



MAY UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE LEIGH AND BRANSFORD MEMORIAL HALL

Helping to Look After Your Heart in the Event of an Emergency

"Don't worry about your heart," the late American film star and humourist W. C. Fields once quipped, adding "*it will last you as long as you live.*" The record shows that his own heart lasted just 66 years – he died on Christmas Day in 1948. By today's standards he died prematurely.

The latest published statistics regarding *average* life expectancy, shows that male hearts in England should now '*last*' at least 12 years' longer than W. C. Fields' own heart did – and women's hearts should '*last*' even longer, in fact more than 16 years' longer.

There are, of course many complex factors that must be considered by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) when it calculates current *average* life expectancy rates for men and women living in England – but one indisputable fact emerging from their published statistics is that, *as a population*, we are living longer, and (for a majority of us) enjoying generally healthier lives than our predecessors.

But that said, the most recent research published in January this year by the British Heart Foundation (BHF), uncovered a more worrying trend – the number of people in England dying before the age of 75 from heart and circulatory diseases has lately risen to its highest level in over a decade. Their figures show that in 2022, over 39,000 people in England died *prematurely* of cardiovascular conditions including heart attacks, coronary heart disease and stroke. That's an average of 750 people each week and represents the highest annual total since 2008.

So, mindful of the fact that over the course of any one year, many hundreds of men, women and children attend events at the rurally located Memorial Hall, the trustees recently explored the possibility of installing a potentially life-saving PAD (or **Public Access Defibrillator**) on the outside of the building. A PAD that would be available not just for those who might be attending an event at the Hall but also for anyone to access and employ in the case of a heart-related emergency in the vicinity.

Our initial research, using information from **The National Defibrillator Network**, also known as **The Circuit**, (a searchable database of all the registered PADS in the UK), showed that of the 9 defibrillators closest to the Hall, the nearest was well over a mile away, and most were over 2 miles distant.

In the event of a heart-related emergency, when time is clearly of the essence, the quicker you can locate and access a defibrillator the better are the chances of survival. Given our relatively remote location, we therefore took the decision to go ahead and purchase a PAD for installation at the Hall, and by registering it with the Ambulance Service have it added to the local and national network of public access defibrillators.

The **defibrillator** was purchased a few months ago. Half of the cost was met by a grant from **London Hearts** – the UK's leading heart defibrillator charity – and the other half from Hall funds. The cost of permanently installing the unit, in clear and plain sight on the outside wall of the building, was paid for with a grant from the Worcestershire Councillors' Divisional Fund – administered in our part of the county by Councillor Karen Hanks – and for which the trustees are most grateful. In total, almost 60% of the purchase and installation costs were met by grant awards.

The defibrillator is now fully operational, on permanent standby and available not just for those attending the Hall, but also for public access if required, 24 hours a day, every day. It is now formally registered with the Ambulance Service and you can search for all the available local defibrillators – including this one – at <https://www.defibfinder.uk/>

Finally, as you can see from the photograph, taken at night, the defibrillator is fully illuminated and located in a prominent position. Of course, we all hope that it won't need to be used too often, but in the event of cardiac emergency the simple instructions are clearly displayed, you don't need to be trained to operate the device and it could be a life-saver for someone.

Jon Gamble, Chair of Trustees