

**Reading and
West Berkshire
Branch**

March 2005

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National headlines for stem cell research

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Paul Wicks, a researcher at King's College, London, enthralled the assembled audience at last week's Open Meeting with his description of the International Symposium on MND in Philadelphia last December.

Last week's media frenzy highlighted the work of Professor Wilmot and Dr. Chris Shaw on stem cell research and MND, which set centre stage for Paul's presentation.

A few days before, Professor Wilmot had outlined his plans to study motor neurones derived from human embryos in order to further our understanding of MND. He had made the headlines, and newspapers carried articles about his licence for therapeutic stem cell research. Dr. Chris Shaw (one of Professor Wilmot's collaborators) also appeared on Radio 4's Moral Maze and other topical programmes.

Paul, a colleague of Dr. Shaw, was able to expand further on this, by explaining what stem cells are, what they will be used for, and how this research will help all those working to defeat MND.

As for the Open Meeting organisers, they were delighted with the attendance



Paul Wicks meets with local Events Coordinator, Gill Cheetham and local Branch Chair, Margaret Moss after his talk.

of 50 people (when 30 had been expected!) and the hotel staff excelled themselves by seating all who attended.

Well done and the committee wish to express their thanks to the Marriott Courtyard for their generosity and helpfulness.

Contributed by Margaret Moss

Drop-in Meeting

You are warmly invited to the next Drop-in meeting on

Monday 7th March 2005

11.00 am – 2.00 pm

at

The Charles Clore Day Centre
Newbury

Joanna Knott and Val Pearson
will be there to welcome you.

Light refreshments will be available.
All venues have wheelchair access—parking on site.

Contact Val Pearson for more details and/or directions

DIARY DATES

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Reading Half Marathon | Sun 6th March |
| Drop-in Meeting | Mon 7th March |
| Thank you lunch | Sun 13th March |
| Carers' Group Meeting | Thurs 17th March |



BG GROUP  **donate £1000**

The Reading and West Berkshire branch has recently been the lucky recipient of a £1000 donation from BG Group plc, who has an office in Reading.

David Lewis, whose father Roland was diagnosed with MND over 5 years ago, is a trainee Management Accountant at the company, whose main business is the exploration, production, transmission and distribution of Liquefied Natural Gas.

The story started last summer, when David approached BG to ask for £100 to sponsor their logo in the race card, for the MND Association's Silver Jubilee race meeting at Newbury.

Unfortunately the response was negative, as it was not company policy to respond to this type of request. However, David was then encouraged to apply for a BG Foundation Award of £1000. These awards are granted on a monthly basis by the



Roland and David Lewis pictured above

Community Involvement Team of the local community part of the BG Foundation.

The only stipulation that came with the award was that it was to be "a contribution towards the provision of specialist equipment for MND sufferers in the Reading area".

Barry Clouting, the Branch Treasurer said,

"The branch annually spends several thousands of pounds helping to provide equipment such as wheelchairs, through lifts and stair lifts, and was, therefore, extremely grateful to receive this generous award."

Contributed by Jennifer Hay

OCTET HIT HIGH NOTE

A Newbury-based choral group hit a high note for its final concert.

The swansong from Octet was a sell-out and is expected to have raised more than £400 for branch funds.

Alto Janette Green said the group had been forced to disband after eleven years as more and more members had moved away from the area.

One of them, Stephen Hall, had inspired the group to donate its proceeds to MNDA after his father Basil, who lived at Hungerford, had died from the disease.

The group sung a selection of Christmas pieces in front of a crackling fire in the atmospheric Great Hall of Brockhurst School, Marlston, near Hermitage. Mulled wine and mince pies completed the festive treat.

Contributed by Jane Gilbert



The girls enjoy their success.
Picture courtesy of Newbury Weekly News

Our very own glamorous girls from Hungerford have now raised more than £4,000 by bravely baring almost all.

The regulars and staff from the Plume of Feathers pub, who posed naked for the 2005 calendar, also collected cash by auctioning off the original pencil and pastel sketches.

And they have surprised themselves with the sparkling success of the fun-filled scheme to raise funds for the MND Association.

CALENDAR GIRLS' SPARKLING SUCCESS

Sue Court, whose husband Mike inspired the girls, said: "I am delighted, it's a fantastic result. I cannot believe how readily people dipped into their pockets."

She had expected the idea would raise hundreds rather than thousands of pounds but put its success down to artist Sue Arkell who "did all the coercing".

Sue also praised landlord Jimmy Weir for his support and all the sponsors who donated cash to cover the printing costs.

The calendar's successful result comes exactly two years after Mike, a regular at the Plume of Feathers, died aged 49, from MND.

His widow, Sue, was persuaded to strip off and become "Miss March" to help the MND Association which supported her and Mike during his illness.

She said of the calendar: "You would expect me to be passionate about the calendar but Sue Arkell was definitely the leading light. People could not say "No" to her."

Sue Arkell, who spent many hours on the project, also featured in the calendar as Miss August.

Several of the girls featured also work with her in the pub where calendars are on sale for £10 each

She added: "We won't let people go without buying a calendar. If they want a pint it's £12.50!"

There are still a few calendars available to buy from Sue Arkell on 07712 290 266 or Sue Court on 01488 683066.

Contributed by Jane Gilbert

Snowdrop Sunday

Snowdrops bloomed early this year, starting in mid January, but would they hold up until late February for our charity day at Welford Park? Then came snow, frost and a massive dip in temperature, persuading the dear little things to hold on to their blooms.

Thankfully, plenty of people visited Welford Park on Sunday 27th, to see the wonderful array of Galanthus Nivalis. With a posse of willing volunteers on a freezing but sunny day, we put on our best front, collected money, sold marmalade and promoted the association.

It was great to see so much enthusiasm in spite of the cold. Thank you to all the helpers and supporters and special thanks to James and Debby Puxley for providing the venue, allowing us to increase our funds by just under £1500.

Contributed by Gill Cheetham



Sandie White, Chris Bickerton, Barry Clouting and Jane Gilbert man the stand and proudly show off our new venture—marmalade sales!

Special thanks to Frank Watkins for the photo.

Neuro Nurse recruitment begins!

The Specialist Neurology Nurse post for the West of Berkshire is currently being advertised.

The nurse will work with patients affected by a group of rare and aggressive neurological conditions which require specialist nursing or intensive support and, of course, this includes MND.

This is a visionary and pioneering approach to meeting the needs of such people, one which will greatly improve their quality of life.

The RBBH and Dr Christine Collin are instrumental in this post which will be funded jointly by the West Berkshire Neurological Alliance and the Reading and West Berkshire MND Branch for two years.

So, in addition to our usual and primary work of supporting those with MND, the branch is still raising funds for this innovative project.

We look forward to an appointment being made soon and to be able to introduce the Specialist Neuro Nurse in the not too distant future!

Contributed by Margaret Moss



Our Newsletter - Thank you!

Dear Editor,

We have heard so often from members about what the Newsletter means to them, that we have decided to acknowledge our (and their) appreciation to you, the Editor, in this way – by writing a letter for publication.

Whenever members meet – at the Drop In sessions or Open Meetings or even with an Association Visitor – there are positive comments!

“How enjoyable it is to see a report on something (they) have been involved in”; “what a difference photographs make”; “how nice to see my photograph”; “such an attractive layout”.

All these things, and more, make our Newsletter something to look forward to and let people know what the branch members (not forgetting the committee) are up to! It’s amazing how many (red) T-shirts get worn in the year! It is very obvious that everyone enjoys the Newsletter and appreciates the effort which is put into producing a pleasing and attractive document!

We all thank you heartily and look forward to the next!

Margaret Moss and the Committee

Dear All—Thank you for your kind words. It is great to get this positive feedback and to know that the stories and pictures our team put together are well received.

Thanks to the team of regular contributors, Jane Gilbert, Val Pearson, Margaret Moss, Jennifer Hay and Gill Cheetham, - and to Kall Kwik Printers for supporting us by printing each issue so generously.

Mary Watson, Newsletter Editor.

Newbury Rotaract chooses MNDA as Charity of the Year

Claudette Dudley, Charity Officer for the Newbury Rotaract, in association with the Rotary Club, have chosen the MNDA as the charity they will represent this year.

They have various fundraising ideas already planned, says Claudette, including an orienteering challenge, crafty craft race, raffle and other ideas for later in the year. Watch this space!

Local Neurologist becomes honorary Patron



Dr. Christine Collin, Consultant in Neuro-rehabilitation at Royal Berkshire and Battle Hospital, has agreed to be an Honorary Patron of the local Branch.

The committee wished to acknowledge in some way the contribution Dr. Collin makes to people living with MND. Her professionalism, care and concern for people living with MND are outstanding and appreciated by everyone.

And congratulations to both Dr Collin, and Dr Ralph Gregory, Consultant Neurologist, who have been awarded the prestigious title of Visiting Professor by Reading University for their research and academic work in the field of Neurology.



Ten more daring individuals to trek Mount Olympus and raise money for MND—15-19th September 2005 Call URGENTLY on 01604 611860



JUMBULANCE HOLIDAY

Haus Rheinsberg, Germany
Friday 10th—17th June 2005

Haus Rheinsberg is a purpose-built hotel for wheelchair users on the shores of the Greinericke Lake near Berlin. All rooms are en suite and fully adapted. There is an indoor pool with a hoist, and, nearby are the Brandenburg Lakes and the palaces and gardens of Potsdam.

Subsidised cost: *£580 VIP's,
£480 Helpers/Nurses

*Based on half board, lunch, plus outings

Please apply to Chris Cook on 01635 200200 or David Lunsden on 0118 977 4951.



Forthcoming Events

Reading Half Marathon

Sunday
6th March

Local runners for MND are eager for your sponsorship and support!

Duchess of Kent Carers' Group Meeting

Thursday
17th March
2-4pm

Duchess of Kent House, Reading

The Princess Royal Trust and what it can offer carers

For more info, call Chris Cook
0118 955 0477

Drop-in Meeting

Monday
7th March
11am-2pm

The Charles Clore Day Centre

Thank You Lunch

Sunday
13th March
12.30pm

Ufton Court

By invitation only

The Dubai Duty Free Weekend Meeting

Saturday
16th April

Newbury Racecourse

Collection for Branch funds

AGM

Wednesday
27th April

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FIGHTING MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE