

HEART THROBS



CARDIAC SUPPORT GROUP
CARING FOR YOUR HEART

The ECHO

Heart Throbs Newsletter Sep 2025

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JOHN'S UPDATE

Wednesday Evening Class - 6pm at Holtwhites

I mentioned in the last edition that we were in the process of opening a Wednesday evening class with the explicit intention of making our cardiac fitness formula available to those who still work. Initially Hara was due to supervise the class but her work commitments made it difficult for her so I'm delighted that Lisa Carpenter has agreed to step into the breach. Lisa is a very experienced health and fitness trainer and has recently added the BACPR qualification to her glittering CV. I recommend all members try and get along to one of Lisa's Wednesday evening at 6pm classes at Holtwhites; you will find them rigorous, challenging and very worth while.

Cancelled Classes at Short Notice

Sometimes we have to cancel classes at very short notice due to unforeseen circumstances. The best way for us to communicate this to the membership is via our WhatsApp group which gives an instant alert to all members on their smart phones. If you are not a member of the group and would like to join please contact Jim Yates on 07703 961008. Unfortunately some members don't have smart phones so, to contact these members, Stefano has set up a 'text group' to send a text notice of cancelations to those members. If you would like to join the text group please contact Stefano on 07766 220111 and he will add you to his list.

Next of Kin and Medication Information

When the General Data Protection Rules (GDPR) were introduced almost a decade ago we had to rethink where we stored members medical records and personal information. It is now held securely, 'off-site' so in the case of a medical emergency it may take a short while for this to be accessed. For those that don't know or have not taken advantage of the facility, your smartphone gives 'easy access' to this information for use by the emergency services.

If you haven't set this up on your smartphone then I suggest you do immediately. If you would like help please speak to an instructor or a committee member.



Anne's article in Enfield Dispatch

A big thank you to Anne Cullen for the excellent article she had published in the July edition of the Enfield Dispatch ([Enfield Dispatch](#)). Not only does an article have to be written, it also requires a lot of badgering of the Dispatch's editor to make sure it is the right length and the required number of photos accompanying it. No small task but it gets our group an enormous amount of exposure across the Borough. Well done Anne.

Stan Phillips

We recently heard of the sad passing of Stan Phillips at the age of 92. Stan joined Heart Throbs in 2010 following a triple bypass and was an active member of the Monday at 11am class and a supporter of our social events through to 'lock down'. In his working life he was 'in the print' and was Father of Chapel at his firm. Latterly he was a representative at Pearl Insurance through to retirement.

VE DAY 80

Finally I would like to thank Catherine, Corinne, Anne and Barbara for their efforts in organising the excellent VE DAY 80 evening (they were the ladies in uniform on the evening). They put a lot of work into gathering the information and archiving it into a watchable presentation and also putting on an excellent spread for us to enjoy. Well done ladies; much appreciated by the attendees. You can read more about the evening on page 5 and see photos from the evening on page 6.

John Golby

Health Matters with Barbara - Chris Bird

In 2017 Chris was in perfect health, a keen walker and not on any medication. Sadly, towards the end of that year Chris's husband Alan died of a sudden heart attack. Two weeks later Chris was rushed by ambulance, sirens blaring to Barnet General. Chris thought she was dying of a broken heart as she had been very happily married for 56 years. Chris explained that the medics told her there was no such thing. However, there is a condition known as Takotsubo cardiomyopathy that causes symptoms of heart attack (Harvard Health publishing June 2013, British Heart Foundation, 3.3.2019). However, Chris was found to have several serious conditions, heart failure, atrial fibrillation, with a heartbeat of 200 bpm and pneumonia. She was in hospital for two weeks so was unable to help her family plan Alan's funeral. She was only allowed to leave her hospital bed if she agreed to return to hospital immediately after the service thus missing the wake.



Treatment for her Heart condition

Chris has heart failure which means that her heart doesn't pump as well as it should. So, without intervention her body would be deprived of the nutrients and oxygen needed to thrive. To alleviate this Chris had many procedures including, three cardioversions, a controlled electrical shock to restore normal heart rhythm, and a convergent and an endocardial ablation in 2022. Unfortunately, these procedures made little difference to her condition. An AV-node ablation was to be given six weeks after a pacemaker was implanted, but because of the extremely long waiting list this finally took place ten months later. Chris's fluctuating heartbeat between 45 and 150 is now a steady 70 bpm. Chris takes 9 tablets daily, including beta blocker, statin, the anticoagulant Warfarin and Entresto for long-term heart failure. Chris says that she feels very well now but does become very breathless when walking up hills, stairs, steps or even slopes.

On being a member of Heart Throbs

After attending a Heart Failure Clinic Chris was given details about Heart Throbs by the Specialist Cardio Nurse. Her first class was in May 2023. Chris attends on Mondays. She told me she immediately appreciated Hara's knowledge and concern for people with heart disease. Chris initially attended the 'Lite' class at 9 o'clock. However, not being a particularly early riser, she was pleased to be 'promoted' to the 11 o'clock class which she still attends once a week. Chris added that Heart Throbs has many advantages apart from exercise. She was very pleased to find a friendly crowd at the classes and enjoys the social evenings. She says it is not only good for her heart but, as research shows having good social support increases her life expectancy.

..... a bit more about Chris including her working life

Chris was born in East Barnet on 6th June 1939, three months before the start of World War 2. Her 5th birthday was D-Day. Chris was the second of four sisters. When out playing in the street, if the sirens went off, they knew they had to go home. During this time her father was away at war. Sadly, when Chris was 15, her father died age 49 from lung cancer. She explained that there was no counselling in those days, and her grieving only became less once she started to have her own children. Chris met Alan in a Youth Club, and they married in 1961. She says they were truly blessed with four children. Chris now has 10 grandchildren and since her husband passed away two great grandchildren. Chris left school at 16 with O levels. She went to work at Barclays Bank in London as a shorthand-typist. She stayed there until she had her first child but had to leave as there was no maternity leave or pay then and no job to return to. Whilst her children were young, she worked locally in offices of WH Smith, Enfield Building Society and later as an Office Manager in Chase Farm Hospital. Her last job was working in Enfield Civic Centre as secretary to the Chief Executive. Chris walked to all these jobs and still walks everywhere.

Barbara Miller

Meet the Committee - Stefano Francioso/General Secretary

1) When did you join Heart Throbs?

I joined Heartthrobs in Nov 2016, about 6 months after my triple by-pass. Shortly afterwards John Golby proposed setting up a committee and asked me to take on the role of General Secretary. I was happy to help out with ideas and promoting the group and how we could increase our membership. I suggested I stand outside various North London Hospitals with a placard saying “We need more Heart-attacks” !!! Thankfully common sense prevailed and we settled with contacting the cardio rehabilitation teams at North Middlesex hospital, Royal Free hospital, Chase Farm hospital and Barnet with a view of introducing ourselves to patients after they had completed their 8 week cardio rehab programme. In my role I advise and pick up actions to ensure the smooth running of Heart Throbs and the committee.



2) What do you enjoy about Heart Throbs?

I really enjoy being part of the committee that raises money for Heart Throbs, our Enfield's local cardiac rehabilitation exercise group. It gives me a real sense of purpose and pride to be able to contribute to something that makes such a meaningful difference to people's lives. I especially enjoy helping to organise and run our fundraising events – I've been involved in many over the years, including catering for our popular Italian Night and the annual Summer Barbecue, all of which bring us together and help raise vital funds for the club. For me, it's more than just volunteering – it's a way of giving something back. Heart Throbs supported me through a very frightening and uncertain time in my life nine years ago, and being part of the committee is my way of showing appreciation for the support I received.

3) What did you do in your working life?

I've owned and run three restaurants in London's West End, so I know my way around a kitchen (and a wine list!).

4) What football team do you support?

I've been a long-suffering West Ham supporter — and by long, I mean the kind of loyalty that deserves a medal... or at least a therapist. Honestly, the best part of supporting them these days is finding out they don't have a game — no heartbreak, no shouting at the TV, just peace. Glorious, football-free peace.

