

**Reading and  
West Berkshire  
Branch**

**April 2008**

**ISSUE NO 50**

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

## BERKSHIRE'S UNSUNG HEROES

**Our amazing volunteers are among Berkshire's unsung heroes – and that's official.**



Receiving the certificate from the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire, Sir Philip Wroughton (centre), are Jane Gilbert, publicity officer, Phillip Adams, committee member, Chair Margaret Moss and Jan Gryglaszewska, Association Visitor. Also present is the Mayor of Reading, Cllr Chris Maskell.

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The branch's achievements have now been publicly recognised with a nomination for a prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

It is among seven groups across the county now in the running for the coveted accolade to be announced in June.

The Queen's representative, the Lord Lieutenant Sir Philip Wroughton, congratulated all those nominated at a formal reception at Reading Civic Offices on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

This year's awards were a swansong for Sir Philip as he retires at the age of 75 on April 19 after 13 years in the post. He told all the groups represented that they had a hope of winning and thoroughly deserved to do so.

Also present at the reception was our nominator Professor Keith Bright, an expert on access issues and inclusive environments, who lives in Thatcham.

Branch chair Margaret Moss said afterwards:

"We are grateful to Prof Keith Bright for the nomination. It recognises the work of everyone involved in the branch. The widespread publicity and awareness this award raises is sufficient - even if we go no further in the selection process we will not be disappointed! We are delighted!"

*Contributed by Jane Gilbert*

It has engaged us all! Here's to the next edition!  
Margaret Moss



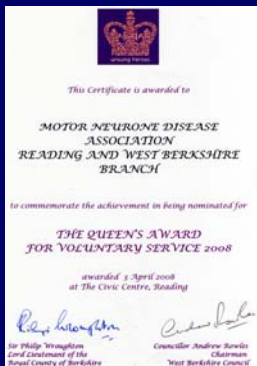
**50 -  
and  
still  
looking  
good!**

The Mayor of Reading, Cllr Chris Maskell, hosted the ceremony attended by other civic dignitaries from across the county. Sir Philip presented each group with a certificate and thanked them for their "inspirational work". He told them:

"You are heroes and heroines, thank you."

The Queen set up the annual award scheme to recognise and reward excellence in voluntary activities in 2002 to celebrate her Golden Jubilee. It is given for outstanding achievement by voluntary groups who:

- \* Regularly devote their time to helping others in the community
- \* Improve the quality of life and opportunity for others, and
- \* Provide an outstanding service





Peter Mills hands over the first batch of mobiles to Jane Gilbert, Branch Publicity Officer

A Reading-based software company has come up with a solution to turn unwanted mobile phones into money that will help fight MND.

When Acision changed its mobile service provider it decided to give its old handsets to a thriving recycling scheme run by the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

For every phone recycled in its special envelopes the charity gets at least £3.50 - even if it doesn't work. As well as helping the environment the scheme produces vital cash to help support people living with MND and to fund vital research work.

Acision's Peter Mills chose the charity in



## You've got mail!

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you so much for your generous contribution towards my scooter. When I decided to give up driving, because I couldn't bear the thought of causing an accident, I really felt that I would remain in the house for the rest of my days. I started looking at scooters on the internet and found one that will enable me to go for country walks again and I was over the moon. My husband works in Burnham Beeches and he would like to show me round, although as a child I visited there, but it will open the world up to me again.

# Money from Old Mobiles

memory of his mother Margaret who died in 2006, aged 78. Mrs Mills, from Newbury, was supported throughout her illness by the Association's Reading and West Berkshire Branch.

So far Peter has handed in more than 50 mobiles and multi-media devices with the pledge of many more to come.

Spokesman Jane Gilbert said Acision's donation had given a big boost to the scheme which has enormous fund-raising potential. She added: "We are also very grateful to Mr Mills for helping to raise awareness of this cruel disease and the need for funds to be spent on research into finding the cause and an eventual cure."

Mr Mills is also promoting the scheme among employees of Acision whose systems are responsible for half of all mobile messaging sent globally.

He said: "First of all I sent in a few old phones that we had at home and it went from there. We will also be raising awareness of the campaign via our internal newsletter."

Acision, which has offices at Green Park, and in Bristol, is the messaging and charging company for more than 300 network operators and service providers worldwide.

Every year in the UK millions of new phones are bought and millions of old ones are discarded. They either lie forgotten in drawers or are thrown away and end up in landfill sites where they can release harmful substances into the earth.

Now a whole new industry has grown around collecting and recycling them. The MND Association receives £3.50 for each one from recycling firm ShP Solutions which supplies freepost envelopes or will pay for a courier to collect large amounts.

Simply contact the charity by phoning 01604 611888 or email [corporate@mndassociation.org](mailto:corporate@mndassociation.org) and ask for a supply of freepost mobile phone recycling envelopes. If you'd like the money to come to the Branch please mark the envelope accordingly.

*Contributed by Jane Gilbert*

Also, once I have worked out a route, I will be able to attend Braywick Nurseries as a volunteer. I am looking forward to potting up plants and generally being with other people. There are so many places that I can now visit and feel a little independent. It really is the most marvellous feeling!!!

I am also "over the moon" with the delivery of a massage table and stool. I am really trying to be positive about my illness and I have been advised that massage helps to maintain useful muscle.

Thank you once again, I don't know what I'd do without this marvellous organisation.

Kindest regards,  
Catherine Hazell

Dear Committee,

Many thanks for your generosity in buying the through lift for me. Apart from a few squeaks, it is working very well. My backside is greatly relieved that I don't have to glide downstairs anymore on my bottom. You are all welcome to come and try it - one at a time because there is a weight limit.

Again, thank you for your help.

Regards Roland Lewis

We love to get feedback about the work of the Branch which aims to make a difference to people living with MND. These emails are examples of how the money we raise is put to good use locally and is very much appreciated.

*The Committee*

# My Sahara Trek

by Anna Cheetham



Anna (bottom right) and the rest of the group proudly display the MND Association logo

Flicking through the MND Association newsletter one day something caught my eye - an eight day trek through the Sahara Desert in Morocco raising funds for the Motor Neurone Disease Association. A few days later in the pub and, fuelled by a couple of glasses of wine, the idea began to snowball, until a couple of weeks later I found myself dropping the registration form into the post box. There was to be no turning back now!

There was the small matter of raising the required £2150 sponsorship, and this was a little daunting at first, but soon I was to be amazed by people's kindness and generosity. My local paper ran a piece on me which immediately raised the profile of my plight. A local bar offered me their premises to hold a fundraising party which was covered by a magazine and soon the money was streaming in.

Another issue to be addressed was my, somewhat poor, fitness level! I contacted a local gym who were exceptionally helpful and supplied me with two personal trainers, a specially tailored exercise programme and six months free membership!

I was astonished by people's benevolence and goodwill...not to mention their faith in the belief that I would be able to trek 100 kilometres through the searing heat and inhospitable landscape of the biggest desert on

earth! Anita and the team at MND Association Head Office were also incredibly helpful.

At Heathrow airport, we all wore our red MND t-shirts and we looked a peculiar bunch; a wide range of ages, accents, backgrounds and jobs ranging from wedding planners to nurses and sales managers! We bonded quickly, all sharing an equal goal...to make it through this week alive!

We flew to Ouarzazte in Morocco via Casablanca, and after our last night between four walls, we soon found ourselves hurtling through the desert in a convoy of battered 4x4's, into what can only be described as the middle of nowhere.

The next few days blurred into one. The scenery was breathtaking, alternating between undulating dunes sculpted by the wind and lunar like rocky plateaus. At times the physical exertion was challenging; scaling the breathtaking Cheggaga dunes and wading through soft sand in the unseasonably warm 30 degree heat was demanding, but



The Cheggaga Dunes—a 300m climb!

spirits amongst the group remained high.

What stands out in my memory the most about the trek was the remarkable people I had the honour of meeting. Hours walking during the day and then sipping drinks around the campfire and watching the sunrise over the desert were an ideal background to talk about why we were attempting the challenge. But the talk of suffering relatives and lost loved ones was not sombre or depressing. Therapeutic for some, enlightening for others but, for all, a celebration of those touched by MND.

I would like to thank Anita and everyone at Classic tours and the MND Association for this a m a z i n g opportunity - and to all the guys on the trek, thanks for the laughs and the beers and the memories!

For anyone contemplating a charity challenge I urge you to sign up without delay. All levels of fitness were catered for, everyone was free to walk at their own pace and stops were frequent.

This was my first Charity Challenge, but it definitely won't be my last... friends and family better start digging deep for the next round of sponsorship!!

Today we actually found part of the cure - - and frankly if I could get the rest by climbing on the roof I would. So save me the bother - give money to Motor Neurone Disease Association and save me from arrest.'

*Contributed by Jennifer Hay*

## BBC RADIO 4 Any Questions?

The following is a loose transcript of a reply given recently by Lembit Opik on Radio 4's 'Any Questions':

'If I could be told that by climbing on to the roof of the House of Commons and getting arrested I could find a cure for Motor Neurone Disease

I'd do it. I'm the president of the Motor Neurone Disease Association -my father died of it a few years ago. It's a dreadful disease, ...and I've been trying to help the Association find enough money to get a cure and, to this government's great credit, they've now given seven and a half million pounds to match funding towards our £15 million target.

## Local Branch Newsletter's 50th issue

by Mary Watson



Our Newsletter's 50th issue is published today, and I should like to thank you all for continuing to read and contribute.

My first issue as Editor was in November 2002, soon after my local

'Full of interest, attractively put-together and lovely and easy-to-read.' Lady Hallifax

NWR (National Womens' Register) group had created and sold the "Simply Scrumptious Cookbook" to raise money for the charity. The seed for the book was sown when Andrew Bickerton, husband of friend and group member Chris, was diagnosed with MND, and we wanted to help in any way we could.

'Consistently 'the best and most colourful' of the newsletters I receive on a regular basis.' Dr. Paul Wicks

When the then National President, Lady Hallifax, spoke to me about using some of my Publisher

skills to help out, I was happy to oblige. Little did I realise that, over 5 years later I would still be here! With a full-time job and a family, this is one way I feel I can help. I find compiling the Newsletter immensely satisfying and I hope that it might make a little difference to some of you. Sadly, Andrew is no longer with us, but I still silently dedicate each issue to him and others who currently live with this disease.

'Just received the latest newsletter and just wanted to say how excellent I thought it was, the layout, photographs and content really make you want to read it and such upbeat articles as Alan's Brave Walk sends out such a positive message about living with MND.'

Jools Cook, National Office

Judging by some of the comments we have received over the years, we seem to be hitting the right note - this from regular contributor, Jane Gilbert :

'My eight years as the committee's publicity officer have been such a positive experience for me. I've been bowled over by all the inspirational people living with MND that I have met and written about. It's also wonderful to be part of such a successful branch. Keep those stories coming - we are making a difference. '

### John's Journey

Congratulations to the MND Association which has won a Charities Take Control vote with its John's Journey campaign on the London Underground. The charity will tell delegates at the Charity Communications '08 conference on May 8th how, with a slim budget, the powerful campaign succeeded in raising a record amount.

"To show you the meaning of Motor Neurone Disease, I am going to be photographed until I die."



John Bick, April 27

## Forthcoming Events

<b>London Marathon</b> Support Sally Minks and Charlie Pearson	Sun 13th April
<b>AGM</b> The Holiday Inn, Bath Road, Reading Speaker: Carol Allen, Specialist Neuro Nurse	Mon 21st April 7.30-9.30pm
<b>Drop-in Meeting</b> Thatcham Baptist Church Burdwood Centre	Mon 28th April 11.20-3.30pm
<b>Spring Conference South East</b> The Crowne Plaza Marlow	Sat 24th May 10-3.30pm
<b>Race Collection</b> Newbury Racecourse	Fri 16th May
Volunteers needed for the collection— please contact Gill Cheetham—see below	
<b>Gill's Open Garden</b> 10 Shaftesbury Avenue, Harmanswater, Bracknell	Sun 18th May
<b>Sponsored Walk</b> Newbury Rotary Club Starts from Snelmore Common	Sun 1st June 12-1pm

A special Thank you to The Holiday Inn, Bath Road, Reading and Kall Kwik Printers, Reading for their ongoing support

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**FIGHTING MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE**