



Newsletter

Supporting ostomists with Colostomy, Ileostomy, Urostomy & Mitrofanoff

Issue 61 - Spring 2026



HMRC No: XT28425

Christmas 2025 in pictures

The Wessex Stoma Support Group enjoyed a packed Christmas. Here are some photos of the festivities:



Top Left & Right:
Christmas Meal at the
White Hart, Salisbury

Bottom Left: New Year's
Meeting with
entertainment from the
Salisbury Pluckers.

Bottom Right: 'Jack &
The Beanstalk'
Pantomime at Salisbury
Playhouse



Contact

For further information about the Group – or anything featured in your newsletter - please contact the Secretary, Sally, on the details below.

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Don't forget to follow us on Facebook
& X (formerly Twitter)



Editor's note: Please remember, everything contained in this newsletter is suggestions/opinions only - always consult your GP or stoma nurse before changing your routines or if you need any medical advice.

Secretary's Spot

Welcome to the Spring newsletter edition of Wessex Stoma Group 2026. Hopefully we have seen the worst of the weather now and are now looking forward to the springtime and all the beautiful flowers that come with it.

We were delighted to welcome The Salisbury Pluckers to the Wilton meeting in January, where we were entertained by an "army" of Ukelele, Banjo, Bass Guitar and Kazoo players and enjoyed a good old sing-along to familiar tunes going back through the years. We may invite them back at a later date as they were so good.

Our next meeting is on the 7th March and Michael Slater our honorary Quiz Master will be hosting "play your cards right". All the best and see you soon.

Sally

Chairman's Message

Well! into the new year we go, I believe that we had a good end to the year. Our November meeting with the bee-keeper was very interesting and the honey he had was very good. I hope you all bought some as honey is good for you. Then the Christmas Dinner was a success again with our guests, those that went to the Pantomime had a good time (Oh! yes they did) and we finished the festive season with our New Year's Party where we had a Quiz from Michael and entertainment with the Salisbury Pluckers, which was enjoyed by all singing along, finishing with some good food by Jean and her team.

Now we must look forward to the new year. Although some things will be changing during the year we still have a lot to look forward to with some good meetings and speakers, and of course in April on the 11th we will be having our 20th Birthday Party, with special guests. I still cannot believe that we have been going for 20 years. Where has that time gone? We have grown from a small gathering in 2006 to the numbers we are now - just over 100 members, we have campaigned and worked with national organisations to improve the day-to-day life of ostomates and enjoyed ourselves along the way.

In the Garden with Jane. I did make a terrible error in the last newsletter of sending through the copy for the previous 'In the Garden with Jane', instead of the correct one so this edition will have to reports. I am very grateful to Jane for writing these stories as I know that you do enjoying reading her information and stories which can be quite humorous at times.

Deo Gel Lubrication. I don't know if any of you use Deo Gel Lubrication to help relieve pancaking in your pouch, but Fittleworth are no longer suppling this item and the alternative is Coloplast Brava Lub Deo 240g instead of 200g so slightly larger bottles.

Transition As you know I will be standing down as Chairman, and Brian Jefferies has agreed to take over the role with some committee members taking on additional tasks. We have started a transition period where Brian and I meet regularly, reviewing all the tasks that I have been carrying out, so that there will be a smooth handover at the AGM in June. I will still be working with Colostomy UK and Mitrofanoff Support and acting as the link.

More and more Stoma Groups are being set up around the country with the help of Colostomy UK, which is excellent as it is at local level that support and empowerment can be given and I will be supporting this.

I have during the last few months attend a number of Colostomy UK volunteer meetings and in November attended the Mitrofanoff Support Patient Day in London.

This year is looking good. There will be few changes but the Wessex Stoma Support Group is strong and will continue to support members and have representation on various groups supporting those with a stoma.

I am not going away and am still in charge until June, after which you will still have my support.

Ken



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TO BOOST OUR FUNDRAISING



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PLAY NOW

Supporters must be 16 years or over

In the Garden with Jane

Winter 2025

So, the clocks have changed, it's getting dark early and the winter approaches. The summer was long and hot, a bit too hot at times. Everything that looked so amazing in the spring then stalled and wilted in the drought. Then the rains came and all of a sudden, the gardens that had gone to sleep early woke up again. Grass is being mowed in November, plants are blooming and weeds are growing.

There suddenly seems a great deal to do. As I write there have been no serious frosts, so the garden is thriving again. I was amazed to find carrots and beetroot I sowed months ago have now grown and I'm pulling carrots and picking runner beans! So even with all the strange turns of nature, there are still some "normal" seasonal jobs that can be done. It's time to dig maincrop potatoes to store.

Some people like to plant broad beans now and start sweet peas off in a cold greenhouse or outhouse, hoping for early flowers in spring. If your veg patch is bare over winter maybe, consider planting green manure. Rake seeds in the soil and let it grow over the winter, holding nutrients that might be lost in winter rains and their roots help bind the soil. Then in spring cut down with shears or a strimmer and dig in. Best done before April as the roots can get harder to manage later.

Now is also a good time to collect seeds ready for next year. Perennials such as lupins, salvias and rudbeckia. Collect on a dry day and store in labelled paper bags (I've so often thought I'll remember without labels and then had a mixture of things to sow some won't come true, such as hybrid aquilegia's which might return as granny bonnets. But I like to take a chance and see what happens. As leaves fall make leaf mould by placing inside a chicken wire frame, or wet and pack into old compost bags pierced with small holes in might take two years but will be worth it.

Collect all the rainwater you can now, remembering the drought filled summer of hose pipe bans. Any water butts under gutters and drainpipes, or spare containers. Mix up the contents of the compost heap to introduce air and speed up the whole process. Homemade compost will be useful in this time of peat free commercial stuff.

Now is also the time to build hedgehog houses, the mild autumn spill keeps them awake longer, but they will need a safe place to hibernate. Use a wooden storage box or crate with a 15cm square hole cut in it, weight it down with bricks and cover with twigs, leaves and soil over the top to make a cosy home. Our hedgehog population has crashed over the past few years, and they have become an endangered species. I am lucky where I live and often see our little prickly friends of an evening.

There are few badgers in my area, which are their natural predators. They are now searching for suitable hibernation spots, so check bonfires before lighting them as this is a favourite home. Also leave a few windfalls for them as well as voles and birds. Everything needs to store up energy for the winter months ahead. Put up bird boxes or clean out old ones preparing for spring and giving birds time to check them out.

Think of piles of bamboo canes or logs for bugs and invertebrates to live in. Leave the ivy if you have any as their flowers are a last hurrah for the bees now food is scarce. Unfortunately, the weather has provided a wonderful breeding ground for scarce fungus which seems to be thriving. When a woody plant just up and dies check the roots for a white layer of tissue which will starve the roots of water and kill the plant. The beige, brown mushrooms sprout in autumn. Try to remove them carefully and dispose of safely to stop the spores spreading. Many fungi are very beneficial so check out which you might have first.

Finally, I hope you all have a warm and happy winter season and a good new year. Put your feet up, stay warm and dream of the spring when it all starts again!

In the Garden with Jane

So, here we are again, festivities over, the lights taken down (if you have them, though I don't as I have a chewer cat) and everything packed away for another year. I had a small artificial tree which was down as much as it was up. Two of my cats were obsessed and I would come home each day to be greeted with thank goodness you're back, the tree fainted, again!

Now the winter solstice has come and gone, the days will soon start to draw out and we can think of spring and all it might bring. After a blistering hot summer, we are now in flood warning times. I have never seen so much water everywhere as there currently is in fields, swollen riverbanks, on roads and in gardens. The field opposite my house is a water meadow and certainly living up to its name. The entire field is a river and flowing. A friend asked me at which point had I decided to move to the coast.

Whilst all this precipitation is hopefully filling reservoirs and definitely filling water butts, along with any containers that have been left out, wheelbarrows, bird baths, ponds....it is also causing chaos in the gardens and fields. Where there is water just laying on the ground it will be drowning useful creatures like worms and certain insects and leeching goodness from the soil. Larger shrubs and trees are in danger of unending as their roots cannot sustain the weight of the tree in sodden ground. Other plants just become so waterlogged they simply rot and die.

I am still constantly amazed and grateful though by the power of nature to somehow find a way through and survive being baked, scorched, frozen and drowned, yet still manage to put up shoots and grow.

There is very little to be done outside whilst this weather continues, except maybe go for a paddle, but if you do feel the need to spring into action, or even just amble, then roses can be pruned now and fruit bushes thinned out if needed. It gives plants time to shoot again and helps stop them rocking and loosening their roots in windy conditions.

Now is also a good moment to tidy up the greenhouse or shed and be outside without being outside ready for the spring extravaganza. I find at this time of year especially my hamster DNA rises to the surface, and I just want to eat and hibernate. But even that allows me to curl up on the sofa with some cats and make plans, outlandish or otherwise, about all the things I will do outside when it's dry in the spring and summer (or if not this one, then another spring or summer, I'm quite relaxed about the timeline). The secret is not to sweat it, if not now, then later, but whatever just enjoy.

Although at the moment the gardens are looking sad and worse for wear, the first shoots of spring are starting, and bulbs are pushing up through the ground.

My plan this weekend is to revamp the cat's garden. Whilst my kits love their safe space and unlimited access to outside, this part of the garden has taken a beating from them. I need to reassess any planting, adding to the shrubs that are already there so they have places to hide and fun spots to ambush from, move out tender perennials who are never going to survive it. This is their space and I must plant accordingly. I have my own.

I'll also attack the shed; my tabby cat Caleb (aka the chewer) also has a somewhat extensive real estate portfolio of cardboard boxes which is needing to be downsized. This will put me on his hit list for a while, but I can usually bring him round with some Dreamies treats. Cats and boxes! My bird table is going great guns too as food will be hard to find, both insects and seeds in this weather. Last week I was visited by a woodpecker, which was very special. Hopefully all hedgehogs are tucked up safely too. I've not looked in my homemade house, but I would like to think all small beats are welcome to shelter from the storm.

And finally, a thought for the day.....wouldn't it be great if we could put ourselves in the drier for 10 minutes and come out wrinkle free and two sizes smaller!

Dream on and enjoy

Bee Keeping talk at November meeting

At the November meeting we had a very interesting talk on Bee Keeping and were able to buy fresh honey



Welfare

Let us all think of each other, as many of us are not well and have been poorly and there are still members who have had surgery and are still waiting for ops.

In this cold and damp weather, be careful to still drink plenty – stay warm and if poorly stay in as bugs viruses can carry to others easily.

Come on spring! Longer days, not so much rain and wind and a little more warmth is what we need.

Some cards may have come a little late - I am sorry, but we have had a lot of funerals and things going on in January, so sorry (some senior moments). All caught up now though.

Pam

Primrose Group

Because of attendance and not many now wanting to attend, the committee have voted for the group not to meet this year. We will look at it again next year. We will use the Tesco Tea and Chat afternoon as a meeting for carers and those with bereavement, if they wish to attend for company or a chat, sometimes a small activity

When I have had my op, if there is anyone who would like to go out for a cuppa for an hour or two at Roberts let me know and we could meet and pay for our own.

STOMA NURSES PIECE

Hi... I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself as the newest member of the stoma nurse team.

I say newest, I have now been working here for over 6 months and have had the opportunity to meet some of you in that time.

So, a bit about me, my name is Tracy, I qualified as a nurse back in 2001, spent a few years working on a colorectal surgical ward in Southampton for 3-4 years and then have spent the last 20+ years working on a surgical ward in Salisbury hospital where I was a ward sister for the last 10 years.

Although I have a lot of experience in caring for patients in the post-operative phase of having a new stoma, this new role has been a real learning curve for me and given me more knowledge and awareness of the problems that can occur down the line and how best to troubleshoot them and support patients. I have been utilising the vast experience and knowledge of my colleagues, whilst also attending various education and study sessions to enhance my own knowledge.

As a team we have been involved in various teaching sessions within the hospital with different staffing groups, my own personal goal is to set up a link nurse role with the inpatient wards, which I hope will enhance the ward nurses stoma care skills and ensure that if you ever are an inpatient on a ward, the nurses will be better educated to support you. I am also aiming to issue the main surgical wards with a resource file, again to support and guide them into giving better care for patients with a stoma.

I hope to get the opportunity to meet and support more of you in the future.

Tracy

20th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Saturday 11th April 2.00pm to 6.00pm

Bob Blandford Memorial Hall, Wilton, SP2 0AL

An afternoon not to be missed with special guests, entertainment, and food provided
by The Earl of Normanton Inn



Colostomy UK

Welcome to Colostomy UKs January 2026 Newsletter for Stoma Groups

Our Stoma support helpline has reduced its hours

We are no longer operating our stoma support helpline 24 hours a day

The helpline will now be available from **9.00am -22.00pm** 365 days a year

If you leave a voicemail we will get back to you during our operating hours

For anything urgent contact your stoma care nurse or 999 for emergencies

Stoma Support helpline 0800 328 4257

Active Ostomates

Active Ostomates will be returning on 24th February for 8 weeks of online gentle exercise classes

Mindfulness, Chair Yoga, and Pilates.

