

**Reading and
West Berkshire
Branch**

Death of friend inspires Christine's run

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Mark, Christine, Helen and Becky line up before the start

An economic survey manager for a Henley company—and mother of two—Christine determined to complete the challenge of the Half Marathon as a tribute to Andrew, former chair of Sonning Common-based Chiltern Players.

Christine ran with three of her daughter's friends, Mark Montague, Helen Webby and Becky Turnbull, who all helped raise money for MND.

Christine Mercier added some “ooh la-la” to the line-up when she ran the Reading Half Marathon recently. Christine was inspired to pull on her running shoes in tribute to friend Andrew Bickerton, the anniversary of whose death from Motor Neurone Disease was on the day before the race.

Despite operations on her feet, which made running the last two miles agony, Christine raised £1429 for the local MND Association Branch.

I was so impressed by the way he dealt with this awful disease, that he gave me the strength to do it. It isn't part of our culture in France to do this kind of fund-raising, even for a good cause...but Andrew gave me the strength to finish...He had no choice but to keep going, so why should I stop?"

Read Christine's own story on page 3...

DIARY DATES

AGM 28th April

Silver Jubilee Races Thurs 1st July

Newbury Racecourse 1979-2004



Players donate profits

Chiltern players Youth Seniors presented a magnificent £400 after their hugely enterprising production of 'The Nerd' by Larry Shue. Their young director Philip Theobald and others came to hand over the greater part of their profits to Branch Chair, Margaret Moss.

As founder and director of the Chiltern Players, Andrew Bickerton had inspired them. Andrew had MND and died last

March. Philip said 'We wanted to help others with MND in memory of Andrew' and so the local Branch was chosen as beneficiary.

The show had excellent press reviews and should it be performed again, our local members are encouraged to support them and have a hugely entertaining evening into the bargain!

Contributed by Margaret Moss

HIGH-FLYING FUNDRAISER NETS A CASH WINDFALL



Lady Hallifax, MND Association President, is seen here with Graham Hodgetts and Keith Hood at the cheque presentation

Keith, who was head of the five Reading lodges in the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, chose the MND Association as his charity of the year.

Now he has presented a giant cheque on behalf of the lodge members to our president, Lady Hallifax, who was among the guests at the Salisbury Club in Reading.

Keith's parachute jump boosted the donation that was mostly raised from raffles run by members of the Reading lodges in the charitable organisation. He had planned to take part in Switzerland's Cresta Run at Christmas but was forced to shelve the plan when his employer died and he had to leave his home.

Keith now lives in Norfolk but keeps in touch with Graham and his wife Maureen and their family who live in Thatcham.

In his vote of thanks Keith paid tribute to his wife Fay and her teddy bear Scruffy who made the para jump with him. He also thanked the Reading lodges, staff and members of the Salisbury Club, the Star pub and businesses and individuals in the Pangbourne area who sponsored him.

Contributed by Jane Gilbert

Former Pangbourne chauffeur Keith Hood, aged 63, jumped at the chance to raise funds for charity.

His daredevil antics have helped towards reaching an impressive total of £5,480 which has now been handed to the branch.

Keith, formerly of Bere Court Road, made his leap of a lifetime last October with a sponsored 12,000 feet parachute jump - just one of what he calls his "crazy ventures".

He was inspired by his friend Graham Hodgetts, 57, who stepped down as landlord of the village's Star pub in Reading Road after he was diagnosed with MND.



What are **YOU** doing this Summer? Why not join the 19th annual Paris to Hayling Charity Cycle Ride and use pedal power to pile on the pounds for MND?

A former Reading woman took up the challenge last year and our treasurer Barry Clouting recently collected £250 from her efforts (Feature in next month's Newsletter).

The MND Association was among 80 charities nominated by riders last year to receive a donation from more than £45,000 raised. This year's fun ride consists of either three or five days cycling and

ON YER BIKE!

staying in good quality hotels returning on Saturday, July 17. But the deadline for payment is April 30th so the challenge is on to find out more.

For entry information call **Jenny Phelps** on **023 9226 9311** or look on the website: www.hayling-cycle-ride.org.uk.



Teas and funds at Calcot Golf Club

A magnificent £1000 was raised by Helen Cole and helpers in memory of Jean Reeves, a popular club member who died earlier this year.. Helen serves teas and refreshments at the Halfway Hut every weekend and for mid-week events and she has raised thousands of pounds for charity over the last few years, much of which has been donated to the Association.

Our picture shows Helen with club captain Mike Saunders handing over the cheque to Branch Chair, Margaret Moss.



Your letters

On the Sunday of the Reading Half Marathon, I woke up with mixed feelings. There was confidence but there was also the fear of not being ready.

Fortunately, Yves, my husband, and my daughters, Anouk and Marion, came to support me and Mark, my “co-runner. It was also comforting to know that my brother was running the Paris Half Marathon that same day, and he would also be wearing the bright red MND Association T-shirt!

The atmosphere as we arrived on site was friendly and we met up with Anouk’s friends, Helen and Becky, who had also offered to run for MND. Our four red T- shirts were spotted by a journalist from the local radio station, “Reading 107” and she gave us and MND a mention during the race.

As we lined up alongside the slower runners, most of whom were running for charities, it was overwhelming to see so many different people: the young, the “less” young, the handicapped and people in fancy dress. The many different messages on T- shirts like ours made me realise how many of us had found the strength to run, following the suffering of friends or relatives. This discovery brought me the warmth the weather was obviously not prepared to offer that morning.

At last we started, uplifted by the crowds encouraging us. All along the way people cheered us on and children even offered us sweets! I heard several cries of, “Come on Motor Neurone Disease, keep going”, and I really

With the help of Chris Bickerton and her daughter’s friends, Christine Mercier raised £1429 in sponsorship for running the Reading Half Marathon in memory of friend, Andrew, who died last year. Thank you Christine, for this wonderful account of your day....

managed to forget I was running during the nine first miles. I was just conscious of being part of a wonderful event of solidarity.

Even when the snow decided to fall, people stayed outside to encourage us. But tiredness was kicking in as the Madejski Stadium appeared, and we realised we still had about two miles to run... through Green Park! There was no one there on a Sunday morning - just us, my tiredness and my very sore feet. It was tempting to stop running but I thought that, when suffering from MND, Andrew had no choice but to keep going - he, and people suffering from MND, gave me the strength to keep running. (And Mark kept peeping behind him from time to time to make sure I did not give up!)

The arrival in the stadium was a wonderful experience. I could see my family. I had done it! I thought of Chris, Andrew’s wife and was happy. Meeting Gill from the MND Association, who had waited for us, was a nice conclusion to this experience. I am happy to know that the money raised will help to buy more equipment to improve the quality of life of people suffering from MND.

Contributed by Christine Mercier

Drop-in Meetings



A reminder to all carers and those living with MND in the area that the local Branch organises “Drop-in” meetings at various local venues. These sessions offering the opportunity for those living with MND to come out for a chat over a cup of coffee with others who have also lived with or are living with MND.

Details of the forthcoming Drop-in meetings are posted this month in our Forthcoming Events session, so make sure you make a note of the one nearest to you, and come and have a chat and a break.

The next drop-in meeting is on Tuesday 20th April at Henry Street Garden Centre, Swallowfield Rd., Arborfield, Reading from 2 until 4 pm. Volunteer visitor, Wendy Gouldthorpe will be there to join us for a chat. The “Drop-in” for May is at the Charles Clore Centre, Newbury.

Contact Val Pearson for more details or just drop in!



Crafty Craft Race

Monday 3rd May 2004

A Charity Fun Day for all the Family

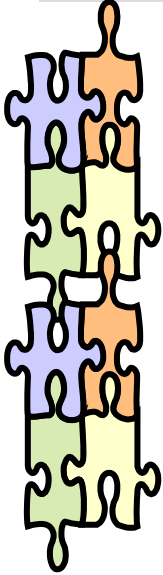
Fair/Fête from 10:30am to 4:30pm

For information and entry details visit our Web site at

www.craftycraft.com or call our hotline 07000 CRAFTY (07000 272389)

Easter Wordsearch

Why not try our EasterWordsearch?
 The first correct entry taken out of the
 hat on 4th May wins a box of chocolates!
 Send your entry to Val Pearson, 3 Mount
 Pleasant, Wokingham, Berks RG41 2YG



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| bunny | easter | holiday |
| chocolate | eggs | resurrection |
| familyfestival | palmsunday | daffodil |
| crucifixion | gethsemane | goodfriday |

Forthcoming Events

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| DROP-IN MEETINGS
See page 3 or contact Val Pearson
for details | Next meeting:
Tues 20th April |
| AGM
Courtyard Marriott, Reading | Wed 28th April
7.30-9.30pm |
| CRAFTY CRAFT RACE
Floating down the Kennet and Avon
from Hungerford to the Fête and Fair
at Victoria Park, Newbury | Mon 3rd May |
| MND AWARENESS WEEK | 12th–20th June |
| ENGLEFIELD WALK | Sun 16th May |
| GRAHAM HODGETTS CHARITY
SHIELD | Sun 30th May |
| SILVER JUBILEE RACE
MEETING
Newbury Race Course | Thurs 1st July |
| *Just £25 for the 25th! | See insert |

*Advance notification:

The BBC2 drama, "Hawking", Tues 13th Apr,
 about the early life of Prof. Stephen at 9pm
 Hawking will be screened on.....

www.mndassociation.org

MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE ASSOCIATION (READING AND WEST BERKSHIRE BRANCH)

You are warmly invited to our
 Annual General Meeting
 on
WEDNESDAY 28 APRIL 2004
 7.30 - 9.30 pm
 at
Courtyard Marriott Hotel
 Padworth Lane, Bath Road,
 Nr. Reading, Berks RG7 5HT

Following the formalities of the AGM itself,
 we are delighted to welcome as our speakers,

**Dr Annabella and Nick Marks on
 'Car Safaris in Africa'**

Light refreshments will be served.

The venue has wheelchair access and toilet.
 There is a car park on site.

Please contact Val Pearson, on 0118 9789063
 if you have any queries or need
 directions to the hotel.

Contact Details

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| Branch Contact
Beth Thorpe
0118 9421600 | Secretary
Val Pearson
0118 9789063 | Events
Coordinator
Gill Cheetham
01344 423440 |
| Chair
Margaret Moss
0118 9470871 | Publicity
Jane Gilbert
0118 9714172 | Reg. Care Advisor
Carole Kingston
0118 9462057 |
| Treasurer
Barry Clouting
0118 9410186 | Newsletter
Mary Watson
0118 9722506 | |



FIGHTING MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE