

Living Proof



20th Anniversary Edition

National Long Term Survivors Group Reg. Charity 1040586 September 2012

For a second time this year, the weather forecast prior to the *Living Proof* weekend predicted dire weather conditions for the entire country. Thankfully, the worst September storm on record abated by Friday and our 20th Anniversary weekend was blessed with generally fine conditions and a glorious sunny Saturday.

There was a full house with double occupancy in several rooms. Attendance was higher than usual for autumn and exceeded that of the normally more popular July weekend. Of 26 attendees only two were new members. We even had one more person than expected, and for once, no member had to drop out on account of health issues. This was not the case with a facilitator and a therapist who were ill and had to cancel at short notice. So we were truly grateful to the team who coped with last minute arrangements to guide and support us over the weekend. These were Neil and Steve as facilitators and counsellors, with therapists Theresa, Josie, James and Andrew.

Celebrations and Commemorations

The programme for the weekend was rather different from that sent out to members... sincere apologies to Sally and anyone affected. To be honest, we had more activities than anticipated and a revised schedule was essential. From the appreciative feedback, it would seem that the result was a resounding success.

The film 'We Were Here' that documented the AIDS crisis in 1981 San Francisco, was shown after dinner on Friday in place of the 'getting to know you' session. Most members attended and showed great patience when technical problems resulted in the film being seen in episodes rather than continuously as planned. Its impact seemed nevertheless to be undiminished and left viewers in no doubt about the dramatic changes over three decades that have resulted in a frightening 'AIDS death sentence' becoming the long term manageable condition that better describes living with HIV today.



The commemorative tree planting was quite a jolly occasion. Tom and Steve as co-founders of the group did the honours in symbolically planting a tree in a space prepared by Simon and Alyn. Shallowford House's deep commitment to NLTSG was demonstrated in the dedication of the area surrounding the tree to the group. In future, members may wish to plant a rose bush or similar shrub in memory of a loved member.

Champagne Reception

Dinner on Saturday evening was preceded by a most enjoyable social gathering with a choice of real champagne (donated), Bucks Fizz or fruit juice. Along with the drinks came a wonderful variety of hot and cold canapés dreamt up by Billy the chef and Simon. Perhaps the success of this event should be judged more by the quality and quantity of interactive exchanges taking place, rather than the delicious food and drink – great as they were. Both Simon (Shallowford House) and Steve (NLTSG) commented on just how engaged people seemed to be.



A 20th Birthday Card and Cake were unexpected and welcome additions to the celebrations. The cake was ceremoniously cut by Trustees after Saturday dinner then divided up later by members in the bar. A big thank you must be given to Anthony.

Thanks also go to Carl and Mark for running the raffle which made a whopping £240. Thanks too to everyone who contributed prizes and bought tickets.

The 1992 Fund

The weekend also saw the launch of a means-tested fund given the name 'The 1992 Fund' in commemoration of the year in which the long term survivors' group was set

up. This newly established 'inclusive' scheme aims to assist new and existing members to attend a Living Proof weekend who would otherwise be unable to afford to come. Small donations on a regular monthly basis from you, the members, and other supporters will help to maintain this fund. (For ways of giving see below under 'Fund Raising')

Altogether this was a worthy celebration of a remarkable 20 years of NLTSG history. A final thanks to Tom and Steve who recorded their thoughts about the foundation of the group in 1992 as well as their impressions of this year's anniversary. This marks the start of the NLTSG sound archive.

Finally, we should not forget the hard work put in by Trustees, and the dedication of Simon, Allison, Chef Billy and all the Shallowford House team. But above all the weekend would never have been so successful and special without the whole hearted commitment of our members who are, in the words used by Gary in the Closing Circle, "**truly, truly magnificent**".

Maurice

Newly Diagnosed Weekend

On November 2-4th 2012 we will be hosting the first weekend run by NLTSG for people newly diagnosed with HIV. The aim of the weekend is to help newly diagnosed people overcome the fears and lack of knowledge at the time of diagnosis leaving them with a more positive outlook. We are happy to announce that funding has been secured from the Monument Trust and the Lottery Awards for All to run the first two Newly Diagnosed Weekends in 2012 and 2013. We are actively seeking funding to run more of these weekends in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Rationale for the newly diagnosed support weekends

The National Long-Term Survivors Group has been running for 20 years, bringing together people diagnosed with HIV for 5 years or longer from all over the UK. During that time the members have amassed a huge wealth of knowledge and life skills to help them cope with the emotional and physical ups and downs of living with HIV. We felt in our anniversary year it was time to pass on some of those skills and experiences to people who have not yet had time to develop their own strategies: People recently diagnosed with HIV.

Although with the right medical and social support people diagnosed with HIV can now live a full and rewarding life, receiving the diagnosis can be devastating; it can be a time of confusion and fear about the future. It was to help face issues like these that NLTSG came up with the idea of a residential weekend for anyone recently diagnosed with HIV. The aim is to help people explore the issues around living with the virus. There will be a safe and friendly environment to meet and support other people who are also learning how to deal with their diagnosis. Drawing on our experience of Living Proof weekends, we believe that participants would go home feeling empowered with greater knowledge about HIV, whilst also acquiring skills and attitudes to look forward to a positive future.

The weekends have workshop sessions on the key issues of living with HIV. Of equal importance, are group discussion sessions and plenty free time for socialising and networking (we have found on our long-term survivors Living Proof weekends that this is where much of the 'good work' is done!) Participants will also have the opportunity to spend some one-to-one time with a trained

counsellor to address any personal issues privately.

Please make your local HIV support group aware that we are now running these Newly Diagnosed residential weekends.

Newly Diagnosed Weekends Dates

2013

May 31 - 2 June

November 8 – 10

2014

May 30 – June 1

November 7 – 9

KPS Trebullom

KPS Trebullom, Cornwall, offers respite opportunities for those living with HIV. These include Personal Development Breaks for adults and Summer Camps for children. For more details please contact

Tel: 01566 86378, Fax: 01566 86331, Email: jhunter@kpsdirect.com

Website: www.kpsdirect.com

Keeping in touch

You can join our Yahoo group to stay in touch with people you have met and other members.

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/nltsgmembers/>

Find us on Facebook: '**National Long Term Survivors Group**'.

Our Facebook page needs people to "like" the page - the more people who "like" it; the more it raises our profile.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/National-Long-Term-Survivors-Group/116095128459393>

Financial state of the NLTSG

The group benefitted enormously from the generous award from the Elton John AIDS Foundation that enabled us to offer fully funded places to specific groups of HIV positive people. We achieved the goals of the project and at the same time increased our membership. All of the funds have been used up this year. However, thanks to a new partnership with the Make a Difference Trust (MAD), we are currently able to offer subsidised places on *Living Proof* weekends to new and existing members. In addition we can offer a limited number of fully funded places to new or existing members who are or who have been involved in the Entertainment Industry.

Fund raising, including regular donations by Direct Debit and Isaac raising over £600 on the Walk for Life, has helped to inaugurate the inclusive 1992 fund that offers help to those who would otherwise be unable to attend a *Living Proof* weekend.

Considering the harsh economic climate in which we are living, members can take heart that the NLTSG is in a much sounder financial state than many other charities. Unfortunately most funding is for a limited period - all the more reason, if you are able - to think about making a small regular donation.

Fund Raising

All donations can now be Gift Aided. Gary has produced a visiting card to give to your family and friends. For further details contact Gary@nltsg.org.uk. We also have collecting boxes available and would gladly support any member (or non-member!) who wishes to raise money for us on a sponsored event.

Stand Tall Get Snapped 30 HIV+ People

This photographic exhibition opens in London on 19th November before touring to major cities in the UK. NLTSG members have participated in its creation and promotion.

STAND TALL, GET SNAPPED:

30 HIV+ PEOPLE
by Edo Zollo



Open to the public:
19th November 2012 – 3rd January 2013,
Monday – Friday – 9.00am– 6.00pm
readingroom.com/gallery

readingroom
GALLERY

Proudly supporting bright new artists

Living Proof Weekend Dates

2013

March 22–24

July 11–13

September 26–28

December 13–15

2014

March 28–30

July 5–7

September 27–29

December 12–14