



## Oxford & District

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Dear Friends

A belated Happy New Year to you all – and with Covid hopefully fading into the background, we trust that 2023 will be a good one for you all.

We are building up what we hope will be an interesting list of talks and entertainment at our monthly Open Days at the Northcourt Centre in Abingdon.

Anthony King will start our 2023 programme by describing his career as a court judge on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

He will be followed on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March by Danny Grocock from the Co-op with a talk entitled 'Tax, Care, and Toy Boys', while on Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, we will welcome the Lord Mayor of Oxford, James Fry, who will describe his role as the city's civic leader.

To those of you joining us at our Open Days, please continue to

## Group Newsletter Spring 2023

bring your own lunch. As many of you will know, since Covid, MS Society rules have prevented our team of volunteers handling food. This work has to be done by an outside firm or organisation which has its own insurance to cover anything that might go wrong.

We have been trying to find someone suitable to take over the task, but it is not proving easy – catering for just one day a month does not seem to appeal. However, we will keep trying.

We will continue to serve tea, coffee and other drinks when everyone arrives at our Open Days and later, during and after lunch.

We are also pleased that our three therapists – Alison Wiltshire, Helen Thorpe and Neil Lambert – are continuing their valuable work as usual.

We still have some gaps in our 2023 Open Day programme, so if you have ideas for guest speakers, singers and musicians we could invite, please let our co-ordinator, John Chipperfield, or any of our committee know.

## **DANY'S APPEAL**

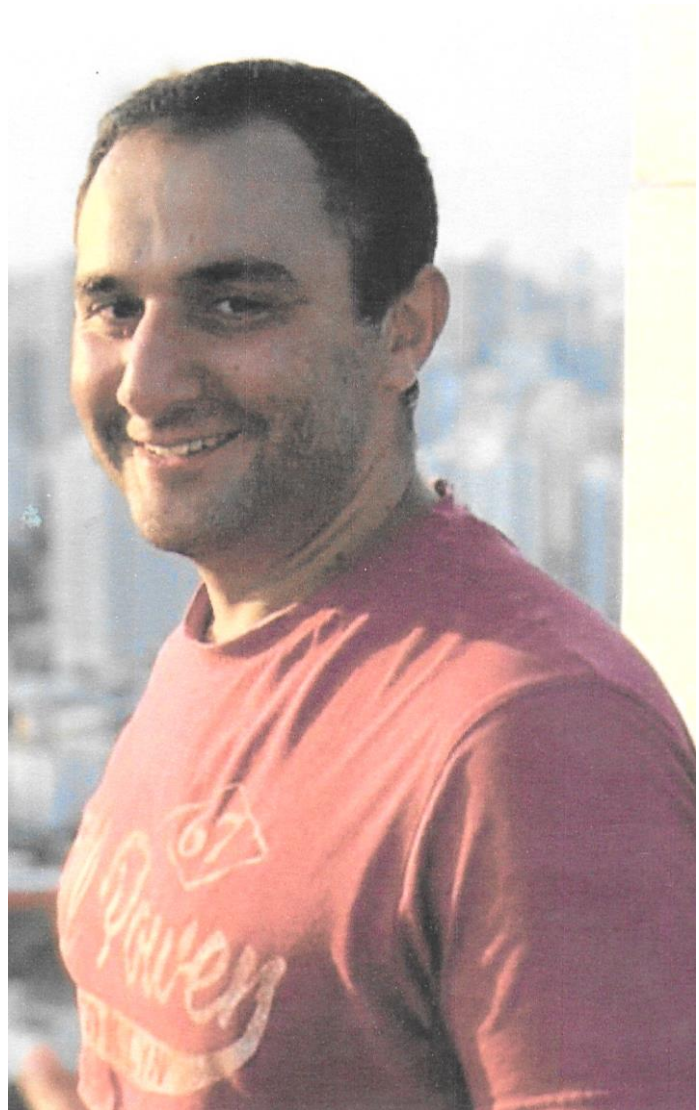
Our best wishes go to Hamdany 'Dany' Sharif who has set out to raise money for stem cell therapy to ease his MS.

He was diagnosed with MS three years ago and has suffered painful muscle spasms, bowel issues and pins and needles through his body. Trips and falls have become more frequent and he fears his mental health has declined.

Dany, who is 33 and lives at Fewcott, near Bicester, told the Oxford Mail: "Before my diagnosis, I was perfectly normal, fit and happy. However, my life has become a constant, unpredictable battle.

"I initially sought medical help when I suddenly woke up to blurred vision and tingling throughout my abdomen and discovered I could no longer walk without crippling fatigue. Since then, day by day, my symptoms have worsened. Life has become an unbearable chore."

