

Newsletter

Issue 2 | February 2009

2008 was another successful year for SSIT with funds being raised through a wide range of events in and around the region. With requests for support both for the Spinal Centre and for individuals, the need for financial support is as important as ever.

Making a difference

Funding from the Southern Spinal Injuries Trust (SSIT) can have a major impact on the lives of spinal cord injured people. Set up to support the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre (DOCSTC) at Salisbury District Hospital, its patients and spinal cord injured people living in the south and south west of England, SSIT is able to help fund a wide range of equipment for individuals from powered wheelchairs to adjustable beds, from communication aids to pressure care mattresses, all of which help improve the quality of life of patients.



One recent beneficiary is 29 year old Georgina Bignell (or George as she is best known), who suffered a T3 spinal cord injury in March 1982, just before her third birthday. Originally treated at Stoke Mandeville, George became a patient of the DOCSTC when she moved to Southampton.

26 years as a wheelchair user takes it toll on your arms and shoulders and it was during a routine check up at Salisbury that it was suggested she apply to SSIT for a powered wheelchair. The grant was made in August 2008. George commented: "This powered wheelchair has made the most amazing difference to my life. I live at the bottom of a hill and can now take the children to school and pick them up by myself and even keep up with them in the play park. It's just brilliant!"

This powered wheelchair has made the most amazing difference to my life

Thank you letters are the communications that Trustee Jeremy Major most enjoys receiving, like the one from Andrew Farrow, who received funding towards a stair lift after a fall from a tree that he was pruning left him with a T2 spinal cord injury: "The grant for the stair lift means it will be possible for me to join my family again in the rest of the house. Thanks to your support, I'll be able to have a proper shower and to read my daughter bedtime stories in her room."



Leck Krawczyk was left with a T6 spinal cord injury after a motorbike accident in November 2006.

SSIT provided funding for a powered hand cycle turning his manual wheelchair into an all-terrain vehicle which can go almost anywhere off-road. Leck wrote: "I love to get out to the Eden Project and to visit the beach. Without the powered hand cycle I would rely on someone pushing me around, but now I can be totally independent. It really has changed my life."

If you have any equipment needs and are struggling to find a source of funding, we encourage you to apply to SSIT. Application forms are available on our website www.ssit.org.uk

FUNDRAISING FOCUS

Fonthill Fiesta: a triumph for SSIT!



Photo: Dominic Parkes

Trustees Lady Margadale and Jeremy Major

The Fonthill Fiesta was the highlight of 2008's fundraising events for SSIT raising an incredible £75,000

Over 380 guests helped support SSIT in July last year at a major fundraising event on the Fonthill Estate in Wiltshire. Hosted by Lord and Lady Margadale, the Fonthill Fiesta was the highlight of 2008's fundraising events for SSIT raising an incredible £75,000.

Held in the magical setting of Quarry Wood, overlooking the lake, the Fonthill Fiesta was a grand picnic in a beautifully decorated marquee. An auction, led by West End jeweller Humphrey Butler, raised over £50,000 with prizes ranging from a week's holiday in the Caribbean to a day's fishing on the River Nadder. Meanwhile a silent auction brought in over £8,000 and a Gift Tree and raffle added to the final total of money raised for SSIT.

After the excitement of the auction guests danced the night away to the *Jimi Heneage Experience* and DJ Charlie Ellingworth. SSIT Trustee Jeremy Major commented: "This was a truly magical evening and our thanks go out to Alastair and Amanda Margadale for hosting the event. We are thrilled that they raised so much money for SSIT."

A Busy Year for the High Sheriff



Annie Maw and her solar-powered Trampler

Annie Maw, High Sheriff of Somerset and ex-patient of the DOCSTC, has had a very busy year fundraising for a number of different charitable causes and we are hugely grateful for her support.

In one of the wettest weeks of May last year, Annie led a cavalcade of solar-powered Trampers travelling from London to Shepton Mallet in time for the Royal Bath & West Show. The vehicles were largely driven by disabled drivers and raised money for six charities including SSIT. We were delighted to receive a donation of over £5,000 from this adventure.

Later in the year, Annie organised a Gala Concert at Wells Cathedral. A *Son et Lumière* production to celebrate the 800 year history of the cathedral, the evening featured music from the Cathedral Choir, Wells Cathedral School and Millfield School. With proceeds split between SSIT and the Cathedral funds, we were thrilled to receive a cheque for £10,500.



Wells Cathedral Gala Concert

Indian Dinner



Photo: Dominic Parkes

Trustee Anba Soopramanien and his wife Veda

Guests were treated to a delicious three course dinner of authentic Indian food prepared by Anba's wife Veda and her team of helpers.

Bollywood music, stunning silk saris and rose petal strewn tables set the scene for the SSIT Indian Dinner held in November 2008. Hosted by Dr Anba Soopramanien, Consultant at the DOCSTC and SSIT Trustee, the dinner was the second major fundraising event organised for the charity in 2008 and raised over £9,000.

Over 100 guests including staff and ex-patients from the Spinal Centre were treated to a delicious three course dinner of authentic Indian food prepared by Anba's wife Veda and her team of helpers. During the meal a performance of Southern Indian music was given by Sathya Chandresekaran, with after dinner cabaret provided by the very funny *Instant Sunshine*.

SSIT Trustee Graham Waterton of Strutt & Parker led the auction with prizes ranging from Bath Rugby tickets to a tandem skydive. Over a thousand raffle tickets were also sold, bringing in valuable extra income for the charity. Our thanks go to Anba & Veda Soopramanien for hosting the event and all those who helped make the event such a success.

2009 EVENTS

The Longest Day Walk: a great sense of achievement!



Wendy Ho of Smith & Williamson

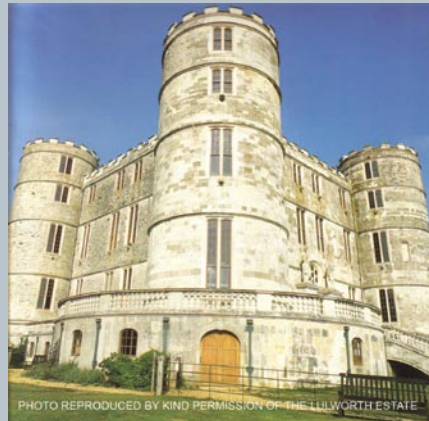
21 volunteers from accountancy and financial services group Smith & Williamson took part in The Longest Day Walk last summer and raised over £12,000 for SSIT. The footsore staff walked 55 miles up and down the hills of the Mid Wiltshire Way and through torrential rain and thunderstorms to complete the challenge in 21 hours and 45 minutes. Wendy Ho from the Southampton office commented: "It was hard work walking on rough hill tracks with lashing rain and hail, soaking wet feet and sleep deprivation, but the sense of achievement when the team crossed the finish line made it all worthwhile."

Thank you to ...

all those who helped raise over £1,000 from our first street collection in Salisbury; the St John's Singers for their concert at St Martin's Church, Salisbury which raised over £700; Therapeutics physiotherapy clinic in Southampton which raised £1,600 with their Neuro Mile walk; Neil Arthur who raised £1,000 from the Connaught Lodge Ladies Night; Andy Downes of Bodytech, Salisbury for pledging percentage donations from car repairs; Sarah Hall of BFG Cards for producing Christmas cards in aid of SSIT and organising a Christmas shopping event raising over £390 and to all the many others who have generously supported the charity.

Volunteers Needed!

Lulworth Castle Abseil:
26 April 2009



The perfect venue for abseiling with a descent of approximately 70ft down the tower, this early 17th century castle offers stunning coastal views from the top. You really couldn't find a better location for an abseil!

A lack of volunteers meant that we had to postpone our original abseil date but we hope that the weather might be a little more enticing in Spring! We have 120 places available so if you, or your friends or family would like to take part, please do contact us via the website (www.ssit.org.uk) and help raise valuable funds for SSIT. Registration costs just £10 and we would be grateful for any sponsorship you are able to raise.

KEEP AN EYE ON
OUR WEBSITE

www.ssit.org.uk

for additional fundraising
events for 2009.

Longleat Charity of the Year 2010!



LONGLEAT

SSIT is delighted to have been nominated as the Longleat Charity of the Year for 2010. This will give us a fantastic opportunity to reach a wide and varied audience through a number of fundraising initiatives. Plans are already afoot for a big event to start it all off and full details will follow on the website (www.ssit.org.uk).

2009 will also see SSIT as the nominated charity of the Salisbury Inner Wheel, Salisbury-based Women on Wednesday, The Green House, Sherborne School and Bristol University Polo Club.

Raise funds for SSIT when you shop online

easyfundraising
.org.uk

Next time you shop online why not do so via the easyfundraising website? All the major online stores are listed and every time you shop with them using the easyfundraising link, you'll generate a free donation for us of around 2.5% of the purchase price. It's completely free to register and you won't pay a penny more for your shopping. Visit the website: www.easyfundraising.org.uk/ssit and follow the simple instructions and then it's Happy Shopping all the way and free donations to SSIT!

Need help or want to get involved?

If you, or your family and friends would like to get involved with SSIT, or you have any needs that we can help you with, then please visit our website to find out more.

www.ssit.org.uk

Alternatively you can contact us by post: **SSIT, 21 Chipper Lane, Salisbury SP1 1BG.**

Funding for the DOCSTC

Patients rehabilitating at the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre are set to receive a welcome boost with the arrival of a unique **patient call and entertainment system** funded by the SSIT.

Designed and developed with the help of occupational therapists and long-stay hospital patients, the bedside independence system features a 9” screen with an icon-based scrolling menu which allows the patient to select from a wide range of functions all at the touch of a single button. The units can be either hand or mouth controlled which gives every patient a way of using them independently, no matter what their level of paralysis. Each unit is wall-mounted and incorporates nurse call, bedside light control, digital television and radio channels and an interface to DVD, CD or games console.

The average length of stay for a patient in the Spinal Centre is between six and nine months, with ventilator-dependent patients staying for around 18 months. For those patients in the acute stage of an injury, bed rest is crucial. Patients are turned frequently to prevent pressure sores, and previously staff would also have to move their portable televisions on trolleys. The new system is much safer and more convenient and will help with staff time too.

In total, SSIT has provided funding for 46 of the 48 units at a cost of £45,000, with the remaining units and the control system paid for by other charitable sources.

In 2008 SSIT set up a **Patient Recreational Fund** to help more severely paralysed patients leave the Spinal Centre with the assistance of medical clinical staff and attend events over and

above those already organised by staff. Helping patients with their rehabilitation in the community is one of the key aims of the Spinal Centre and the charity.

SSIT has also been able to fund the purchase of **specialist physiotherapy and communication equipment** for the spinal centre. It has part-funded the making of a **DVD** which gives a longer term perspective of living with a spinal cord injury to people who are newly injured. The DVD will be available early in 2009.

Plans to build a conservatory within the Spinal Centre were shelved due to escalating costs. The original budget was £75,000 but this soon leapt to way over £100,000 and it was decided that funds could be better spent on other projects.

Who's who at SSIT?



Dr Anba Soopramanien joined the DOCSTC as Consultant in Spinal Injuries and Rehabilitation Medicine in January 1999 and as such brings

centre in Pakistan, and for another two years on a 50 bed spinal unit in Romania.

Dr Soopramanien has been a trustee of SSIT since its formation in 2006. Speaking about the charity he commented: “Until SSIT was formed, the DOCTSC was probably the only spinal unit in the UK not to have its own dedicated charity and it was my dream to set one up. I was therefore delighted to be asked to serve as

understanding of the problems faced by people with a spinal cord injury. Many are struggling to deal with all sorts of challenges: although medical help and rehabilitation are a key part of the process of adjustment to their situation, financial help from SSIT can also make a real difference. There is a real need for SSIT to provide help to individuals living with a spinal cord injury, and enhancing in-patient facilities of the DOCSTC.”

I always look beyond the confines of clinical work, and have a good understanding of the problems faced by people with a spinal cord injury.

a wealth of practical experience and medical knowledge to SSIT. In addition to working in other spinal units in the UK and Europe, Anba worked with the International Red Cross for three years as Head of Rehabilitation on a 100 bed spinal unit and an outpatient prosthetic

a Trustee, when Sally Mathieson, Jeremy Major and others created SSIT. I have been impressed by the positive energy generated in setting up the charity and its successful fundraising ever since.”

“I always look beyond the confines of clinical work, and have a good

Dr Soopramanien has announced his retirement from the Spinal Centre from 1st April 2009, but will continue to serve as a SSIT Trustee.