5) What's your favourite food?

Now, when I'm not emotionally recovering from another West Ham result, I'm indulging my true love: Italy. Everything Italian makes me happy — especially the food. My first passion? Seafood. The fresher, the better. Pair that with a crisp bottle of Italian white — a Gavi di Gavi or a chilled Vermentino — and I'm in heaven.

6) What's your favourite drink?

Red wine ? Don't even get me started. I couldn't possibly choose just one. Some of my favourites are Amarone della Valpolicella and full-bodied Primitivos. Basically, if it's Italian and comes in a bottle, then I am hooked!

7) What's your favourite holiday destination?

Every year, we escape to Italy for a much-needed recharge — sun, wine, pasta, repeat. But our all-time favourite trip? Japan. Mind-blowing in every way: culture, food, toilets with more buttons than a spaceship - unforgettable.

8) Do you have a pet, if so what?

At home, we're ruled by our two feline overlords — Cookie and Cream. They're 12 years old, brothers, and fully aware they run the show. They've mastered the art of judging us silently and demanding treats with a single stare.

Catherine McCarthy

Heart Throbs Social Events 2025

Our Summer Programme included:

- 1 May** - 80th Anniversary VE Day Celebrations
- 5 June** - Wildlife photography with Robin Claydon
- 3 July** - Stefano's BBQ

Our Autumn Programme:

- 2 October** Paul Davies, former ITN news man - "The Life and Trials of a Television News Man" part 2
- 6 November** - Our patron Dr Simon Kennon
- 4 December** - Christmas quiz "Around the world in 80 questions"
- December** - Christmas lunch - date to be confirmed

If you have any thoughts on relevant topics/guest speakers for our future Social Evenings or any hobbies interests/career experiences etc. that you might like to present a talk on please contact Jim Yates.

Jim Yates

Exercises to improve your balance

Improving your balance helps you feel more stable and coordinated when you're moving around, which can help reduce the risk of falling and hurting yourself. This is particularly important as you get older because balance can worsen with age. According to NHS figures, around 1 in 3 people over the age of 65 have at least 1 fall a year. That's why the UK Government recommends older adults perform exercises that improve balance and co-ordination at least twice a week. This includes activities like dancing, tai chi and bowls, as well as the exercises below. People who've had a stroke or have peripheral neuropathy (nerve damage) and those who take multiple medicines, can all benefit from balance training too.



Hara Markos, one of our trainers, is a Cardiac Rehabilitation Exercise Physiologist at Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust, where she helps people recover from heart conditions or surgery through exercise. On the British Heart Foundation website Hara shares a series of simple exercises you can do at home to improve your stability.

Hara recommends doing the exercises at least twice a week. The 10 exercises should take around 7 minutes to do. You can choose to perform them either standing up, sitting down or holding onto the back of a chair. In the videos Hara demonstrates each exercise standing up, and our own Corinne Woods, performs them while sitting or using a chair for support. If you're standing, make sure you're near a wall, table or a secure chair you can lean on if you feel wobbly. Hold each position or movement for as long as you feel comfortable. Speak to your doctor before starting any new exercise if you have a heart or circulatory condition, diabetes or high blood pressure.

Source: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine>

Catherine McCarthy

New members

A warm welcome to all our new members; Roger Brown, Christine McCluskey, Khaleed Mirza, Colin Wollaston, Evelyn Cantelo, Joe Mariconda, Sandip Patel and Martin Parrott.

VE DAY 80 Celebration

On 1st May we celebrated VE Day 80 which was organised by Catherine, Corinne, Barbara and Anne. The room was decorated with flags and balloons and there were hats for everyone to wear. At the beginning and interval 1940's wartime music was played including The White Cliffs of Dover, We'll Meet Again, In the Mood and Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy. Catherine, Corinne, Barbara and Anne donned wartime uniforms (from Amazon!) and several members wore the Heart Throbs VE Day 80 blue polo shirts. Many of the attendees wore red, white and blue and we were all impressed to see Bob in RAF uniform.