After doctors told him that, because he was young and healthy, stem cell therapy would be a viable option, he has launched a GoFundMe appeal to help raise the money.



He said: "I never thought I would be telling this story, but here I am. I have to cope with the cards I've been dealt. With enough donations, I'll be given a second chance at life. After the treatment, I can expect an increase in energy, strength and mobility. Although I may never completely rid myself of MS, I have a chance of halting its progression."

The Hamdany Sharif: Stem Cell Treatment for Multiple Sclerosis appeal is at [gofundme.com](https://gofundme.com)



**Don Rouse, in mock beard and moustache, who entertained us at our December Open Day – his daughter Julia is kneeling beside him**

## **DISABLED ACCESS**

An interesting letter highlighting the difficulties disabled people have accessing many venues in Oxford appeared in the Oxford Mail.

Pat Whitehouse, of Headington, wrote: "I thought it was a legal requirement for people who use wheelchairs to be able to access all, or most, areas.

"The excuses are 'there is only a small step to negotiate' or 'can you get out of your wheelchair?' As for accessible toilets, I often find chairs and tables blocking the entrance. Another comment is 'Let me help you', but that is why people are disabled – unable to do things for themselves.

"Could I also ask people not to park over dropped kerbs on pavements? It means that the wheelchair user has to find another dropped kerb nearby.

"I even had to ask a driving instructor with a pupil in the car to move which doesn't give the pupils the right idea about parking.

"Disabled people are entitled to get about the city easily. Please think about disabled people when parking or planning access to your restaurant etc. Could I also remind drivers that disabled

parking spaces are just for disabled people.

"Having had a good moan, I have to say that most people do go out of their way to be helpful, such as moving a chair from a table without being asked for access for the wheelchair user. Thank you. Now don't get me started about blocked fire exits!"

## **OUR FUTURE**

We always look on the bright side, but one thing is certain – we are all getting older, and that includes our committee members.

To put it bluntly, we need to recruit younger volunteers to lead us. Our ageing committee will not go on forever!

No-one has indicated that they wish to resign immediately, but we have to accept that at some time in the future, we will need new faces.

Now is the time to train volunteers to take over, while the present committee is still active. The last thing we want to see is our group folding because there is no-one to lead it.

To join our committee and help ensure our future, email our secretary, Jo Hawtin, at [jo.hawtin@ntlworld.com](mailto:jo.hawtin@ntlworld.com)

## **GOLDEN REWARD**

Nick Ray made headlines in the Oxford Mail with a story about a gold wrist watch his father was presented with for long service at the Pressed Steel car body plant at Cowley.

A reader from Norwich had written to the paper earlier to say that he was the proud owner of an Everest gold watch given to a former employee, J E Nelson, who worked for the firm from 1937 to 1962.

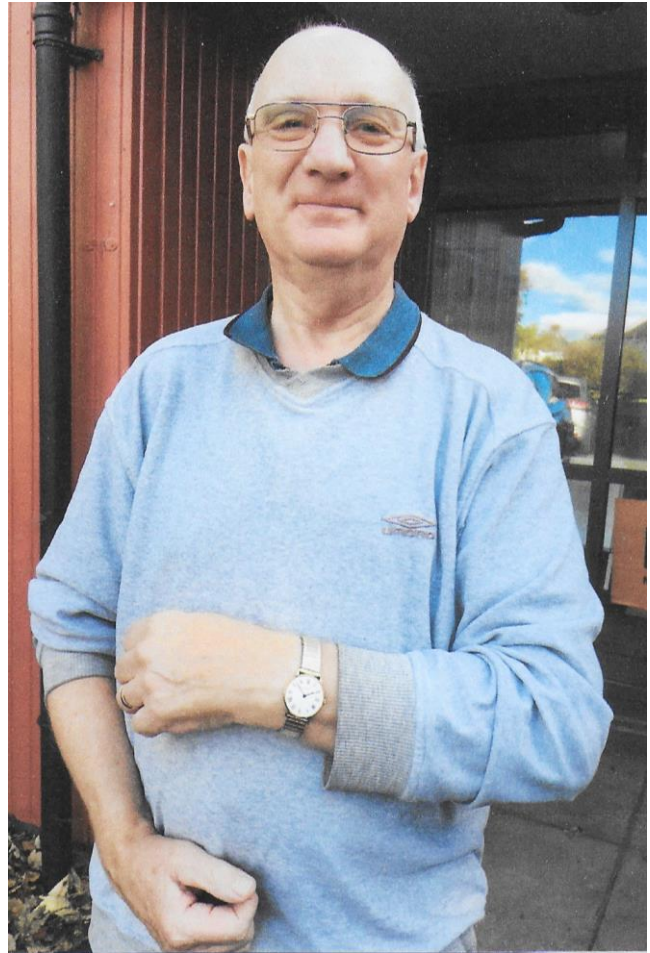
Nick spotted the story and revealed that the Garrard gold watch he was wearing was given to his father Donald in 1979 to mark his 25 years with the firm.

