



Night Golf - a Glowing Success!

A fiendishly difficult night golf competition played at Newbury's Donnington Grove Country Club proved a glowing success.

Spot the golfer?

Mike Payne tees off on the 14th tee, and Publicity Officer, Jane Gilbert, has the green easily in her sights!

Seven teams of four set out with their glow balls and light sticks under a full moon shining against the spooky back-drop of the Gothic mansion house.

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Players armed with glowing necklaces, special pens for scoring and lights on their trolleys and bags looked an eerie sight as they headed into the darkness for the dimly lit tees.

The tricky competition on Hallowe'en proved to be a treat for the Motor Neurone Disease Association which was given nearly £300 towards its research work.

One of the organisers, David Green, from Kintbury, now hopes night golf will become a regular fixture on the club's calendar.

He said: "I think the most difficult

thing was not being able to see your golf club. The full moon and fireworks over Newbury made it very spectacular and atmospheric."

Mr Green thanked Donnington Grove for its support and especially social secretary Timmy Brunsden for his help in marking out the course with lightsticks.



The victors, pictured with David Green (centre), were (L to R): Mrs Noriko Yamamoto, Mr Nagata Jun, Mr Katsuhiko Kawakita, and Mr Ryuji Yamamoto.

The fun evening rounded off a £13,000 fundraising effort led by Mr Green and his wife Annelie for the charity - In the summer they cycled 1000 miles with four friends from Casablanca to London.

Jane Gilbert

Dream it! Do it!

Sue and Dave's New York Marathon Challenge

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Supporter Sue Baker decided to run the New York Marathon just three months after her dad Bernie was diagnosed with MND.

Unlike fellow runner Dave Ennis, it was a completely new experience for Sue, who lives in Henley.

Bernie's 78th birthday last year prompted Sue to sign up for the Big Apple declaring: "As dad courageously faces the gradual loss of the use of his muscles, I decided that I could discover many I never knew I had!"

Here Sue tells Newsletter readers about her life-changing experience:

"One of the most exhilarating experiences I've ever had was crossing the finish line of the 2009 New York City Marathon.

It was the first time both Dave Ennis and I had taken part in the event and the first time I had ever run a marathon at all! Dave, a seasoned runner,

had been nursing a foot injury in the few months before and I had become completely single-minded in following a 16 week training plan which promised to get me over the line!

Dave and I met before the event in Reading's Forbury Gardens to share our training trials and tribulations and it was very reassuring for me to soak up Dave's confidence and enthusiasm for the fun in running....yes, that's right, the fun in running!

As the 1st November approached and travel plans were finalised, the goal to 'finish and have fun' became my mantra. Completing a marathon in itself is an experience unique to every individual, yet the New York City Marathon experience has become legendary for the amazing festival atmosphere and unconditional support afforded every runner.

On the day, right from the start in Staten Island, I was overwhelmed by the huge number of volunteers cheering everyone on. Two million people lined the streets of Brooklyn, Queens and the

Bronx and along every section of the 26.2 miles to the finish in Manhattan's Central Park.

That much unconditional support undoubtedly carried me through several miles, so Dave and I were ecstatic that we both finished and had fun!



Sue and Dave take a breather. For those of you who like to know the stats Dave's time was 4:33:07 and Sue's 5:14:41- a personal best !

Sue will be telling how she put her dream into action at a talk on February 28th (3pm-4pm) at Henley River and Rowing Museum where she will be in conversation with former bronze Commonwealth medalist Mike Gratton (see enclosed flier for details).

Jane Gilbert

Calling all farmers and landowners!

Do you know a landowner or farmer who might allow treasure hunters to trawl their land for a worthy cause?



If so, our metal detecting friends have come up with a scheme to unearth vitally needed funds for people living with MND.

ure-hunt at a stud farm, near Hungerford.

But Jim Bradshaw, chair of the WMDA, said even ten acres of land could yield a valuable boost to the charity's coffers.

He explained: "Our little club has 40 members and we could expect about 30 of them to pay £10 a head for the day if it is somewhere special. If it was a



big site we would open it up to people from other clubs as we did at Englefield.

The Newbury-based Wessex Metal Detecting Association is keen to find interesting sites, big or small, on which to hold rallies and is willing to give the branch all the proceeds from entrance fees.



An amazing £7,698 from three rallies has already been donated over recent years – two on the historic Englefield estate (see library pictures) and a third treas-

"All we need is for the charity to make the initial contact with landowners and we would do the rest. Suitable land can be cultivated, although not in crop, or pastureland. Most people prefer ploughed fields but grass is fine and so are the grounds of old country houses in and around the flower beds."

At the Englefield rally in 2007 two superb gold coins were the top finds among more than one

hundred items dating from iron age to modern.



Jim and his vice-chair Trevor Sprules have been great supporters of the MND Association since they lost their friend and fellow metal detecting enthusiast George Pearce to the disease. George, who lived at Newbury, also took some of his fascinating finds along to a branch open meeting.



Enthusiast Mick Turrell, of Leisure Promotions in the Kennet Centre, Newbury, spoke at last year's branch AGM about how the hobby can unearth a regular cash boost for charity.

If you know a landowner who might be able to support the Association in this way please call publicity officer Jane Gilbert or any of the committee (See Branch Contacts for details).

Jane Gilbert

Know the one about...?



A man entered a London Underground station. He saw a sign that said "Dogs must be carried on escalators". It took him 40 minutes to find one.

Roland Lewis

Profile on...Jane Gilbert



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I was inspired to use my journalism skills to help fight MND just after my mother died exactly 10 years ago. When former Association president Lady Hallifax, who knew of my newspaper background, gently reminded me there was a vacancy for a publicity officer in her branch how could I refuse?

The role in Reading and West Berkshire has been a great challenge and so rewarding. I'd like to think I have made a difference to the level of awareness of this devastating disease.

My job is all about communication – I need to know what is going on and to decide how best to convey that message. Our volunteers are brilliant at telling me about newsworthy events and the heart-warming stories behind them.

Mostly the job involves sending a press release and pictures to the various regional papers or asking local radio or TV to feature one of our members. Then there is this newsletter too for which I regularly write articles. I spent many years as a reporter on weekly and evening newspapers covering

everything from courts and council meetings to flower shows and fires. Latterly, I was a news editor on an evening newspaper and I now find it so interesting seeing media life from the other side of the fence!

There have been many memorable moments volunteering for the branch but I think one of the highlights was when actor Kenneth Branagh came to Newbury to introduce our special screening of his film "Theory of Flight" in 2000. It was shown as a tribute to my mother and others who had recently died of MND and proved a big fundraiser as well as boosting our profile.

Then closely followed working with the Duchess of York at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show where the branch had its own garden designed by one of our members who sadly did not live to see it win an award.

Another actor Simon Williams came to launch our successful Free Spirit balloon release and proved to be a good friend to the branch. Most recently we were visited by renowned film and stage actor Joss Ackland at the Lantern for Life event

and the press obliged with a picture spread the next week.

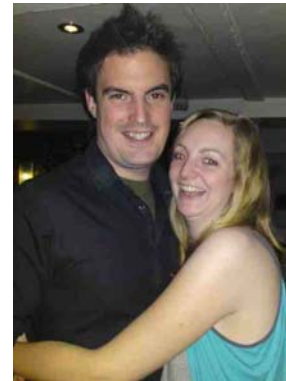
Quite often I'm busy helping to market one of our big events like the open garden day at Englefield House or a Walk to D'Feat MND. Several studio interviews on BBC Radio Berkshire have also given me the opportunity to talk about MND to a wider audience.

Ten years on I'm still doing the job because I very quickly realised that it's a two-way thing – there are mutual benefits. It has helped me to do something positive after MND touched my life and I feel so privileged to have met many inspirational people living with MND along the way and to have been able to tell their extraordinarily brave stories. I'm a mother-of- two and live with husband Derek in Bucklebury, near Reading. Keep those news items coming – there is much work to do!

