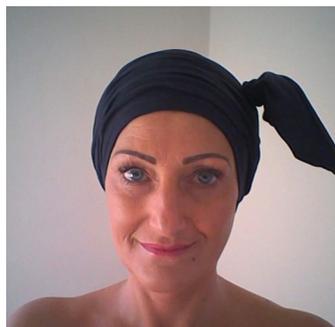


Step 2 — Discard the top section. Using the tube of material you have left, place the hemmed end of the t-shirt on your forehead leaving the rest of the material hang down towards your back.



Step 3 — Pull the material snug and make two bunches.

Step 4 — Cross the bunches over each other and bring all bunched material forward like a headband.



Step 5 — Pull the headband section snug to one side and using a hair bobble, make a small ponytail.

Step 6 — Adjust the headband section to sit comfortably and scrunch the ponytail to make a rose. This can be secured with a hat pin, or just tucked into the bobble itself.



Sarah Burnett

A huge thank you to Sarah for sharing this with us

Dates for Your Diary

Breast Cancer Care Cymru Dates

Moving Forward Courses

This free four week course (one morning per week) covers a range of topics to help you move forward after treatment. Expert speakers are happy to answer questions and there's time to share experiences with people in a similar situation to you.

Cardiff

10am - 1pm

Wednesdays 07 February - 28 February 2018

Llantrisant

10am – 1pm

Thursdays 01 March - 22 March 2018

Bridgend

10am – 1pm

Fridays 02 February - 23 February 2018

Booking is essential for the above Breast Cancer Care Cymru events.

Please call 0345 077 1894 or e-mail cym@breastcancercare.org.uk for more info.

Living with Secondary Breast Cancer

has been designed to give you the opportunity to meet other people living with a secondary diagnosis and get relevant information and support.



In Cardiff there are regular (usually monthly) meet-ups where you can chat and share experiences with others with a secondary diagnosis. Topics include pain management, fatigue, benefits, and side effects sessions – we also welcome suggestions for topics you would like to cover.

If anyone is interested in the Living with Secondary Breast Cancer service they can contact Breast Cancer Care Cymru on 0845 077 1893 or email secondaryservices@breastcancercare.org.uk

19 January 2018, 11am—3pm, Healthy Eating

16 February 2018, 11am—1pm, Meet up

16 March 2018, 10am—3pm, Information Day

20 April 2018, 11am – 1pm, Meet up

18 May 2018, 11am—3pm, topic TBC

Managing Menopausal Symptoms

A free 2.5 hour session on managing the menopausal symptoms that are all too often a side effect of breast cancer. The session is presented by Gail Williams, Oncology Nurse Specialist in breast cancer and takes place at Velindre Hospital.

For more information or to book onto a session, please call Helen Harris on 029 2031 6979

Save the Date

**Friday, 20th April 2018
7pm—9pm**

**Open Evening
Canolfan Beulah, Rhiwbina
All Welcome—bring a friend**

If you are over 70..... Message from South East Wales Breast Screening Centre

'We will not invite you but you are still able to be screened if you wish. Please ask us for an appointment by getting in touch with your local Breast Test Wales screening centre. Screening is only available every three years'.

South East Wales Breast Screening Centre

18 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ. Telephone: (029) 2039 7222

Running for my Mum (from page 1)

In April, Michael Williams will be taking part in the iconic London Marathon to indulge his passion for running and to raise funds for Breastfriends. Michael loves running for a number of reasons. It is a chance to get away from a stressful job in London and a great way to keep fit.



Michael was just 9 when mum, Ruth, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1999 at the age of 39 and the decision to run for Breastfriends was an easy one.

‘Not only do I have the chance to run in the most famous marathon in the world’ says Michael ‘but I also get to raise money for a cause very close to my heart. Breastfriends has been a great source of comfort and support to my Mum and I know the money I raise will be put to good use’.

Ruth is one of the founder members of Breastfriends and is also our treasurer.

‘We are a very small charity’ says Ruth ‘and our main expenditure is our newsletter. While some support groups no longer exist, we have continued to flourish and I believe that is, in part, due to our newsletter. We have 3 issues a year and it’s a great way to publicise who we are and what we do and to attract new members’.

On hearing that nephew Michael will be pounding the streets of London for Breastfriends, Ruth’s brother-in-law, also Michael, has decided to join him and the two Michaels (pictured with Ruth) hope to raise enough money for a whole year’s newsletters!

If you’d like to support Michael, you can donate via www.virginmoneygiving.com/MichaelWilliams56 or at any of our meetings or walks. **Sue Youngman**



Weathering the Storm

My love affair with Hong Kong began in 1999 when I flew out to teach English to Chinese school children. An unexpected windfall had given me the opportunity to say goodbye to what had become a mundane job and enrol on a ‘teaching English as a second language’ course with just enough left over to pay for my flight.

It was a gamble that paid off and I loved my new life. Although family commitments brought me back to the UK in 2014, I’ve been lucky enough to go back each year and housesit for friends when they went on vacation. It was while I was in Hong Kong over Christmas 2016 that I found an abnormality that led to my breast cancer diagnosis. I’ve always been a very private and independent person and chose to deal with my diagnosis and treatment in my own way telling only a handful of friends. A chance meeting with an old friend introduced me to the Breastfriends Roath Park walk and, as I got to know the other walkers, I found being able to chat to others who understood my issues really helpful.

We talk about all sorts of things over coffee and one morning I found myself sharing my story of how I came to work in Hong Kong. It was probably on my mind because I’d had the offer of an apartment for 7 weeks over the summer and had held back, mainly because I was worried about the journey from Cardiff to Heathrow.

My confidence had taken a knock and I hadn’t driven for 6 months. My main concern was how I’d manage my case on public transport without doing any damage to my affected side and without having to depend on the kindness of strangers. The enthusiasm of my fellow walkers was catching, all I needed to do was work out the logistics of the journey and go for it.

Being back in Hong Kong was magical and did so much to restore my confidence. I loved eating out, drinking, catching up with friends and doing some teaching. I told a few close friends about my experience and it seemed so much easier doing it after the event than when I was just diagnosed or having treatment.

While I was in Hong Kong, we had more than our fair share of typhoons but we just battened down the hatches and weathered the storm - which pretty much sums up 2017 for me! **A Tuesday walker**

Bon Voyage Linda

At the end of December 2017, Linda McCarthy, Head, Breast Cancer Care Cymru retires after 8 years with the charity. Breastfriends has always had a very close working relationship with Breast Cancer Care Cymru. The charity takes our calls, promotes our group and we in turn promote the services offered by Breast Cancer Care. Those of us on the committee who are also volunteers for Breast Cancer Care have a huge amount of respect not only for Linda, but for everyone in the Cardiff office who work so hard to help women (and men) with a diagnosis of breast cancer.



Following a career in the Royal Navy, Linda entered the charity sector in 1989 and joined Breast Cancer Care Cymru in June 2009. In the words of one of her line managers:

'Linda is a joy to work with. Always striving to do the absolute best for our clients, service users, volunteers and staff. Linda is also a fantastic networker engaging key people to join and support us. Linda led service development, policy and campaigning turning the organisation's profile in Wales from a small relatively unknown charity to one of the leading cancer organisations with a reputation for quality services and effective campaigning. Linda's leadership skills were instrumental in the success of the organisation across the UK not just in Wales'.

Linda cites her greatest achievement during her time with Breast Cancer Care Cymru as 'Increasing our reach through our face to face services from single percentage figures to 38% and still rising! However I can't take the accolades for this as my amazing team 'punch so above their weight' and without them and the superb volunteers, it simply wouldn't have been possible'.

Linda will begin her retirement in style with a 50 day cruise visiting the Caribbean, Mexico, Panama Canal, Hawaii, San Francisco, Tonga, Samoa, New Zealand and Australia.

As Linda quite literally sails off into the sunset, we would like to wish her a long and happy retirement and say a huge thank you for everything she's done to help make Breast Cancer Care Cymru the amazing charity it is today.

Sue Youngman

Tattoos for Breast Cancer patients

How tattoos can give Breast Cancer survivors their confidence back - that was the headline of a recent article that I was involved in for the South Wales Echo and Wales Online.

I had a reconstruction in 2007 a year after I had my mastectomy. Then about four months later my surgeon reconstructed a nipple and tattooed an areola. I was so glad that I had it done as I felt it gave me back my confidence. I could go swimming and get changed without having to worry that I would get looked at because I was different. It was definitely the right decision for me. Over time the tattoo would fade and would need retouching. Breast care nurses are trained to do this so I knew this wouldn't be a problem.

Fast forward to 2015. I had been thinking for some time that my tattoo needed touching up but hadn't got around to doing anything about it. On 6th October 2015 I saw a post on the Cardiff and Vale Breast Cancer Now Facebook page from Rachel Kennedy. As it was Breast Cancer Awareness month she was donating an areola repigmentation treatment. I was lucky enough to win the treatment and duly my areola tattoo was restored to its former glory!



Before and after shots of Elaine's eyebrows

During chemo I lost my eyebrows and eyelashes. Whilst my eyelashes returned my eyebrows always remained very sparse. I had talked to Rachel about having my eyebrows cosmetically tattooed and she showed me pictures of her work. I recently decided to go ahead and had my eyebrows done in August. In September Rachel contacted me and asked me if I be interested in doing an interview for the South Wales Echo about her work.

Rachel became a cosmetic and paramedical tattooist after her close friend was diagnosed with breast cancer. When her friend lost her eyebrows and eyelashes she wanted to do something to help and support her friend. She did her training and then set up her own semi-permanent cosmetics business. As well as helping more than fifty breast cancer patients she has also used her talents to help people with burns and skin conditions.

Elaine Nicholas

Stop the Train—I really do want to get off!

The topic for our November meeting was *'Coping with Fatigue'*. The session was very well attended which must indicate that it's not just me that is searching for the answer to this debilitating and frustrating condition.

The message is clear – be kind to yourself, rest, don't waste what little energy you do have on mundane chores such as dusting, washing and delousing next door's children.

All well and good, I say, but should I still feel so tired seven years on? The reason, according to my mother, is that I'm an over-achiever and a people pleaser. She didn't use those exact words. She simply complained that I'm **always** busy. I hate criticism, but once I calmed down I started to wonder if she had a point.

Before I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 47 in 2009 I was working full time and looking forward to the next step in my career. I didn't go out much socially but I was quite happy collapsing in front of the telly, doing a bit of knitting or wandering to the pub.

Then breast cancer came along. For nine months I stayed at home whilst going through surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and Herceptin. Returning to work was much harder than I had anticipated and I had to settle for a three day week. I could physically do no more.

The upside of this was that I now had lovely long weekends and a lot of envious colleagues. So, what has happened? I've filled them with other stuff, that's what! I started taking up all those invitations to lunch and dinner that I had previously passed up. All of a sudden I had several different groups of exciting friends. I then joined the local Rotary Club and within a few years I was the first women president of our club and active on several committees. I then got asked, very nicely, to become the secretary of Breastfriends.

Everything was manageable until we had a couple of family crisis. All of a sudden I was running around in a permanent state of confusion, anger and extreme FATIGUE trying to balance everything! I knew I had to get a grip on the situation when I found myself looking back fondly on the time I was 'on the sick' having treatment. During this period I did what I wanted and no one wanted anything from me. No one asked 'good old Jane' to run errands or help out as she was *'too ill to be bothered with such things'*. No one moaned when I watched telly all afternoon or spent all day experimenting with cookie recipes. No one quibbled when I said I was just going out for a walk in the sunshine or got upset when I didn't feel like going out. I was *'precious'* for a while and I was allowed to do what I liked.

I don't want to be *'precious'* again but that period did show me that I could find tranquillity in doing simple things and taking time to *'smell the roses'*. I've lost that and I need to reclaim some of that precious time. It's time I started to say 'no' more often. **Jane Shatford**



Some coping strategies to help with Fatigue

- ◆ Allow extra time to get things done and stop before you become over-tired
- ◆ Find a balance between what you want and need to do. Does it all really need to be done? Can you delegate?
- ◆ Keep a fatigue diary to ascertain when during your day your energy levels are highest and plan accordingly.
- ◆ Balance your day between activity and rest.
- ◆ Take time to relax and practise relaxation techniques.
- ◆ Give yourself permission to do less and to do things differently .
- ◆ Learn to say 'no' and tell others how you are feeling.
- ◆ Small amounts of exercise and time outdoors will help boost your energy levels and mood.



What's on at Breastfriends

Join us at one of our meetings

Cardiff Meetings

Our Cardiff group meets on these dates from **1pm-3pm** at the **Margaret Whittaker Lounge, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, CF14 6LX** unless otherwise stated

Friday 12th January
Coffee and Chat

Friday 9th February
Complementary Therapies
Angela Green, Velindre

Friday 9th March
Mindfulness
Dr Teena Clouston, Cardiff University

Friday 13th April
Gardening and well being
John Chichester, The Secret Shed, Rhiwbina
Open meeting , bring a friend!

Friday 20th April, 7pm—9pm
Open Evening, Canolfan Beulah, Rhiwbina

Barry Meetings

Our Barry group meets on these dates from **2pm-4pm** at the **Mary Lennox Room, Barry Hospital, Colcot Road, Barry, CF62 8YH**

Friday 19th January
Coffee and Chat

Friday 16th February
Coffee and Chat

Friday 16th March
Coffee and Chat

Friday 20th April
Coffee and Chat

Friday 18th May
Coffee and Chat

For more information on the Barry meetings please call Rosina on 01446 745269 or Linda on 01446 710516 / 07967 806073

Walk and talk with Breastfriends

We meet **every Tuesday (weather permitting)** for a short leisurely walk followed by coffee and maybe cake!

Barry walks alternate between Barry Island and the Knap and start at 10am or 10.30am depending on the time of year—Please contact Rosina on 01446 745269 or Linda on 01446 710516/07967 806073 for more info)

Cardiff Walks meet **by the lighthouse in Roath Park at 10.30 am** for a walk around the lake
(Please contact Sue on 07773 500525 for more info)



Contact Us

Phone: messages care of Breast Cancer Care Cymru on 0845 0771894

Please check our website for up-to-date information

Email: info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk

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