



Multiple Sclerosis Society

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Dear Friends

A quiz evening at the Northcourt Centre, Abingdon, where we hold our monthly Open Days, featured the MinnowS, a team from our branch.

We did consider calling ourselves the MaeStros or the MaSters, also playing on the letters MS, but thought that might be tempting fate. It was better, we reckoned, to rise from the bottom than fall from the top! So the MinnowS it was.

Our team of Dorothy and Michael Warner, Jo and Brian Hawtin, Alan Cusden and John Chipperfield didn't win, but also didn't come away with the wooden spoon. We ended somewhere in the middle, with 58 points from a possible 101. So not a bad effort.

Some of the questions were really obscure and difficult. All we can say is that there must be

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some very knowledgeable people in Abingdon! Although it was a fun evening, it also had a serious purpose – to raise money for maintenance and improvement work at the centre. The final total was £703.

During a break in the quiz, fish, fishcakes, sausages and chips were served from a van parked outside – no easy task when there were more than 100 hungry people inside!

STAMP WINDFALL

John Franklin's latest collection of used stamps netted £83 for our funds. Don't forget to tear off and keep the stamp when you get a letter. They can be British or foreign stamps, but they should have at least an eighth of an inch of envelope around them.

Give them to John at our Open Days, or send them to 14 Station Road, Brize Norton, Oxon OX18 3PU. But remember to pay the correct postage, otherwise he has to pay an excess charge, cutting into his profit!

OPEN DAYS

We were pleased to welcome Malcolm Nelson to our October Open Day. He kept us amused for more than an hour about his tales of his life as a customs officer chasing smugglers.

So fascinating and gripping was his talk, if members had had their way, he would have talked all the way through lunch! We will be inviting him back for further stories, so keep an eye on future newsletters for the date of his return.

Brenda Franklin led another of her popular craft workshops at our November Open Day, inviting members to create their own Christmas decorations, and in December, we will welcome back two of our favourite performers, Diane and Ian Woods, who will entertain us with their unique brand of music and humour.

FLOWER SHOW

Members of Abingdon Flower Club worked hard to produce some imaginative displays for their annual show at St Nicolas Church in the town centre. They hold their meetings at the Northcourt Centre in Abingdon, where we have our monthly Open Days, and decided to give proceeds from this year's show to our branch. We hope some of

our members managed to get along to see the magnificent exhibits during the three days they were on display.

Our chairman, John Chipperfield, attended the preview and thanked members for their support. He has promised to attend a meeting in the New Year to receive their cheque.

FESTIVE EVENTS

Two Christmas events are being organised by the Friends of the Oxford Centre for Enablement.

The first is a Christmas party in the OCE building on the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre site at Headington on Friday, 5th December at 7pm. A band will play carols, Santa will put in an appearance and there will be food, drink, a quiz and other attractions. Tickets are available at OCE.

The second event is carol singing with a band in the Westgate Centre on Thursday, 11th December from 11am. Everyone is welcome to come along and join in the fun.

Some of our members are regular visitors to the OCE, and both events will raise money for the centre, for equipment and other amenities not available from NHS funds.



MAKING FRIENDS

Young Caitlin Cope, sitting on mum Carolyn's knee, left, shows no fear as Darwin, the panther chameleon, settles down beside her during the visit of Emilie Clack and her rescued animals and reptiles from Amate Animalia to our September Open Day. Below, June Stephen gets to grips with Nagini, the boa constrictor.



SEVEN GOALS

The MS Society has set seven long-term goals in a new five-year strategy. The ultimate goal is to find a cure for MS, so the new policy reaffirms the society's commitment to increase investment in research.

Meanwhile, the seven goals are:

1. Effective treatments
2. Care and support
3. Research so that fewer people develop MS
4. Quality information
5. Community work so that no-one faces MS alone
6. Support for families and carers
7. Greater certainty about the future

At the same time, the society is carrying out a review to streamline its workforce and services and provide more effective support to local voluntary branches like ours. It has warned that the review may lead to redundancies among staff, although some are likely to be redeployed in new jobs.

CHALLENGE FAILS

The MS Society and other charities have failed in an attempt to challenge the Government's decision to change the criteria for the highest rate mobility component of PIP, the

new Personal Independence Payment.

Under the new rules, if people with a physical disability can walk 20 metres, they could miss out on the higher rate of the mobility part of the benefit. The previous distance was 50 metres. Half a million disabled people could lose money.

Although criticising the Government's decision-making process, the judge ruled that it was lawful and threw out the case. The MS Society and its partners may appeal.

50 YEARS OLD

One event that has slipped by without our noticing is the 50th anniversary of our branch. It was in 1964 that our branch was formed, 11 years after the national MS Society came into existence.

Many of you will remember that we celebrated our 40th anniversary in 2004 with a tea party at Lady Margaret Hall, organised by our then vice-chairman and treasurer, Paul Severn. The guests included the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Oxford, Bryan and Beryl Keen.

We'll make a note and ensure we remember to celebrate our 60th birthday in 2024!



Three of the exhibits on display at Abingdon Flower Club's annual show – the club has kindly agreed to donate profits from the show to our branch.



BRIEFLY

A collection at the funeral of Christopher Scully, son of branch member Margaret Scully, raised £400, which the family has kindly donated to our branch. Our sympathy goes to the family and our thanks to all who donated.

Margaret Shergold looks after patients at her foot clinic at Wheatley and, for many years, has given the money she earns to our branch. Her latest cheque was for £384.50. Our thanks to her for her continued support.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Douglas Bradley, who attended our Open Days with his wife Hilary on several occasions. Douglas was always the best dressed man, wearing his jacket and tie. Our sympathy goes to his family.

John Winn dropped in to our November Open Day to hand over a cheque for £100 – proceeds from talks he gives on his hobby of making steamboats. He has agreed to give a talk at one of our future meetings. Our thanks to him for his support.

The wheelchair we kept at the Northcourt Centre at Abingdon for emergency purposes has had to be removed. Unfortunately, the chair, donated by our membership secretary Stevan

Heads, does not fold down and the hall management committee ruled that it was taking up too much room in the store cupboard. If anyone has a spare wheelchair which does fold down, please let us know.

Rosemary Watt-Wyness, former director of policy and strategy at the Prince's Trust, has been appointed the new executive director of services and support with the MS Society.

If you would like to receive the newsletter in colour by email, send you email address to sheads@icloud.com

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.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday December 5: Open Day, Northcourt Centre, Abingdon. Christmas music from Diane and Ian Woods. 10am-4pm.

Friday December 5: Christmas party at Oxford Centre for Enablement. 7pm. Tickets available from OCE.

Thursday December 11: Christmas carol singing at the Westgate Centre. From 11am. Collection in aid of Oxford Centre for Enablement.

No Open Day in January

Friday February 6: Open Day, Northcourt Centre, Abingdon. Speaker to be arranged. 10am-4pm.

Friday March 6: Open Day, Northcourt Centre, Abingdon. Annual meeting. 10am-4pm.

Call Alan Cusden on 01865 723420 or Geoff Cowan on 07930 542692 if you wish to help with fundraising or collections.

Call Alan Cusden on 01865 723420 if you wish to go on a boat trip

Don't forget to look at our website at www.mssociety.org.uk/oxford

Oxford and District Branch Officers – 2014-5

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