

Warrington Branch

MiScellany

December 2010

Last time I wrote this editorial was the night before I travelled down to Oxford, to go to university. I'm now in my eighth week here (including fresher's week), and thought I would give you an update about how it's all going.

There are two stereotypical images of Oxford University. The first is of rich, posh boys from Eton, Harrow, and other southern world-renowned boarding schools reclining on leather armchairs in their oak-panelled studies, smoking pipes and wearing tweed, while remarking about the current state of the British economy, and the outcome of the next varsity boat race. The other is of small, pale, malnourished students, who hide away in their rooms for months on end, venturing away from piles of books on rare occasions to make a brief trip to the library, or even more rarely, to eat. Both of these types of people do exist here, but they are very much in the minority.

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For those of you who don't know, Oxford, like Cambridge and Durham, is split up into colleges. In the case of Oxford, there are just over thirty of these colleges. They differ greatly both in size and in character. Some are only for graduates, some even only for certain subjects. Some have only a few tens of students, other have hundreds. Some (like Wadham; my college) are very down to earth and relaxed, while others, like Christ Church, are highly pressured, and have formal dinners in large dining halls, where academic gowns are compulsory. Just as an aside, the Great Hall scenes in Harry Potter were filmed in Christ Church's dining hall. These different colleges tend to attract the types of people who conform to the stereotype of their college, and so the idea of certain colleges having certain types of people is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thankfully, I chose the college which seems to least conform to the Oxford stereotype. The amount of work, thought, most definitely does. My official timetable doesn't look too taxing; I have lectures or practicals from 9am to 1pm, and two hours of one-on-one tutorials per week.

However, each of these tutorials need preparatory work of usually about fifteen hours each. Suddenly, my week doesn't seem that free anymore! The word most often used to describe the Oxford terms is 'intense'. The reward is that they only last eight weeks, and so I break up for Christmas on the 4th of December!

The opportunity is amazing though; my tutors are all actively involved in their respective fields of research, and regularly produce papers for some of the best medical journals in the world. The course content is completely different to many of the other medical courses on offer in the country, in that we start by learning the scientific principles first, before doing the hands-on medicine in later years. This means that instead of learning the facts by rote, you can reason your way through them, which to me makes more sense. One of the most interesting aspects I have learnt about is applying maths to how the myelin sheath works for nerves, which gives an interesting way of understanding why Multiple Sclerosis affects nerve function as it does. Non-aca-

demically, I've made lots of friends here, and the people are generally very normal, we've already began searching for a house to rent in our second year. I've also been playing rugby for the college, although that isn't going quite so successfully, we've lost all seven of our matches so far, and have been relegated from the third to the fourth division! I did do very well in the rowing tests, but the 6am starts 4 times a week tipped the balance for me, and so have decided to stick to rugby!

As always, thank you for reading,

Sam King

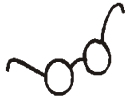


Our congratulations to:-

Graham BANKS	05.Dec
Liz SPENSLEY	08.Dec
Chris JANOVITZ	13.Dec
Steph ATHERTON	16.Dec
Jill SHERRATT	19.Dec
Margaret HUGHES	17.Jan
James WILDE	21.Jan
Jennifer CAIN	06.Feb
Karen DANIELS	06.Feb
Lorraine MORRIS	17.Feb
John TIPPING	24.Feb
Nicola BROSTER	25.Feb

**Support
Your
Branch
Attend Functions**

WANTED



Spare Spectacles
Contact Susan Atkinson
Tel 727612

Used Postage Stamps
Odd Balls of Wool
Contact Susan Atkinson
Tel. 727612



As you can see above we now have some of our members birthdays listed. If yours is not included and it falls within the dates shown then you haven't filled in and returned the data protection act form sent with last newsletter or you've opted to be left out. As you can see December is an important month as it includes mine.

Listening Ear - Margret Hughes - 01925 723917

MS Drop-in Coffee & Chat

When I discovered that I had M.S. back in 1995, I felt as though I had been dealt a major body blow. Whilst it was in a way a relief to have a name for all the weird and wonderful sensory symptoms that had been happening to me, it was without doubt the biggest shock of my life. My M.S. was not to be officially diagnosed until 1997, when my weird and wonderful symptoms got rather more worrying, and I had an MRI scan. Those two years were interesting to say the least. My knowledge of M.S. was purely academic – I had studied it as part of my degree, but I had never connected the symptoms that I was experiencing to the disease. I had always thought that having M.S. meant that you had problems walking and using your arms. I never for one moment realised that it could mean fuzzy feelings in your legs, arms & face, feeling as though fire ants were running down your leg, double vision, not being able to swallow and falling over if you shut your eyes whilst standing up.

During these two years only my close family knew about the likelihood that I had M.S. but I desperately needed to talk to other people about the condition. I had access to an email support newsgroup and I posted there to sound out whether I was jumping to the wrong conclusions. The general consensus was that I wasn't. I stayed with the newsgroup for a few years, as it was the only place that I could chat to other people about M.S.

With the support of the Warrington Branch of the M.S. Society, I am hoping to set up a drop-in meeting place for people who want to get together and talk about MS and how it is affecting our lives. By its very nature this group will probably appeal more to people who are newly diagnosed, but everyone will be very welcome. We have a venue in mind (at the Warrington Disability Partnership at Beaufort Street) but first of all I need to know if anyone is actually interested in such a group. The group will meet once a month and coffee will be provided. If you would be interested in such a group, can you please contact Mandy Wilton on 07734 952392 or at anwilton@hotmail.com.

100+Club

There are 109 members if you're not one of them please consider joining contact Chris Janovitz on 723564. Remember the more people join the higher the prizes go don't delay.

12th of October 2010
Members 109

Prize	Num	Name
1st	102	J Moston
2nd	075	Audrey Donaldson
3rd	007	KJ Critchley
4th	113	George Lilford
	063	Scott Jackson
	111	Roger Spensley
	056	G Atkinson
	030	J Burke Jr

9th of November 2010
Members 109

Prize	Num	Name
1st	020	Mary Burke
2nd	086	Olive Curley
3rd	047	Ann Hope
4th	017	K Daniels
	033	Mandy Wilton
	102	J Moston
	039	Colin Berry
	049	Julie Wilton

The amounts were £109.00, £59.00, £33.00 and 5 at £10 respectively

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Forthcoming Events

There is no social in January

8th February	Social St Josephs Club Penketh 7:30 pm
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8th March	AGM St Josephs club 7:30 PM
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Now that we have a very pleasant room at St Joseph's club why not come along to the AGM and take a look

Requests for transport - Jeff Richards 07738609018

Fundraising

Hello Everyone, It looks like we are now back in the Winter Season.

We have not had a lot of fundraising through the summer, but one of our member's mother and sister have kindly made some hats and scarves and hand made Xmas Cards to sell. These all sold at one of our Social Evenings held at the St. Josephs Social Club, Penketh.

The new venue is really nice and we have all been made to feel welcome, it would however be nice to see more members there.

On Bonfire night (the Saturday) we were asked by Keith Thompson from Raddon Court if we could provide some help at a charity Bonfire he was holding for MacMillans and a young child. Seven of us attended, Rita on the Hot Pot Van, Paul selling fireworks, Helen, Margaret and I selling sweets and bric-a-brac. Peter was selling raffle tickets and my husband ended up stacking the fridges in the bar. Of course for those of you who know Margaret she had to try everything on and demonstrate all the hardware. It was a rather muddy night as to be expected but we all enjoyed it. The hot pot van was always thirty deep.

We did have a couple of collecting tins dotted around and raised some money from this.

We have received a cheque from Keith Thompson for £500.

Our November social was organised by Julie and Mandy Wilton and was a Caribbean evening. Some of us dressed up in fancy dress and others had flower strands dangling around our neck. Julie and Mandy organised a tombola on the night and provided light re-



freshments. The money raised from the Tombola and sale of books raised £70.50. Thanks to Mandy and Julia for organising this event. It was enjoyed by all who attended.



Pictured bottom left is Capt Hook Jeff above left is Paul and Mary looking rather splendid and right is Peter looking like a real pirate

Margaret, Helen and Rita are also busy making a number of crafts for us to sell at local Xmas Fayres/Church Fetes etc. They have already attended a couple of church fetes. The same amount of money can be raised at these events compared with Car Boots and members running these Xmas Fayres don't have to get up as early, are much warmer and are in a friendly environment.

Well done ladies and gentleman. There may be products to purchase at the Xmas Dinner in December.

Look forward to seeing you all then.

Julie Richards

Dave Hinde Travel Services	
	D.H.T.S. Disabled Travel Service
14 Seater Mini buses	
Tel. 01744 615851	
Mobile 07887 615040	
Parcel delivery service. Accounts	

<http://warringtonms.org.uk>

— Overhaul of Benefits May Impact on MS —

Recent benefits shake-up promises to simplify the benefits system with a new universal credit. But it also introduces a harsh new regime of sanctions for employment support allowance (ESA), and limits ESA support to just one year for many people.

The new sanctions are aimed at people in the ESA 'work-related activity group' (meaning that rightly or wrongly they're deemed eligible to return to work at some point), and those found 'fit for work' and put on Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). These claimants risk benefits payments being stopped, for a potentially indefinite period, if they do not comply with requirements to 'prepare for work'.

Those in the 'work related activity group' and claiming 'contribution based' ESA (based on paying National Insurance contributions in the past) are seeing their benefits limited even more. Payment will be restricted to one year, after which the person will lose their support if they have not been able to find a job and they are not eligible for an income-related benefit.

MS Society 12/11/2010

MS Nurse

There will be no clinic in December.
In the New Year the clinic will still be 2nd
Monday of the month at Woolston
but will be booked direct with the nurse.
Her telephone number will be in the next
newsletter if you require an appointment
before then contact
Dorothy on 268820 for details

— Review of Work Capability Assessment —

An independent review of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), the main assessment for Employment and Support Allowance, calls for extensive reforms to make it fairer and more effective.

The report echoes many of the concerns we outlined in our September response to Professor Harrington's review. Here's a lowdown of what this means for people with MS.

1. Government will review assessments for fluctuating conditions

After lots of campaigning by the MS Society and other disability charities, the Government has committed to bringing its review of assessments for fluctuating conditions forward by a year.

This is great news for people affected by MS – it's a chance for us to work with the DWP to look at how the medical assessment can better assess unpredictable conditions like MS, as well as symptoms like pain and fatigue.

2. Medical examination centres to employ experts

ATOS Healthcare, the company who assess ESA claimants, will employ mental, intellectual and cognitive 'champions' in each medical examination centre, to help decision makers understand complex medical conditions and symptoms.

3. Decision makers will have access to healthcare professionals

The review recommends that decision makers get advice from professional healthcare advice to make sure medical reports are accurate. If decision makers are going to get more decisions correct, they need better information, including information from healthcare professionals.

4. Greater transparency

ATOS will send every claimant a copy of their personalised summary. If any inaccuracies are spotted, you have the right to discuss these with a decision maker. This aims to reduce the high number of appeals and additional stress the current system creates.

— Eleventh hour proposal for Leuchie House —

A proposal to take over the running Leuchie House respite care centre in Scotland has been received by the MS Society.

The proposal was made last week and was the first and only offer to run the centre in the six months since we announced in June that we would no longer provide residential respite care

Having spent time assessing the proposal, we are pleased to announce that Leuchie House will remain open under the MS Society for a further six months, to facilitate a smooth transfer. The Society will continue to review progress and consider a further extension if this seems appropriate. This honours a commitment we made from the outset to give any credible venture time to get off the ground. Until this announcement Leuchie House was to close for good on 3 December.

The new venture is led by Mairi O'Keefe (current Leuchie House manager) and now has the backing of a number of organisations. It is only in the last few days that funding arrangements have become clear. The proposal plans to offer more beds at the centre and open it up to people with other long-term conditions; something the MS Society is unable to do under our charitable objects. One of the aims of the new venture will be to focus on people with the highest dependency needs.

Simon Gillespie, Chief Executive of the MS Society, said: "This is a really encouraging and welcome development. Leuchie House is much loved by the people who visit it and we have always been committed to finding an alternative provider to help keep it open. It is still early days, but we have had a positive response from the property's owners to this new bid and look forward to working with all concerned to help secure the future of Leuchie House for people with MS."

"Meanwhile, the MS Society will continue to campaign for more equitable access to services for people with MS right across Scotland and the UK. It is unacceptable that basic provision such as MS nurses, access to approved drugs and respite care facilities remains patchy at best. Only by working with local authorities and government can charities hope to serve the needs of the 100,000 plus people in the UK who live with this debilitating condition."

Mairi O'Keefe added: "I am very happy to be working with the MS Society to ensure the venture is successful."

———— Vitamin D campaigner Wins Award ————

Teenage campaigner Ryan McLaughlin has won the 'Teenager of Courage' category at the Daily Mirror's Pride of Britain awards. He was honoured for his high-profile Shine on Scotland campaign, which aimed to raise awareness of the link between vitamin D deficiency and multiple sclerosis (MS). He was inspired by his mum, Kirsten, who has MS.

Pride of Britain 'celebrates the achievements of truly remarkable people who make our world a better place.'

Ryan received his award at a star-studded award ceremony that was screened on ITV on Wednesday 10 November. Our congratulations to Ryan!

MS Society Scotland

———— Membership News ————

Unfortunately since the last newsletter we have been informed of the death Marie Longworth who died in July last year but we have only just been made aware of this.

We have also been informed of 7 new members previously only registered with headquarters. They will be receiving this newsletter and I hope they will take part in future branch activities as little or as much as they wish.

I'm glad to see that the birthdays (at least some of them) are now back in the newsletter if you haven't returned your Data Protection Act form and wish to be included please let me have it back.

All that remains for me to do is wish you all a Merry Christmas from your executive committee and hope we all have a New Year that with all the changes that's taking place within the benefits system none of us are adversely affected.

Chris Janovitz

**MS Helpline Freephone
0808 800 8000**

Executive Committee April 2010

Branch Officers

Chair	Mr Paul Harrison.....	01606 892151
Secretary	Mrs Elaine Magill.....	637120
Treasurer	Mr John Burke	824041
Support Officer	Mrs Dorothy Lewis.....	268820

Committee Members

Fundraising	Mrs Julie Richards.....	573980
Joint Equipment/ Transport	Mr Jim O'Connor.....	451472
Web/DTP	Mr Jeff Richards.....	07738609018
Social	Mr Chris Janovitz.....	723564
Everybody's Help Activities	Mrs Rita Harrison.....	01606 892151
Editor	Mrs Suzan Rainford.....	602719
Subscriptions	Mrs Margaret Wilmot.....	755017
Everybody's Help	Mr Sam King.....	860630
Everybody's Help	Mr Peter Travers.....	492970
Everybody's Help	Mrs Mary Burke.....	824041
Co-opted	Charles Dooley.....	860112
	Mary Burke	824041
	Amanda Wilton.....	726758

This newsletter is published by The Warrington and District branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society. We give regular updates about MS and what is happening locally in the MS community.

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Layout Chris Janovitz

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

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