We heard memories of VE Day from some of our Heart Throbs members Elizabeth Nathan, Brian Woods, David Davies, David Cox and Peter Grosch. Catherine presented the memories which included stories of fathers and relatives being away fighting in the war, separation from family, the importance of communication especially the radio and telegrams, war heroes in the family, dealing with rationing, bombings, reserved occupations and growing fruit and vegetables to help with the war effort.

We saw some newsreels from the time and how the country celebrated when the war came to an end particularly the street parties that everyone enjoyed. Brian, David Davies and Peter shared their photos from their own street parties (see below). Elizabeth remembered the Morrison's shelters which were reinforced metal dining room tables that a family could sleep under during the nighttime air raids and David Cox shared how he and his brother were evacuated to Australia for six years by the Children's Overseas Reception Board. Peter then spoke about his memories including the Alcazar cinema in Fore Street, Edmonton being bombed.

We enjoyed a plentiful buffet and a VE Day 80 cake. In addition, Paul brought a delicious homemade victoria sponge, scones, jam and cream. We finished with the raffle and a good time was had by all.



Catherine McCarthy

VE DAY 80 - Photo Gallery

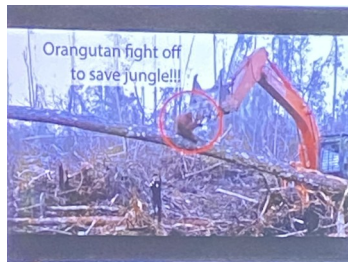
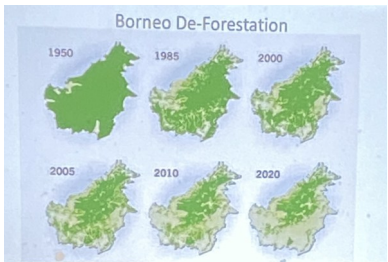


Orangutans of Borneo

On 4th June we welcomed the return of the wildlife photographer Robin Claydon, this time to talk to us about the Orangutans of Borneo. It was a fascinating talk where we heard about the problems they face and the importance of education to help resolve them. The orangutan is sometimes called the person of the forest (Malay for orangutan) or gardener of the forest. They are only found in the rainforests of Borneo and Sumatra. They have a life span of 35-40 years in the wild and weight about 110-220 lbs. They have one baby every eight years and the mother raises the baby on her own for seven years. They learn everything from their mothers who build a new nest every night to sleep in.

Robin explained the role of the orangutan foundation in protecting the rainforest and rehabilitating young orangutans. Deforestation has had a devastating impact on orangutans. Each orangutan needs a certain amount of space in the forest but over time this has been reduced to make way for palm oil plantations. Also, baby orangutans are often taken by locals as pets for their children but when they get big the families are unable to cope with them. As the babies haven't been taught by their mothers they need to be rehabilitated. If they can't be released into the wild they have to stay in the rehabilitation centre. As well as looking after and rehabilitating orangutans the foundation undertakes education of the local population to help address these issues. We also heard about other animals, birds and insects including macaws, alligators, fire flies, dragon flies and caterpillars.

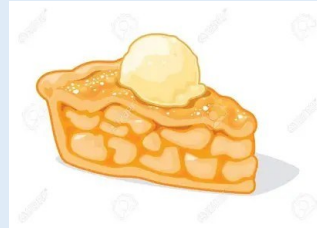
The orangutan foundation needs help to look after and protect 2,500 acres of tropical rainforest which is home to critically endangered orangutan's and other vulnerable wildlife species. Just £2 safeguards one acre of the forest for a whole year and every acre truly counts. If you feel able to donate please visit www.orangutan.org.uk/sponsor-an-acre. Robin has donated his fee to the orangutan charity. We also had the grand raffle.



Stefano's BBQ - Tex-Mex Fiesta

On 3rd July we enjoyed Stefano's delicious Tex-Mex BBQ where we feasted on hot dogs served in soft rolls, topped with golden fried onions, juicy chicken drumsticks and wings coated in a smoky Tex-Mex BBQ sauce, coleslaw, corn on the cob, mac and cheese, nachos, apple pie and cream and strawberry gateaux. It was a great evening spent in good company.

Presentations were made to Stefano and Enrica to thank them for all their hard work in organising a wonderful evening and to Charles Dace for organising the enjoyable trips to Wrotham Park earlier in the year. We also had the grand raffle.



Catherine McCarthy

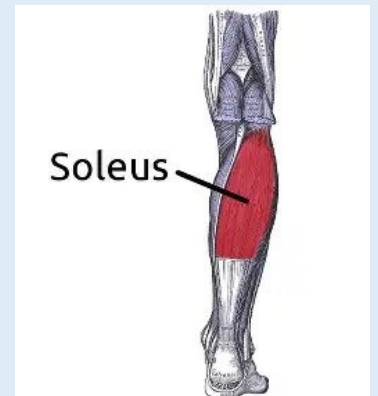
First fully robotic heart transplant in the US performed without opening patient's chest

Surgeons in Houston, Texas, have used robotic tools to perform heart transplant surgery on a patient without opening his chest. The minimally invasive surgery, performed at Baylor St Luke's Medical Center, reduced surgical trauma, blood loss and infection risk and increased recovery time for the 45-year-old patient. During the procedure, surgeons made small incisions in the upper abdominal wall below the diaphragm, eliminating the need to open the chest and break the breastbone. The robot was then navigated through the preperitoneal space in the abdominal wall to remove the diseased heart. The same route was then used to implant the donor organ. "Opening the chest and spreading the breastbone can affect wound healing and delay rehabilitation and prolong the patient's recovery, especially in heart transplant patients who take immunosuppressants," said lead surgeon Dr Kenneth Liao, chief of cardiothoracic transplantation and mechanical circulatory support at Baylor. As it's a minimally invasive procedure compared to traditional chest-opening procedures, the recovery period is drastically reduced, with less risk of infection and complications. The patient had been in hospital since November 2024 with multiple mechanical devices supporting heart function. Following the transplant in March 2025, the patient spent a month in hospital recovering before being discharged, without any complications. Liao said: "This transplant shows what is possible when innovation and surgical experience come together to improve patient care. (Source: Engineering and Technology Magazine, June 2025)



The importance of the Soleus muscle

The heart is not the only muscle that works in our body. In our legs there is a muscle called the soleus that also plays an essential role. That is why it is called "the second heart". This muscle, often ignored, has the fundamental task of helping to pump venous blood towards the heart, defying the force of gravity. The soleus is located at the back of the leg, just below the gastrocnemius, which is the most visible muscle of the calf. It is designed for endurance, not explosive movements, so it is not involved in jumping, but it is essential to keep us upright. The soleus is primarily responsible for plantar flexion, which is the action of pointing the toes downward, and it plays a crucial role in activities such as standing, walking, running, and jumping. Additionally, it helps maintain posture and improve balance.



Why is its function crucial? When the soleus is active:

- It improves blood circulation.
- It prevents the formation of blood clots and venous stasis.
- It helps reduce swelling in the legs.
- It protects against cardiovascular complications.
- The fascinating thing is that this muscle also works when you are standing, even if you are not moving.

(Source: <https://www.verywellhealth.com>)

Stefano Francioso

What drinking alcohol when you're on statins does to your body

They are one of the most widely prescribed medications in the UK, but what actually happens if you mix them with your favourite drinks?



As we reach a certain age, many of us begin reaching for our pill bottles, as well as a nice glass of red. With more than 10 million people in England now eligible for statins, the cholesterol lowering drugs it's inevitable that some will want to keep enjoying the odd drink while taking their medications (although perhaps not simultaneously). This is particularly true after the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) watchdog adjusted their guidelines in 2023 to lower the age of eligibility for statins down to 25, meaning that younger patients – especially those with underlying genetic risk factors – deemed to be at a higher short-term risk of heart problems can now be offered the drugs. But can statins and alcohol really be combined? Are some worse than others? Or are they quite simply, a marriage made in hell?

How does drinking alcohol affect the body when on statins?

Dr Raul Santos, a Brazilian cardiologist who serves as editor-in-chief for the World Heart Federation's Global Heart Journal, is keen to emphasise that statins are, overall, extremely safe medications. "They've been used by millions of people for decades to reduce cholesterol, and prevent myocardial infarctions [the medical term for heart attacks] and stroke," says Dr Santos. However, people can sometimes run into issues when combining them with alcohol, because the way in which statins lower LDL or "bad" cholesterol is through acting on a series of biological pathways in the liver. In particular, statins inhibit an enzyme which actively decreases the continuing production of cholesterol, as well as enhancing the uptake and breakdown of existing LDL cholesterol in the blood.

How does this affect our livers?

The problem, as pointed out by Dr Oliver Guttman, a consultant cardiologist at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, is that alcohol also acts on various enzymes in the liver. "They're both going down the same waterway, so to speak," says Dr Guttman. "So the main concern is that there's going to be some kind of congestion." With statins altering the liver's natural function, and alcohol needing to be metabolised, Dr Guttman says that having too much booze in your system risks impeding the liver's ability to carry out its vital functions such as breaking down and detoxifying toxins. "When statins and alcohol are combined at a high level, there's an increased risk of liver inflammation or damage," he adds.

How much booze is too much?

So how much alcohol should you stick to? Dr Santos suggests that all statin users should aim to stay within the guidelines of seven units per week for women and 14 units for men, while Dr Guttman says that drinking advice should take into account whether the patient has any other underlying liver conditions.



The final verdict: Can alcohol and statins mix?

Dr Guttman adds: "Generally, if you have a little bit of alcohol, no more than a glass of wine a day, it's generally safe. The bottom line is that moderation is really important.

(Source: The Daily Telegraph).

Stefano Francioso

Good News Stories

Hero Service Dog Senses Owner's Irregular Heartbeat - Saving the Veteran From a Catastrophic Stroke

The Labrador usually lets Hank sleep late - but not on this particular day. Something was wrong. Very wrong. The service dog named Tommy had been with Hank Ford since he was a pup, and he knew his owner was at risk. He started nudging Hank with his nose, then pawing at him, and jumping on his body. Hank figured the dog needed to go outside a little earlier than normal. But when Hank stood up, he was light-headed and woozy, starting to sense that something was wrong too. He opened the door to let the dog outside, but Tommy didn't budge. 54-year-old Hank kept feeling worse. He decided to check his vital signs with a blood pressure cuff and was startled by the results. His pulse was a staggering 171 beats per minute. Hank drove himself to the hospital and he could tell by the way the doctors were behaving that it was something serious. "It was good that Tommy woke me up. "Something about the way he woke me up: He hasn't done it before and he hasn't done it since,". "Doctors said, more than likely, it would have been a stroke and it would have been a (big) one." What he was experiencing is AFib - an irregular heartbeat characterised by a rapid rhythm. The upper chambers of the heart beat out of sync with the lower chambers, and the condition can lead to reduced blood flow and cause strokes - or even death. "I knew dogs were man's best friend for a reason," Hank said. "He takes it above and beyond that." (Source: www.thegoodnewsnetwork.org).



Stefano Francioso

The Committee

The committee meets each month except August and January. The Annual General Meeting usually takes place during the summer. It hasn't taken place for this year yet, details to follow. The committee members are:

John Golby (Chair/Treasurer), Fintan Gallagher (Deputy Treasurer), Stefano Francioso (General Secretary), Jim Yates (Events Manager), Jim McCluskey (Membership Development & NHS Liaison), David Hollifield, Peter Bevan, Deborah Roberts, Anne Cullen (Deputy Events Manager), Corinne Woods (Joint Membership Secretary), Barbara Miller (Joint Membership Secretary) and Catherine McCarthy (Newsletter/Website Editor).

Newsletter suggestions

If you have any suggestions for newsletter items or want to submit an item please contact Catherine at cmccarthy4@sky.com.

Website improvements

If you have any suggestions for improvements to the website please forward them to Catherine at cmccarthy4@sky.com.

And finally

We are changing the timing of the December newsletter to January so we have an edition for New Year. This means that there will be a newsletter every four months and we avoid the big gap between December and May. Also the January edition will



Catherine McCarthy