

Progress®

All about The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity

SPRING/SUMMER 2025

Hi-tech surgery

The microsurgery system supporting advanced treatment

Always on call

The hospital hotline providing 24-hour patient advice

Royal support

Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales makes a welcome visit to Chelsea and becomes a Joint Patron of The Royal Marsden





Your support truly matters

Welcome to the latest issue of Progress, where you can read about Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales' visit to The Royal Marsden earlier this year.

The Princess heard about the hospital's world-leading research, treatment and care, and how The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity's support makes this work possible.

We also hear from Dr Shaman Jhanji about the importance of prehabilitation – a vital service supported by Charity funding – and The Royal Marsden-led research that will benefit patients across the NHS.

Finally, we highlight some fantastic fundraisers who have been supporting us in inventive ways, from selling eggs to a sponsored PowerPoint presentation.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

Antonia Dalmahoy
Managing Director
The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity



The Ever After Garden has raised over £1.2 million for the Charity since it first began in 2019.

Filled with more than 30,000 illuminated white roses, the remembrance garden is a tranquil haven that offers a space to pause and reflect during the festive season. Visitors are invited to dedicate a rose and make a donation in memory of a loved one.

Antonia Dalmahoy, Managing Director of the Charity, said: "This fundraising milestone is a testament to the hard work of Anya Hindmarch and Camilla Morton, our garden co-founders, who have been the driving force behind the Ever After Garden and its remarkable success. We are incredibly grateful for their ongoing dedication and commitment.

"Our special thanks also go to Brookfield, our Headline Partner, for their generous support of the 2024 garden."

[Preorder a dedication for the 2025 garden at royalmarsden.org/garden](https://royalmarsden.org/garden)

A UK-FIRST STUDY at The Royal Marsden – funded by the Charity and The Royal College of Radiologists – has explored the use of 'smart biopsies' to better understand and treat sarcoma, a rare type of cancer.

Led by Dr Edward Johnston, whose role is part-funded by the Charity, the study explored how robotic guidance can enable multiple areas of a sarcoma to be sampled before they're removed from the body.

The samples are compared with MRI imaging at three areas across each tumour. It's hoped that this will allow researchers to predict how cancers will grow and gather vital information about a particular tumour to better inform treatment options for patients.



On the cover: HRH The Princess of Wales during her visit to The Royal Marsden, Chelsea. Royal photography: Andrew Parsons/Kensington Palace. All photographs taken at The Royal Marsden were shot in accordance with infection control guidelines



Hospital welcomes Her Royal Highness

Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales have become Joint Patrons of The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust.

The Joint Patronage was announced following a visit by Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales to The Royal Marsden, Chelsea, where she heard about the hospital's world-leading work and how your support helps makes this possible.

Her Royal Highness spoke to patients about their cancer journeys and treatment. She also met staff and thanked them for the vital care they provide.

During the visit in January, The Princess visited the Diane McCarthy Medical

Day Unit, which was funded by the Charity. Here, she heard about supportive therapies offered to complement patients' medical treatment. This includes the Charity-funded Emerging from the Haze programme, which supports patients experiencing cancer-related cognitive impairment.

One patient The Princess met was Peter Burton, who was diagnosed with stage 3 myeloma in 2017 and underwent a stem cell transplant at The Royal Marsden. To help manage the side effects of 'chemo brain', he was referred to Emerging from the Haze, which provided him with

coping strategies for brain fog and lack of focus.

Dame Cally Palmer, Chief Executive of The Royal Marsden, said: "We were honoured to welcome HRH The Princess of Wales to The Royal Marsden in Chelsea, and are delighted that TRH The Prince and Princess of Wales have become joint Patrons of our specialist cancer centre.

"We are incredibly fortunate to receive Royal Patronage – it is inspiring for staff and patients and enables us to shine a light on the outstanding work our staff deliver every day for patients and their families."

HRH The Princess of Wales met patients, such as Richard Bosworth with his wife Ruth (above left), and Tabatha Luxmoore-Styles (above), as well as staff (top)



Always on call

Your donations are supporting the expansion of The Royal Marsden Hotline, which provides advice and reassurance for patients and their families as they navigate cancer diagnosis and treatment

Thanks to The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity's funding, The Royal Marsden Hotline is expanding to allow more patients at all stages of their cancer journey – as well as relatives or friends who may be concerned about a patient – to access specialist support more easily.

The hotline is staffed by experienced oncology nurses, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, allowing patients to obtain medical advice and reassurance from experts in cancer care whenever they need it. This reduces unnecessary visits to GPs or to A&E, which is important for cancer patients who may have weakened immune systems and be more susceptible to infection.

Knowledge and experience

Between August and December 2024, the hotline received an average of 2,950 calls a month – almost 100 a day.

“On our busiest days – typically Mondays and Tuesdays – we can get up to 120 calls, so we have four nurses working on the hotline to help patients,” says Camilla Boyd, Matron for the Centre for Urgent Care, The Royal Marsden Hotline and the Acute Oncology Service. “These nurses also work in the Centre for Urgent Care, providing them with the necessary breadth of knowledge and experience to support callers.

“We use a traffic-light system to triage patients. Some may need



advice, while those who are more unwell may need to be brought into The Royal Marsden or sent to their local emergency department.

“The nurses can contact specialist clinical teams for advice specific to the individual patient. This includes the Oak Foundation Drug Development Unit, to allow for the right support for patients on clinical trials. Our nurses also have access to a 24/7 translation service.”

Timely advice

Kimberly Fricker, Ward Sister in the Centre for Urgent Care, works on the hotline. She says: “Here at The Royal Marsden, we have

“It’s important that patients know they can get specialist advice whenever they need it”



The Royal Marsden Hotline's staff include Matron Camilla Boyd (above left), Junior Charge Nurse Bryce Medina (above) and Ward Sister Kimberly Fricker (above right)

many patients on clinical trials who are using new drugs or being treated with pioneering technology. Things can be complex, so it's important that patients know they can get specialist advice whenever they need it.

“If a patient lives too far away and is requiring urgent care, we'll direct them to their local emergency department. In that scenario, we have links with other local hospitals, meaning we can provide a handover directly to their staff and ensure the patient is treated appropriately for their condition.”

“The hotline is so reassuring”

Betsy, 74 (below), was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2020. She was referred to The Royal Marsden, where she was treated with chemotherapy and surgery.



Last May, her cancer returned, so she began treatment on the GLORIOSA clinical trial and is responding well.

Betsy called The Royal Marsden Hotline when she was feeling unwell after a treatment session.

She says: “Having access to the 24-hour hotline is so reassuring. Feeling supported is worth its weight in gold, knowing that you always have someone to speak to – whatever time of the day it is.

“I’ve used the hotline a number of times. The most important was when they advised me to attend the Medical Day Unit immediately. They conducted a thorough check and found an infection that was swiftly treated.”

Call The Royal Marsden Hotline on 020 8915 6899



Help us grow the hotline team

Since the hotline was set up in 2017, referrals to The Royal Marsden have increased significantly and the number of calls has more than doubled.

To ensure patients and their families get the support they need, we are funding an additional staff member to join The Royal Marsden Hotline team.

Your continued donations enable us to fund more specialist staff so they can provide timely advice and support to more patients and their loved ones.

To donate or find out more, please visit royalmarsden.org/hotline, call 020 7808 2233 or scan the QR code below





Surgeons Mr Aadil Khan (left) and Mr Kieran Power with Symani

Leading the way in specialist surgery

Thanks to the Charity’s funding, a new robotic microsurgery system at The Royal Marsden will support advances in microsurgery for the benefit of cancer patients everywhere

The Royal Marsden is the first UK hospital to use the Symani® Surgical System by MMI (Medical Microinstruments, Inc.), with the aim of speeding up recovery and improving quality of life for patients having reconstructive surgery following cancer treatment.

The robotic platform is used to carry out microsurgery – a highly specialised technique where surgeons join tiny anatomical structures such

as blood or lymphatic vessels, or nerves, which are usually less than one millimetre in diameter. The technology enables surgeons to join these vessels with enhanced precision and control.

Mr Kieran Power, Head of the Plastic Surgery Unit and Consultant Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, says: “We are hugely excited by the potential of Symani and the possibilities it offers patients in terms of faster recovery, less pain and improving quality of life following surgery. We have the opportunity to play a leading role in this field, helping to develop new, less invasive surgical options.”

Symani will also enable the hospital to establish the first research programme in the UK dedicated to assessing its effectiveness in reconstructive cancer surgery, helping to set national and international standards of treatment and care.

The three-year lease of the Symani Surgical System has

been made possible thanks to the Denise Coates Foundation and Mrs Emma Bishop’s generous support of The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity.

How Symani works

Following the surgical removal of cancerous tissue, microsurgical reconstruction plays an essential part in restoring function and appearance. It supports reliable wound healing and helps patients regain their quality of life by reconstructing tissues and structures that were removed.

Using the world’s smallest wristed robotic instruments, it enables surgeons to replicate the natural movements of the human hand at the micro scale and reach difficult-to-access anatomy.

Nick Lees, 47, was the first patient to undergo reconstructive surgery using Symani at the hospital. He was diagnosed with dermatofibrosarcoma protuberans (DFSP), a rare type of soft tissue sarcoma, in his chest. The removal of his tumour was followed by



Nick Lees was the first patient in the UK to be treated with the Charity-funded Symani surgical robot



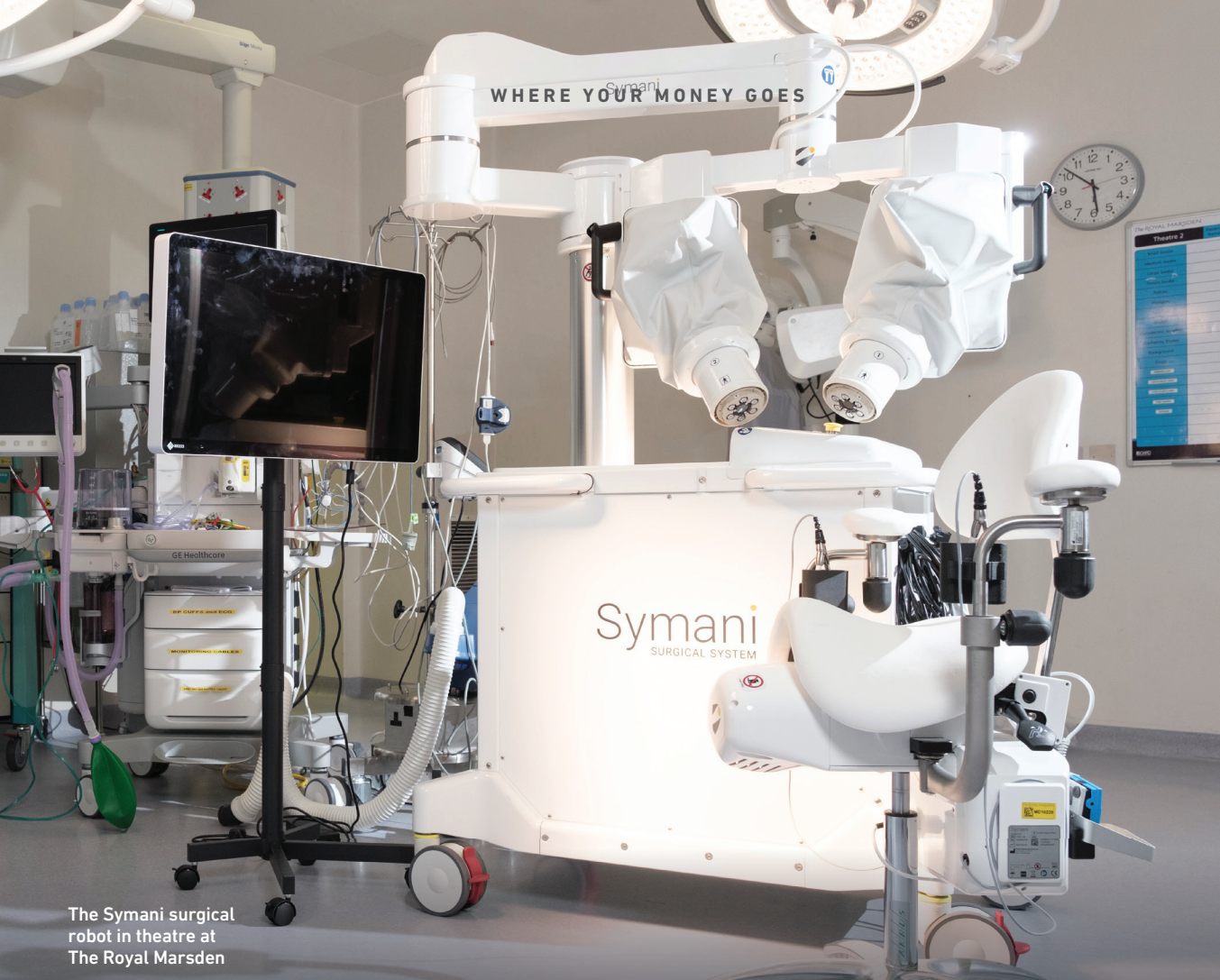
About Emma

Emma Bishop was a longstanding supporter of the Charity and a patient at The Royal Marsden following her diagnosis of incurable, stage 4 EGFR-mutant non-small-cell lung cancer in 2022.

She became an inspiration for other cancer patients, even taking on the TCS London Marathon in 2023 while on active treatment. Her efforts raised an incredible £115,000 for the Charity.

The same year, she spoke at the opening of the Oak Cancer Centre at The Royal Marsden, Sutton, in the presence of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, and helped to raise funds for the Ever After Garden.

Emma’s generosity, both with her time and her fundraising, has left a powerful legacy. Though she sadly died in October last year, aged 40, her story will continue to inspire others for years to come, making a difference to the lives of cancer patients long into the future.



The Symani surgical robot in theatre at The Royal Marsden

reconstruction using tissue from elsewhere on his body. This was connected to blood vessels at the site, using Symani.

He says: “Getting a cancer diagnosis last year was completely unexpected and a huge shock. I feel incredibly lucky, and proud, to have had the opportunity to benefit from Symani, all thanks to The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity.”

“Recovery from my surgery has been excellent, and everything is healing really well. I’m certain I wouldn’t be doing as well, or recovering as quickly after such a major operation, if I hadn’t been treated with this new robotic technology.”

“I’m certain I wouldn’t be recovering as quickly if it wasn’t for Symani”

Pioneering research

The hospital has established a new research programme called INnovations in robotic mIcroSurgEry (INCISE).

Mr Aadil Khan, Consultant Plastic Surgeon and Reconstructive Surgeon, said: “We hope to be able to refine and improve reconstructive microsurgery techniques used to treat a range of cancers. Our goal is to share learnings with colleagues across the NHS for the benefit of patients across the UK and beyond.”

Symani could benefit breast cancer patients undergoing autologous breast reconstruction, also known as free flap or free tissue transfer. This is when the patient’s own tissue is used to rebuild the breast after

a mastectomy. The INCISE programme intends to combine breast reconstruction with lymphatic microsurgical repair, to prevent the development of lymphoedema – a condition which causes swelling in the body’s tissues.

More widely, the team hopes to use Symani in other kinds of lymphoedema surgery, and to treat other cancer types such as lung, skin, gynaecological and urological. It could also be used for nerve repair for head and neck cancer patients.

Q&A

Dr Shaman Jhanji

The Consultant in Anaesthetics and Intensive Care Medicine shines a light on the positive impact of prehabilitation, which is supported by funding from The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity



For example, some lymphoma, lung, brain and gynaecological cancer patients needing nutritional support are seen at the same time as their radiotherapy appointments, to reduce multiple hospital visits and ensure effective management of their nutrition alongside any symptoms from treatment.

What research is The Royal Marsden carrying out?

Prehabilitation for cancer patients isn’t currently available nationally across the NHS. I chair the National Cancer Prehabilitation Collaborative, a network of the UK’s leading prehabilitation specialists led by The Royal Marsden. We’re working to deliver research that will help us develop a prehabilitation service to provide effective, personalised support for patients across the country.

The research in progress covers areas like wearable technologies for patients and personalised exercise and nutrition, as well as evaluating existing cancer prehabilitation services across the UK. It’s hugely exciting.

The National Cancer Prehabilitation Collaborative was made possible thanks to Andy and Susan Bond, and Charles Wilson CBE and Dr Rowena Olegario’s generous support of The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity

What is prehabilitation?

Prehabilitation prepares patients for cancer treatment, both physically and mentally, before it starts. This could mean structured exercise support – for example, to help a patient build up their strength – advice on nutrition, or mental wellbeing guidance. The aim is to prepare them for surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy so they have the best recovery possible.

What are the benefits of prehabilitation for patients?

The evidence shows that improving the physical fitness and mental health of patients before treatment can reduce the adverse effects of cancer treatment. Patients who have undergone prehabilitation are more

likely to have more treatment choices, leave hospital sooner after surgery, cope better with treatment side effects and have better long-term health.

We are grateful to supporters of the Charity for funding specialists in occupational therapy, physiotherapy and dietetics, as well as a specialist exercise instructor, who all play a vital role in supporting our patients and helping to improve their quality of life and recovery.

How is prehabilitation integrated into the care provided at the hospital?

Patients seen in the clinic are referred to colleagues in dietetics, physiotherapy and occupational therapy for tailored support, which is integrated into their treatment pathway.

Why we volunteer

Volunteering is a great, accessible way to get involved and support The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity. Here, we meet long-time volunteers Pearse and Shirley



Thanks to volunteers like Shirley Carpenter, The Banham Marsden March is an annual success

Every year, hundreds of people give up their time to volunteer for The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity. Whether they're assisting at the Charity hubs at the Sutton or Chelsea hospitals, supporting patients and staff, helping out at the Ever After Garden during the festive season, holding bucket collections at events, or cheering on participants in sporting challenges, their generous support makes the Charity's work possible.

Getting involved

Pearse O'Driscoll, 88, has been volunteering for the Charity for more than 20 years. He began volunteering in memory of his wife, Theresa, who was a patient at the hospital but sadly died from lung cancer.

"There's a huge variety of ways you can get involved," Pearse says. "Over the years, I've helped at local events and taken part in bucket collections at local supermarkets. I also support the Charity team in the office by doing stock counts and filing."

"One of my favourite jobs is helping to get the Oak Centre for Children and Young People ready for Christmas. Each year, I help decorate the Christmas trees and wrap all the presents for the children to open on Christmas Day. It feels very special to be able to help with this and I look forward to it every year."

Giving back

Shirley Carpenter has also been a Charity volunteer for over 20 years. Like Pearse, Shirley

"You know you've made a difference when you hear staff say 'thank you'"

OUR AMAZING SUPPORTERS



Pearse O'Driscoll helps out at The Banham Marsden March

began volunteering as a way to give back to the hospital, following the death of a beloved friend.

"I'd recommend volunteering with the Charity – although you're giving your time to others, you get so much more back," she says. "You know you've made a difference when you hear staff say 'thank you, we really appreciate you.'"

As well as volunteering at the hospital each week, both Pearse and Shirley help at The Banham Marsden March every spring. On event day, volunteer roles can range from directing thousands of walkers along the route to handing out medals at the finish line in Sutton.

Pearse says: "I've walked The Banham Marsden March myself, but I couldn't do it now. I help out every year instead."

"Shirley and I love handing out the medals – it's so lovely to see everyone coming down after doing

their bit. Everyone is so happy – if a bit knackered!

"Shirley and I help at Celebrate a Life every year too. We put the stars on the bottom half of the tree and help out on the evening."

Volunteers are at the very heart of all we do, and we are so grateful for their invaluable support. Our amazing volunteers help ensure we can continue to make a difference to the lives of cancer patients everywhere.

Would you like to volunteer for the Charity? Find out more at royalmarsden.org/volunteer, or go to march.royalmarsden.org/volunteer to learn about volunteering at The Banham Marsden March



An egg-sell-ent effort

Carl and his children, George and Isla, have been raising funds for the Charity by selling eggs laid by their 20 chickens.

Carl and his wife chose to donate the profits from their egg sales to the Charity as they both had family members who were treated at The Royal Marsden.

The family has raised over £1,750 since they began selling eggs to friends and neighbours in 2023.

The hens – who reside in Cluckingham Palace and are always bought in pairs – have some inventive names, such as Courtney Clucks and Matthew Pecky, Eggolas and Bilbo Baghens, and Obi Wan Henobi and Chewbeaka.

Carl said: “We’re definitely known for our eggs now. People are always asking for eggs, to the point that we actually have to turn them away in the winter when the chickens aren’t laying as much.

“I’m resisting the temptation to go and buy more – I think 20 is enough for now.”

Powering through

Tom Downie chose a unique way to raise money for the Charity – holding a PowerPoint-a-thon.

He spent four-and-a-half hours speaking about 32 PowerPoint presentations he created on topics chosen by his friends and family. These included ‘the history of board games’, ‘ridiculous children’s names’ and ‘the sights of Milton Keynes’.

Tom livestreamed the session and added incentives for people to donate, such as putting on a shark costume when he reached £250. He raised over £900 for the

Charity, inspired by his mum, Sue, who is being treated at The Royal Marsden.

He said: “I’ve wanted to support The Royal Marsden for a while, as they have looked after Mum so well for the past eight years.

“It was a joy to see people rally around to support me. I spent hours sifting through the topics that people suggested, and then it took so long to research and pull everything together.

“The PowerPoint-a-thon was great fun – although I have a love/hate relationship with PowerPoint.”



Celebrating ten years of fundraising

This year marks the 10th anniversary of support for the Charity by the Lunch Box café on Epsom Downs.

Last year, café owner Keith Benneyworth celebrated raising over £10,000 for the Charity – a figure that continues to increase.

This fundraising is the result of putting a collection tin on the counter, which was suggested by Tony Rose, a customer who has been

volunteering for the Charity for over 30 years.

Tony said: “I have supported the Charity for decades now. In fact, I met my wife in 2001 while I was collecting for the Charity.

“In 2017, I started walking on Epsom Downs as part of a rehabilitation programme following open-heart surgery, and that is when I met Keith. Now, I see him almost every day!”

Over to you...

What you’ve been saying on social media

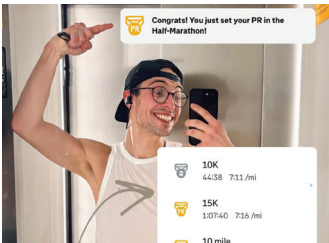
Rosie Alexandra (@rosiealexandramusic)

Such a joy watching Lydia and Judith smash 13.1 miles of @brightonhalfmarathon 🏃 Blessed with sunshine and support the girls made amazing time and raised over £3,750 for @royalmarsden.



Daniel Chapman (@DanielChappers)

🏃 3 weeks until I run the Hampton Court Palace Half for @royalmarsden & Nan!



Join the conversation on X (Twitter), Instagram and Facebook @royalmarsden

There are so many wonderful ways to support The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity. Whether you choose to complete a PowerPoint-a-thon or hold a bake sale, your support helps to save lives. Learn more about unique ways to fundraise at royalmarsden.org/ideas



Born to run

If you've ever thought about running for The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity, take some inspiration from two stories of supporters who've pounded the pavements to raise money

Team Dubbz's story

Vikesh Mesuria, Harish Parmar and David Akeredolu took on the Hampton Court Palace Half Marathon in honour of their friend Daniel Danso, who sadly died in 2024 after living with cancer for seven years.

They said: "Team Dubbz consists of three of us, with Daniel being the fourth puzzle piece to our group. Our friendship goes back more than 20 years, and we have been beside one another as we moved through life. Our friendship has shaped all of us, so we're running to celebrate Daniel, and to champion the legacy he leaves behind."

"With the support of The Royal Marsden team, Daniel and his family were able to find moments of comfort and create some more

happy memories with the time that they had. The Royal Marsden also helped us to have more quality time with Daniel and we are forever grateful for that."

Kevin's story

Prostate cancer patient Kevin Webber completed an 80-mile challenge to raise funds for the Charity.

He ran and walked from his home in Epsom to The Royal Marsden in Sutton 10 times over a 24-hour period – once for each year since his diagnosis with stage 4 prostate cancer.

Following his diagnosis, Kevin came to The Royal Marsden for treatment, including chemotherapy and radiotherapy. A decade on, he is doing well and benefiting from abiraterone – a hormone



Above left: friends Harish, David, Daniel and Vikesh, aka Team Dubbz. Above: Kevin Webber

therapy that was first developed by teams at The Royal Marsden and The Institute of Cancer Research, London.

During the challenge, Kevin was supported by friends, family and hospital staff, including his consultant, Professor Chris Parker, who joined him for part of the challenge.

Feeling inspired? Find out more about running for Team Marsden at royalmarsden.org/run



Among the guests were a pack of Irish wolfhounds, arranged by Jordan as a surprise for Tom, who has always wanted one of the dogs

How we made our big day even more special

Tom and Jordan Blunden used their wedding day to give back to The Royal Marsden, where Tom's mum, Wendy, has been treated for leukaemia since 2022.

The couple made a donation to the Charity instead of handing out traditional wedding favours to guests. They also placed QR codes on their tables, encouraging guests to make their own donation.

Tom said: "We felt like we were spending so much money on a wedding that we thought it would be nice to give back in some way. The care that mum has received at The Royal Marsden has been second to none, so that's why we decided to donate to the Charity."

Find out more about fundraising at your own special occasion at royalmarsden.org/special

Fundraising in the saddle

Wimbledon Village Stables celebrated its 50th annual sponsored ride in 2024, with participants raising money for the Charity (below).

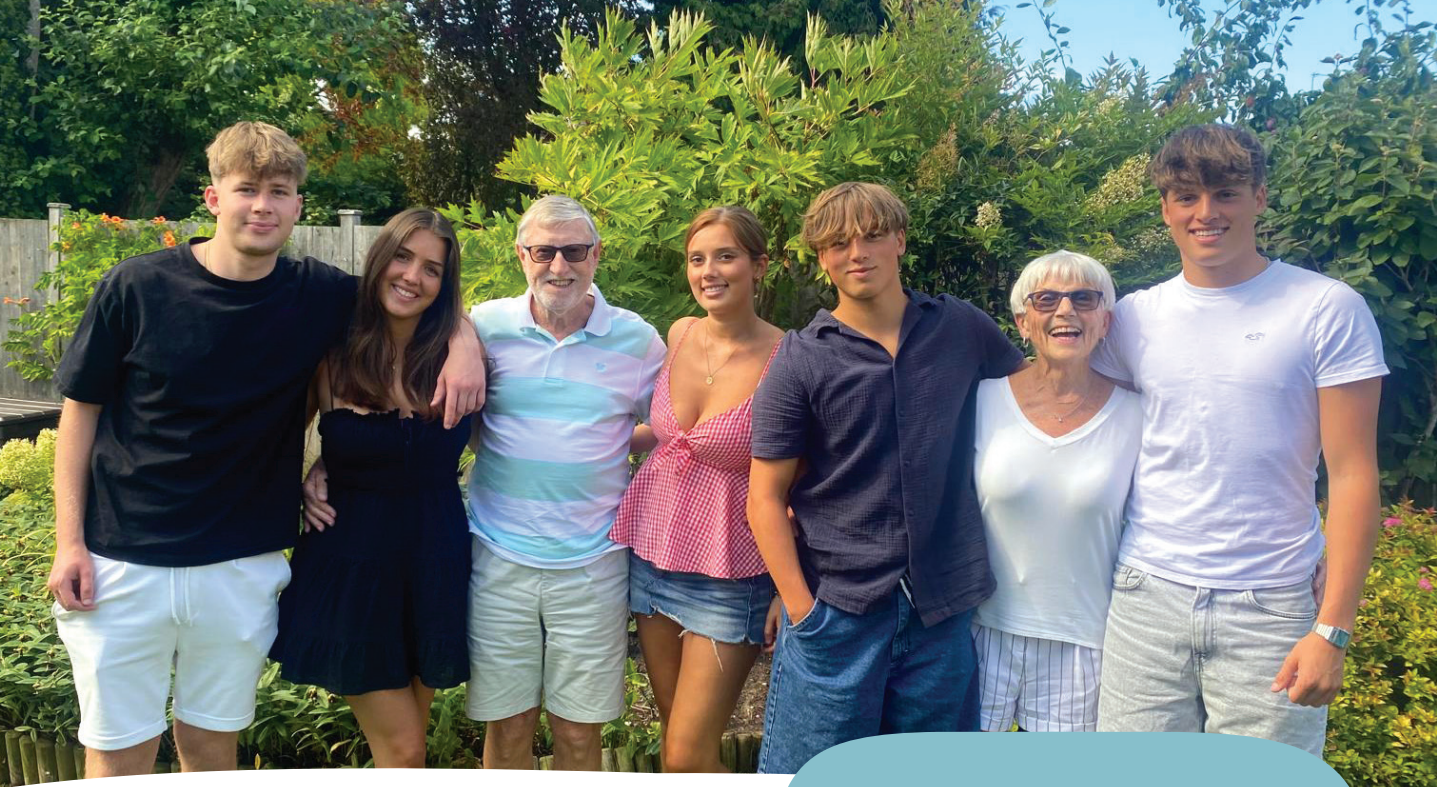
Riders took part in fancy dress, meaning Captain America and Cleopatra were spotted riding through southwest London.

Wimbledon Village Stables also holds an annual carol service in December in aid of the Charity. The service is consistently a sellout, and in recent years has had to expand to include a second sitting.

Since it first began the sponsored ride and carol service, Wimbledon Village Stables has raised over £350,000 for the Charity.



To find out more about how your community group, club or society can support the Charity, visit royalmarsden.org/groups



Write your Will for free

Give back to the future

Your gift can help fund our life-saving research that will make a vital difference to cancer patients long into the future.

"Thanks to research and the trial treatment I'm on, I've been around to see my grandchildren grow into teenagers"

Jacky, 82, patient at The Royal Marsden



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