



Press Release

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Cyclists raise over £30,000 after completing Wiltshire to Devon challenge

A group of cyclists who travelled over 100 miles from Wiltshire to Devon have raised over £30,000 for the Stars Appeal, Salisbury District Hospital's Charity.

The Unlikely Cyclists made up of William Warden, John Matthews, Andy Hillier, Matt Oakes, Mike and Elaine Davis, Nick Cordel, Matt Hurley, Alistair Fenwick, Wayne Davis, Tristan Warden and Chris Combe, completed the challenge over two days.

William, from Devizes, came up with the idea of doing the challenge after his wife Sarah was diagnosed with breast cancer last year and cared for at the Stars Appeal funded Breast Unit. After telling friends of his plan, some initially thought he was 'bonkers', but then rallied round and were keen to support him - and the Unlikely Cyclists were formed.

Explaining more about what spurred him on to fundraise for Salisbury District Hospital's Charity, William said: "Sarah was diagnosed with Breast Cancer in late 2022 and while sitting in Salisbury Hospital's Breast Unit, one grey and damp morning, I read through the list of companies and individuals who had donated to fund the unit to provide a calm and peaceful atmosphere for treatment, and felt I would like to do something to help. The care Sarah received from the dedicated team of nurses was faultless." "Sarah has recovered well from surgery and the follow-up radio therapy and will have another scan in the New Year. Fingers crossed!"

Members of the group visited the Breast Unit at the Hospital on Monday, August 9 for a special cheque presentation and also had a talk about the charity's work.

The group, whose ages range from under 30 to over 70, set off from Marston near Devizes on Thursday, July 13 where they headed to Axminster then on to Mortonhampsted on the edge of Dartmoor the next day.

William said: "When we got to Axminster we were fairly tired, but we all made it. The weather on the Friday cycling to Dartmoor was a big challenge – it must have been the windiest and wettest day for a considerable time. Everyone was glad they did it," adds William, who had initially set up a JustGiving page with a target of £5,000 and was "amazed" as the fundraising total continued to grow.

"We never envisaged getting anywhere near that amount. To get over £30,000 we were astonished. We hope it will make a difference to a lot of people.

"We can't thank everyone who supported us enough."

The Stars Appeal aims to raise over £1million each year to fund projects offering direct, practical support to patients, their families, and the Hospital's staff.

Alongside its Breast Unit the charity has provided the Hospital with additional CT and MRI scanners and a range of new facilities including an enhanced Children's Unit and Cardiac Suite.

Donations also help fund projects supporting cancer patients, including free aromatherapy, headwear for patients who lose their hair, free drinks for chemotherapy and oncology outpatients, and a rehabilitation programme offering one-to-one support to help patients prepare for surgery and treatment.

The Stars Appeal's Director of Fundraising, Dave Cates, said: "We are so grateful to William and Sarah, and all of the cyclists and their supporters, for raising such an incredible sum for our charity. It will enable us to continue our work enhancing care for thousands of patients every week at Salisbury Hospital and supporting their families and the NHS staff that care for them."

ENDS

Caption: William Warden with his wife Sarah and fellow Unlikely Cyclists presenting a cheque to staff on the Breast Unit at Salisbury Hospital. Picture by Spencer Mulholland.

Note to editors:

William Warden is happy to be interviewed and can be contacted on 07889 461 358 or **info@conservation-contractors.co.uk**

The Stars Appeal is the charity for Salisbury District Hospital. Every day, work funded by the charity helps hundreds of patients at Salisbury District Hospital and supports the NHS staff who care for them. The Stars Appeal aims to raise over £1million each year to fund projects which offer direct, practical support to patients, their families, and the Hospital's staff.

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