Love is....running together!



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When Georgina Haines told her boyfriend she was running for the MND Association in the Reading Half-Marathon he immediately decided to join her.

in Devon several years ago.

Already Georgina, aged 27, and her partner Neil Cocks, have been pledged £750 in sponsorship for their run on March 21st.

Georgina, from Reading, said: "I am fully prepared to see Neil disappear into the crowd ahead as he is aiming for sub-2hrs. I, on the other hand, will just be glad to make it round in one piece!

The pair are training hard and taking their challenge so seriously they spent Valentine's Day running the 10k together at Chessington with Georgina declaring: "It's highly likely that Neil will be carrying me over the finishing line."

"Training is going well, only one twisted ankle so far! I bought Neil a GPS running gadget for his training which has really boosted his enthusiasm, he has returned the favour by buying me a year's supply of tubi-grips to prevent my recurring shin splints, how very romantic."

The Reading Half- marathon will be a first for them both although Neil, a 31-year-old accounts manager from Exeter, has completed a 13k run

Georgina took up the fund-raising running challenge after her dad Brian Haines - a popular regular at Branch drop-ins with his wife Margaret - was diagnosed with MND in Spring 2009.

She said: " I hope that the money we raise will help someone, somewhere with this horrible disease.

"Everyone has been extremely generous in their personal donations on our JustGiving website (www.justgiving.com/rungeorgierun). "

Georgina's bosses at Foster Wheeler Energy Ltd, Shinfield Park, near Reading, have generously donated £250 to the pair's sponsorship appeal.

Jane Gilbert

Mari's Grim Challenge



Undertaking their Grim Challenge are Mari on the left and Charlotte on the right .

Mari Lewis, daughter of Roland who is living with MND, and her friend Charlotte, completed the 8 mile Grim Challenge run in 1 hour 50 minutes 46 seconds on Sunday 6th December 2009.

It turned out to be a lovely sunny day although very muddy. 2,200 people took part and the girls overtook 200 of them - the last 200 not the first 200.

There was lots of support for all the runners and everyone enjoyed the occasion.

The girls were thrilled to take part and raised £1,865 for our branch of the Motor Neurone Disease Association. They would like to thank you all for your support and generosity.

Roland Lewis

Come (Line) Dancing with Carol and Reg



The picture shows one of the Socials, with at the front, left to right, Carol, Ellie, Mary and Reg.

Carol Bishop and I are keen line-dancers, and attend lessons every Wednesday at the Crescent Resource Centre in Lower Earley. During August our instructors, Steph and Julie of Steps and Stetsons, take a well-earned break, but this leaves us with a gap in our lives.

Three years ago Carol had the idea that we could run Charity Socials to take up the slack. This is the third year that we have been doing this, and proceeds have gone to the MND Association in memory of my wife, Susan Watson, who was a keen line dancer, and who died of MND in 2006.

This year we changed our approach slightly and arranged the Socials to be official MNDA Charity Events, which meant we could hire the hall for a much lower fee.

We actually covered five Wednesdays in July and August last year, and also ran a raffle. We charged £5 on the door, and over the five weeks took £887 in door money and raffle sales. Hall hire came to £228, so we raised £659 for the Association, which we felt was very successful.

Thanks are due to Steph and Julie of Steps and Stetsons (www.stepsnstetsons.co.uk/) for their support, and especially for the loan of CDs – this was vital. Also thanks to Ellie and Mary for assisting, to the staff at the Crescent Centre for their co-operation, and of course to all the line dancers who came to the socials.

The good news is that we plan to run more charity line dancing events this summer!

Reg Watson

MND in the Mastermind spotlight

Comedian and writer Stewart Lee faced the challenge of the big black chair and a grilling from John Humphrys when he appeared on Celebrity Mastermind on Monday 4 January.

Stewart chose as his specialist subject the avant garde guitarist Derek Bailey who died from MND in 2005 and

nominated the MND Association as his chosen charity.

Stewart is the co-creator of Jerry Springer The Opera and an acclaimed writer and comedian. His most recent series Stewart Lee's Comedy Vehicle aired earlier this year on BBC2.



Quizzed out - it was a fix!



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The quiz evening on Saturday 28th November was a real treat and an opportunity to meet friends, old and new, in the impressive surroundings of the Tithe Barn at Avington Manor. Our sincere thanks go to Gillian, Lady Howard de Walden, for arranging such a splendid venue, which really added to the special atmosphere for the evening.

The Ploughman's supper at half time was much appreciated, giving a chance for the brain cells to recover from the fierce competition, which reigned during the first part of the evening.

The pressure did not let up in the second half, however. Spurred on by wine and whis-

pered conversations, the frantic scrabbling of pens on scraps of paper could be heard throughout. You might think that this was simply entertainment but the contestants took it very seriously and gave their all.

The runners-up were firing on all barrels, answers coming like bullets. Unfortunately, as one team member muttered under her breath, they kept discarding the right answers. This was particularly galling as they only lost by one point..... and that's another thing - I would like to know how Alec Jenkin's team won by that precious one point, bearing in mind that he is a friend of the quiz master! I am not one to cast aspersions but it looks

very suspicious to me! It was a fix!

Even the diabolical weather, heavy snow falling as we all made our way home, did not spoil the enjoyment of a fine evening.

Our sincere thanks go to the quiz-master and his wife, Tony and Olwyn Wainwright. The defeated teams will have their chance for revenge, however, as Tony and Olwyn have very generously offered to run another quiz for us later in the year.

Val Pearson

Rodney's Roaring Success

You may remember talented artist, Rodney Lunn, scooped a national award for his colourful work, days after losing his battle with Motor Neurone Disease. Rodney's entry was selected as one of the winners in a Christmas Card design competition to mark the 30th anniversary of the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

Sadly, he never knew of his success, as he died, aged 67 in the Royal Berkshire Hospital the week before the final judging took place. His wife, Paddy, said 'He would be so pleased. I can imagine him saying 'the best artists have to die before they get recognition'

The local branch had 150 packs of Rodney's Christmas card printed separately and we are very pleased to be able to tell you that they were *completely* sold out - in fact we could have sold more!

Many thanks to those of you who bought cards for family and friends. In total, the Branch sold just under £1,100 worth of Christmas cards this year and will receive a further 20% rebate from National Office to boost Branch funds.



Rodney is pictured here with wife, Paddy.

Hundreds gather to protest global warming?



Thank you to Carol Allen and Val Pearson for this headline story!



And, from Roland Lewis via the Daily Mail ... it looks like the work of aliens, late-night pranksters or an as yet undiscovered animal building a nest.



But this strange-looking snow formation in Somerset has a very natural explanation.

'Snow rolls' are cylinders of snow found in freezing conditions on open ground and most commonly appear on the prairies of North America.

I rang the swine flu hotline but all I got was crackling....

Roland Lewis



Diary Dates

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Dream it, Do it! Sun 28 Feb
3-4pm
River and Rowing Museum
Henley-on-Thames

Sue Baker and Mike Gratton on putting your running dreams into action.

Drop-in Meeting Tues
16 March
11.30am-2.30pm
St. Luke's Church Hall
Englefield Road, Theale

Naidex Exhibition Tues-Thurs
20 -22 Apr
Halls 17,18,19
NEC Birmingham

www.naidex.co.uk

The UK's largest event for homecare, disability and rehabilitation. An opportunity to test, touch and compare the latest products and services to aid independent living.

Branch AGM Wed
28 Apr
7.30-9.30pm
Holiday Inn
Reading West

Speaker TBA

Spring Conferences
Southwest 17 Apr
Southeast 18 Apr
Home Counties 23 May

For further information or to register:
www.mndassociation.org/conferences or contact
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