



Multiple Sclerosis Society

Registered Charity Nos 1139257/SC041990
Registered as a limited company in England
and Wales 07451571

Dear Friends

Many of our members will have been shocked to hear of the death of Gabriel Stocks, in a tragic accident on the flooded River Thames.

Gabriel, a former member of our branch, had worked tirelessly for people with MS. He was once a key member of the Thames Valley Regional Committee in the role of web manager. He was also a founding member of the Henley branch, which he had served as chairman and treasurer.

He died after trying to negotiate the flooded and unlit towpath beside the swollen Thames on his mobility scooter at Osney. Both he and the machine went into the water. Gabriel was pulled out, but pronounced dead at the scene. The Thames had overflowed due to the recent heavy storms.

Gabriel was a 47-year-old single

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Newsletter**

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man and retired engineer and lived in Kelham Hall Drive, Wheatley.

After the accident, Superintendent Christian Bunt, Oxford police commander, appealed to people to stay away from flood areas.

He said: "This tragic incident highlights the dangers of using pathways which have flooded. The public should be particularly careful following the recent heavy rainfall, especially along the River Thames, and ensure they do not put themselves at risk by entering flood water. I urge anyone using these areas to take extra caution."

Sue Hannaford, the MS Society's local support development officer, said: "Gabriel was a lovely man, a great committee member and was passionate about supporting people with and affected by MS."

Death is said to have been due to drowning with a contributory cause of multiple sclerosis. A full inquest will be heard later.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust is holding another 'Oxford Multiple Sclerosis Update' at Oxford Spire Four Pillars Hotel in Abingdon Road, Oxford, on Saturday, 8th March from 10.15am to 3.30pm. Lunch and refreshments will be served.

There will be displays about MS research being carried out in Oxford, an update on clinical services and therapies available to people with MS, and details about on-going projects and what is planned for the future. Winners of the Oxford MS Young Investigator Award and the MS Inspiration Award will also be announced.

This is the second year that the event has been held and branch members who attended last year will tell you how informative it was. Space is limited so please book early – email mstrialsinfo@ndcn.ox.ac.uk or write to MS Trials Unit, Neurosciences Offices, Level 3, John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford OX3 9DU, stating your name, dietary requirements and seating requirements.

CLOSER LINKS

As a branch, we are trying to forge closer links with the MS Therapy Centre at Milton Park, near Didcot. The centre, which is

under-used at present, offers therapies, information and support for people with MS in a pleasant environment – a service which could benefit some of our members.

It provides physiotherapy, osteopathy, massage, reflexology, acupuncture, foot treatment and hyperbaric oxygen therapy. It has also just added a small gym.

We will publicise the centre's activities regularly and the centre will promote ours. We hope in this way to complement each other's activities and provide a better service to people with MS and their carers. We have invited a representative to attend our March Open Day and give a brief talk about the centre's work after our annual meeting.

Staff will be pleased to show you round the centre at a convenient time if you call **01235 832023** or visit www.omstc.org

CELEBRITY CARDS

The MS Society invited famous names to create birthday cards to mark its 60th anniversary. Thirty-five cards were received from celebrities and then auctioned on eBay, raising £2,900 for MS research. The highest bid was £455 for a card designed by David Tennant (Dr Who).



Chrissie's owls proved very popular when they appeared at our October Open Day. Look out for more birds, animals and other surprises at our April and September Open Days



FIRST PILL

An Oxford drug company has developed the first pill to treat relapsing and remitting MS. In the past, the only treatment was through injections.

However, Genzyme, based at the Oxford Business Park at Cowley, has now had its pill, Aubagio, approved by Nice, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence. It is said to slow the degenerative effects of MS.

The advance has been welcomed by the MS Society, which described it as excellent news for people with MS.

Spokesman Jenna Mahoney said: "There are a number of treatments for this sort of MS, but they are all injectable. This offers people an alternative for the first time."

She said that in a recent MS Society survey, a huge proportion of people with MS said they would prefer a tablet to an injection.

MEL DAVIES

Our branch was well represented at the funeral of Mel Davies, a member and supporter for many years. Mel came to our Open Day with his wife Nancy, who had MS, and continued to attend after she died. He moved from

his home at Didcot to a care home in Sussex a year ago to be near his family and died on New Year's Day.

The family decided to bring Mel back to Didcot for the funeral – many of his friends and colleagues attended the service at St Peter's Church.

Afterwards, fittingly, a reception was held at Didcot Railway Club – Mel had worked on the railways at Didcot for 48 years, first as a locomotive fireman and later as a driver, after leaving his native South Wales as a teenager.

RECYCLING CASH

The MS Society's three-year partnership with The Recycling Factory is paying handsome dividends, with more than £50,000 raised for MS through members' recycling efforts.

Print cartridges, mobile phones and electronic gadgets, including MP3 players, sat navs, electronic games consoles and digital cameras, are all worth money.

Recycling envelopes are enclosed with every issue of MS Matters, the MS Society's bi-monthly magazine. Just pop your unwanted, recyclable items in the post (no stamp is needed as postage is free).

OPEN DAYS

After our usual break in January, we started our 2014 programme of Open Days with a visit by Hazel Brunier, who entertained us on her accordion and invited us to join in some popular songs.

Our Open Day on Friday, 7th March will be taken up by our annual meeting. This is your chance to decide who serves on the branch committee and to put forward ideas for the future. The accounts prepared by our treasurer, Brian Hawtin, are attached to this newsletter.

At our Open Day on Friday, 4th April, we will welcome Clive and Jayne and their Wheatley Birds of Prey. Our two previous meetings with owls have proved very popular, so please come along and enjoy seeing these and other wonderful creatures at close hand.

Brenda Franklin will lead another of her hands-on craft workshops at our Open Day on Friday, 2nd May – your chance to be creative.

COLLECTIONS

Our collections at the Westgate Centre in Oxford in January and February were called off after heavy flooding.

There didn't seem much point spending hours in the cold, wind

and rain with collection tins when the city centre was almost empty.

Our fundraising team, however, has negotiated another collection date at the Westgate – Thursday, 1st May, coinciding with the annual MS Week.

With the centre management's agreement, we plan to hold a Cake Break at the same time, offering a piece of cake to passersby in exchange for a donation to MS funds.

Meanwhile, don't forget - we have been offered the chance to collect at Tesco stores in Cowley, Didcot and Bicester on Wednesday, 2nd April. Please call Alan Cusden or Geoff Cowan to offer your services. Their numbers are printed later in the newsletter.

MOUNTAIN CLIMB

A trek to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro is being planned in August, exclusively for MS Society supporters.

The party will include Paralympic dressage rider Simon Laurens, who was diagnosed with MS in 2005.

The team will climb the Lemosho route, through rainforest, desert and glacier, over eight days to the ice-capped peak at 5,895m (or 19,341ft).

Call Rebecca Stead on **020 8438 0890** if you have a taste for adventure.

BRIEFLY

The branch has a group membership at Oxsrade, the sports and leisure centre in Marsh Lane, Marston. Members can use the facilities – just say ‘MS member’ when you get there, but call **01865 741386** beforehand to check on availability of equipment.

The owners of Ellwood Cottages at Blandford Forum, Dorset, are offering “exceptional holiday accommodation for people with disabilities, their families, friends and carers”. If anyone considering a holiday break would like a brochure, please see our secretary, Jo Hawtin, at the March Open Day.

The MS Society has relaunched a partnership with the Carers Trust and local Crossroads Care scheme to offer people with MS and their families care and support from trained staff during a short break or holiday. Call the Carers Trust on **020 8498 7900** for details.

Research funded by the MS Society has found that short periods of moderately intense exercise, such as walking or steady cycling, can improve fatigue levels and the quality of life of people with MS.

MS Week, the annual event

promoted by the MS Society to raise awareness of MS and campaign for improvements in care and treatment, takes place from Monday, 28th April to Sunday, 4th May.

There are still plenty of vacancies for members and friends to join our 100 Club. Please call the 100 Club organiser, Brenda Franklin, on **01993 842076** or see her at one of our meetings. It’s a good opportunity to win a cash prize for yourself and to help branch funds at the same time. The next draw will be at our March Open Day.

Let us know if you hear of anyone ill or in hospital. Call **0779 237 7178** for all welfare matters. Send correspondence to John Chipperfield at 3 Lambs Close, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2YD. For the MS nurses, call **01865 234461** or email ms.advice@orh.nhs.uk Call **01865 231869** for information about ongoing and new MS trials. To contribute to the newsletter, call John Chipperfield on **01865 374877**, write to 3 Lambs Close, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2YD or send an email to mjpchipperfield@yahoo.co.uk

All views expressed in this newsletter are individual and not necessarily the view or policy of the charity or its supporters.

Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st October 2013

	Open Day	Information Centre	General	Total	Previous Year
	£		£	£	£
Fund Balance at 1st November	-47	617	20,457	21,027	18,258
Income					
Donations	4,672			4,672	7,608
Raffles	846			846	413
Travel Contrib	174			174	228
Coffee Mornings			320	320	433
Subscriptions			864	864	908
Grants				0	0
Bank Interest			145	145	140
Commission			33	33	0
Total Income	5,692	0	1,362	7,054	9,730
Expenditure					
Grants Given			750	750	5,014
Outings & Socials	5,667			5,667	0
Purchase of Equipment				0	1,056
Transport	1,863			1,863	0
Purchases for Resale				0	211
Fund Raising				0	255
Printing & Stationery			245	245	142
Postage			124	124	202
Telephone		50		50	0
Other			67	67	81
Adjustment			1	1	
Total Expenditure	7,530	50	1,187	8,767	6,961
Fund Balance at 31st October	-1,885	567	20,632	19,314	21,027
Represented By:-					
Cash in Hand				Nil	nil
Stock				100	100
Bank Balance				19,480	21,163
				19,580	21,263
Less					
Sundry Creditors				-266	-236
				19,314	21,027

The Annual General Meeting of the Oxford & District Branch of the MS Society will be held on Friday, 7th March 2014 at 10.30am at Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon.

Only those who have paid their annual subscription by the beginning of the AGM can vote and stand for office. Members are invited to put names forward for any of the following roles:

- Chairman
- Vice-chairman
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Support Officer
- Fundraising Officers
- Open Day Coordinator
- Transport Officer
- Newsletter Editor
- Membership Secretary
- Information Officer

Nominations should be seconded and must reach our secretary, Jo Hawtin, at 11a Vicarage Road, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2EL by 11th February. If you are unable to attend the AGM, you may nominate a branch member to be your proxy.

Committee Nomination Form

Name of nominee.....

Telephone number of nominee.....

Position on committee.....

Proposed by.....Signed.....

Seconded by.....Signed.....