

## **The League of Friends of the West Wales General Hospital.**

### **Introduction**

Prior to 1948 records confirm that for over 80 years Voluntary Hospitals had been sustained and grew due to the efforts of voluntary workers. The Minister of Health at that time, Aneurin Bevan feared on one hand that this would stop and he therefore appealed that voluntary service in one way or another would continue after July 5, 1948 (the date of the official launch of the NHS at Park Hospital, Manchester).

Here in Carmarthen this service had been considered to be so valuable that a “Friends of the Infirmary Association” was formed to assist the then County Infirmary Association at Priory Street in Carmarthen. Its objects were:

1. To encourage and foster interest in the work of the Infirmary by means of voluntary service and support.
2. To provide amenities and comforts for patients and staff not otherwise available from official sources by organisation of money raising efforts.
3. To support in every way the work of official bodies and committees for the benefit of the hospital service.

However at a meeting of the Friends of the Infirmary on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1949 a motion to change the title to ‘League of Friends of the Hospital’ was put and accepted.

A press report appeared in the Carmarthen Journal following this meeting explaining to the members of the public the need for continual support by voluntary effort towards the Infirmary. It must be recorded that progress was slow. But in April 1949 a lady was admitted to the Infirmary to give birth, she was expecting twins but she gave birth to triplets. She was therefore short of clothing for the extra child and at a meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April the Friends agreed to spend £2.8s.3d towards clothing for the young mother’s extra child. This action helped the public to understand the true work and intentions of the League of Friends of the Hospital.

At their meeting in October 1950 it was agreed to join the National Association of League of Hospital Friends. We were one of the first and largest leagues in the Country at that time. It is worth noting here that our funds at that time stood at £130.17.11d with a Christmas present fund of £25 and £5 for the provision of roses for the hospital wards. Today we still buy Christmas presents for those unfortunate to be in hospital for Christmas but today’s costs obviously bear no comparison. Another point of interest here is that among the list of officials at that time is the name of Mr David T.P. Rogers recorded as Secretary he remained in this post until 1995.

## The League of Friends' Work during the early years.

It must be recorded that while the League of Friends worked hard during these early years progress was slow. However, working on the principles of improving equipment, improving much of the furniture and many other amenities provided for Nursing and Domestic staff, thus improving service and comfort to patients, the League pushed ahead. During 1956 the balance sheets had risen to £206.2.9. It is recorded here that £50 was spent on bed tables. At about this time it is recorded that local churches and chapels had donated £150. Membership was increased by members of Rotary, Round Table and Soroptimist now taking an active part in the League of Friends. Records show that many gifts were presented to the hospitals like television sets and medical trolleys, ward chairs were upholstered, and curtains were replaced or repaired. In 1959, Mr T.J. Evans reported that Mr David Rogers had been appointed to represent the local League of Friends at the annual meeting of the National Association. Following this, a general letter was sent to all local Churches, Chapels, Trade Union organisations, and business establishments and via the press to the general public, this had a positive effect. Special thanks were paid to the local press for the unfailing support and Mr Emlyn Thomas JP, editor of the Carmarthen Journal and the Welshman was gratefully acknowledged for this splendid co-operation. The League received a letter of warm support for their activities from the Union of Shop Distributions and Allied Members. It is recorded that due to the high level of treatment received at local hospitals, many ex-patients had sent personal donations direct to the League of Friends. Mr David Rogers records such an act in one of his committee reports. "A splendid photograph was presented to Miss Negus of Little Water Street, Carmarthen to commemorate her gift of a television set to the Children's Ward at Glangwili Hospital, in memory of her mother.

Many such like gifts are recorded being presented to No.1 Ward, Penylan Road, Carmarthen, and at Glangwili Hospital, Carmarthen, Priory Street Hospital and TB Hospital at Llanybyther. In these days we covered the Tumble Hospital up until they formed their own League of Friends.

The enthusiastic work of everyone continued. The Matron and the Secretary of the Carmarthen Hospitals were a great assistance to the League of Friends and following the appeal of funds by Mr Rogers and Mr T.J. Evans M.B.E (who published a book titled Golden Strands) it is worth recording that the balance sheets now read a healthy £1393.18.4d and the League moving with the times, provided patients with telephone trolleys enabling them to phone home from their bedsides. Gifts of televisions, wireless, invalid chairs and bed jackets for patients continued to be provided. I also noted during my research that one presentation included a high chair and five English and Welsh bibles were presented for use in the hospital.

One important date during the 60's is May 1962. It was during this month that the Young Farmers Clubs began to take an active part in activities at the League of Friends. I know that the first stall visited at our fetes by all families is the YFC stall. Their support to us as a League of Friends is outstanding.

Another service worthy of mention that commenced during the 60's was the introduction of teas at Priory Street Hospital. While the ladies prepared teas the men would take patients who were up and about on trips to Llanstephan Beach, this proved popular for many years. It was also during this period that the League of Friends commenced Street Flag Days.

The first one in 1961 raised £88.6.9.d;

In 1962 we raised £138.6.1d  
Into 1978 and now we were collecting £701.  
While 1989 records an excellent result of £2550.48. An all-time record!

Our first fete was organised in 1966 and was opened by the then mayor, Cllr D.D. Harries. This raised £1104. Our fetes are biannual and have been a highlight in the towns calendar ever since.

Yes it is fair to say that the 50's and 60's were hard work, but with persistence and hard work the committees of those years laid a foundation that made The League of Friends the force it is today. I record with grateful thanks that one man - Mr David Rogers JP - who was there at the start and was to lead The League of Friends to greater heights in the 70's, 80's and 90's and up to 1995 when he retired but remained as an active Life President . In 1992 David was made a Member of the British Empire for his fine work in the many hospitals he served.

### The League of Friends in Modern Times

It is fair to record that by this time, (the early 70s). The League of Hospital Friends has established a pattern of work that is maintained to this day. Every year we held committee meetings on the last Monday of every month. Members attended at the All Wales Conference held each year in Newtown. We also attended a Dyfed League of Friends meeting as well as the Welsh National Association Conference held in North Wales one year and South Wales the following year. Senior committee members also attended at the National Association Conference in London and other major cities of the principality. From each conference new ideas were obtained and it was from this vein that strength and ambition was gained.

In 1971 a schoolroom was built for the Cilgerran Ward at a cost of £6243. Our biggest venture to date.

We were then issued with a challenge to provide the hospital with a Hydrotherapy pool to raise the level of treatment of its patients. There were many doubters, but again we stuck to our pattern of perseverance and with money raising activities of annual flag days, concert one year, fete and raffle the next year, we succeeded.

In 1972 the Hospital had its Hydrotherapy Pool and cover at a cost of £60,000. But we will never forget the magnificent support of you - members of the public and many other local organisations.

This was followed in 1974 by building the Llys Myddfai Units Recreation Bungalow costing £15,000.

It was here that Mr and Mrs Johnny Walker spent many hours over months and years taking sweets and comics to entertain the children at the Unit – yet another service by the League of Friends.

Into the 80s and the action was still hectic with £15,000 being spent on the Colonoscopy Department in 1986.

In 1987 equipment for the Theatre was bought at a cost of £10,740.

In the same year £6,500 was spent on equipment for Hip Replacement Surgery.

While in 1988 the League of Friends gave £6,500 to establish Relatives Accommodation at the Special Care Baby Unit. This was opened by the then Secretary of State for Wales – The Right Honourable Peter Walker MBE M.P.

The 1980s ended as they began with the Friends providing the hospital with Urodynamic equipment costing £25,131. A League of Friends Committee still following the laid down pattern and preparing to meet the 90s with no let up!

Again 1990 started on a high with £50,000 being collected and spent on the Cardiology/Physiology Measurement Equipment Department being established. This wonderful addition to Hospital Services was officially opened on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September of that year by the Right Honourable Baroness of Kiddington J.P. This grand old lady was at this time chairman of the National Association of League of Hospital Friends.

While in 1991 the Friends paid £8,562 to establish a Chapel viewing room at the Hospital Mortuary thus allowing families to view their loved ones who had passed on - with dignity.

Also during this year the League purchased laparoscopy equipment valued at £27,880.

The Hospital in 1992 re-established itself as one of the best Maternity Departments in Wales thanks to the League of Friends providing £52,000 to refurbish the Maternity Ward. Those of us who live in the West Know that the late Ray Gravelle, our own International Rugby Hero, who's saying "West is Best" opened the new ward after his wife had given birth there.

In 1993 we bought 17 King Size Special Beds for our hospital, along with Pressure Mattresses for the Special Baby Care Unit at a cost of £10,800.

During 1994 the League of Friends had to expand and again change its title to The League of Hospital and Community Friends and at once we established ourselves by providing Infusion Pumps valued at £13,020: 4 Pegasus Beds costing £14,000 to be used in the Community.

We have now reached the 2000s and still the pattern of work holds good, we start by providing new shower and changing rooms for our hardworking surgeons and their staff, this costing £15,000.

IN 2001 we refurbished bathrooms for the elderly at Dyfrig and Cadog wards. No more canvas hoists, modern baths costing £20,000.

While in 2002 the Children's ward was refurbished at a cost of £32,000. Also that year we established a Triage Room at the A & E department at a cost of £10,000. Now patients can be examined in private.

2002 also saw the providing of Urodynamic equipment for Derwen Ward a total of £25,000 was spent here.

While during 2003 we spent £56,000 on installing an up-to-date CT scanner.

The year 2004 was as active as ever - providing a Video Haemodynamic Monitor Assembly costing £16,516.

A Zeiss analyser for the Ophthalmic Department costing £22,320.

Eight orthopaedic chairs for the pre-assessment department - costing £1,512.

**In the year 2005 the League provided the following:**

Flo-tech adjuster Chair for Ceri Ward - cost of £1,218.

Oxford chair for Ceri Ward – cost of £490.

