

THE GIFT
SPRING/SUMMER 2022

QVH CHARITY NEWSLETTER HELPING REBUILD LIVES



A warm welcome to the spring/summer edition of the GIFT - the newsletter from your QVH Charity.

We hope you enjoy our new format, named the GIFT to reflect both the giving and positive impact of donations, to show how you can make a difference by enabling us to help rebuild lives.

In this edition we reveal how the screen legend Ava Gardner continues to help change patients lives here at Queen Victoria Hospital. We talk about how donations make a difference to breast cancer care, with an inspiring chat with Trisha, one of our breast reconstruction patients. We pitch up at our CREW activity camp for young patients, and introduce you to our little team who work tirelessly to manage the hospital charity for the benefit of patients and staff.

We hope that what follows will inspire you to see how you could make a difference by supporting your QVH Charity with the gift of giving. Thank you.



HOLLYWOOD STAR STORY

Ava and us

How the much adored screen legend touched QVH, and continues to change individual lives today.



PATIENT EXPERIENCES



Breast Cancer: life reconstructed

Trish shares her cancer journey from the initial fear to recovery with life-changing breast reconstruction

"It makes you think about what's important"

DONATION POWER



Gift to make a real difference

Your donation will help fund life-changing equipment and improve patient experiences

"The simplest thing which makes a huge difference"

CREW SUPERHEROES



Activity camp for confidence

Running special activity camps to help young patients manage the psychological effects of physical trauma

"Creating a sense of belonging is everything"

See the real difference your donations make



Ava and us

A LEGACY OF GIVING: THE AVA GARDNER TRUST



Ava with the McIndoes



The Ava Gardner trustees visit QVH

Ava Gardner was widely recognised as one of the leading ladies of Hollywood during her 50 year career. She starred in films such as 'The Killers' and 'Show Boat'.

It was in October 1957 that Ava suffered a devastating fall from a horse at the Peralta ranch in Spain. This fall resulted in a haematoma on her right cheek (a haematoma is a collection of blood outside of a blood vessel causing bruising). Ava's confidence took a great hit and she didn't work for two years.

It was during this time Ava sought the advice of one of the world's leading plastic surgeons, Sir Archibald McIndoe here at Queen Victoria Hospital. Archie, as Ava came to call him, treated Ava with heat and massage, continued to follow Ava's progress, and assured her that the haematoma would go away in time.

In recovering from the fall, Ava became more and more involved with the burned pilots who were being treated at the hospital and who formed The Guinea Pig Club. Ava said her involvement with these brave men helped her.

"It was the best possible therapy for me."

In her autobiography, Ava: My Story, she said:

"I met a lot of them and we danced and laughed together. They were so brave I could have wept. Archie told me my visits did them a lot of good, but I'm sure they helped me more than I ever helped them."

Ava passed away in London in 1990, and Queen Victoria Hospital was named as a beneficiary in her estate. Ava's legacy of giving continues to support our patients as well as staff, and we are proud and so grateful to be supported by The Ava Gardner Trust to this day. Through the years they have donated over £650,000 which has helped us to undertake a number of initiatives that make a huge difference to patients from across the South East and beyond who have suffered life changing injuries or illness.

★ **Every one of our donors is a star in our eyes!**

If you would like to find out how you can leave a gift in your will please email us at supportqvh.qvh@nhs.net or visit our website www.supportqvh.org to find out more.

THANK YOU!

The Gold Standard: Did you know...?

The Gold Standard for breast reconstruction after a mastectomy is a 'free flap' reconstruction using microvascular techniques to take tissue, usually from the abdomen, and use it to form a new breast. In 2020/21 QVH carried out **212 free-flap breast reconstructions** without a single flap failure; a notable quality achievement and patient benefit.

QVH is the major regional centre for complex, microvascular breast reconstruction following, or simultaneously with, resection for cancer. Additionally, the hospital remains the sole provider of this service to the people of Kent, Surrey and Sussex. The aim is to further strengthen this by becoming **the regional plastic surgery service** to Kent, Surrey and Sussex.



Meet Trish.

Trish is a mum of two and a physiotherapist from Chichester in West Sussex. She was invited in for her first ever routine mammogram aged 52 in November 2020. With no family history of cancer and being otherwise fit and healthy, she was expecting a clean bill of health. She was invited into St Richard's Hospital mobile screening unit, her local healthcare provider, and following further investigations and a biopsy she received the news nobody ever wants to receive. She had breast cancer.

A friend within the healthcare sector recommended she ask for a referral to QVH. She was seen by QVH Consultant Surgeon Andrew Mellington who specialises in breast reconstruction and trauma.

What was your experience with QVH?

Despite the uncertainty of full lockdown, everything worked really well with everyone finding time to be caring. I felt so comfortable in my conversation with Mr Mellington about my options - he allayed all my fears about my impending 6-hour surgery.

My mastectomy was performed by the breast consultant from my local hospital (St Richards), with Mr Mellington and his team completing the reconstruction straight after. This involved taking a muscle - called gracilis - skin and fat from my inner thigh to reconstruct the breast. I then went on to Canadian Wing; they were so lovely and caring, especially as I wasn't allowed visitors (because of the pandemic). I was lucky as I didn't need chemotherapy or radiotherapy, so was able to start my rehabilitation quite quickly afterwards when I got home.

What would you like to people to know about being a patient at QVH?

I just can't praise it highly enough. Everyone is so pleasant and it has such a comforting atmosphere. The team took time to explain everything that was happening, taking a lot of the fear away for me.

Most memorable moment?

There are many but one that sticks was when I first sat down with Mr Mellington and we went through the options available. I then had to sign all the consent forms and I hesitated slightly. Mr Mellington stopped to make sure I was ok and felt comfortable with what we had decided. There was the time and support to have that moment, and it was the reassurance I needed which meant a lot.

What's been your takeaway from this experience?

It really makes you think about what is important; it has made me re-evaluate my career and take the next step forward. It changes how you think about your life. I have a long way to go but it's a start.



Trish shares how her first ever mammogram changed everything

Any advice for other people going through a similar situation?

During the 6 weeks whilst I was waiting to go into hospital for the surgery, me and a group of my girlfriends did a weekly Zoom where we all cooked together. We would circulate the ingredients list and one of us would lead the session. They all cooked double portions and later dropped it off at my house so we had the freezer full when I came back home after the surgery. Not only was that helpful as we didn't have to cook for two weeks whilst I was recovering, but just the time together was really special and we laughed so much. We created our own recipe books with the ones that we made.

A year on, I'm now mountain biking and out running. Having spoken to other women who have had to go through the same thing I almost feel guilty for how well it all went. **I know I'm lucky because it was caught so early.** I would definitely encourage all women to have their mammograms when they are offered.

You just never know.



DONATION POWER

Your donation today will help change lives for patient with breast cancer by funding things such as:

Community event £400

A face-to-face held to inform and engage with patients considering breast reconstruction.

Post-surgery bras £2,000

Helping patients who cannot afford post-surgery bras and support garments that are essential following surgery.

Patient video £11,500

Funding a QVH video for patients considering a breast reconstruction so they know what to expect.

If you would like to help us continue to fund these types of initiatives you can donate £5 by texting **ISUPPORTYOU** to **70085** or send us a donation with the enclosed donation form.

✔ Thank you for helping us make a difference to patients today.

Texts will cost the donation amount plus one standard network rate message, and you'll be opting into hearing more from us. If you would like to donate but don't wish to hear more from us, please text **ISUPPORTYOUINFO** instead.

£5



What's coming up...?



SUPPORTING OUR SUPERHEROES

Having suffered burns or any other physical trauma can not only change the way a child looks, but create long lasting psychological effects. **Every year we run activity camps for children to build confidence, create a sense of belonging and make lasting memories and friendships. It allows them to connect with other children who might have experienced similar injuries.**

After two years of having to be put on hold, this summer children aged between 7-17 who have been or are currently patients at Queen Victoria Hospital will be setting off to the **Isle of Wight for the specialist summer camp called CREW**. The camp is **fully funded by QVH Charity** to ensure it is open to everyone to be able to join.

It costs us **£8,000** to fund this weekend camp every year. CREW camp means so much to so many people. Often children who are now too old to attend come back as volunteers to help out.

✔ **Your donation today will inspire their tomorrow**



It's only right we tell you a bit about us!

QVH Charity was founded in 1996 and is the dedicated charity fundraising for things above and beyond core NHS funding for Queen Victoria Hospital. When you contact us, either Camilla or Rachael will be there to help you. We are a small charity team which means you will get to know us a bit too.



Rachael Fox

**Charity
Co-ordinator**

Rachael joined the charity in 2020 and deals with a lot of our charity administration. She organises our charity committee who approves funding, does the majority of thank you letters, looks after our database and generally keeps us on track in every area.

▶ rachael.fox3@nhs.net



Camilla Slattery

**Head of Fundraising &
Voluntary Services**

Camilla joined the charity in 2017 having worked for a number of other health charities. She heads up our fundraising as well as our volunteer development onsite. She does a lot of the marketing, social media, strategy and relationship building in all areas of our fundraising.

▶ camilla.slattery@nhs.net

Just 5 minutes - we would love to hear from you!

We are so grateful to you for supporting us, and we would love to learn more about you:

- Are you a current patient or family member of a patient? If not, what is your connection to our hospital or to our charity?
- If any, what particular area of care are you most interested in?
- Do you have any particular interests such as sports? If so which ones? For example, gardening, cooking etc.

▶ Please email your answers with your name and the town where you live to qvh.supportqvh@nhs.net

Charity Office

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TO LEARN MORE
AND DONATE

