

AAT member John Carter was awarded an MBE for his charity work in Bath. He recalls what it meant to him, the impact of his work and his encounter with a royal

PHOTOGRAPHY GARETH IWAN JONES

John Carter’s parents set him a challenge when he was 20: to make a significant contribution to the local community by the time he retired. At that time, he was about to embark on a successful accountancy career and, being very work-focused, he didn’t pay much mind to what they’d said. But he never entirely forgot their words.

“I subscribed to their ideals – both my parents were involved in charities and believed it was a really important thing to do,” Carter explains. “I’m a great believer that, when you have a relatively comfortable life, you should give something back.”

In 1985, John became one of the first trustees of the Bath Cancer Unit Support Group (BCUSG), a local charity that had been set up to provide support to cancer patients and their families. He volunteered his time during the evenings and weekends while he ran his practice, Carter & Humphry Chartered Accountants, with his wife, Sue. After he retired from practice, he became the charity’s chief executive and dedicated all of his time to it.

“When I first became involved with the charity, there was every possibility that the rudimentary cancer facility at the hospital would move to Bristol,” Carter explains. “For patients who were already unwell and undergoing chemotherapy, travelling on public transport to access treatment far from home would have been awful. So that was part of my motivation to get involved.”

Carter made a conscious decision not to get involved with the charity’s accounts – as he prepared accounts as part of his day job, he wanted to do something different. “I did everything else,” he recalls. “I led teams and developed websites and marketing aids. I arranged events. And, in the later stages, I used Twitter.”

Having worked as a tutor for an accountancy tuition company in 1978, Carter was used to standing up and speaking to large groups of people, so he already had the skills needed to speak to potential donors for BCUSG. As a practising accountant, he also understood the need for good



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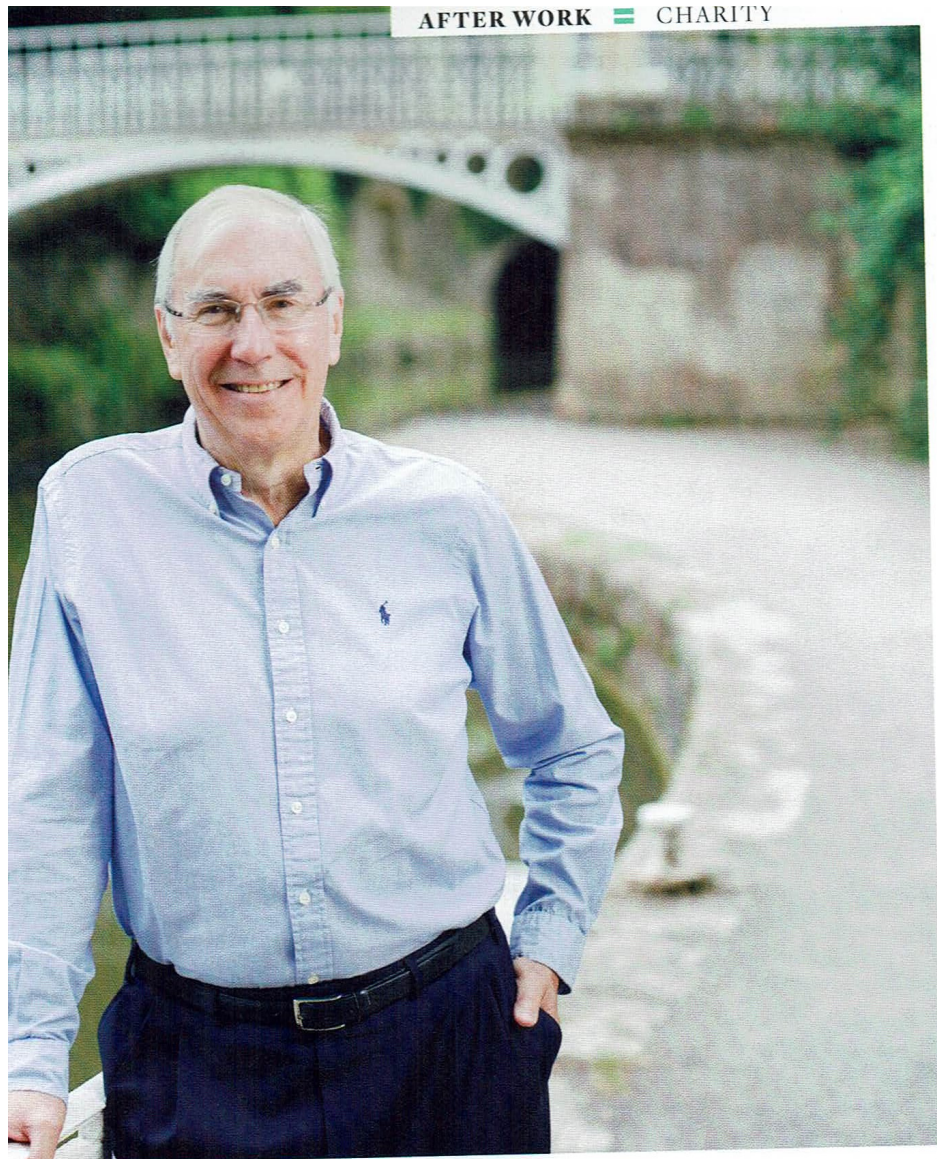
governance, and he was used to dealing with limited companies.

A man with a scanner

Carter retired from the charity in May 2017, but not before he’d managed to help raise £1.2m for a permanent PET-CT scanner, which has revolutionised treatment for cancer patients

Shorts

EVENT	BOOK	PODCAST	EVENT	CPD	EVENT
AAT: Budgeting and cost control (19 and 26 September; London, Birmingham) A comparison of traditional and modern costing methods.	Bean Counters: The Triumph of the Accountants and How They Broke Capitalism (out now) <i>Private Eye</i> journalist Richard Brooks argues against big firms.	The Revolutionary Firm (weekly) This podcast explores new thinking and ideas in order to empower accountants to work differently. bit.ly/RevFirm	AAT: Financial reporting update (17 October; Birmingham) This session looks at the main issues since FRS 102 and FRS 105 came into force.	AAT: Knowledge Hub – for members and students AAT Knowledge Hub is a single resource for all learning needs. aat.org.uk/knowledge-hub	AAT: Strategic management accounting (15 and 21 November; London, Leeds) This event covers traditional and modern concepts and techniques.



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Carter has built bridges between Bath's hospital and cancer patients

at the hospital. "Funding the PET-CT scanner for Bath's Royal United Hospital was my proudest moment as it's making a big difference to people's lives," he says. "It provides precise images of tumours and has a significant effect on cancer treatment. It helps identify early-stage Alzheimer's, too."

Carter feels a very personal connection with the scanner, not least because it has saved some of his friends. "I received a call recently from the chairman of a local charity, who told me he had been the first patient to use the scanner in 2016, following a lung cancer diagnosis. Here was someone

who had chaired a local charity for many years and regularly supported our appeal, and he turned out to need the scanner himself. I was in tears.

"I later found out that a very good friend of mine had also gone through the scanner. He had signs of various tumours, and the scanner was able to diagnose him effectively. Eighteen months later, he's almost in remission."

Charity work also gave Carter the opportunity to embrace new experiences. "Charity work meant I could try things I would never have done as an accountant," he explains. "Hospital radio enabled me to be a sports commentator and to travel abroad to cover the rugby. In 2010, I organised the visit of Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, to BCUSG to celebrate the charity's 25th anniversary."

The royal treatment

The royal visit left a lasting impression on Carter. The Duchess stayed far longer than she originally intended. "When we were about to cut the cake, I passed Camilla the knife and she turned to me with a twinkle in her eye and said: 'I wouldn't stand too close, Mr Carter; I'd hate for this to slip,'" he recalls. "She was ever so funny. I thought she was fantastic."

In June this year, Carter was awarded an MBE for his charitable services to healthcare and the local community. He even received a personal letter of congratulations from his old friend Camilla.

"It was amazing," he says. "People had decided that what I'd undertaken over the years was worthy of nomination. I received the letter asking me if I'd accept the MBE on 3 May, but I wasn't allowed to tell anyone for five weeks, until the Queen's official birthday. It was the longest five weeks of my life." ■

EVENT

Making Tax Digital 2018 (28 November; Birmingham)

Learn how to deal with the changes and challenges posed by Making Tax Digital.

PODCAST

Cloud Accounting Podcast (weekly)

Accountant and cloud specialist Blake Oliver discusses the modern practice. bit.ly/CloudAPod

BOOK

The Pacesetters (out now)

Doug LaBahn and Xero interview forward-thinking UK firms, and offer advice and strategies for modernising the way you work.

EVENT

Sharpen your tax skills (6 October to 14 November)

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