Donald worked in the press shop, creating the bodies for the vehicles before they were sent to the neighbouring Morris Motors' plant for final assembly.

Nick said: "My father very rarely wore the watch and I found it in a drawer after he died."

The company held an annual dinner, often at the Randolph Hotel in Oxford, when the latest employees to complete 25 years' service were welcomed to the 25 Year Club.

Our co-ordinator, John Chipperfield, featured the stories



in the Memory Lane section of the Oxford Mail he compiles every Monday.



We took a step back in time when we spotted a picture in the Oxford Mail, showing our former chairwoman, Pat Hodgson, at a cheque presentation ceremony.

Four customers at the White House pub at Bladon, near Woodstock, had taken part in a marathon canoe paddle up the River Thames from London to Oxford in 1979.

They were Geoff Ashman and his wife Jane, Dave Lambourne and Christine Surman.

They raised £610 to be shared by our branch and the young disabled unit at the Churchill Hospital at Headington.

Pictured left to right at the pub are Jane Ashman, Pat Hodgson, Christine Surman and Dr Katheryn Peete.

Our branch appears to have been very generous – it agreed after the ceremony to surrender its share and give the whole amount towards a new minibus for the young disabled unit.

## **OPEN DAYS**

Our thanks to our speakers, singers, and musicians who continue to entertain us at our monthly Open Days.

We were delighted to welcome back Jeff Rozelaar in November, with a talk entitled 'Bagels and Bacon', while in December, retired farmer Don Rouse returned with more amusing tales of country life.

We were grateful to Don for stepping in at the last minute. He was due to talk to us in April, but agreed to bring forward his visit when organist and singer Diana Woods had to pull out through illness.

## **RESEARCH STUDY**

Dr John Spreadbury, a Senior Research Fellow in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Southampton, writes:

We are running a research study investigating attitudes to digital health technology among people who provide care to those with neurological conditions.

We would like to speak to people who provide care or support to someone with multiple sclerosis and find out what they think about digital health technology and how it can be improved.

Participants do not have to be presently using digital health technology to take part.

The study is entitled: Neuro Digital: From Attitudes to Strategies (Work Package 1 Attitudes).

You can find more information about the study by visiting the following link: <https://www.arc-wx.nihr.ac.uk/research-areas/ageing-and-dementia/neuro-digital-from-attitudes-to-strategies/>

## **WE WANT TO KNOW!**

Don't forget, this is YOUR newsletter and we always like to hear what you are doing in your life.

If you have any stories to tell, written poetry, created paintings and drawings or taken family photographs in recent times, please send them to John Chipperfield at [mjpcipperfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mjpcipperfield@yahoo.co.uk) for inclusion in the next newsletter. We all love to hear what other members are doing in their lives.

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



**Together, we can be there for everyone affected by MS**

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

All Open Days take place, 10am-4pm, at Northcourt Centre, Abingdon, OX14 1NS.

**Fri. 3<sup>rd</sup> February**

**OPEN DAY - Anthony King.**  
Life as a Court Judge.

**Fri. 3<sup>rd</sup> March**

**OPEN DAY – Danny Grocock.**  
Tax, Care, and Toy Boys.

**Fri. 7<sup>th</sup> April**

**OPEN DAY – James Fry, Lord Mayor of Oxford.**

**Fri. 5<sup>th</sup> May**

**OPEN DAY – Andy Simpson.**  
A collection of country music.

**Fri. 2<sup>nd</sup> June**

**OPEN DAY – Chrissie Harper.**  
Chrissie Harper's owls provide a hoot.



## HELP AT A GLANCE

**MS Society helpline – 0808 800 8000** (Freephone)

**MS nurse advice line – 01865 234461**

[ouh.ms@nhs.uk](mailto:ouh.ms@nhs.uk)

(The advice line is an answer machine service monitored 9am-5pm, Mon- Fri)

**MS specialist nurse – Sue Barnden**

**01865 737465**

[ouh.cnsns@nhs.net](mailto:ouh.cnsns@nhs.net)

**Continence (bladder and bowel) nurse – 01865 904303**

**MS Therapy Centre**

37e Milton Trading Park, Abingdon

**01235 832023**

**Carers Oxfordshire – 0845 050 7666**

**MS resource centre – 0800 783 0518** (Freephone)

**MS Trust Library & Information Service – 0800 032 3839**

**NHS Direct - 111**

**Medical Emergency - 999**

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