

Dr. Derek Connolly's Enthusiastic Report on Midlands Metropolitan Hospital.

Firstly let me thank everyone who came to our meeting on Wednesday 26th of July, especially the people from Walsall group who showed their support.

Our guest speaker was Dr. Derek Connolly, Consultant Cardiologist who has been a leading figure in getting the new Midlands Metropolitan Hospital built in Sandwell ever since it's inception in the year 2000. Dr Connolly gave us a very enthusiastic presentation on the new hospital even telling us that he got the idea for the name when he was in New York and he visited the New York Metropolitan Museum.

The building of the hospital began in 2016 after a series of misadventures due to changes in design and government rules for funding and is now the largest building project in Europe. There will be nine floors in the hospital incorporating all of the services you would look to find in a large modern hospital. The hospital will contain 670 in patient beds, 11 operating theatres and 24 delivery rooms in the maternity department. There is also a massive underground car park with lifts direct to clinics and wards. The hospital is designed with three main wings all running parallel to each other with walk-ways between the wings meaning the hospital looks like a giant capital M for Midland Metropolitan when viewed from above. As well as all of the clinical services available the trust want to make visits and stays

at the hospital as pleasant as possible, with well laid out gardens and a new tow path alongside the Cape Arm of the Birmingham Canal with a wetlands area to encourage wildlife. There will also be an indoor Winter Garden as an area to relax in.

All in all this looks like a very exciting project. Of course this does mean changes to our existing local hospitals. The existing City Hospital Site will retain all of it's new build facilities including the Birmingham Treatment Centre for one stop diagnosis and day surgery.

The Birmingham & Midland Eye Centre will stay on its present site and retain its existing services while The Sheldon building will become the intermediate and rehabilitative care unit for West Birmingham residents.

Sandwell General hospital will retain recovery and rehabilitation beds and a Day Case unit, including three operating theatres. There will also be an imaging unit providing MRI & CT scans, X-Ray and ultrasound as well as the Endoscopy unit.

Several outpatient clinics will also remain at Sandwell including our own UGI clinic.

Rowley Regis hospital will retain recovery & rehabilitation beds as well as Outpatients and X-Ray and ultrasound facilities. The Sexual Health clinic will also remain at Rowley.

On losing a friend and carer.

From Brian

Just after Easter 2001 I was recovering from surgery, and was really not doing very well. I was losing weight because I was not eating properly and I was having to go to the pain control clinic at City Hospital because of severe nerve end pains.

At the same time we had our two grand daughters, Hayley 14 and Steph 11 living with us. Steph was also recovering from injury having broken her shoulder in a road accident just before Easter. Hayley being a really caring sister brought home a gift for Steph, a small bundle of grey fur wrapped up in a school scarf that turned out to be a kitten. Just what we needed!

Kate and I took this kitten, which had been named Cassie to the vets to get it inoculated to be told that it was really too young to have been taken from it's mother and to bring it back in two weeks time. A fortnight later we took it back, it had it's injections and we were advised to go back again six weeks later to get her "doctored". Over those six weeks Cassie started to show her independence and her preferences, she wanted nothing to do with Steph but would always climb up onto my lap and sit with me. We had never had a cat as a pet and so treated her just as we would a dog, telling her to sit, which never worked, letting her out into the garden to "do her business" and calling her in when we wanted to feed her and when we were going out, which did work.

After a six week wait we took her to the vets for "the operation" left her at the surgery and waited to return in the evening to pick

her up. We went to pick her up that evening to be told that this queen was actually a tom, but they had operated anyway. Time for a change of name and Cassie became Cassius.

Now we started to see this unique cat develop it's own special ways. It was definitely sure it was my cat, and let everybody know it. Then during his time out in the garden he made friends with a magpie! I know that this seems improbable but these two used to chase each other around the garden. Cass would sit on the fence while the magpie flew up behind him and pull hairs out of his tail. Kate had told friends about this strange friendship but no-one believed her. Until she had been out one day with one of her mates and as they got out of her friends car Pam saw the magpie patrolling around the car with Cassius hiding underneath. The Cass came out from the opposite side of the car and chased the bird around the front garden and up a tree.

Cass loved to sit at the top of our drive every morning as the children were going to school and to make sure that every one of them took notice of him and spoke to him and scratched behind his ears. He was very vocal and very loud and made sure that no-one ignored him. In fact one time when Lynne, who works with us on Thursdays was on the phone to Kate her started with his Mam, Mam calls and Lynne asked if we had the grandkids with us he was that loud. He also liked to come up the road with me each morning as I went for the paper. He would walk beside me up the street until we got to the top where he would jump up onto the pub wall and wait for me. He would never attempt to cross the road. When I came back with the paper he would call out and

stretch up for me to pick him up where he would climb onto my shoulder and sit there until we got back into the house. We also know that you should never allow a pet into your bedroom. Cass was not a pet, he was a member of the family and not only used to sleep on the bed but on most nights would make his way from the bottom of the bed and lie in the crook of my arm with his head on my shoulder, and would he moan if I should move.

The experts also say that cats are territorial and will not share their space. Cassius had never read this rule and invited every cat in the neighbourhood not only into the garden but also into the house. He would sit in the garden and call out until other cats came to join him, I'm sure that Kate was a great help with him making friends as she would feed every cat that arrived. It was not unusual to put out seven dishes of cat food on a morning. We used to take Cass down to our chalet in Aberystwyth every time we went down there and he was a good traveller. Well he was after the first time when we tried to take him down in a cat box. He meowed and moaned and scratched at the box all the time he was in it. Halfway through our journey we stopped off for a coffee and to let Cass out for a drink and a rest. Kate suggested that she would try him out of his pet box and on her lap for the rest of the journey. He was ok at first but then he climbed onto the cars dash board, looked out of the window and stayed there for the rest of the trip. He travelled without a cat box for ever after that.

On his first weekend at Aberystwyth he stayed in the chalet and never ventured outside. On his second trip he ventured outside

and by his third trip he had a complete run of the site. The things he got up to there were a cause of much amusement and not a little embarrassment. Here he was territorial and used to guard his space outside the chalet. He would sit on the bench outside and chatter and hiss at the rooks and gulls as they came near the chalet and he developed a habit of attacking dogs as they were walked past. He used to sit crouched on the bench or on one of the chairs in the chalet and if he thought any dog came to close he would leap out and attack it. This usually led to the dog running round in circles getting entangled in its lead while the owner looked on in amazement at what was going on. Either Kate or myself had to rush out and grab him and apologise to the dog owner. Fortunately every time they just laughed and said they had never seen anything like it. One owner though did have to change his route because his springer spaniel became too nervous to walk past.

Cassius was also amazing at knowing the time! He would cry to be let out and we would tell him a time to be back, he was never late. Friends who have stayed with us have said that they had never known anything like him. He also let you know when it was time for his time, and this has caused me some embarrassment and led to a lot of laughter at our holiday site club. We would travel down on a Friday and around 7-30 I would go down to the club for a couple of pints and a bit of a gossip. Around 9pm I would leave to go back to the chalet. One evening engrossed in conversation the time ran past the none o'clock limit. Much to the amusement of the friends I was with

the Polish security guard on the door and said in heavily accented English “It is time for you to go, your cat is waiting outside for you”.

Things changed in October 2013, Cass had gone out for his evening prowling around our estate, letting all the local cats know who was boss when my daughter arriving home at about 8 o’clock in the evening saw him limping down the drive. She picked him up and brought him in, she was covered in blood. Cassius had severe damage to a front leg. We got him down to an emergency vet at Great Barr where they put him on a drip and gave him antibiotics and kept him over night. We collected him the next morning and took him to our own vets. They could not be sure what had happened to him but could tell that he had not been in a road accident. All the fur was torn from his leg and the supposition was that he had either fell through a fragile roof and torn the skin off getting free or had been in a fight with another animal, perhaps a dog or fox. The vets tried for ten days to save his leg but the flesh was rotting in the bone and infection was setting in. The first vet to see him at the practice took his injury as just another job, so did a different vet on the second day. The first vet saw him again on the third day and said to us “This is a special cat, I’ve never known one so well behaved, I’ll look after him from now on”. When we said after the ten days of treatment that they had tried their best but we had to think about how it was affecting the cat she looked a bit dismayed. When I said we needed to get the leg amputated she was greatly relieved, for this

really was a special cat. After the amputation we knew that things would change.

The trouble was no-one told Cassius. After two days of being confined to the house we let him out into the back garden. After a few minutes looking around he made a dash for the gate, jumped up onto the wall and was off up the street. We Kate and I ran out looking for him but he was nowhere to be seen. My daughter Vickie joined us as we started to walk around the streets looking for him. We kept meeting back at home, but no sight of him. After about half an hour he came sauntering down the street as if nothing had happened. The funniest thing about this incident was when Vickie asked a lady who was walk along the road if she had seen a cat “ It’s just had an operation and has a cone on it’s head, it’s only got three legs and has stitches all down one side of it’s body. The lady’s reply “What colour is it”? Cass continued to come down to Aberystwyth with us and was still very territorial and still attacked dogs, even with only three legs. He did stop coming to collect me from the club though.

The first sign that something was wrong was on Tuesday 18th July when Cass didn’t come up to bed. On the Wednesday morning when we got up I saw that he had vomited a couple of times, clear liquid with a frothy edge. He wouldn’t eat so we took him to the vets that morning. We were told he was quite ill and the vet gave him two injections, an antibiotic and something to stop him vomiting. He also took blood tests and gave us a kit to collect a urine sample. I returned the sample on Thursday but we could see that Cass was deteriorating through the night. We

took him back to the vets on Friday morning and a different vet gave him a steroid injection, more antibiotics and drip fed 200ml of saline into his body. We tried everything to get him to feed all through Friday, even to the point of trying to get him to take liquidised food from a syringe, all to no avail. On Saturday morning it was obvious that he could not survive and at 12 mid-day on the 22nd July we helped him slip away, he was sixteen tears old.

I write this to let you know that it is not always a partner or human friend who helps you through your recovery from UGI cancers. In my case it also included a very special cat.



The Next Meetings.

Our next group meeting is on Monday 21st August at 2pm where the guest speaker will be Specialist Registrar Dr. Taran Gupta. Please note that this meeting is one week earlier than would normally be expected because of the Bank Holiday week-end. Everyone will be made very welcome to this meeting and of course there is free parking.

Because of the change of room from the Medical Education Centre at Sandwell to the room within the secure area of the hospital not proving to be very successful we are cancelling all Sandwell meetings until refurbishment at Sandwell is completed. All Sandwell patients and carers will be made very welcome at Walsall where we try to arrange guest speakers with a wide range of topics to inform us all.

Mr. Ewen Griffiths & Dr. Deepak Vijayan Climb Ben Nevis.

Mr. Ewen Griffiths and Dr. Deepak Vijayan have completed their climb of Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain raising over £1,400 in sponsorship to be shared between Upper G.I. Blues and Queen Elizabeth Hospitals UGI cancer charity. We thank them for completing this great task and look forward to sponsoring them on a cross channel swim!

