

# Sobell Times

THE NEWSLETTER FOR SOBELL HOUSE HOSPICE



Issue 5  
Spring 2024



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## Dear friends,

January is a time for reflecting back as well as looking forward. You may have heard that we raised £4.6 million last calendar year and reached over 4,000 people in the financial year 2022 to 2023, which equates to 2/3 of the people who died in Oxfordshire that year. These figures tell me that we are providing our much-needed services to more and more people, while our need to raise more funds is also growing – a demand you, our fabulous supporters, are helping us to start meeting.

December was a whirlwind of media – you might have heard about Sobell House on ITV Meridian not once, but twice! – showcasing the wonderful Martin Claridge and his Christmas lights, as well as a feature on Christmas in the Hospice. December is also a time when people want to remember loved ones and often make generous donations in their memory: you will be delighted to know that our beautiful Lights of Love remembrance celebration raised £26,764.29 and our Christmas appeal raised £8,643.28.

We also had a lot of painting (!) going on, with painting and decorating students from Cheney School, one of our nearest secondary schools, doing a marvellous job of redecorating the hospice reception area, while author and illustrator David Melling, of *Hugless Douglas* fame, live decorated one of our oxen in a pop-up shop at the Westgate in the week before Christmas. David's week-long residency meant that we were in the Westgate not once, but twice (is there a theme here?), as our fabulous retail team were part of the Charity Super.Mkt pop-up at the Westgate. We hope this will continue into the early part of this year.

It will soon become the year of the dragon, but it is also the year of the OxTrail! We have had over 200 design submissions from artists, as well as 85 schools and youth groups signing up to get involved. We are so ox-cited to be bringing art and colour to Oxford this summer. Find out the key dates on page 7.

There is also much to be doing here at the hospice and across all our services. Having completed the Prayer and Reflection room (page 8), we are about to refurbish our kitchen, while our clinicians are developing a new service to help those suffering from pain caused by metastatic cancer. Our RIPEL service, co-funded by us with Macmillan and Social Finance, has launched its final phase - a virtual ward - and of course we are making sure that our expert and compassionate care continues to be delivered here at the hospice, across OUH hospitals and in people's homes. Thank you for reading this update and for continuing to support us – find out more about events you could get involved with on page 3, or how to make a regular donation on page 12.



*Amelia Foster*

**Amelia Foster**  
Chief Executive

[sobellhouse.org](https://sobellhouse.org)

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# What's on

## Winter Walk **March**

Join us for a fun-filled walk through the beautiful grounds of Blenheim Palace. The route is accessible for wheelchair and pushchair users, and dogs are welcome to join in too! Your ticket gives you access to the grounds for the whole day and under 5s go free.

## Blenheim 7k Fun Run **May**

Choose from four races and enjoy an action-packed day out at Blenheim Palace. In addition to the main 7k, you can take part with your dog, or complete the 4 mile route for pushchair and wheelchair users, or a 1 mile route for under 15s.

## Corporate Golf Day **June**

This a great way to entertain clients or have a fun day out with your colleagues. Take part as a team of four and enjoy brunch on arrival, a round of golf on an 18-hole course, a two-course dinner, and the chance to place your bids in our auction and raffle!

## Bike Oxford **June**

Take part in a 25, 50 or 80 mile ride, and cycle some of the best-mapped routes in Oxfordshire. This is the perfect event for beginners and seasoned pros alike! By joining Team Sobell, you get a charity funded place, support throughout, and a Sobell House top.

## Oxford Half **October**

Run 13.1 miles through Oxford's historic city streets, where music and unbeatable crowds will keep you moving until you reach the finish line! By joining Team Sobell, you will receive a charity funded place – saving you £50 – a Sobell House running top, access to an exclusive Team Sobell Facebook group, and lots of support and a goody bag on race day.

**Join Team Sobell →**



**Prefer to take on your own challenge or host an event? Speak to Niki or Ariya in our fundraising team for ideas, support and advice.**

**T: 01865 857007  
E: [mail@sobellhospice.org](mailto:mail@sobellhospice.org)**



# Dave's story

Shared by Dave's wife, Sarah.



My gorgeous, kind and funny husband Dave only lived for ten weeks after being diagnosed with metastatic colon cancer, which spread to his liver just before Christmas 2022. Dave had retired just ten days before we received this devastating news. We were so happy together and have two great kids, aged 19 and 21.

The whole thing was such a shock to our family – Dave's liver was failing and six attempts to insert stents had failed. We were told he had a few days at best, and he was transferred to Sobell House on 6 February 2023.

The staff at Sobell House were just fantastic, and their care, expertise, kindness and compassion got us through the next few days. And, as it turned out, the next few weeks. Two days in, instead of dying, Dave started to show signs of improvement. It seemed like the stent was finally working! We got quite excited that maybe he could start treatment, even go home. Sobell House doctors supported us all the way, explaining that Dave was now too weak and treatment would not be possible, so we continued our stay at Sobell House.

Dave was looked after so incredibly well. He loved chatting to the staff, who were kind and patient, helping him with a daily wash and making sure he always felt clean. Dave had ice cream for breakfast, honey yoghurt for lunch and whatever hot dessert was on the menu

for dinner! We were given the opportunity to simply concentrate on spending time together as a family. Those last weeks of his life gave us time to say everything we needed to say and even sort out some practical and financial things that have really helped me since his death.

Being on the ward meant I often spoke to other relatives visiting their loved ones, and spending this time together was a great support for me. I met so many lovely people and we shared an immediate bond as we were all in similar situations. I often think about the people I met. They really helped me and I hope in a small way that I helped them too.

Dave didn't want to die, but Sobell House and the amazing people who work there allowed him to die as he lived, with great dignity and surrounded by love. He was calm, relaxed and pain-free, and I was with him holding his hand just as he wanted on 5 March, the date he died.

Dave was passionate about supporting Sobell House and helping others receive the same care he did. Since his funeral, we have raised over £5,000 through donations from family, friends and work colleagues. Dave would have been absolutely thrilled about that. He called the staff at Sobell House 'the A Team'. He was spot on. Thank you does not even touch the surface.

Stories are so important for our fundraising work and help to provide comfort to patients and families who may be anxious about receiving hospice care.

If you feel comfortable sharing your story and connection to Sobell House with our supporters, please fill out our online story form →





# Living Well

My name's Rachel and I am the Living Well therapy assistant at Sobell House. I have the lovely job of working with patients in a creative and personalised way, often getting to know people really well over several months. Here's a typical day in my life...



I get in early to set up the room and lay out the activities for the day. This could be lino cutting, book making, or assembling items together to get peer-support conversations flowing.



At 9am, I meet with the specialist nurses to talk through the patients that are coming in that day. We make a support and care plan for each patient.

As patients start to arrive at 10am, they are greeted by tea and smiles from our lovely volunteers. I run the activities, support the nurses with care plans, and on some days sit down with the patients for a warm lunch and a chat.

Having excellent listening and communication skills is central to our work. Sometimes the conversations we have with patients feel huge and incredibly profound. Living Well is most often filled with the sound of music and laughter, but we are there for the tears too.

At the end of the day we debrief and write our notes.

I love working in Living Well. The daily lives of our patients may be turbulent and uncertain, but I can see that when they come to Living Well they are held in a safe space of humanity, compassion, community and creativity. To be contributing to this purpose is an honour.



## Support group for unpaid carers

Do you care for someone with a palliative or progressive life-limiting illness? Are you keen to socialise, share and reflect with others in a similar situation? Would you like support from different speakers on the practical, emotional and other aspects of caring for someone?

If so, you are welcome to join the Living Well support group for unpaid carers at Sobell House Hospice, which takes place on the first Thursday of the month between 10am - 2pm. Contact the Living Well team for more information:

T: 01865 225875

E: [pallcarelivingwell@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:pallcarelivingwell@ouh.nhs.uk)

Haven't you 'herd'?

# The **OXEN** are coming to **OXON**!

**OxTrail** is Oxfordshire's very first art sculpture trail. In summer 2024, a herd of life-sized and mini ox sculptures will be taking over Oxfordshire to form a vibrant, colourful and family-friendly trail. Join the moo-vement and explore Oxfordshire's iconic attractions, uncover some hidden gems, and have lots of fun along the way.



Adventure  
awaits you...







## VISIT OXTRAIL

6 July - 29 August 2024

Oxfordshire

## FAREWELL WEEKEND

7-8 September 2024

Westgate

## GRAND AUCTION

13 September 2024

Saïd Business School



A Wild in Art event brought to you by Sobell House

[oxtrail2024.co.uk](https://oxtrail2024.co.uk)

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# Good news

After a year of closure, repairs to our Chapel roof are complete and the room is now open again because of your support – thank you!

Renamed the ‘Prayer and Reflection Room’, ensuring the doors feel open to all, and with a fresh coat of paint, it’s been wonderful to see the space coming together. Our Chaplain Rachel shares more...

