

## REMEMBER A CHARITY | STARTING A CHARITY

## KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

REPORT BY DEBORAH STONE

WHEN BROADCASTER RICHARD DIMBLEBY DIED, HIS WIDOW AND SONS LAUNCHED A FUND TO HELP OTHERS LIKE HIM

Starting a charity is not for the faint-hearted: it can be hard work and you need trustees with expertise and dedication, but it is enormously satisfying – says broadcaster David Dimbleby. David helped his mother Dilys set up a cancer care charity in memory of his father in 1966, the year after Richard Dimbleby – one of Britain's highest-regarded broadcasters – died from lung cancer aged just 52.

"After my father died we had masses of letters and calls from people asking to send flowers to his funeral," says David. "So my mother said that we would like donations for cancer care and research."

"Within a few weeks we had sacks full of envelopes arriving and it was quite clear after a week or two that it was enough money to set up

our own specific fund, rather than just hand it all on to one of the established cancer charities.

"We had a particular connection with St Thomas's Hospital in London, which was where my father had been treated, so we decided to talk to them and we set up a Richard Dimbleby Cancer Fund."

The donations were used to fund a Fellowship of Cancer Research, which became a Professorship at King's College, part of London University. Money was also used to set up a cancer care unit at St Thomas's – something which didn't exist at all at the time.

"It was a room where people who were having radiotherapy could go to relax before and after treatment, so they didn't have to sit in a drafty

corridor with a lot of other people waiting to have their treatment," says David.

"From that we've developed a complete cancer care unit both at Guy's Hospital in

London and at St Thomas's, which provide information, psychological support services, family support and support for carers, discussion groups about cancer – plus massage and all the practical help, support and comfort needed by people who are increasingly living much longer with cancer."

The Richard Dimbleby Cancer Fund is now called Dimbleby Cancer Care, but it has kept its two central aims: to provide funds for cancer research and care for sufferers. This emphasis on patients' needs marks it out from other cancer charities.

"My father said the one thing he would like to do for cancer patients was to provide them with a decent pillow in hospital because he was so uncomfortable – and we've done that," said David. "It's just a small thing but it makes a difference."

Small charities can do many things that the bigger charities don't have the time to focus on, or are not particularly interested in, according to David.

"One of the things we are doing now, which is very under-funded, is research into the way you care for people with cancer," he says.

"You might think that this was something that would be done automatically but, because the



In the swing: Richard and Dilys Dimbleby with their children and pet dogs, in 1949, and David, below

length of time people are living with cancer is advancing, the actual care of the living has been neglected as a subject of study.

"We do research on what people like, what they need and what they think priorities should be, and we research half a dozen other projects a year on different aspects of cancer care. It's not huge sums but it is important."

Now Dimbleby Cancer Care plans to expand its work and will be actively fund-raising for the first time, so legacies will be critically important.

"Over the years we have had some spectacular legacies," says David. "We've been left houses and large sums of money, but there's no pattern to it."

"Sometimes we go six months without anything happening, and then suddenly it all starts up again. It is very easy to leave money to big charities, but it is important that the smaller, and in many ways more innovative, charities get a look in."

Leaving legacies is a very practical way of giving to

charities, adds David: "People need the money while they're alive, but they're happy to support charities when they are dead."

As for setting up a charity, David says: "Go on the internet, see what others in the field are doing and talk to them. We have found that discussing whether we should concentrate on this or that is very helpful."

"Then be confident that you've got a good enough story to tell, so that you can gain support and momentum for the charity – so all that effort is not to be wasted."

## TRUSTEES

The key to a successfully-run charity lies with the trustees says Ronald Travers, 73, who became involved with Dimbleby Cancer Care when he married Richard's widow, Dilys.

"When you set up a charity you need to get the relevant expertise around your table: a lawyer, a banker, an architect a doctor – that's the expertise you need to run the show," says Ronald, who went on to run the charity, but has now stepped down to be a trustee.

Trustees also need huge experience, something which Ronald gained as International Director of Cheshire Homes, and deputy to Leonard Cheshire – who set up the UK's leading charity provider for disabled people.

## FIND OUT MORE

For more information on Dimbleby Cancer Care contact: David Dimbleby, 4th Floor Management Offices, Guy's Hospital, London SE1 9RT or email: malcolm.tyndall@blueyonder.co.uk

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Head Office  
LINK, 19 Hartfield Road  
EASTBOURNE BN21 2AR  
info@linkdp.org

LINK Scotland  
The Eric Liddell Centre  
15 Morningside Road  
EDINBURGH EH10 4DP  
scotland@linkdp.org

LINK Northern Ireland  
PO Box 363  
LISBURN BT28 9AN  
ni@linkdp.org

LINK Wales  
PO Box 3097  
Llanrumney  
CARDIFF CF30 0AU  
wales@linkdp.org

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