

## PRESS RELEASE – 7 November, 2018

### Fun runners' thank you to lifesaving cancer team at Sunderland Royal Hospital



Cancer survivor Steve Embleton has said thank you to the head and neck cancer team at Sunderland Royal Hospital who helped to save his life by presenting them with a cheque for almost £2,200.

The money was raised by pub regulars and their families who turned out in fancy dress for a Beer Belly Fun Run in the summer from The Grey Horse in Consett. They completed five 1km laps of the town, interspersed by half pints, with a full pint at the end. The fundraiser, organised by Ian Pratt, was started after teacher Nigel Nattress developed Motor Neurone Disease. Mr Nattress died in 2016 but the event is still held annually. This year it was in aid of the Head and Neck Cancer Charitable Fund

at Sunderland Royal, where Grey Horse regular Mr Embleton, 58, was treated. He did the run along with his wife Ann, daughters Louise and Tracey, and family friends.

Mr Embleton, who is now in remission, first noticed a lump on the left side of his neck in February 2017 while having a shave. His GP arranged a referral to the Ear, Nose and Throat department at Sunderland Royal and following x-rays, scans and other checks for throat cancer, he was told he needed further tests. While on the ward awaiting the procedures he was told that, in fact, the team wanted to operate immediately. After the operation, he was informed that the lump, his tonsils, lymph nodes and the base of his tongue were cancerous. Several lymph nodes, his tonsils, and all of his back teeth which had fillings, were surgically removed in preparation for planned radiotherapy treatment.

In May 2017, he began chemo-radiotherapy at The Northern Centre for Cancer Care (NCCC) based at Newcastle's Freeman Hospital, with the treatment being carried out over an intensive 35 days. During this period, he also received weekly support from the Macmillan Clinical Nurse Specialists based at Sunderland Royal Hospital, who attend the head and neck patient oncology clinic at NCCC.

Mr Embleton, of Consett, a retired civil servant, said: "The treatment was tough and the two weeks afterwards were some of the worst in my life. I felt drained of energy and lost four stones because I couldn't eat. I've never smoked and I'm not a heavy drinker and I do sometimes think 'Why me?' but, on the whole, life is good. I do still get days when I feel tired and I find it difficult to eat some foods but I feel very thankful that I'm still here and can look forward to the future."

Mr Embleton, who still has a check-up every 10 weeks at Sunderland, said: "The teams at Sunderland Royal and the Freeman Hospital were brilliant during my treatment and they have been excellent ever since. I couldn't have got through it all without the doctors, radiographers and nurses who took care of me and, of course, the support of my family who kept me positive throughout and I just want to say thank you to them all."

The Head and Neck Cancer Charitable Fund at Sunderland Royal will use the latest donation to improve patient services and raise awareness of head and neck cancer.

Rachael Bannister-Young, Head and Neck Macmillan Clinical Nurse Specialist at the hospital, said: "Steve didn't tell us about the run so it was a fantastic surprise when he said he wanted to give the fund such a large donation. We are thrilled that he, and his family and friends, wanted to give something back. Without people like them, we wouldn't be able to make some of the improvements and provide the little extras that patients really appreciate."

**Common head and neck cancer symptoms include:**

- A lump in the nose, neck or throat, with or without pain.
- A persistent sore throat.
- Trouble swallowing (dysphagia)
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Frequent coughing.
- Change in voice or hoarseness.
- Ear pain or trouble hearing.
- Headaches.

If you are concerned about any changes you experience, please talk with your GP.

**ENDS**

*The photo shows: Left to right: Steve Embleton and Ian Pratt with Sunderland Royal Speech and Language Therapists Beth Halliday and Michael Caygill, Dietitian Kathryn Finnegan, Acting Director of Corporate Affairs Andrea Hetherington, Ear, Nose and Throat Consultant Nashreen Oozeer, and Head and Neck Macmillan Cancer Nurse Specialist & Lead Cancer Nurse Rachael Bannister-Young*

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