The Prayer and Reflection Room provides visitors with a peaceful and calm sanctuary; patients can enjoy restful time alone, families visit on the anniversary of their loved one’s death, and staff use the space to cope with the pressure that working in palliative care brings.

The space has been greatly missed by those at Sobell House during its time of closure. Nigel, whose wife died six months ago, visited recently and told me that he was delighted to see it open, as he would have loved to have made use of it when his wife was staying on the ward. Although an alternative quiet area was created while the room was closed, the absence of such a special place was felt. It offers something very different from the clinical spaces and rooms on the ward, and feels like a sacred space full of meaning and peace, which can provide spiritual comfort for many – those of specific religions or faiths, or none.

As well as repairing the roof and repainting the room, we have made prayer books, candles and prayer mats available for visitors. We’re looking forward to the arrival of the final pieces of furniture to add to the space in February – comfortable chairs, tables, and plants – to create a cosy feel.

The Prayer and Reflection Room is at the heart of our hospice, and for over 20 years has provided those seeking solace with a calming environment, and been the backdrop for many happy wedding days. We are delighted that it has been repaired and painted for staff, patients, and loved ones to use for many years to come.

## Rachel Cross

*Names have been changed.*







**SOBELL  
HOUSE**  
HOSPICE

**Just  
£1**



**per entry to  
play and help!**

# Lucky Leap Year?

**Play the Local Hospice Lottery. It's a little  
bit of fun that makes a BIG difference  
to **Sobell House** and local families!**



## Weekly Prizes:

**£2,000**

**£1,000**

**Rollover**

**£100**



**8 x £25**

**190 x £10**

**Rollover can reach  
as much as**

**£25,000**

**PLUS**

**£10,000**

**SUPER DRAWS**

**Every March, September  
and December!**



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to join  
today!**

**Join today to play, support, win!**

visit: **[www.localhospicelottery.org/sobellhouse-leap](http://www.localhospicelottery.org/sobellhouse-leap)**

or call: **Freephone 0800 316 0645**

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**All players must be  
aged 18 or over**

**GambleAware**

Play the Local Hospice Lottery responsibly

Registered with



FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR

# A Valentine's story

Tom, our Music Therapist, delivers around 1,000 music therapy sessions every year, helping people come to terms with their illness and leave a legacy behind for their loved ones.

In tribute to Valentine's Day, Tom shares the deep-rooted connection between music, love and hope, and how music connects our patients with meaning and purpose at a time when all feels lost.



## “If music be the food of love, play on.”

As you may know, this is the opening line of William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. It is one of his most famous and most quoted lines, from a play about all the different kinds of love that we might experience as human beings throughout our lifetime. Just as food is essential for the body's sustenance, music might well be essential for our emotional wellbeing.

As the music therapist here at Sobell House, I try to use music in a way that might support the emotional needs of our patients and their families. We all have favourite pieces of music that become special to us throughout our lives; songs or melodies that evoke strong memories of important events, of people and places, of family and friends. And music will often soundtrack our relationships with significant others.



I have recently been working with a woman called Lisa who has a life-limiting cancer. After a very successful

and active life, she is now dependant on family and professional carers for all activities of daily living, and a large part of that responsibility falls to her husband Keith.

In our music therapy sessions each week, Lisa and Keith enjoy nothing more than singing through some of their favourite songs with me. We project the song lyrics on to a TV screen and Lisa reads along, mouthing the words and vocalising as much as she is able. This simple activity is something that Lisa and Keith are still able to do together – Keith is doing something *with* Lisa, rather than *for* her.

Keith often talks about memories attached to some of the songs we sing each week; the places they travelled to where they might have first heard a particular song, or the friends that they once enjoyed these songs with. But Keith has also noticed recently how a song's lyrics can take on new meaning as their lives have changed because of Lisa's illness. The words have become more poignant and are somehow able to say something about their relationship and their situation that they might otherwise struggle to express. Songs such as Bridge Over Troubled Water, You've Got a Friend and Let It Be are sung each week both with joyful abandon but also melancholy and some sadness.

A few years ago, a woman called Anny came on to the ward at Sobell House for end-of-life care. The staff were concerned about her husband Peter who was clearly distressed by the situation he now found himself in, and asked if I could offer some support. Peter came with me to the music room and, perhaps prompted by the instruments there, told me that he was a keen guitar player himself and that he also enjoyed songwriting. He picked up a nearby guitar and began to play me a song



that he had written as a young man, when he had first met his wife-to-be. The lyrics talked about his feelings for his partner, his initial longing, and the warmth and certainty she brought him. But he had recently added some new lyrics to the song, reflecting on their current situation and the loss he knew he was facing.

Over the next few days, Peter recorded his song for Anny. He played the guitar and sang the words and chose other instrumentation that he felt would best present his song. As we worked, Peter spoke more about his relationship with Anny, the family they raised together, and the life they had made. He also spoke about his fears of losing Anny and what life might look like without her.

When the song was finished, Peter played the recording to Anny in her room on the ward. He told me that they had both found this very emotional. He had also managed to tell her that he would like to sing the song at her funeral. This song, that Peter had composed as a young man at the start of their relationship, was still just as relevant and important at the end of Anny's life.

Human beings have always used art to express themselves, tell their story and make sense of their lives. If we could do it simply by talking, we would. Perhaps Shakespeare realised we need the creative arts to explore the bigger questions, to make sense of bigger things.

Regardless of genre, the overriding theme of the most popular songs of the last 100 years is love. It's the subject we most use song to think about, to explore, to try and make sense of. And it is enriching to see that the people I meet in music therapy sessions here at Sobell House, perhaps unconsciously, already know this. Whether listening to favourite pieces or making their own compositions, they use this ancient art form almost instinctively to help them move forward and carry on into an uncertain but hopeful future.

**Tom Crook**

*Some names have been changed.*



## Become a shop volunteer

Our Retail team simply couldn't operate our shops without the help of our valued shop volunteers. Any time you can donate makes a real difference to local people and their families.

**Locations:** Bicester, Carterton, Kidlington, Oxford, Thame, Wantage, and Witney.

**Roles:** we have a wide range of roles available, so there is something for everyone! You could help by sorting through donations, greeting customers and answering their queries, keeping the shop floor tidy and well stocked, or operating the till.

If you can help, please pop into your local shop to speak to a member of staff, or get in touch at [shops@sobellhospice.org](mailto:shops@sobellhospice.org) - thank you.

**Find your local shop →**



# A resolution for good

It's that time again - New Year, new you. But this year, instead of giving something up, why not give back in support of your local hospice by making an ongoing donation?

Any gift you can give helps to future-proof our hospice, and ensure our services continue to provide people with all of the care, comfort and support they need during some of their darkest days. This is the impact your gift could have...

£10



could pay for a scrumptious homemade cake to celebrate an important occasion for a patient, such as a birthday or anniversary.

£13



could ensure a Sobell Companion volunteer can travel to a patient's home to provide them with support and companionship.

£21



could fund an hour of expert and compassionate nursing care for a patient.

## Your information

Title:  Name:   
Address:   
 Postcode:   
Email:   
Phone:   
Date of birth:  /  /

**Tell us if we can claim Gift Aid. Boost your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate at no extra cost to you.**

*giftaid it*

☐ YES, I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past four years to Sobell House Hospice Charity. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I will notify Sobell House Hospice Charity if I no longer wish for them to claim Gift Aid on my donations, or if my name or address changes.

☐ NO, I am unable to Gift Aid this donation.

Signature:  Date:

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☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Bi-annually ☐ Annually

Is your donation in memory of someone? If so, please tell us their name so we can attribute your donation:

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Account number:

Sort code:

Bank name and address:



Instruction to your Bank/Building Society to pay by Direct Debit.  
Service user number: 443975

Please pay Sobell House Hospice Charity Direct Debit from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Sobell House Hospice Charity and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society. I confirm that I have read the Direct Debit guarantee at [sobellhouse.org/direct-debit-guarantee](https://sobellhouse.org/direct-debit-guarantee).

Signature:

Date:  /  /

## Keep in touch

We would love to stay in touch and tell you how your support is making a difference and about other ways you can help Sobell House, including opportunities to donate, volunteer or fundraise. We may contact you by post unless you tell us otherwise. Please let us know how you'd like us to stay in touch:

By post ☐ Yes ☐ No

By email ☐ Yes ☐ No

By phone ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you don't tell us how you'd like us to keep in touch, we may contact you again by post to let you know how you can support us. If you'd like to change how we keep in touch, email [mail@sobellhospice.org](mailto:mail@sobellhospice.org) or call **01865 857007**. We promise to keep your details safe and only use them in accordance with our privacy policy [sobellhouse.org/privacy](https://sobellhouse.org/privacy).

Please return this form in the freepost envelope provided, or deliver it to: Sobell House Hospice Charity, Churchill Hospital, Oxford, OX3 7LJ. **Thank you.**

**Set up a regular gift online →**



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