2 Defibrillators for Cleddau Ward – Cost of £7900.

Electric Recliner Chair for Coronary care - £683 .FNA – Ultrasound Scope & Nemio System for General/Mr O'Riordan - £38,750.

Ice Machine – ICU Department - cost of £645.

Special Patients Chair – Gwenllian Ward – cost of £1000.

**In 2006 the following were purchased:**

Asena GS Infusion Pumps for general use - cost of £4148.

Defibrillator for A & E - £6,845.

Phillips Cardiac Monitor – Dinefwr Ward - cost of £10,000

46 Chairs - for Derwen Ward – cost of £2,566.

**In the financial year of 2006/07 additional smaller items were also purchased which amounted to £1186. Including a relatives bed for the Special Care Baby Unit and 6 portable loop systems for the hard of hearing.**

**For the year 2007/08 items costing a total of £137,287 were purchased. Some of these are listed as follows:**

13 BP monitors - £18,174.

Ultrasound Bladder Scanner for Gwenllian Ward - £4,037.

2 Mobile suction pumps for Merlin Ward - £1,250.

Patients information package - £9,000.

Uretro-Renofiberscope - £7,550.

C.O. Monitor for A & E - £2,495.

Epidural Pumps – Dr Thompson - £8434.

Breast Pumps – For Dinefwr Ward - £5,008.

Oxymeters - £1644.

Broncoscope – Respiratory - £68,790.

Oxymeters – Respiratory - £1650.

Bariatric Chair – ICU/HDU -£2051.

Treadmill – Respiratory - £5,779.

**In the year 2008/09 equipment to the value of £56814 was purchased by the League of Friends.**

**Examples of some of the items are as below:**

Cardiology monitors – Cardiology - £48290.

Bladder Scanner – For the Community - £6200.

3 Phlebotomists chairs - £1400.

Other smaller items were also purchased.

**For the year 2009/10 the sum spent was £40,763 – the major items being:**

Spirometer – Respiratory - £1249.

Sonosite equipment – Respiratory – cost of £19,762.

2 Beds – Ceri Ward - £2000

Bath – Picton Ward £9,918.

Treadmill – Physiotherapy department - £1878.

Portable defibrillator (Porters Lodge) - £5100.

**For the year 2010/11 a total of £106,485 was used to purchase equipment. Main items were as follows:**

Equipment for Merlin Ward - £9982.

Thorascopy equipment - Dr Collier - cost of £18,554.

Laryngoscope – Merlin Ward - £5,739.

Flotron Machine – Derwen Ward -£2767.

Endoscopy Equipment – Mr O’Riordon – cost of £69,441.

**For the year 2011/12 the total purchased by the League amounted to £40,704.**

Main items were:

Treadmill for the Cardiology – cost of £20,608.

Rotem Delta System – Dr Thompson – cost of £19,741.

The above system is a special blood diagnostic machine. Sometimes used after patient surgery and enables the haematologist to decide on appropriate treatment within about 15 minutes compared with an hour for the conventional method. League members were therefore delighted to give the go-ahead to this purchase.

**This brings us up to the present year of 2012/13. Up to date - money spent or allocated for purchase is as follows:**

Cardiology Equipment - £2430.

Urological Equipment for the treatment of Bladder Incontinence – Mr Gana – cost of £10,000.

This equipment will be used by the Urology department for the treatment of bladder incontinence.

This treatment which is attributed to have a 60% to 80% success rate entails a patient being treated for 30 minutes per week for a period of 12 weeks. Following a presentation by Mr Gana , Consultant Neurologist - the League were delighted to make finance available for the purchase.

Probe for the Nemio System – Mr O’Riordan - £1,600.

A special remote controlled Chair (Bariatric Chair) for use on Preseli Ward – cost £4,750

### **The League of Friends Today.**

Reading these last few pages it is clear that large amounts of cash are involved. While we in the League of Friends give our time it is you - members of the public who contribute. Without your kindness and understanding our organisation would cease to function.

Things have not changed, we still follow the patterns laid down by our predecessors – why change when the system works.

We are very grateful to the public who support us in our summer and Christmas Fayres and also hospital wards/departments staff who help at these fayres.

The public support we receive at collection days, raffles, and occasional concert.

The many legacies and money in lieu of flowers that so many thoughtful people send to us.

The kindness and efficient treatment given by Hospital staff also leads to the many donations sent to us as a means of thanking the Ward/Hospital.

Also the donations sent by many chapels and churches.

It all adds up.

What is pleasing is that all monies collected are for the benefit of the patients and staff at our Hospital.

We would like to stress that the research for this historical paper and its compilation up to the year 2005 was carried out by a now retired and hardworking stalwart of our League – namely Mr Peter Evans. Over the many years he was a member, he carried out (at differing times) the duties of Chairman and Secretary with diligence.

At the time of his retirement in 2009 he was our Policy officer and in conjunction with the late Mr David Rogers. MBE: JP Life President of the League he was responsible for this Historical Paper of our League - now known as The League of Friends of Glangwili Hospital.

Arthur Phillips,

Chairman L of F