Go online to register

The Community

Last year we attended 56 events across the UK with volunteer representation us for over 70% of them

This included webinars, airport forums and open days across the UK

If you would like to be involved with volunteering, you can sign up via our website **Become a volunteer - Colostomy UK**

Research

Would you like to get involved with research into wellbeing and the stoma community

You might be interested in the 12-hour journey research project conducted by University College London

This is a walking and Mindfulness challenge and requires.

B&Q announces roll out stoma friendly toilets across the stores nationwide

Our new Stoma Friendly Toilets finder is live. Find a Toilet near you.

You can access a stoma friendly map on our website

Active April -Step up for Stomas!

Our annual Step up for Stomas challenge is back. And better than ever and this year we are asking you to take part and get Active in April to support the over 21,000 people who undergo stoma every year in the UK that's 55 people every single day

How can I get Active and take part?

Whether you pledge to run, jog, walk, skip, swim, or roll, 5K walk 5,500 steps, or do 55 minutes of an activity of your choice every day in April, there are so many ways you can Get Active and raise vital funds

for Colostomy UK, you can do this solo or take on the challenge as part of your support group

Officially launched on February 16th keep and eye on the Website for further details or email us on **getinvolved@colostomyuk.org**

Catch up with the Tidings magazine always a good read with interesting articles online at ColostomyUK

Christmas Dinner at the White Hart Hotel



Another successful Christmas Dinner, at which everyone enjoyed good food and good company.

We were joined by our special guests Libby and Maxyne from Colostomy UK, Rachel from Irwin Mitchell, Rebecca from Salts, and Jenny from Medicareplus.

We are grateful for all the support that these people give us.



Oh yes, we did! Members had a great afternoon at the Pantomime at Salisbury Playhouse in January (above)

Christmas Tree Festival

St Thomas's Church

This was our 14th year of having a tree at the St Thomas's Christmas Tree Festival, a festival that has been running now for 20 years and raised thousands of pounds for charities in the area.

It is also a shop window and awareness of many charities including ourselves.

Not only are there over 100 trees on show but during the week over 50 musical groups and choirs take part, making it as much a musical festival as a Christmas tree festival, showcasing nearly all the school choirs, from Nursery to Seniors.

This year's Festival raised over £25,000 split between three charities, Clouds House, Julia's House Children's Hospice and the Church all receiving just over £8,500 each. Four years ago, we were the beneficiaries receiving £4,500.

Thank you to Brian and Sally Jefferies for producing this year's tree, Tubular Bells, decorated by members at a Tesco session and creating something different



CONGRATULATIONS

to

Liz Stevens, our member from Trowbridge, for being awarded the Queen's Award to Nursing. Well done, Liz.

SDH Stoma Patients' Panel

PALS and the Stoma Nurses at Salisbury Hospital have set up at Patients' Panel for those with a stoma, consisting of those who have recently had the procedure and members of the group. We are lucky to have four members on the panel:

Brian Jefferies, Gary Nunn, John Dear, and Rob Tinkler.

I am sure if you want to raise problem speak to them they will pass it on to the group

New Year's Party 2026




Our New Year's party started with a Quiz by Michael, followed by music from The Salisbury Pluckers. Which everyone joined in with - arms waving and clapping and tapping of feet, and this was all followed up with some good food and enjoying everyone's company

Colostomy UK

Helping someone with a stoma at home? We are offering a free workshop is for friends, family members, neighbours, or unpaid carers who want to learn the basics of stoma care. It's a 90-minute Zoom session, delivered by an experienced stoma care nurse. We're offering 2 dates (20 places per session):

- 16 June – 6:00pm • 13 October – 1:00pm

 Sign up via our website: <https://www.colostomyuk.org/support/caring/CPD> accredited - attendees will receive a CPD certificate on completion. [#stoma](#) [#StomaAware](#) [#training](#) [#cpd](#) [#CPDtraining](#)

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CALENDAR FOR 2026

Meetings Bob Blandford Scout Hall

Wilton SP2 OAL 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Saturday 7th March

Saturday 11th April

20th Birthday Celebration

Saturday 13th June

Annual General Meeting

Talk Streets of Salisbury continued

Saturday 12th September

Saturday 14th November

Tesco Tea and Chat Afternoons

for ostomates, carers and friends

Tesco Community Space, Southampton Road, Salisbury SP1 2NY

Saturday 9th May

Saturday 8th August

Saturday 10th October

Summer Social Saturday July 18th

Earl of Normanton Inn, Boscombe SP4 0GA 3:00pm to 6:00pm

Christmas Dinner Friday 4th December

The White Hart Hotel, Salisbury 12:00 for 12:30pm