

## Breastfriends Cardiff and Vale Breast Cancer Support Group

May 2023

# 2023

### Celebrating Twenty Years of Cardiff and Vale Breastfriends

It all began back in 2003, when the first Cardiff support group was started. Barry came on board in 2008 and both groups have been going strong ever since.



### Help us celebrate!

We're organising two special events to mark this amazing milestone and we'd love you to join us. **See inside for more details.**

- ◆ Monday June 12th - Buffet and Bubbles
- ◆ Friday October 13th - Fashion Show

Could you be  
our next Top  
Model?

See page **two** to  
find out more....

### 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.



# Celebrating 20 years of Breastfriends in Cardiff and the Vale

## Two special events

Our usual Strawberry Tea AGM event will be replaced by 'buffet and bubbles' (12th June) and promises to be a very special evening.



Our second event, on Friday October 13th, will be a Fashion Show, kindly sponsored by **Calon Rhiwbeina**. Our last fashion show in 2018 was a huge success and an inspirational evening for both the models and the audience.

Both events will take place at:  
**Canolfan Beulah, Rhiwbina, Cardiff CF14 6LX**

For information about tickets for the Fashion Show, email us.

We are also looking for models, so get in touch if you're interested.



[info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk](mailto:info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk)

## Dressed to Impress

**Breastfriends Treasurer, Ruth Williams, describes the thrill of the catwalk.**

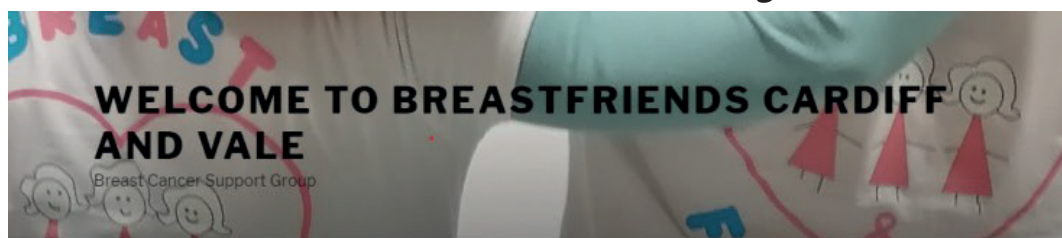
I would never have thought that I would be walking down the catwalk with an audience looking at me. The timing was perfect as my daughter was getting married and I had worked hard to lose weight and at last I felt good about myself. Kath from **Calon Rhiwbeina** was so kind and helpful.

I went to the shop and had a good look around all the lovely clothes, seeing what I liked and choosing outfits for the different categories we were going to model. Then, trying them on and deciding what looked good on me.

The evening itself was such fun for all of us. The audience were lovely and made me feel confident parading and twirling down the hall. I'm so glad I did it and recommend the experience to anyone.



[www.breastfriendscandv.org.uk](http://www.breastfriendscandv.org.uk)



## Who exactly are support groups for? Some reflections from our Secretary, Jane Shatford

Up to now I've tended to consider support groups like Breastfriends to be more relevant to those who have been newly diagnosed or in the early recovery stages; *'to catch you before you fall'*. However, my recent experience has made me question that assumption.

I was diagnosed in June 2009 and was very thankful for all the initial help with issues such as coping with treatment, the emotional aspects of having cancer, the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and various self-help tips. Over time I thought I was adjusting relatively well but recently I've become angrier – with everything!

This seems to stem from the fact that all those years ago, having had 2 separate cancers discovered in both breasts the only solution was a bilateral mastectomy followed by chemotherapy and Herceptin and Tamoxifen.

There was no talk of reconstructive surgery and when I investigated the possibility two years later, I was advised that any surgery would be extensive involving skin grafts and repositioning of support muscles with no guarantee of success.

However, 12 years on surgery seems to have advanced considerably along with high profile cases of elective mastectomies for those choosing preventative surgery where there is a high risk of hereditary breast cancer.

I was beginning to feel cheated and jealous of those now able to take advantage of treatments not available to me years ago. But, at a recent Breastfriends meeting, the topic of reconstruction came up and it was extremely heart-warming that others in the room were willing to share their experiences.

Some had had successful surgeries but others had had problems. This discussion helped me to put things into perspective. To be grateful that as things were in 2009, I had received the best treatment that was available.

Medical advances are being made all the time, that's a fact of life and you have to accept certain situations.

I'm very proud of being a trustee of Breastfriends. As a charity it has always kept true to its aim of *'promoting and protecting the physical and mental health of persons who have or have had breast cancer ...by providing information, advice, peer support and resources'*.

In this respect it has never, in all its 20 years, deviated from that aim. It's there for everyone, irrespective of how long ago your cancer 'journey' began. Thank you and Happy Anniversary!

Jane Shatford – Secretary Breastfriends

## Dates for Your Diary

Face to face **Moving Forward** courses take place over two consecutive weeks and are delivered by a Moving Forward facilitator, in partnership with NHS hospitals.

Online **Moving Forward** courses also take place over two consecutive weeks and will give you the chance to share your experiences, get tips from breast cancer experts and connect with others.

You can attend **Moving Forward** either at our face-to-face course or take part by joining online. Find a course near you or register for an online course at: [breastcancernow.org/movingforward](http://breastcancernow.org/movingforward)

or call us on 03457 077 1893

To find out more and to register to join a course, scan the QR code with your mobile:



### Moving Forward Dates

#### Face to face sessions:

##### Llantrisant

Thursdays 11 & 18 May 9.30 – 1pm

##### Cardiff

Wednesdays 17 & 24 May 9.30 – 1pm

##### Abergavenny

Thursdays 18 & 25 May 9.30 – 1pm

##### Swansea

Tuesdays 11 & 18 July 9.30 – 1pm

##### Newport

Wednesdays 12 & 19 July 9 – 12.30pm

**Moving Forward Online** runs every week.



### Managing Menopausal Symptoms

Maggie's Cardiff offer free, two-hour sessions on managing the menopausal symptoms that are all too often a side effect of breast cancer.

These can be booked either by phoning Gail Williams or by phoning us at Maggie's on 029 224 080 26.

Maggie's Cardiff, at the Chris McGuigan building, Velindre Cancer Centre, Whitchurch, CF14 2TQ

The next **Younger Women Together Online:** Wednesdays 28 June & 19 July 7 – 8.15pm

#### Younger Women Together Speakers Live:

Tuesday 16 May, 7pm-8.15pm: Sexuality and Intimacy with Dr Isabel Whyte

Thursday 01 June, 7pm-8:15pm: Healthy Eating with Nathalie Jones

Register at:

[breastcancernow.org](http://breastcancernow.org)

### 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



## There's nothing like a good old singsong!

At our February Cardiff meeting we welcomed Sarah Armstrong, one of **Tenovus's Sing with Us** choir leaders.



Sarah began the meeting by outlining the various services offered by the Tenovus Cancer Care charity. These start from the moment of diagnosis, through treatment and beyond.

Some of us might have received chemotherapy or Herceptin treatment on one of its amazing Mobile Support Units or accessed its Counselling Service, Tele-friends Service, Cancer Callback Service, Benefits Advice, Ask the Nurse or Support Line.

Several years ago the charity conducted some research into the positive effect that singing has on those living with a cancer diagnosis, whether that be the person with cancer or their family, friend or carer. With a grant from The National Lottery it was able to employ choir leaders in various locations across the country and the project has gone from strength to strength – even during the Covid period when things went online.

Sarah then involved the group members in some warming up exercises and soon had everyone laughing as they tried to concentrate on creating multiple layered harmonies. Everyone was soon entering into the spirit of things and surprised just how much fun it can be – even for those who thought they couldn't sing at all. It truly is a wonderful way to lift your spirits, reduce anxiety and be part of something special.

If you would like to find out where your nearest choir is, just contact Tenovus. More information about the choirs and other services is available online at: [tenovuscancercare.org.uk/support](https://tenovuscancercare.org.uk/support) or you can call them on 0808 808 1010. Lines are open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday. 10am – 1pm weekends and bank holidays.



## Genetics: Breast Cancer—is it in the genes?

At our Cardiff meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March, we heard from Genetic Counsellors Angharad Cullinane and Gabriela Juma who are part of the All Wales Medical Genomics Service at the Institute of Medical Genetics based at the University Hospital of Wales.

Angharad explained how an individual with a strong family history of breast cancer is assessed once a referral, usually from a GP, is made. The process starts with the drawing of a family tree containing information about the relationships and the type of cancer they are/were affected by. Various factors are examined including the clustering of certain types of cancer i.e. breast and ovarian, the age of the person diagnosed (usually being younger than expected) and the number of relatives affected. From this analysis it is decided whether a person has an underlying hereditary cancer predisposition.

Most people asking for an assessment do so because they are concerned whether their children are at risk and the assessment seeks to address three main questions – whether the risk of developing cancer is high, moderate or low, if the person is eligible for additional screening and their eligibility for genetic testing.

Once the assessment, which can take some time and research, has been completed and the results explained to the person, the counsellors will then discuss preventative treatments and explain what additional screening and monitoring will involve.

Often the person will need advice and support when explaining the implications to their family members and managing their reactions.

Following Angharad’s presentation another member of their team, Joanne Thomas, who is the Genetics Education and Training Lead, encouraged those at the meeting to complete an online survey which seeks to find out how and when people would like to be made aware of the availability of the assessment service.

It is clear from the presentation that considerable strides have been made in advancing research and treatment into this area which bodes well for the future of those concerned about the future of their health and that of their families.

This slide shows in more detail the referral guide.

<b>For Individuals with a <i>Family History</i> of Cancer please refer:</b>		
<b>Any individual with a relative who has a mutation in a cancer predisposition gene</b>		
<b>Breast/ Ovarian Cancer</b> Please note an affected individual through a male (e.g. breast cancer in paternal relatives) may be assessed as a one step-closer relative e.g SDR as FDR. If in doubt please contact us or refer <small>(Must meet one or more of the following)</small>		
<p><b>1 relative* with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breast cancer age &lt; 40 years</li> <li>Male breast cancer (any age)</li> <li>Bilateral breast cancer (any age)</li> <li>Breast AND ovarian cancer (any age)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>*FDR</b></p>	<p><b>2 relatives (male or female; same side of family)* with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breast cancer (any age)</li> <li>Ovarian cancer (any age)</li> <li>One breast and one ovarian cancer in different relatives (any age)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>*2 FDRs or 1 FDR and 1SDR</b></p>	<p><b>3 or more relatives* (same side of family) with:</b></p> <p>Breast and/or ovarian cancer at any age</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>*FDR or SDR</b></p>
<b>Colorectal (CRC) / Bowel polyps / Lynch Syndrome Related Cancers (LSRCs)</b> LSRCs = CRC, endometrial, small bowel, transitional cell carcinoma renal pelvis or ureter <small>(Must meet one or more of the following)</small>		
<p><b>At least 1 relative* with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LSRC age &lt; 45 years</li> <li>CRC &lt; 50 years</li> <li>2 or more LSRC (any age)</li> <li>CRC and &gt; 5 bowel polyps</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>*FDR</b></p>	<p><b>2 relatives* with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRC (any age)</li> <li>LSRC (one &lt;50 years)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>*2 FDRs (including both parents if CRC) OR 1 FDR and 1 SDR (on same side of family)</b></p>	<p><b>3 or more relatives* (same side of family) with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRC (any age)</li> <li>LSRC (one &lt;55 years)</li> </ul>

## If it's not one thing, it's another.... Living with breast cancer and comorbidities

**Mandy Mclachlan was already living with multiple sclerosis when she was faced with a breast cancer diagnosis. Here, she explains how she copes with having not one, but two challenges to deal with.**

Living with comorbidities isn't a walk in the park, but walking in Roath Park definitely helps.

Diagnosed in 2016 with oestrogen receptor positive breast cancer, a year after a fifth lot of Campath (lemtrada/alemtuzumab) treatment for Relapsing-remitting MS, the multi-disciplinary team decided it would be better if I didn't have chemotherapy, as it had been less than a year since my last dose of Campath, which works in a similar way to chemo.

Instead, after the mastectomy (three tumours) I was offered monthly Zoladex injections in addition to Tamoxifen to make sure that I wasn't producing any oestrogen. I was lucky that this combination seemed to work for me and I've had no further cancer since the mastectomy and lymph node removal.

Living with cancer, MS and epilepsy isn't easy (especially with two young children) but with a positive attitude and determination I went back to work five months after my second operation. I consider myself very lucky as I've passed the magic five years after breast cancer diagnosis and am still mobile most of the time (when not having an MS relapse).

I'm not good at taking things easy, but I'm trying to get better at pacing myself and realising that sometimes I just have to rest to recharge my batteries. I started the Breastfriends Tuesday walk round Roath Park after my mastectomy and have enjoyed continuing this when I can. It's a great way to keep in touch with Breastfriends members and support newly diagnosed members, with the added bonus of getting some fresh air and exercise.

Come along and join us, whatever your mobility issues! **See back page for details.**





# 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

**May 12th**

Paper flowers craft session

**June**

No monthly meeting  
Buffet and Bubbles & AGM Mon 12th, 7pm

**July 14th**

Coffee and Chat

**August**

No monthly meeting

**8th September**

TBC

### Barry Meetings

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

**May 19th**

Barry World War Two Museum—Women at War

**June 16th**

Tai Chi

**July 21st**

Wellness

**August 18th**

Afternoon tea at Alison's Wonderland

**September 15th**

Genetics

For more information on the Barry meetings please call  
Jenny on 07855 020905

## 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 10.30am.

Please contact Jenny on 07855 020905 for more information

**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 information



## Contact Us

Phone: messages care of Breast Cancer Now Cymru on 02922 80 2899

Please check our website for up-to-date information

Email: [info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk](mailto:info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk)

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