

**Reading and  
West Berkshire  
Branch**

[www.mndrdgwberks.freeuk.com](http://www.mndrdgwberks.freeuk.com)

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*Barry retires as Treasurer—see page 3*

*Profile on Barry in next issue*

### Did you know?

In October 2006 the Association launched its Research Foundation which aims to raise £15 million over the next two years to support national and international efforts to end MND.

## FOOTBALL STUDY MAKES WORLD HEADLINES



**Graham Hodgetts holds the trophy aloft for Echinswell**

### The study of three soccer-playing friends from the Newbury area who all developed MND has made news around the world.

Researcher Dr Paul Wicks first decided to explore a link between football and the disease after a visit to an open meeting of the Association's Reading and West Berkshire Branch. There he discovered that carpet fitter George Pearce, electrician Graham Hodgetts and carpenter Sam Brown all played in the same league on the same pitches and simultaneously developed MND.

It was through the disease that they were re-united years later at the former Charles Clore Macmillan Day Unit in Newbury.

George, aged 56, and 59-year-old Graham died within days of each other in the summer of 2005. Sam, aged 63, has been bravely telling their story in a series of TV and newspaper interviews. He can no longer speak but communicates through an electronic keyboard unfazed by the numerous camera crews, including Sky

News, which visited his Kingsclere home.

Sam and Graham grew up a few miles from each other and played on Saturdays for Echinswell in the Basingstoke league. George Pearce played for Chieveley, the top village side at the time, and shared pitches with them on Sundays in the Newbury league.

Now Sam welcomes the study and stressed the need for cash to provide further research into the cause of the disease. He noted the similarities the three of them shared – they had all received electric shocks and been exposed to creosote on pitches.

In the study Dr Wicks and co-author Dr Ammar Al-Chalabi, of Kings College, London, discuss the possible factors that may have contributed to the three men developing MND. The study concludes that, "these friends shared so many other putative risk factors in common that we must be cautious before attributing their simultaneous ALS to soccer alone." ALS is the most common form of MND.

Talking about the study, Dr Al-Chalabi, said: "We still do not know why some people develop MND and everyone has their own theory. What is unusual about this group is that they are all friends who developed MND at the same time. In any year two people in 100,000 will develop MND so a cluster like this could occur by chance, but the odds are quite long."

Researchers have suggested that the risk of developing MND is likely to involve a combination of a wide variety of genetic and environmental risk factors, perhaps occurring years before the onset of symptoms.

*Contributed by Jane Gilbert*

**More on this story on page 2.....**



# Football Study Makes World Headlines .....*Story continued from page 1*

George Pearce was convinced that creosote was the cause of his disease. At the time the men were playing football together line markings on football pitches were burned with creosote – now a banned substance.



creosote to do this to me? I think so.”

In October 2005 a link

between playing football and MND was posed in a Newsletter tribute to George and Graham following their deaths.

Colin, aged 56, played football for many years until he was aged 48.

If he were to guess what caused his onset he says two things spring to mind – he was kicked in the head while playing football and headed the ball a lot but also had exposure to Beryllium Copper and did things with it that are now recognised as hazardous.

In April 2005 George, who lived at Wash Common, wrote in the Newsletter about his theory on creosote.

He began to show signs of weakness in his left arm a few months after he cut his hand while creosoting a fence in the garden. He had earlier had a bad bout of flu. George commented: “Did the flu lower my resistance enough for

In it, Colin Moss, a former semi-professional footballer in the Swindon area who is now living with MND, speculated on theories behind the cause of the disease.

He wrote then:” 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.”

Colin, who now lives at Hermitage, near Newbury, recently spoke about the study on ITV Thames Valley Tonight with Graham Hodgett’s widow Maureen and Sam Brown.

The Branch is very grateful to them for all their help in raising awareness of motor neurone disease and highlighting the need to find the cause and eventual cure.



Graham Hodgetts



George Pearce



Sam Brown

## OUR MAGNIFICENT MARATHON MEN

This year’s London Marathon was a runaway success for two men who took on the challenge for the sake of family and friends.



Charlie Pearson after the race

One of them, young teacher Charlie Pearson, is a familiar face on the gruelling 26-mile course. This time, he says, it went “almost unimaginably well.”

Charlie, whose family live at Whitchurch Hill, near Pangbourne, ran to the finishing line in an incredible 2 hours 46 minutes – breaking his record by seven minutes.

He was also the MND Association’s faster runner despite the sweltering heat on the day.

Elaine Wyspianski, community and events fundraiser, said afterwards: “He didn’t even look as if he’d broken out into a sweat when he came into the room.” Charlie kept his cool by pouring every bottle of water he was given over his head.

Without that he would have struggled as many runners sadly did.

As ever Charlie was inspired by his cousin Chris, who died from MND at the age of only 28.

He was once more sponsored by pupils and staff at the comprehensive school in Bath where he works and regularly gives school assemblies on MND and the work of the Association. Now he has to chase them for their pledges and do some number crunching himself.



Carpenter John Cornwall ran this year in support of his friend Sam Brown (our picture shows them together) who is living with MND.

John, aged 58, didn’t start running until he was aged 50 and finished his third marathon in five hours. With help from Sam’s wife Anna he hopes to collect

between £2,500 and £3,000 for completing the daunting task.

Wife Val said in spite of the heat John looked like he had had a walk in the park when she saw him at the finish.

He also helped to raise awareness of the disease by appearing with Sam on ITV Thames Valley the day before the big race.

John, from Ashford Hill, near Thatcham, visits Sam most weeks to discuss their great passion – pigeon racing.

The pair also appeared in the Newbury Weekly News where John told of his plans for the marathon and their friendship spanning 40 years.

He explained: “I decided to run for the MND Association because they do a lot for him. It’s tough seeing him go through it.”

*Contributed by Jane Gilbert*

# Praise for Specialist Neuro Nurse at Branch AGM

The specialist nurse who supports people living with MND and other rare neurological diseases has made a huge impact in the area.

Chair Margaret Moss told the branch Annual General Meeting a study was now underway to assess the two-year post funded by donations.

And it is hoped health chiefs will agree to pay the nurse's salary in the long term.

She told the audience at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Padworth, of the branch's pride in helping to pilot the vitally needed post jointly with West Berkshire Neurological Alliance. A total of £90,000 was raised to pay the nurse's salary and other costs, including the impact study, for two years.

Margaret thanked all supporters for their generosity, including the hotel, which has continually provided its facilities free of charge.

Treasurer Barry Clouting presented his last report at the AGM on April 25<sup>th</sup> as he is retiring this summer to live near Poole. He was presented with a book as a token of thanks for all he has done for people living with MND and for the branch in the his 4 years of dedicated service.



Barry Clouting, retiring treasurer receives a vote of thanks from Branch Chair, Margaret Moss

Of his time with the Branch, Barry's wife Anne writes in a letter for the next issue,

" (Barry) will hugely miss his involvement, the camaraderie of the committee and the time spent in the company of very special people – those living with MND. "

The branch is fortunate in having Ed Gryglaszewski as its new treasurer. Ed can be contacted at 27 Ashton Road, Wokingham, RG41 1HL or on 0118 9789069 – we welcome him to the team and look forward to working with him.

Newsletter Editor Mary Watson and Association Visitor Wendy Gouldthorpe were both given bronze long service awards for five years voluntary service.

Ruth Barton, the Association's volunteer development co-ordinator,

also thanked members of the branch for their hard work during the past year.

"Reading is one of the top notch branches and on a personal level it's great to work with everyone," she said.

Later Emeritus Professor Keith Bright spoke on "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" – an entertaining account of access to buildings with examples from China to Europe.

He was thanked by vice-chair Jennifer Hay. *Contributed by Jane Gilbert*



Association Visitor, Wendy Gouldthorpe, is presented with her long service award by Margaret Moss.

## TREASURE SEEKERS GO FOR GOLD AGAIN

Treasure hunters are hoping to unearth another bumper crop of gold for the MND Association from fields at Englefield near Reading.

The Newbury-based Wessex Metal Detecting Association is organising a rally on September 9<sup>th</sup> following the success of its event two years ago.

It will be on the same productive fields as before at the heart of Newbury MP Richard Benyon's Englefield Estate.

In 2005 the trawl through 450 acres of

prime land harvested four gold coins and other ancient finds and yielded £3,400 in glittering new money for the branch.

The day was a fitting tribute to enthusiast George Pearce from Newbury who died, aged 56, from MND that year.

One of his last wishes was that the club should organise a rally for the charity which supported him and his family. Chairman Jim Bradshaw now has agreement from the estate

### TREASURE SEEKERS' GO FOR GOLD....

Some of the treasures from the last find included gold coins, some dating back to 100 B.C., and a bronze gilded



Zoomorphic bird from the 6th to 8th Century.



to hold a second rally by popular request.

He said: "We hope the site will produce another crop of memorable finds."

The site has many crop marks from the Bronze and Iron Ages together with recorded Roman and Saxon settlements in nearby fields.

*Contributed by Jane Gilbert*

## Summer Concert for MND

A popular Newbury-based choir will be hitting the high notes next month to raise funds for people living with MND.

The Cromwell Singers is performing on Saturday, June 23, at the town's Methodist Church during MND Awareness Week (16th-24<sup>th</sup> June).

The choir chose the charity because one of its singers, Ann Minks, lost her husband Bryan to motor neurone disease which has no known cure.

Ann and concert organiser, Gwenda Hutchinson, from Great Shefford, are hoping the evening will be a sell-out.

It is one of the choir's main events in its summer programme and all proceeds will go to the Motor Neurone Disease Association's West Berkshire branch.

The choir is now 55-strong under its conductor David Wilcox and has produced a wide ranging programme. It will feature songs from the musicals Beauty and the Beast and Phantom of the Opera, some English madrigals, pieces by John Rutter as well as English and North American folk songs.

Tickets, at £5 each to include refreshments, can be obtained from Jim Turner, a member of the Cromwell Singers, on 01635 248490, from Gill Cheetham (see below), or on the door on the night.

*Contributed by Jane Gilbert*

## A TRIBUTE TO CARERS

Carers are often overlooked  
There's no sympathy to spare  
When it's lavished on the one  
who's sick –  
The person in their care.

So often the carer needs an ear  
A shoulder on which to cry,  
A minute or two just for  
themselves  
As their life goes rushing by.

An hour to spend that's just for  
them

For fripperies and fun  
When at someone else's beck  
and call,  
Their work is never done.

An outing to the cinema  
perhaps,  
To laugh and feel carefree,  
To offload the burden, weighed  
down with love,  
So a bit of life they see.

They never moan, they don't  
regret,  
They don't see it as a chore.  
They don't do it as a duty  
Or to notch up a heavenly  
score.

They don't get awarded medals  
At the end there is no prize.  
But then, you see, each carer  
Is an angel in disguise.

*Anonymous*

## Forthcoming Events

**Walk to D'Feet MND** 16th -24th June  
**MND Awareness Week**

**Drop-in Meetings** Monday Evening  
Please note the new times\* and venue. Session\*

**The Mansion House in Prospect Park** 4th June  
**Liebenrood Road, Reading RG30 2ND** 6.30-8.30pm

This is a popular pub/restaurant with plenty of room and a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere for this one-off session. Those of you who want could stay on after the drop-in and may order a meal at very reasonable prices

**Future Drop-in Meetings** Thursdays\*  
**Venue TBA** 11.30-2.30pm

at Summer Tea Party, Canoe Club, Reading ---  
12th July  
9th August  
13th September

**Cromwell Singers** Sat  
**Newbury Methodist Church** 23rd June

**Summer Tea Party** Thurs  
**Canoe Club, Reading** 9th August  
2.30- 4.30pm

**Open Garden for Charity** Sun  
**10 Shaftesbury Ave, Harmans Water,** 1st July  
**Bracknell** - contact Gill Cheetham (see below)

**Metal Detecting Rally** Sun  
**Englefield Estate** 9th September

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**FIGHTING MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE**