

# Throb News

The Heart Rehabilitation  
Organisation  
of Berkshire



It's Winter... Time To Get Toasty



This winter has so far been mild and wet, although at the time of writing we are suddenly experiencing a cold snap and frosty mornings. There is no knowing how long this might last before mild weather returns but February is a notoriously 'wintery' month and the risk of snow has not yet passed. With that in mind it's worth reminding ourselves that, as we get older, our internal thermostat becomes less efficient and the range of temperature that we find comfortable can narrow. Extreme poverty for pensioners is relatively rare these days and most of us can afford our heating bills so the memory of being a child with the frost on the *inside* of the bedroom window is thankfully just that - a memory. So practice the Scandinavian habit of 'hygge' (contentment from simple pleasures, such as warmth, food, friends, etc), snuggle up, drink cocoa and Spring will be here soon.

## IN THIS EDITION

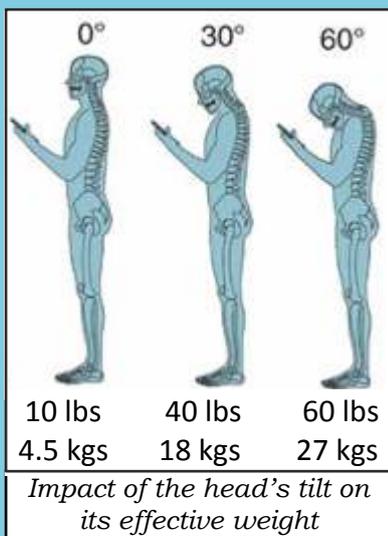
### Editorial P2

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Last chance to dance - *Page 5*

### Postural Stress



A few decades ago it was unusual to see a 'head forward' posture on anyone other than an elderly person. Nowadays, physiotherapists are increasingly concerned about the number of people who display this posture. The cause is not hard to find. Constantly looking forward and down at phones, computers and digital gadgets. Combine this with stress while driving and too much sitting and you have the perfect storm. Our heads are heavy and meant to balance on our spines in a way that supports that weight. As soon as the head is thrust forward the weight on the spine increases (*see diagram*) which in turn puts stress on shoulders and neck. This can cause headaches, neck problems, musculo-skeletal problems, ill-health, and finally permanent deformity. The cost to the NHS is high. Advice is to become aware of this posture and to pull the head back tucking the chin in more and take regular breaks from sitting and using digital devices.

Lesley Richards

### Editorial



It is with a heavy heart that I report the sad news that David Read, previous Throb News editor for over twenty-five years, passed away on January 20th after a long illness. David was a stalwart of THROB and in addition to being editor he was an exercise class member on Friday mornings at Carnation Hall, Ascot for many years. A full tribute will be in the May edition of this magazine. Our thoughts go out to his widow Terri, his family and friends at this difficult time.

Throb News certainly comes round fast, especially when Christmas and New Year take up part of the quarter! However we have succeeded in pulling this issue together in the last three weeks. On page four we have two pieces on the subject of family tree investigations, outlining fascinating information that had been suppressed by family due to social reasons at the time. It can be quite addictive as I myself found a few years ago and although there were no great surprises and no skeletons in the cupboard, it was exciting nevertheless. How many of you have explored your family tree? Could you be our next contributor with an interesting tale to tell and publish in Throb News?

Lesley Richards [leseveric@gmail.com](mailto:leseveric@gmail.com)

N.B. The editorial board reserves the right to decide the magazine's content and to amend articles as necessary

### Back Trouble... A Pain In The ...

Well not quite literally, but certainly in the lower back! Having experienced back pain intermittently for most of my adult life, a persistent bout in November 2019 caused me to consult a chiropractor for the first time. He provided several massage sessions which solved the problem. He further advised me to trap a tennis ball between the small of my back and a wall with the aim of manipulating and leaning into the ball at the point where the muscles hurt. The idea was to "lean into the ball" ...it certainly hurts but it sure does relax the back muscles. Result? The back pain disappears and there's no need to visit the chiropractor any more.



Derek Drew

## Fascinating Fascia

**F**ascia is fabulous and fascinating - but you may never have heard of it. You might have heard it called 'connective tissue' and remain none the wiser because it is rarely mentioned by health professionals other than surgeons or physiotherapists. It doesn't show up on x-rays or scans, and yet it is everywhere in your body forming a spidery, thin covering over all your bones muscles and internal organs. Imagine if you could strip off the skin from the whole of your body from head to foot and see all the fascia - you would look a little like the invisible man bandaged tightly in clingfilm or perhaps like a trapped fly cocooned in a spider's web.

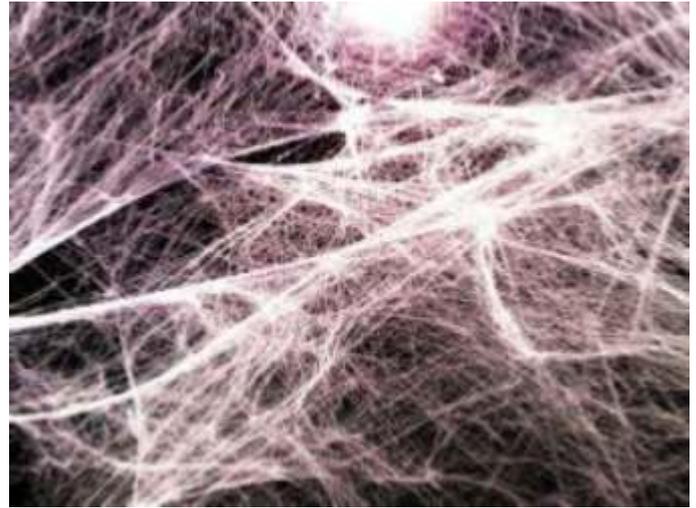
Right now this tough substance is getting some big attention in the medical world and treating it could replace surgery for some musculo-skeletal ailments.

Most doctors had hands-on experience of fascia during their training when dissecting human cadavers. To get to the interesting bits of muscle, nerve, blood vessel and bone they had to continually cut through, strip off, and discard this irritating stuff called fascia. It seemed to be of no real consequence, but in fact it does an important job.

Made primarily of collagen, fascia's most important function is to provide structure and form, holding everything together. It has a huge amount of nerve endings and helps smooth out friction between nerve fibres and muscles as the body moves. If the fascia is restricted then muscle contraction is restricted, which causes pain. Tight fascia is every bit as painful and restrictive as tight muscle.

For some surgical patients pain is experienced long after the wound has healed. Sometimes doctors mention "adhesions" in this situation but can offer very little to help. Adhesions are in fact restrictions in the fascia caused by scar tissue forming during and after healing.

So what can be done? Physiotherapists and sports-massage therapists can often locate areas of 'tightness' and pain that can be felt by the patient even when the skin is lightly touched. Extra pressure in specific spots can



Fascia - a web-like structure that covers the whole body

cause quite intense pain which very quickly resolves as the tightness loosens. Two personal examples of this are

😊 Huge improvement in pain/swelling in ring finger on right hand when pressure applied to a tight spot deep in the muscle of my right forearm.

😊 Good improvement to left sided nasal sinus blockage by releasing tightness on left side of neck and shoulder.

I now sometimes 'amuse' myself by trying to find spots of obvious tenderness that have no known cause then applying pressure using a tennis ball or foam roller to release restrictions and then see what happens - often it results in easier movement in another part of the body!

You are, however, advised not to start treating yourself without first getting guidance from a qualified professional. Sports-massage therapists, physiotherapists and chiropractors would be among those most likely to be able to assist.

But, for the curious, the internet, especially YouTube, has some interesting things to say about treatment of fascia injury and tightness.

On the previous page you can read Derek Drew's experience of successfully releasing tight spots in the muscles of his lower back using the pressure of a tennis ball. An excellent example of fascia release.

Lesley Richards

## Family History

It is some time since I dabbled in my family history but my experience is worthy of note by those who are now beginning to get involved. Many of you will have watched the programme “Who do you think you are?” on the BBC channels and marvelled at the ease with which the celebrity’s family history is unfolded: this is unlikely to be so in your case. There are many pitfalls involved unless you are prepared to spend considerable money employing professional researchers to do all the legwork and investigations in such activity. I liken it to the activity of a detective agency. Of course the amount of public information now available on the internet has increased considerably since my studies and creates a firm platform for a starting phase. Most people are extremely economical with the truth when they volunteer information to the governing authorities, particularly the miscreants. One can spend large amounts of time and effort seeking the truth about your ancestors. As an example, I quote the case of one of my close relatives.

Ellen had lived for the whole of her life up to the age of about sixty-five in the complete belief

that those she regarded as her mother and father were her lawful parents. I was first involved at the age of eighteen, as a student in London, when I was asked to visit Somerset House to get a copy of her birth certificate for her. After several hours of searching, I had to admit complete failure as no record was there. My relatives doubted me and Ellen’s father said “Leave it with me, I will sort it out.” Some fifty years later, when I had retired, I decided to investigate further and after considerable work the following story emerged.

It seems the father “managed” the situation, steering his daughter through all formalities including marriage, until he died in the early 1950s and her mother quickly followed him. However, the mother, with almost her last breath, waved her index finger towards the right-hand drawer of their wardrobe, which had always been locked by the husband, and whispered to her daughter “Look in there.” For the first time in her life Ellen became aware of her illegitimacy and informal adoption.

At times I pick up the reins again to complete the story and meet many dead ends.

**Arthur House**

*See back page for some useful resources.*

## A Not Uncommon Story

No one else must be included. (For order of entering names see Examples on back of Schedule.)		Age of Males	Age of Females	and upwards.	If less than one year "under one."	Total Children Born Alive.	Children still Living.	Children who have Died.
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1	William Wood	Head	25	Married	2	2	2	—
2	Miriam Wood	Wife		Married	3			
3	Miriam Wood	Daughter	2	—				
4	Malet Wood	Daughter	1	—				
5	Frankie Pratt	Visitor	5	—				

Arthur’s piece speaks to a time when illegitimacy was a taboo subject. Shortly before his death, my father confessed to one of my brothers that he had been ashamed all his life of being illegitimate. Despite having an illegitimate child, his mother, Miriam, was later able to marry. On the 1911 census return, his true relationship to the family was not revealed. At the age of five, he is listed with his mother’s

maiden name, as Frankie Pratt – Visitor. He subsequently adopted the Wood surname and grew up to be a decent, hard-working man who supported his wife and a family of three boys. How very sad that he bore, what he felt, was that burden of shame for so long. Thank goodness attitudes have changed and we live in more enlightened times.

**Haydn Wood**

## Magnesium

This is the first article in a series about minerals and trace elements found in the foods we eat. The series will look at why these are so important for us, where we can obtain them, and what happens if we have lower than optimal amounts. Our body has to be efficient at using these minerals - a process known as bio-availability - but as we get older our ability to absorb them slows down. As a result, the majority of older people have low levels of essential minerals and trace elements despite having a balanced diet. This problem is often exacerbated by modern agricultural methods which cover crops with chemicals and deplete minerals in the soil, thus making the produce less nutritious than it was in the past. In the case of magnesium, scientists now believe that people in industrialised countries have lower than optimal levels, including younger people.

So what does magnesium do for us? It is vital for around 300 enzyme reactions and is important for nerve and muscle function, regular heartbeat, strong bones, mental alertness and normal blood pressure. A lower than optimum level can therefore result in higher blood pressure, muscle cramps, tingling nerves, osteoporosis, mental fogginess and anxiety.

Should we supplement with magnesium as we get older? Yes, possibly, and since overdose

is extremely rare it is generally presumed safe to do so. However, studies have indicated that absorption of magnesium from tablets is low in older people and may therefore not improve things that much. Some people swear by taking magnesium supplements to alleviate regular cramping in muscles. A true clinical magnesium deficiency is rare but it is thought that many of us have 'sub-clinical' levels of deficiency meaning we are low, but not low enough for it to show on a blood test. So what can we do instead if we don't wish to take supplements?

Diet is the only alternative and fortunately many foods can help us even though they may not contain as much magnesium nowadays. Foods that contain the highest levels of magnesium include most types of nuts, shelled seafood such as shrimps, whelks oysters etc, avocado, berries such as blackberry and raspberry, spinach, quinoa, strong dark chocolate, bananas, tofu and cultured yogurt. But many other foods also have magnesium and it is absorbed better from animal-based food than by plant foods simply because our body's evolutionary design means it is better at extracting it. As with all other dietary advice the more 'real food' variety the better, as this will go a long way to ensure that all nutrients are available to you.

Lesley Richards

## Dancing Is Great Exercise ...

... and what better way to start 2020 than The Party Near the Green! Only a few tickets left so order soon. Guitarist Johnny Wheeler will have your feet tapping to familiar tunes suited to our

age group. The music is irresistible, you'll soon be on the dance-floor. There is also a wonderful buffet as usual, however **N.B. there is no licensed bar so bring your own drinks.**

### Party Near the Green - Last Chance - Book Now

Saturday 22nd February 2020

7.30 pm - 11.30 pm

Holyport War Memorial Hall

SL6 2NA



Tickets £17.50 incl buffet

★ No licensed bar ★

Bring your own drinks

Live music by Johnny Wheeler

Tickets: Keith Jarvis 01189 785 838 ✧ Lynn Warner 07956 848 986 ✧ [events4throb@gmail.com](mailto:events4throb@gmail.com)

## Spam & Pearly Gates



One of my Christmas presents this year was a Times book of cryptic crossword puzzles. I'm a great fan of crossword puzzles, doing one almost every day, so this was a very welcome gift. However, although the "tricks of the trade" are common to all puzzle setters, each paper has its own individual style and, not having tackled any Times puzzles before, I found myself struggling. I was excruciatingly slow to solve the first couple of puzzles but I stuck with it and gradually began to make progress. Imagine my delight then when, a few pages in, I turned to a new puzzle and immediately solved the first two clues I looked at. They were blindingly obvious, I didn't even have to think about them as the answers popped into my head almost unbidden.

At last, the breakthrough that I'd been hoping for. Except that it wasn't quite. My optimism was a little premature and I still had quite a struggle to finish the puzzle. Those of you who are cryptic puzzle fans will know the frustration of grappling with that final, most difficult, clue. It's always the last one, isn't it? But then comes the elation when the penny drops and you either groan at your own stupidity in not having seen the answer sooner or curse at the compiler's obtuseness.

In the Middle Ages, average life-expectancy at birth was thirty-five, a far cry from today when, thanks to modern standards of nutrition, sanitation and health-care, increasing numbers can expect to achieve a very ripe old age. Longevity in itself however is not the goal. Rather it's quality of life that matters and that means maintaining physical and mental fitness. *Mens sana in corpore sano* - a healthy mind in a healthy body - was the educational dictum I grew up with in the days before teachers were swamped by testing and targets and it is very much THROB's philosophy. As well as organising the rehabilitation and fitness classes which many of you attend, providing class equipment and funding the installation of Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) in the

community, THROB also aims to maintain your mental welfare. The stimulation of meeting like-minded souls at a class or going on an outing, attending a dance or a quiz cannot be underestimated.

Retirement can and should be a happy and fulfilling phase of life. But the end of one's working life has one disadvantage - the loss of daily interaction with work colleagues. Standing by the coffee machine, you're just as likely to be chatting to the office junior as to someone of your own age and that can only be a good thing, helping you to keep an open mind and to stay stimulated. At all costs, we must avoid the risk of slumping into inaction as the years advance. An article in *Psychology Today*\* listed the benefits of socialising which can include:

1. Living longer
2. Better physical health
3. Better mental health
4. Lower risk of dementia

So, for a long and healthy life, it's as important to keep active mentally as it is physically. Hobbies, whether it's crossword puzzles, model-making, gardening, learning a language or photography, and simple activities such as chatting to neighbours and class-mates are all great ways to keep the grey matter healthy and stay engaged.

Spam and pearly gates? Ah yes, here are the clues that occasioned my joy:

Clue 1 Plans to return this unsolicited communication (4)

Clue 2 Gay prelates off to heaven they admit (6,5)

And here, in the immortal words of Blue Peter, is one I made earlier:

Clue 3 The short, illegal way to acquire a benefit for the heart (5)

*Answers bottom of next page.* ↘

\* *Psychology Today* 30/06/16 - The Health Benefits of Socializing

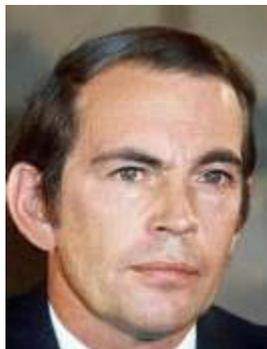
Haydn Wood



## Before Their Time

*Pioneers who paved the way to modern medicine*

### 12. CHRISTIAAN BARNARD



**P**ossibly the most well known of the pioneers we have featured, Christiaan Barnard is often cited as the first doctor to perform a human heart transplant although this is slightly inaccurate as several others had attempted this and failed. Dr. Barnard was the first surgeon to perform the operation and have his patient wake up afterwards. The operation was performed on December 3rd 1967 at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa. (This was on my 19th birthday and I remember it well despite the fact that at that point in my life I was not contemplating a career in nursing let alone cardiac nursing.) In the hype surrounding the event and given the notable charisma of Dr. Barnard it is easy to forget that his first patient Louis Washkansky (58) lived only eighteen days and died of pneumonia, a complication related to anti-rejection drugs, and Barnard's second transplant patient in 1968, Philip Blaiberg, fared little better and lived only eighteen months. But the fact that it had been done, like breaking the four-minute mile barrier, opened the floodgates for others to perfect the techniques and the drugs.

By the 1950s, with the invention of the heart-lung machine and increased knowledge about how to combat organ rejection, heart transplantation had become inevitable at some point in the future, but Christiaan Barnard was, initially, an unlikely candidate to be the first successful cardiac transplant surgeon.

Early in his surgical career Barnard's enthusiasm for experimental operations was apparent and after practicing on dogs he was able to perfect a technique to repair infant

*intestinal atresia*, a congenital bowel abnormality that was normally fatal. Thus his reputation grew, resulting in the winning of a scholarship to the University of Minnesota where he worked with Walton Lillehei, a pioneer in open heart surgery. On his return to South Africa two years later, the chief of surgery at Groote Schuur Hospital took him on as a protégé and helped raise funds to buy a heart-lung machine so that Barnard could establish an open-heart surgery programme. Christiaan and his brother Marius, also a surgeon, did not disappoint and were soon performing extremely difficult cardiac surgeries on children, with results that were as good as any around the world. The brothers did not get on well and Christiaan was generally known to be a difficult perfectionist and belligerent to work with. Marius also considered him to be a poor surgeon. However, any deficit in talent was made up for by his enterprising spirit and by 1967, following a research trip to America, he was actively talking about human heart transplants “in the near future”.

In October 1967 Barnard decided his team were ready to perform such an operation and they even had a suitable candidate in Louis Washkansky whose heart was so damaged that death was inevitable quite soon. They awaited a donor organ and on 2nd December Denise Duvall (24) was hit by a car and suffered injuries incompatible with life. Her father gave permission for her organs to be used for transplantation and the rest is history. Between 1967 and 1974 ten heart transplants were performed at Groote Schuur, four of the patients lived longer than eighteen months and two of those became long-term survivors, lasting thirteen and twenty-four years respectively.

Dr. Christiaan Barnard ended his career an Emeritus Professor having stopped performing surgery in 1983 after developing rheumatoid arthritis in his hands.

He died in 2001 at the age of seventy-eight following an asthma attack.

**Lesley Richards**

<p>gates = to heaven they admit                  3. The short = Th; illegal way to acquire =                  rob; a benefit for the heart = Throb</p>	<p>1. Plans = maps; to return = backwards =                  spam = unsolicited communication                  2. Gay prelates; off = anagram = Pearly</p>
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**I**t's February, Valentine's Day is on the horizon and THROB members Dennis Borrowdale and Barbara Ball are bringing a touch of romance to this issue. Both are long-term members of the Friday exercise class at Carnation Hall and clearly love can blossom between the step-ups and the weight-lifting! Dennis popped the question on Christmas Day and fortunately for him Barbara said yes. They say there is "a lot to sort out" before naming the day but we wish them all the very best in their future life together. It's a first for my class - I've had to wait more than twenty-five years for such an event. It's so nice when people find happiness for a second time.

**Lesley Richards**

**I**t's been heartbreaking to see the devastation caused by the wildfires in Australia. If you'd like to help, here are two charities that you can donate to: [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au) Wildlife rescue - [www.wires.org.au](http://www.wires.org.au)

**Family History**



**A** quick internet search will bring up a host of sites that will help you to research your family history. Most offer a free trial but to make any real progress you will need to subscribe. Here is a small sample:

- [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)   [www.ukcensusonline.com](http://www.ukcensusonline.com)
- [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)   [www.genesreunited.co.uk](http://www.genesreunited.co.uk)
- [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)   [www.forces-war-records.co.uk](http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk)

This can be a fascinating and rewarding hobby but be warned, it can be addictive!

**DID YOU KNOW?**

When diving, a blue whale's heart beats two times a minute.



The Heart Rehabilitation Organisation of Berkshire  
Affiliated to the British Heart Foundation - Charity No 1132434  
[www.throbrehab.org.uk](http://www.throbrehab.org.uk)