

**Reading and
West Berkshire
Branch**

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Treasure Seekers Struck Gold

Treasure hunters unearthed a bumper haul for charity at their annual metal detecting rally in West Berkshire on October 2nd.

This year the Newbury-based Wessex Metal Detecting Association organised the event at Englefield, near Theale, to support people living with MND.

The trawl through 450 acres of prime land harvested four gold coins amongst other ancient finds and yielded £3,493 in glittering new funds for the branch (including £248 taken on the branch tombola stall run by Gill Cheetham, Sandie White and a team of volunteers).

Chairman Jim Bradshaw said the day was a fitting tribute to fellow enthusiast and dear friend George Pearce who died, aged 56, from MND in August.

George, a well-known Newbury carpet fitter, was determined to find that hoard of coins and went out every Sunday in all weathers to pursue his hobby until the progressive disease made it impossible.

One of his last wishes was that the club should organise a rally on behalf of the MND Association which supported him and his family.

Jim, who organised the day with Trevor Sprules, said afterwards: "We were very pleased. It was a great tribute to George.

"The total finds were greater than we would expect at a rally normally because the condition of the ground was perfect for detecting but they weren't exceptional."

The rally fields were part of the historic Benyon estate and 350 people armed with their detectors spread out across the horizon in eager anticipation.

Their final haul included four gold coins with



Organisers Trevor Sprules (left) and Jim Bradshaw with Gill Cheetham and Sandie White at the metal detecting rally.

ages dating from 100BC to early Tudor and Georgian, 60 silver coins, mainly



Elizabethan, and about ten Roman Bronze coins. Interesting artefacts included a medieval animal bell.

Jim said of the haul: "At a rally you would normally expect to get one or two gold coins but to get four is a bonus"



His vote for find of the day was a little Saxon mount (pictured) a stylised

Zoomorphic bird with gilding over bronze (It's about 50mm long), and it dates from the 6th to 8th century AD.

During the day there were visits from Richard Benyon MP whose family own the land and his aunt Lady Hallifax, who is president of the MND Association. (Lady Hallifax even had a go at metal detecting herself and found a pound coin with the first signal!)

Contributed by Jane Gilbert

On Top of the World

A PhD student from Newbury has returned from scaling Africa's highest peak to raise awareness of MND. Fiona Powell, aged 24, climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with her brother Robert and university friend Anna Kent.

Their intrepid effort raised £6,000 for national office funds which neatly works out at a pound for every metre of the mountain.

Fiona hopes the vital cash will fund research into the disease from which her father, who lived in Cambridge, died last year.



The trio are pictured at the summit (Fiona is pictured on the left), which they reached at 8.20am on September 18 - nearly five days after their journey began.

Fiona said in her diary of the trip: "Realising we were going to make it was an emotional experience."

The climb began at 1490 metres and during four-and-a-half memorable days they ascended almost 4500 metres with the risk of altitude sickness ever present.

They finally spent 30 minutes soaking up the summit in temperatures of minus 20°C which felt warmer with the strong sun before beginning the long descent.

Fiona, who is studying for a doctorate at the Institute for Animal Health at Compton, near Newbury, maintains the real heroes of the mountain are the porters who carry and do so much along the way.

For her it's now back to the mountain of work she needs to get through to finish her studies. "Kili was a half way break," added the student who is no stranger to adventure with operations in the Amazon and Indonesia already under her belt.

Contributed by Jane Gilbert

RACE NIGHT RUNS ON.....

The success of Marian Hall's fund raising race night seems to run and run. An amazing £6,044 was given to the branch following the fun event at Hungerford Town Hall. Now enterprising Marian has nominated herself for a Vodafone UK Foundation Community Award for her efforts and generated a further £50.

Any bets on whether Marian has anything else up her sleeve?

Link between playing football and MND?

Colin Moss pays tributes to George Pearce and Graham Hodgetts, who both died during the summer and speculates on theories behind the causes of the disease, particularly as they all three enjoyed a game of football.....

It was very sad to hear of the passing of George Pearce who I had come to regard as a friend and also that of Graham Hodgetts who had a long football career like myself.

It is interesting that all three of us played football and there has been some evidence in Italy to suggest a potential link between football and MND. An abnormally high percentage of Italian footballers were diagnosed with MND compared to the rest of the population.

Everyone with MND seems to have their own 'theory' about what caused the onset of the disease in them. George was convinced creosote was the cause in his case and I understand Graham thought chemicals in the pitch markings could cause it.

If I were to guess what could have caused my onset only two things spring to mind:

- I was kicked in the head whilst playing football, which caused me to swallow my tongue and be unconscious for a few minutes. I also headed the ball a lot as it was one of my strengths.
- I had exposure to Beryllium Copper during my work many years ago and did things with it that are now recognised as a hazardous.

Out of curiosity, shortly after my diagnosis I had a Hair Analysis to check what substances were present in my body. Lo and behold the results showed a potentially dangerous level of Beryllium. When I mentioned this to my Neurologists they said that although Beryllium has been linked to respiratory problems it has no known link to Neurological problems.

As MND is quite rare I believe it is important to gather as much information about each patient as possible. It could be useful for all MND patients to complete a questionnaire e.g. what they believe may have been the cause, any exposure to chemicals, crop spraying, electric shock, etc.

Contributed by Colin Moss



Learning to just be

By Gill Howgego

This month's moving letter is reproduced by kind permission of Gill's husband, Pete, and Beth Thorpe, who says it is "just her". It is a wonderful celebration of her life and thoughts. Gill died in early July.

I started learning to "just be" a few years ago now, and I find it really rewarding: catching the sun on a flower - the sunset-sunrise - and sometimes a bee searching for a nectar. But I was not well practised. This disease has taken me slowly by the road of doing nothing. At first I painted and joined in many activities at the Duchess of Kent House. My voice has never gone, and my right hand still manages to ring the bell. So you see, plenty of practice! But it is less easy.

In moments of just being, there is God, very evident, which warms the heart and encourages the journey. Now I have all the moments that I need, and the awareness of God feels like a pattern, unasked, unlooked for, unexpected - there He is. It would be more than difficult to identify each one, but this grace of God comes in a variety of forms: whilst I'm doing nothing: when the sun shines on my

white cyclamen and I see the light; a gift of flowers and fresh bulbs. Wit and laughter are a background to the daily round of care. When I most need it a friend may drop by with unexpected words which challenge and encourage. I could make a longer list. It would be a pretence if I did not say that there are clouds that hide God on some days, but I am held gently and firmly in His love, by Pete, Dom and Nicky and Stephanie, and all of my close family, by the love and prayers and thoughts of my many friends (including the staff at the DOKH) and some folk I don't even know.

What can I say?

Once out on a quiet evening I watched the sun go down over a golden field of wheat. As I watched, the clouds in the sky became an angel on wings.



Gill Howgego

I walked back to where I was staying, and either side of the road was strewn with gold (cut corn): and there is God. My heart is full of thanks for all these good things - and many I've enjoyed and latterly all that I have received. I can only say that small word (thank you) and receive graciously from the giver.

Gill, 31st January 2005

My Father, Amir Dadd

By Shazir Dadd

My father, Amir Dadd.

Born in 1952, he came to the UK in 1970 after getting married. He lived in Cardiff for a couple of years before moving to Reading, where he started work as a bus driver. In 1984 he brought his wife and four children to the UK. He worked for Reading Transport for 27 years, until he took early retirement in 2004 after being diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease.

His illness was rapid, and his health deteriorated fast. Within a year of the diagnosis, he lost the ability to talk and eat properly, but he was a strong man and he never

complained about anything. He tried every treatment to help cure his illness - he never gave up.

He was a very independent and multi-skilled individual, who always did his own work: plumbing, electrical, DIY - he knew it all. He was always smiling and going out of his own way to help others.

In the last couple of weeks of his life, he suffered a lot, and it was heartbreaking to see him like this. It still seems hard to come to terms with reality. But we believe he has gone to a much better place.

I love you and miss you so much dad!

Shazir Dadd

Duchess of Kent Carers' Support Group – Autumn 2005

The Carers' Support Group hold a regular programme of focused talks on alternate Thursday afternoons from 2-4pm in The Green, Day Therapy Unit, Duchess of Kent House. The group meets to support and inform relatives and carers of people with life threatening diseases. There is plenty of opportunity to discuss issues around the table.

The meetings scheduled for the Autumn are as follows:-

13 Oct	Independence and Quality of Life Mary Bulmer, Occupational Therapist
27 Oct	Not hungry? How Can I Help You? Nicky Curtis, Dietician
17 Nov	Relaxation for Carers Fiona Harland, Physiotherapist
1 Dec	Looking for Meaning? What helps, what doesn't? Judy Davies, Chaplain
15 Dec	Informal Christmas meeting

In the New Year, the unit are planning talks from the Macmillan Nurses, Family Support Workers, a Psychologist, Complementary Therapists, The Princess Royal Trust, Crossroads and some informal support sessions.

For further details, please contact:
Chris Cook, Day Therapy Unit at Duchess of Kent House, Dellwood Hospital, Reading on **0118 9550 477**

WEDDING WINDFALLS

Hungerford's Maureen and Colin Bull made the selfless decision to turn down gifts for their ruby wedding anniversary and gave the branch a present instead. They presented a bumper cheque for £700 to Lady Halifax, MNDA president, at the recent drop-in meeting.



The donation was just one of several from the family in memory of Maureen's brother Lyndon Miles of Herefordshire, who died from MND two years ago aged 61.

Maureen's sister Sue Hale also recently gave the branch £370 after holding a coffee morning in her garden at Paddock Road in Newbury.

And our very own Newsletter editor Mary Watson has given £140 raised at her recent 25th anniversary celebrations.

Congratulations to them all! *Contributed by Jane Gilbert*



With sincere thanks to Kall-Kwik Printers, St Marys Butts, Reading, for their continued help and support in printing this Newsletter.

Forthcoming Events

Drop-in Meeting Charles Clore Centre

**Monday
31st October
11.30am -2.30pm**

(See article on Insert pages regarding the closure of the Charles Clore Centre)

**Monday
5th December
(Provisional)**

Collection

in aid of Branch funds

**Friday
4th November**

'My Fair Lady' The Hexagon, Reading

By kind permission of the Sainsbury Singers

Wokingham Winter Carnival

**Sunday
27th November**

Christmas Tea

Details to follow

**Wednesday
14th December
2.30pm -4.30pm**

Cards for Good Causes

**17th October–
15th December**

Charity Shop United Reformed Church Cromwell Place Newbury (opposite Marks and Spencer)

**Mon-Sat
10am–4pm**

Note new e-mail address for Branch Contacts:
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