



Hertfordshire MS Therapy Centre

[www.hertsmstherapy.org.uk](http://www.hertsmstherapy.org.uk)

# News

News, views and information from Herts MS Therapy Centre



## Happy families

How Nancy Gusumano has transformed her life with a little help from the Centre

-page 4

**FREE**

# So much to celebrate!



## It's a great pleasure to work here with such amazing people: staff, volunteers and Members.

What a great cause we have: to offer effective, affordable therapies to every person with MS in our area, not just in Letchworth but in a town near each person affected.

I am just so impressed with the people I meet here. People with MS, friends, family and carers of people with MS, the incredible 92 volunteers and our very small team of paid staff. Every one of them is amazing. Put together this really is an extraordinary community bringing people together to make a difference for people with MS.

It is a great pleasure to get to know many of the people with MS who come to Letchworth. It is also fabulous that we now work every week in other towns, including St Albans, Hoddesdon and Luton. Hopefully soon in Hemel Hempstead.

The mobile physio clinic has put us on the map in various venues across Hertfordshire and south Bedfordshire. Starting in early 2012 the service has made such a positive difference to

many people with MS, especially those who are unable to get to Letchworth. People like Nancy Cusumano. Nancy enjoys the benefits of Physiotherapist Ben Parkash's treatments and exercises.

Our Physical Therapies Co-ordinator Ricky Gould and his team, are also offering a pilot standing frame service in St Albans. You can read about how Ricky has helped Lyn Osborn stand on her own two feet and enjoy some of the things many take for granted, like being able to stand to chat with friends face to face at the same level. This is really a great feeling after spending up to 13 hours a day in a wheelchair.

You can also read about a few of our fantastic volunteers and what it means to volunteer with us. I am delighted that the Centre recently won the Valuing Volunteer Management Award for Hertfordshire. Especially as this is based entirely on what the volunteers themselves think about their experience with us.

Many of our fundraisers are now established annual events - the Flamstead Scarecrow Festival and the Virgin London Marathon are two of

them. The 2013 marathon included a gritty performance from Centre supporter Paul Stocker. Paul awoke on the morning of the run with an upset stomach but still completed the course and raised £1,800 - a fantastic effort!

And characters like Ironman athlete Geoff Taylor are complete heroes. Super swimmer Andy Nation is fantastic. Andy's commitment to swim for us after recovering from a broken neck is astounding. You can read about all these people here.

There's also a whole page in this issue thanking the many people who support us in many different ways. I'd like to add my own personal 'thank you' to each and every person who makes this Centre a positive place to be, where life changing therapies are provided, through the commitment and hard work of our staff and volunteers. Well done each of you. Your work makes a world of difference for each person with MS we seek to support.

Hope you enjoy this issue of Centre News!

**MARK BOSCHER**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

## Centre's volunteers recognised in local awards

We always knew our 90-plus team of volunteers were winners - now it's official.

The Centre recently came top in the Valuing Volunteer Management Awards 2012, taking away a certificate, trophy and £300.

"Best of all we received recognition of the huge contribution our volunteers make," Chief Executive Mark Boscher, who is pictured receiving the award from The High Sheriff of Hertfordshire the Hon. Arabella Stuart-Smith, said.



# Physio on the move is the way forward

**People with MS can now receive vital treatment thanks to our mobile physio clinic.**

The clinic, currently visiting various venues in Herts and Beds, is funded by part of a grant from The Department of Health's Social Enterprise Investment Fund.

This enabled us to buy and adapt a Citroen Relay van and deliver physiotherapy in the community. The grant shows the NHS at its very best, pioneering new ways to improve health.

Since it was launched a team of physiotherapists and physio assistants can offer local communities accessible healthcare at very affordable prices.

"It's a great example of highly effective treatments being taken to people in greatest need," the Centre's Chief Executive Mark Boscher said.

"We're working with many new partners and the community to provide professional, accessible healthcare to any person with MS or a similar long term condition. In fact we will try to provide physio for anyone who needs it.

"We know we offer a great physio service from our Letchworth Centre but many people with MS who travel from further away find that the stress of the trip can negate any treatment they receive.

"Many find it impossible to travel more than about 12 miles. So, taking the service to them has huge benefits for these people," Mark continued.

Planning the mobile clinic's visits in Hertfordshire is down to Charlotte Adams, Business Manager and Ricky Gould, Physical Therapies Co-ordinator. Ricky is also a Personal Trainer and Physio Technician, with special training



**ON THE MOVE: Customers Vic Harris and Beryl Smith (centre) with Ben Parkash and Jane Waterman at Charters Health Club in St Albans**

for stroke recovery. Ricky has secured regular Friday morning visits to Hoddesdon's John Warner Sports Centre in Stanstead Road.

The mobile clinic can also be found at Charters Health Club in St Albans. Physio Ben Parkash and Driver/Assistant Physio Jane Waterman can be found at the Russett Drive venue every Monday.

Beryl Smith and Vic Harris are both regular visitors. Beryl, who has had MS for 12 years and lives in Watford, has been receiving weekly treatments at Charters for more than a year: "Over the past few months I have noticed some fantastic benefits. The stretching exercises Ben uses mean I have less stiffness and my muscles are more relaxed."

Vic, from nearby Colney Heath, has had MS since 2001 and visits the clinic with his carer Liz Boyle. "I'm making good progress and the long-term goal for me is to be able to get a mobility scooter. This would give me so much more independence."

The mobile clinic is also being 'piloted' at Hightown Community

Sports Centre in Luton and soon in Highfield Community Centre in Hemel Hempstead.

Running costs for the Hertfordshire project have so far been funded by The Childwick Trust, Hertfordshire Community Foundation, The Robert Clutterbuck Charitable Trust, Margaret Archer (in memory of her husband Michael), The Well Heald team from Milton Keynes-based Heald Solicitors and £7,000 sponsorship money from two fundraisers Lewis Sage and Hayden Jones who cycled from Letchworth to Land's End to raise funds, the Health & Social Care Volunteering Fund, the Garfield Weston Foundation and The Rayne Foundation. The Steel Foundation has also contributed to the work in Luton.

"The project would not have been possible without the fantastic support we've had from all these people and organisations," says Business Manager Charlotte Adams. "Their support has enabled us to provide this great service."

If you want physio, anywhere in Herts or Luton, call us on **01462 674054**

# La Dolce Vita

**One lady feeling the benefits of the Centre's mobile physio clinic is Nancy Cusumano.**

Nancy, who was born in Sicily but now lives in Hoddesdon, has been a regular user of the unit since it opened at the local fire station.

A year on from her first treatments she has become something of a keep-fit fanatic with a whole range of exercises and equipment close at hand. As well as her weekly physio sessions with Ben Parkash she also uses a treadmill, gym ball and a variety of balancing exercises at home.

"I struggled with foot drop for a while but the exercise programme Ben set up has been a big help," Nancy explained. "I'm so much stronger now and I'm sure it's due to the time I spend on the treadmill and the work I do with the gym ball. Fatigue used to be a big problem but I've made big improvements there as well."

Nancy also had great results with the functional electrical stimulator (FES) for a while. This battery powered device stimulates and contracts the muscles in her leg helping the ankle become more flexible. "It was so successful I stopped using it a while ago and I'm now able to drive from my home to get my weekly physio treatments," Nancy says.

This is good news for Nancy and also Driver Junior Carrington, who used to pick Nancy up from her home and drive her to the sessions. "Junior was such a gentleman taking me to and from physio but I'm so glad I can drive myself now."

Nancy used to make the 80-minute round trip to Letchworth but it often left her exhausted. "Now after my treatment I can make a cup of tea, cook dinner and pick up my children from school. I'm more



independent now and it's great."

Mind you, Nancy still likes to visit the Centre whenever she can: "I've made so many friends there that I need to catch up with them from time to time," she explained. "My husband Charles takes me and my children Jessica, Daniel and Anthony whenever possible and I really look forward to it." The family is featured on the front cover of this magazine.

Another regular visitor to the clinic in Hoddesdon is Sue Brown. Sue, from Broxbourne, has had MS for 20 years and has already noticed an improvement in her condition. "This service is brilliant and saves me travelling to the Centre's Letchworth HQ," she said. "The treatments there were great but I found by the time I got back home most of the benefits had been offset by the long road trip."

It would also be time consuming as her husband and driver Richard explained: "The round trip would often take half a day and would be quite stressful for Sue. She is far happier with this short five minute trip." Sue agreed saying: "This is making a huge difference to my health."

**PLENTY OF DRIVE:** Nancy is now back behind the wheel of her car

**'So much stronger now.. and fatigue is getting better'**



**Ricky Gould treating Nancy**

# Making a stand

**Recovering stroke and MS patients at Holywell Neurological Rehabilitation Unit in St Albans often needed help when they went home after their treatment.**

Although supplied with a standing frame, many patients did not have the strength or confidence to use them. Now the Centre have launched a pilot standing frame service to help meet the long-term needs of these people.

Physiotherapists, personal trainers and volunteer trainee physios from the Centre now visit people's homes and assist them to stand and provide a personal exercise programme as part of the new service.

To ensure a smooth hand-over from the unit to home the first session includes a meeting between the patient and physios from the NHS and the Centre.

St Albans resident Lyn Osborn has already benefited from the scheme after hearing about the Centre's mobile physio clinic: "It's been a big help and I urge people to give it a try. If you stick with it for several weeks you'll soon see an

improvement," Lyn, who is 53 and has had MS for 22 years, explained.

As well as receiving assistance to get up and stand in her electric standing frame, Lyn receives vital manipulative treatments and exercises to relieve the severe spasms caused by her condition.

"I spend up to 13 hours a day sat in my wheelchair and to be able to stand up and look people in the eye is really important," Lyn said. "It is also great to be able to look out of my window and watch the world go by for a while."

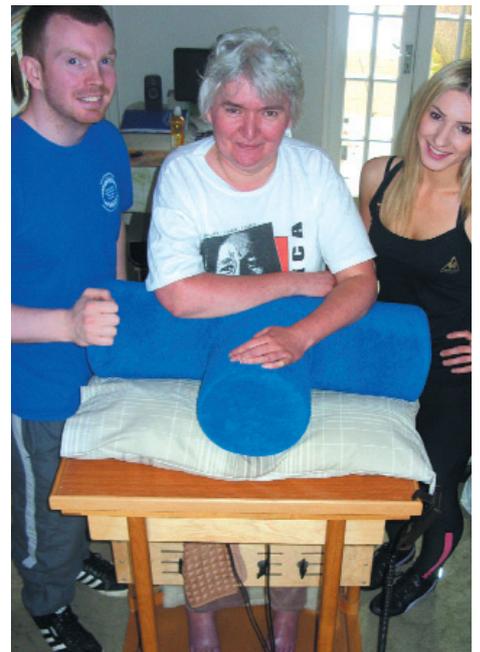
Lyn, who after a year of treatment and exercises is now able to stand for up to 45 minutes, is asked to make a contribution towards the cost of the service but to keep those costs down the service needs more people.

The Centre's Physical Therapies Co-ordinator Ricky Gould said: "We would like to help more people in St Albans which would also make it more cost-effective."

This service is potentially available to anyone in Hertfordshire or Luton with a standing frame at home. Call Ricky on **01462 684214**.



**It's great to be able to look out of the window**



**HELPING HAND:** Ricky Gould and Volunteer Trainee Physio Amy Harris help Lyn Osborn



**BACK TO WORK:** Jennifer Wyatt and Ben Parkash

## Back to work in Luton

When Luton Borough Council discovered that musculoskeletal conditions are the number one cause of staff sickness absence they contacted the Centre's mobile physio service for help.

Now Physiotherapists Ben Parkash and Debbie Simm from the Centre are treating the Council's staff and helping them get fit and back to work. The 'Fast-Track to Physio' pilot scheme forms part of the Council's Employee Wellness Plan.

Sessions take place once a week at the Council's Apex House premises where staff are treated following referrals from their Line Managers. The Council's Senior Occupational Health Advisor Lilian Adams explained: "The pilot is aimed at early intervention in the management of acute musculoskeletal injuries. Each employee will be offered up to

six physio sessions, including an initial 45 minute assessment, free of charge."

Eighteen staff have been treated since the pilot was launched in February. One of them, Environmental Enforcement Manager Jennifer Wyatt, who has had back problems for 16 years, explained the difference the treatment had made to her health: "I am now back at work after three weeks off with back pain caused by two prolapsed discs. I am still on medication but feel that without the physiotherapy treatment I would not have made the progress I have.

"I just wanted to thank you and say what a positive difference the early intervention of the treatment has made."

● For more information about the Centre's physio services please call Charlotte Adams on 01462 674054.

## Date for the diary: August 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, 2013

If you accuse Professor Charles H Temple (pictured inset) of putting on a wooden performance chances are he'll take it as a compliment.

Charles has been putting on his Punch and Judy shows all over the country for 46 years and still uses the original wooden puppets.

The Stevenage-based showman says: "I was 14 when I joined the local magic society but when I saw a seaside Punch and Judy show two years later I decided to have a go and I've been doing it ever since."

Charles made the hand carved puppets in wood-work at school and then learned needlework to make the costumes. "They've taken quite a few beatings over the years but my wife Patricia makes new clothes for them every couple of years."

Punch and Judy shows started in Italy and first appeared in this country in the mid 1660's. Despite the tough economic climate Charles still does around 50 shows a year, including several children's parties.

Does the violence upset some of the smaller children? "No, it's Punch's voice some of them are not used to. The swazzle, a type of reed made from a piece of material between two bits of metal, can start a child crying," Charles explains. "And once one starts they all join in!"



# That's the way to do it!



**The 12th Flamstead Scarecrow Festival takes place from August 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>.**

This fun, family, fundraising event is about as traditional as you can get - morris men, magic shows, tombolas, cream tea and cake stalls, brass bands and even a proper old-style Punch and Judy show.

No wonder 5,000 people pack into this picturesque little Hertfordshire village over the three days to pick their favourite scarecrow from the 100-plus on show.

Chairman of the organising committee Paul McMahon promises this year's event will follow that tried and tested traditional format that raised over £10,000 last year.

Again, the money will be split between the local Friends of St Leonards Church and the HMSTC.

"As well as festival regulars Professor Charles H Temple and his Punch and Judy show, the Hemel

Hempstead Brass Band, Great Belldini's Magic Show and the Aldbury Morris Men, we welcome newcomers the Wicket Brood," Paul explained.

"As usual we have lots of free parking and a free bus service to take drivers to the village centre," Paul said. "We also have a tour bus for anyone unable to walk round the village."

But let's not forget the other stars of the show - those straw-filled scarecrows and their Flamstead-based creators.

Last year's winner Liz Atkinson will be keen to defend her title. Liz's gold, silver and bronze entry tapped into the Olympic theme and beat Nikki Young's The Smurfs and the Peddar family's Hungry Caterpillar into second and third places respectively.

● **For more information and to check times visit: [www.flamstead-herts.co.uk](http://www.flamstead-herts.co.uk)**



**A SONG AND DANCE:** Harpenden Morris Men Peter Lane and Peter Bushill (main picture) brighten up Flamstead's annual Scarecrow Festival. Inset, a warm welcome is guaranteed with traditional music never far away. Last year's winner Liz Atkinson's 'Gold, Silver and Bronze' and the Peddar family's 'Hungy Caterpillar'

**Super-fit swimmer Andy Nation certainly is a tough guy. But the Therapy Centre fundraiser was almost sunk by an insect in his back garden last summer.**

The 63-year-old from Knebworth tripped and broke his neck after being stung by a bee on his patio. The accident happened just weeks before a planned marathon swim from Teddington to Calais in June 2012.

"My wife Lieva keeps bees and was working on them when one stung me and another made a bee-line for me. I tripped over my own feet and landed on my head."

Andy, who is also raising money for the Herts Air Ambulance, was taken to the local Lister Hospital and then taken by ambulance to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge.

"They put my head in traction using a rather barbaric contraption screwed into my skull with weights hanging from it. After eight hours they decided it wasn't working and I ended up having surgery to straighten my spine."

The treatment involved grafting a piece of bone from Andy's hip on to the front of his spine and fixing the vertebrae with a plate and screws. This was followed by lots of physio.

"At the start I was very weak and couldn't even hold a teaspoon," Andy said. "But after the operation I made a quick recovery and went home a few days later, much to the amazement of all the surgeons and nurses."

At this point Andy took oxygen treatment with the Centre to accelerate his recovery.

Andy's high level of fitness contributed to him being back in the swimming pool the following week completing a very gentle four lengths. He then arranged for friends to ferry him to and from his training base at



**TOUGH GUYS:** Andy, pictured with Hollywood hard man and former boxer Mickey Rourke

# Super-fit Andy's stung into action

Odyssey Health Club in Knebworth.

"I wasn't allowed to drive for seven weeks but knew I had to get my speed up as quickly as possible," Andy explained. "Luckily freestyle doesn't involve too much neck movement and slowly but surely my times improved."

In the first week Andy completed a mile in 50 minutes, compared with 32 minutes before the accident.

The 147 mile swim will now start on July 19 and Andy has currently trimmed his time for a mile down to 34 minutes. As well as training at Odyssey, Andy has had open water training with his escort team in Margate and in Dover.

As well as the money raised from the swim, Andy will be auctioning a

fine, leather bound autograph book of 'People of Our Time' featuring the signatures of over 400 celebrities and sponsors. These include Sir David Attenborough, Sir Stirling Moss, Tony Blair, David Cameron, Darcey Bussell and Barry Norman. The latter can be seen interviewing Andy about his swim on the website:

[www.teddingtoncalais2012.org.uk](http://www.teddingtoncalais2012.org.uk)

Anyone can have their name in the autograph book alongside all the famous names; schools, clubs, companies or individuals. All you have to do is make a donation of £1,000 or more!

Andy hopes the swim and book will help raise £1 million.



*Is it a bird?  
Is it a plane?  
No it's...*



**TOUGH GUY:** Geoff Taylor in action (above) during last year's Ironman triathlon and (left) with wife Margaret at the finish

# Ironman!

**Marathon man Geoff Taylor is a good sport. And the super-fit athlete can't be beaten when it comes to fundraising.**

In recent years Geoff, 57, has run the London Marathon five times for the Centre, raising about £9,000. His best time was just over four hours in 2009.

Now Geoff, from Luton, has found something harder than running 26.2 miles round London on a Sunday morning - the Ironman Triathlon!

He entered the Tenby event last year and managed to complete the course in 12 hours and 42 minutes.

Geoff raised £2,000 but still isn't satisfied. He's taking part again this September and hopes to do better. Most people would be delighted in just completing the 2.4 mile swim, 112-mile bike ride and full marathon, but not Geoff.

"I was a bit disappointed with my time and, to be honest, was just concentrating on finishing. It's a tough course but has some breathtaking views of the Pembrokeshire coastline, if you get a chance to look," Geoff joked.

A month later Geoff will be enjoying the sunshine in Lanzarote when he

takes part in a half Ironman event.

What does his wife Margaret think about all this? "Oh he's mad, especially as he's got a bad back," she said. "Even when we go away for weekends in our caravan he'll disappear for a couple of hours on his bike."

Cycling is Geoff's favourite sport and he often competes in the 120 mile Sportif road races. "I have competed in about half a dozen of them over the past 10 years and they are great fun and a good way of meeting serious cyclists," Geoff explained. "You're not allowed to stop, but there are feed stations en route and the race takes me about five and a half hours to complete."

But there is a sport that ex rugby player Geoff thinks is really tough: "Tug of War. Now that really does hurt!"



Ghiselle Green Paul Stocker

## Ghiselle and Paul's peak performances

Ghiselle Green is a tip-top competitor. The 20-year-old student from Petersfield, Hampshire took part in her first London Marathon this year, finishing in an impressive 3 hours and 50 minutes, raising almost £2,000.

Ghiselle, the niece of the Centre's Charlotte Adams, is a high achiever since climbing Mount Blanc when just 17. But it has been her ambition to compete and complete the marathon for a long time. "I should have run in 2012 but a knee injury forced me out," she said "But this year I made it and loved every minute. It will be the first of many."

The psychology student, regularly runs cross country races at Nottingham University and put in endless hours of training during the winter months. "Sometimes it was tough though," she admitted. "The endless freezing weather made it a hard slog but worth it, especially as the weather was so good on the day."

The warm conditions came as a bit of a shock to Ghiselle: "It was the first time I'd run in T-shirt and shorts for a very long time but it meant I stopped at all the drinks stations on the course," she said.

● Liverpool-based Paul Stocker did not have the stomach for this year's marathon. But despite waking up on the morning of the run with a tummy bug Paul, 34, completed the course in just over six hours and raised £1,800.

This was Paul's second London Marathon and it will be his last. "I've got another fundraiser lined-up for the Centre in the near future though. I'm thinking of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro soon."

Paul is married to Cher, the niece of Centre Community Fundraiser Charlene Redmond.

# Something special

“You can't prepare yourself for the day, it's like a huge street party



**DYNAMIC DUO:** Trudie Squires (left) and Tally Jackson-Dyke are all smiles at the finish

**Terrific fundraising from Tally Jackson-Dyke and Trudie Squires meant this year's Virgin London Marathon was a money-spinner for the Centre.**

The two friends, who raised over £6,000 between them, met at a marathon boot camp last year as Tally explains: "I already had a Golden Bond place and Trudie wanted to run too so I suggested she write to the Centre. Luckily they had a spare place."

For teacher Trudie, from Arlesey, Beds and masseuse Tally, from Henlow, Beds, it would be their first marathon. Despite both picking up ankle injuries in training they gradually got fit for the race. "I did the Hal Higdon online training course for four months which really helped," said Tally.

"It was hard doing 500 training miles during the winter, especially as my husband Craig works long hours and I have two young children. But it

was all worth it," Tally continued.

The couple also spent a good deal of time getting sponsorship with Tally organising a glamour portrait night last November and a pancake quiz night this February, along with Toni Fenton who was also due to run, but had to pull out due to injury.

Toni who also raised over £2,000 will have her place carried over and will be running in 2014.

The day itself was something special as Trudie explains: "We both set out too quickly but as a result we walked and ran the final 12 miles and enjoyed chatting to friends and family and soaking up the amazing atmosphere. I was exhausted but happy at the finish."

"You just can't prepare yourself for the day," said Tally. "It's just like a huge street party."

The girls crossed the finishing line together in a time of five hours and 47 minutes.



# People always leave the Centre feeling better

## MANDY WISSON

### How long have you been volunteering at the Centre?

I started in June 2011

### How did you hear about us?

I live quite near to Chief Executive Mark Boscher in Wilstead, Beds and I was also aware of the MS Centre in Bedford.

### What is your role?

I visit the Centre on Wednesdays and

also Friday afternoons and apart from being head tea maker I chat and listen to the Members whenever they want to talk.

### What is the best part of the job?

I think it boils down to the fact that the people who come here are inspirational. To be able to help people come to terms with MS and then move forward with their lives is deeply touching and satisfying. No

matter how people are feeling when they come through the doors they always leave happier, more fulfilled and satisfied. They receive a tonic, sometimes through the physio or oxygen treatments or simply by talking. They seem to become more satisfied. I try to help the Members come to terms with MS and gradually move forward, so that, little by little, they become more positive.



## JUNIOR CARRINGTON

### How long have you been volunteering at the Centre?

I started working for the Centre in 2011

### How did you hear about us?

I had an advisor helping me to find work in Luton, where I live and she set up a meeting with Mark Boscher and Charlotte Adams. They seemed to like me and I liked them and I was taken on part-time straight away.

### What is your role?

At the moment I work as a Volunteer Driver for the mobile physio unit for eight hours on a Saturday. This is because I now have a full-time job elsewhere.

### What is the best part of the job?

I really like the job and also the people I work with. It really seems to make a difference to people's lives. I'm proud to be able to help people with MS.



## AMY HARRIS

### How long have you been volunteering at the Centre?

I started in May 2013.

### How did you hear about us?

I work for Luton Borough Council and received some physio treatment from Ben Parkash. He told me about the work the Centre does and encouraged me to get in touch with them.

### What is your role?

I work as a Physio Assistant with Ben and Ricky Gould a couple of days a week. I am also studying sports massage at Luton University.

### What is the best part of the job?

Having received treatment for whiplash injuries to my neck from Ben Parkash I really appreciate how good the Centre's physios are. All the people I work with are positive and inspirational.

## JANE PIBWORTH

### How long have you been volunteering at the Centre?

I started towards the end of 2012.

### How did you hear about us?

I used to have a part-time job next door to the Centre in Sainsbury's and popped in one day to see if they

needed some help and it has grown from there.

### What is your role?

I work two days a week as Volunteer Training Co-ordinator. This involves training the volunteers in admin, accounts and general office work. I have also helped train the reception

staff. I am also a carer in Shefford, Bedfordshire, where I live.

### What is the best part of the job?

Apart from Mark's bacon sandwiches it has to be the fact that the Centre is always such a friendly place. The fact that the team of volunteers is growing is also important.

● Having joined in 2011 Karen Hanford quickly found out the Centre has much to offer - she's already a regular user of both physiotherapy and oxygen treatments. And she volunteers each week. Here's Karen's view on her condition and what the Centre means to her...



### I was on holiday in Greece in 2005 with my family when I noticed a tingling in my right foot.

I visited my GP on my return and eventually I was diagnosed with RRMS (Relapsing Remitting Multiple Sclerosis) in March 2007.

My neurologist thought that I qualified for the disease modifying drugs scheme and so referred me to another neurologist that could prescribe them. This neurologist didn't think that I represented a typical RRMS patient as my lesions were all on my spinal column and so I was subjected to a lumbar puncture and a delightful MRI that included being injected with a special fluid that lights up your brain like a Christmas tree. You can tell I really bonded with this neurologist.

Anyway I started on Avonex but had two or three relapses so then tried Copaxone but after experiencing some joint pain I stopped taking it at Christmas 2012.

I had been working part time at Paradise Wildlife Park in Broxbourne, close to my home in Cheshunt. It was the perfect job because I had three children; two still at home and one at University. I would work three short days a week which allowed me to do the school run and do my domestic chores. I loved my job.

# Learning to walk and live again..

But MS happened. After the relapses things became harder. All my previous relapses had somehow consolidated so my right leg, which started all this as a tingle, was now slowing right down. I was losing the sensation in my fingers and so becoming slower on my keyboard and just being clumsy and, horror of all horrors, I actually took a day off sick! So after five years of absolute joy I stopped work and the break was just what I needed.

But after eight months I hit a bit of a wall. In fact I was heading into a steady decline and I needed support and advice.

A friend from work had introduced me to Charlotte Adams at a fundraiser, years before and I had politely taken her business card. A while later I picked up the phone to make an appointment to visit HMSTC and get assessed for physio with Ajith Raghaviah. I also found myself an MS nurse and visited an MS Society conference completely independently. I'm so glad I did.

My first visit was in March 2011 and I didn't know what to expect but I was made to feel welcome by everyone. I was introduced to the staff who run the office and fundraising activities and also Mark Boscher who explained all about the Centre. This made it so easy for me to get to know what was going on and also to be a Volunteer on the reception desk.

I have since spoken to members of the Centre who have expressed exactly what I was feeling at that time. I wasn't entirely sure I wanted to face everything that the Centre had to throw at me, I just wanted to be with 'normal' people in other words people like me. Ha! Well these are people like me; tall, short, fat, thin, intelligent, daft,

happy, sad, funny – just like me. It also meant learning how to master the till and answer the telephone, and help out whenever and wherever.

I was assessed for physio by Ajith who is marvellous. When I came to the Centre, my walking was so poor that I was literally dragging my right leg behind me. During my assessment I explained to Ajith that I had 'forgotten' the process of walking and even if able, I couldn't remember the rudiments of how to walk. I had even tried to study people in the street. But believe me, try it, no two people walk in the same manner. So he very calmly said 'heel, lift'. And like a child I followed this simple instruction and walked properly for the first time in months! I have been attending weekly physiotherapy ever since.

Whilst sitting in reception I noticed a large half cylindrical object embedded in the ground. There were always people disappearing inside it and a couple of operators outside taking temperatures and scribbling down important notes. I took an instant interest in this only to discover that it was Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT). You sit in a capsized baked bean tin and breath in pure oxygen! It's a decompression chamber and it's great.

I need to be at the Centre, because I have MS. I want to be useful so I volunteer, In fact I have apparently become even more useful and have a new job - helping Nicki Wood in accounts one day a week! I also have a need to keep my limbs moving, so I make good use of the physio and also the HBOT. And I love coming to the Centre to meet up with the fantastic friends I have met over the last couple of years.

### WHAT IS RRMS?

**Relapsing Remitting Multiple Sclerosis is the most common form of the condition. Patients normally experience an attack or series of attacks followed by complete or partial remission. This is where the title can prove misleading. Patients can assume that the remission stage will mean 100 per cent recovery. While this can be true, particularly during the early stages of the disease, often the remission will only be a partial one, particularly as the condition progresses, thus leaving the patient with residual, sometimes permanent, symptoms.**

**We want to thank all those who make the Hertfordshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre what it is. First the Members themselves, many of whom make vital contributions through their**

**donations and fundraising efforts. Each and every volunteer, the Centre's staff, plus each Member of the Board and our many friends in other organisations.**

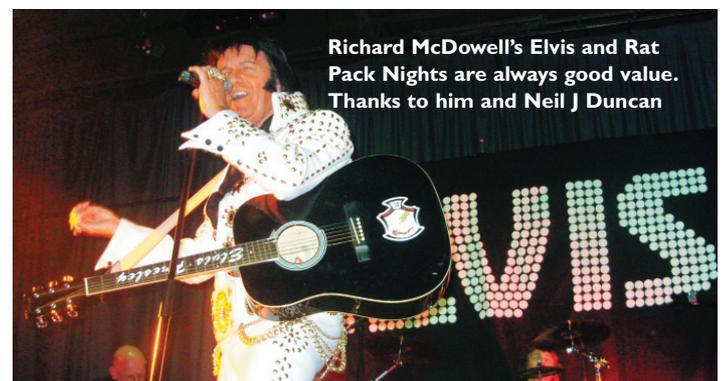
We pay special tribute to all these people and organisations that have made donations and grants to the Centre.

**Gifts, Donations and Other Support:**

Altro Flooring, Aylett Nurseries - raffle prize, Baldock Bowls Club, Barclays Bank, Hitchin (match funding - fun day), Breachwood WI, Cathy Darlington, Chris & Alan Percival - sale of holly, Church of St Lawrence, Colin & Sandra Fuller, Scout Active Support Unit Letchworth, Dennis Turner & Phil Newstead (Retirement Collection), Diana Seller (Over

50's Keep Fit, Walsworth Road Baptist), Give as you Live, H & V Controls Letchworth - John Miller, Hertfordshire Bridge Association, Highlander Golfing Society, Hookers & Pullers Golf Society, Jan & Mick Velasco, Janice & Paula Daniels, Knebworth Masonic Lodge No 6941, Letchworth Ladies Circle, Linda Anderson, Lytton Arms, Kings Waldon, Marc Lawrence - car calendars, Margaret Archer - race night, Maureen Wilson, MB Solutions (Holdings) Ltd - Kevin Lake, Melissa McComb, Morrisons Letchworth - raffle prize, Mr & Mrs J Potter

(dance class) - Jackie Owens, Mr & Mrs S Kirbyhire, Mr J Bogen, Mrs E Tant, Mrs M J Robson, North Herts CVS - loan of mini bus, North Herts Road Runners, Move Assist, Old Hertfordian Masonic Lodge No 8083, Pam Sim, Paradigm Secure Communications Ltd / Astrium, Paradise Wildlife Park - raffle prize, R M Company Services Ltd, Sarah Stokes, St Christopher School, Take Back, The Knights of St Columba (Council 529), Vicky Judson, 100 Club (Sue Spurden) and Payroll Giving from MBDA.



**Donations from Events including Sponsored Events:**

Elvis Night (Richard McDowell, Barclay School), Sandeep Bhachu Skydive, Mr & Mrs M Goodier & Family for Sandeep's skydive, London Marathon (Geoff Taylor, Glen Dobson, Martin Vinter, Stuart Kingwell, Alex Muse, Ghiselle Green, Tally Jackson-Dyke, Trudie Squires, Paul Stocker), Letchworth Rotary Club Walk (Terri Campbell, Nicki Handscombe, Victoria Smith, Melanie Chaput, Charlotte Adams), Teddington to Calais Swim (Andy Nation), Stevenage Sponsored Swim (Nicki Handscombe), Ironman Wales (Geoff Taylor), Milton Keynes Half Marathon (Tina Middleton), Paris Marathon (Simon Wagstaff), Three Peaks Challenge (Phil Huddle), Clavering Lakes Fishing Competition (Clive Bone), Extra Mile Challenge (Heald Solicitors led by Tina Middleton) and Flamstead Scarecrow Festival (St Leonards & SC Committee).

**Trusts, Organisations & Grants:**

Bridging Fund Charitable Trust, Champneys Charitable Foundation, Coutts & Co, Health & Social Care Volunteering Fund, Cranfield Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, IBC Employers, Letchworth County Council, Local Budget Scheme (Terry Hone), Reuben Brothers Foundation, The Albert Hunt Trust, The Ardwick Trust, The Christopher Laing Foundation, The Harris Family Charitable Trust, The Hedley Foundation, The Letchworth Civic Trust, The Lynn Foundation, The Mathew Wrightson Charitable Trust, The Neighbourly Charitable Trust, The Percy Bilton Charity, The Rayne Foundation, The Steel Charitable Trust, The Sylvia Adams Trust, Xerox.

**Legacies & Bequests:**

In memory of Tom Webb, Richard Goodier and Helen Geldhill.

**Collection Tins:** Companies, Individuals, Clubs, Pubs and Stores: Ajula Stores Letchworth, Aldi's Hatfield, Alphamarque St Albans, Argos St Albans, ASDA Stevenage, Aylett Nurseries, B & Q WGC, Baldock Bowls Club, Baldock Florist, Barbara Williams, Becky's Beauty Clinic, Brian Sheppard, Cathy Darlington, Chris Jakes, Elaine Smith, Gill Burns, Green Dragon, Cheshunt, Homebase St Albans, Ian & Jo Fraser, Jan Marshall, Jean Deazley, Jean Hallet, Jean Roe, Jhoots Pharmacy St Albans, Letchworth Clinic, Londis Royston, Margaret Elves, Martin Connor, MBDA, Mike & Gloria Burrows,

Morrisons Letchworth, Morrisons WGC, Mr Hawkins, Mrs Carr, New Inn Roydon, Nisa Stores Letchworth, Norton Coffee Shop, Notcutts Garden Centre St Albans, Old George Ickleford, Pat Sim, Ray's News Agent St Albans, Richard & Jackie McDowell, Rose & Crown, Hitchin, Royal British Legion, Sainsbury's Coreys Mill, Sainsbury's Garage Marshalswick St Albans, Sainsbury's Hitchin, Sainsbury's Letchworth, Sainsbury's Petrol Station Biggleswade, Sainsbury's Petrol Station Letchworth, Sainsbury's Pharmacy Letchworth, Sella Supermarket Hatfield, Springfield Pharmacy, Standalone Farm, Stotfold Pharmacy, Swallowfields, Tesco Extra Baldock, Tesco Extra Hatfield, Tesco Extra Stevenage, Tesco Hemel Hempstead, Tesco

Hertford, Tesco Royston, The Candlestick, Essendon, The Carpenters Arms Classic Car Club Harpenden, The Sweet Stall, Stevenage Indoor Market, The Woodman, Hatfield, Thorns Garden Centre, Waitrose St Albans, White Bear Royston.

**Thanks for all the people who do collections**

We thank all our volunteers who help with collections each year, without whom we would be unable to collect a substantial amount of money that all goes towards providing our therapies. But special thanks to the following people and organisations who have gone that extra mile: Ian Bangs, Jean Deazley, Allan Dunsmore, Welwyn Garden City Rotary Club and Maureen McConnell for outstanding help with collections.

Special thanks for the volunteers who help with events: Jan Turner, Jean Deazley, Monica Hills, Maureen McConnell, Marie-Edmée Peregrine. Special thanks also go to The Flamstead Scarecrow Committee, Richard McDowell, Ken Wing, Barclay School Stevenage, MS Society for allowing us to join in with their London Marathon reception, Barclays Bank

Letchworth for their support and Match Funding. Also to those who donate items towards the fundraising table, raffles, cakes and tombola. Thank you to each person and organisation who has given us money or given us their time, and sometimes both. Your commitment to the Centre is deeply appreciated.

MS was first recognised in the 1860s by a Frenchman called Charcot, but for a century there was no research into the condition even though it was relatively common.

Roughly twice as many women as men have MS. It becomes apparent most commonly in the late 20s or early 30s, but another peak age for diagnosis is the 50s. It is prevalent in temperate climates but is almost unknown on the equator.

Although MS is not known to be genetically transmitted, there is evidence of increased frequency in

family groups; siblings with MS are far from unusual. Despite this there is no consensus among researchers about what causes MS.

MS is a condition that affects the central nervous system, which comprises the brain and the spinal cord. Nerve cells within the spinal cord are protected by a myelin sheath, the analogy usually made being the insulation around electric wires.

For people with MS there is myelin damage (demyelination) identifiable in X-Ray and MRI scans as scarring (sclerosis) and these plaques of scar tissue

impair the function of the nerve, which in turn impairs muscle function.

Which part of the body is affected is dependent on where the scarring occurs. In healthy people myelin is able to regenerate itself, but not in people with MS.

When newly diagnosed with MS it is tempting to ignore it or to feel that there is nothing that can be done. The opposite is true and, whilst as yet there is no cure, there is much that can be done to help to maintain mobility and slow the progression of MS.

## Our services

**Our services provide direct help across our region (Hertfordshire and South Beds) for people affected by MS and other neurological conditions.**

**In the past we have focused solely on MS but we are now using that expertise to broaden our services to support people with other neurological conditions.**

**If you have MS or another neurological condition, or you are the friend or relative of someone who does, HMSTC can provide help, companionship, facilities and experience.**

**We are an independent charity, established in 1983. People can be referred to us by their GP or consultant or can call us directly.**

Whilst the majority of our services are currently provided at our Centre in Letchworth we do offer a number of services locally across the region. Details of these are available on request.

We offer the wide range of services listed below. Appointments can be booked by calling **0800 121 7002** from a UK landline or **01462 684214**.

### Foot Treatments

Our Foot Health Professional provides treatment for foot problems and can help with anything from removing corns to cutting toenails.

### Chiropractic

Chiropractic involves gentle manipulation of the spine, other joints and soft tissues to promote good health. Treatment also includes exercises plus health and lifestyle counselling.

### Counselling

MS and other neurological conditions can be traumatic, not only for the individual, but for the whole family. The professional face-to-face counselling available at the Centre in a safe and supportive environment can be a great benefit.

### Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

In Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) pure oxygen is breathed through a

mask under pressure in a specially constructed chamber called a hyperbaric chamber. The increased concentration of oxygen at higher pressure helps many people. Treatment starts with an initial course of 15 sessions over the course of three weeks, which are then followed by an ongoing programme of "top-up" sessions, usually weekly.

### Massage

Massage can be beneficial for a wide range of individuals and problems, although no claim is made that it is in any way a cure. It can have the combined effect of improving general



*Continued opposite...*

## Our services (continued)

health whilst giving a pleasant sense of wellbeing, that in turn aids sleep and increases vitality.

### Personal Training

Personal Training can help you improve your physical fitness through personalised exercise plans and nutritional advice, tailored for you individually to help you achieve your personal goals towards a fitter healthier you. This can be offered as one to one or on a group basis.

### Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy for people with neurological conditions is not just a matter of exercise and strengthening. These conditions affect the central nervous system not muscle tissue hence the main emphasis of Neuro-physiotherapy is on learning co-ordination of movement and the re-learning of lost movements. In addition muscles that have not been used for a time become weak and wasted from disuse. Neuro-physiotherapy also provides the correct exercises for increasing the strength and endurance of muscles so that they are functionally useful. The Centre also

offers a private physiotherapy service covering all musculoskeletal problems including whiplash and back injuries. Please ask for more details if you know of anyone who may be interested.

### Remedial Therapy

Remedial therapy is very similar to Neuro-physiotherapy as it re-educates muscles to restore core strength, tone, flexibility and stability. An individually tailored programme of treatment involving a combination of manipulation and exercise follows the initial assessment.

### Reflexology

During reflexology, pressure is applied to the minute reflex points in and around the feet or hands, which in turn, has a stimulating effect on specific parts of the body. While no specific claims for its benefits are made, it enhances a sense of well-being and aids relaxation.

### Shiatsu

Shiatsu is a form of massage consisting of finger and palm pressure, stretches, and other massage techniques. Many people find that it helps them to relax and cope with issues such as stress,

muscle pain, nausea, anxiety, and depression. Shiatsu is usually performed on a futon mat with clients fully clothed, but can also be performed with the client sitting in a chair.

### Sports Massage

Sports massage is designed to assist in correcting problems and imbalances in soft tissue and also helps to improve posture and flexibility. The application of sports massage (prior to and after exercise) might aid recovery and prevent injury. The stimulatory effects encourage the healing process and assists in the removal of lymphatic fluids as well as helping to move waste products along such as acetic acid and carbon dioxide. It can also be of great benefit to those in wheelchairs as it helps to relieve tension and stiffness in your muscles.

### Yoga

Yoga provides both physical and mental relaxation by combining breathing with movement to increase and maintain flexibility and mobility, and to promote a feeling of well-being. The most important aspect of yoga is that everyone is aware of their own bodies and how much they can do for themselves.

A range of other therapies is also available on request. Please call 01462 684214 for more details. These include:

### Acupuncture

Helps to release endorphins, nature's 'painkillers' by gently stimulating certain Acupuncture points.

### Bowen Technique

Bowen technique is a very simple and gentle therapy in which the practitioner uses thumbs and fingers to gently move muscles and tissues in order to help relieve pain.

### Buteyko Breathing

Buteyko (pronounced Bu-tay-ko) is most commonly used as a treatment for those with asthma and other breathing disorders such as COPD and hyperventilation. It helps people with disordered breathing patterns – such as panic breathing, mouth breathing or dry coughing to retrain themselves to use a normal breathing pattern at all times.

### Dietary Advice

Research indicates that a healthy diet plays an important role in the management of any illness, and there are some very definite guidelines for specific conditions. The Centre's nutritionist offers individual advice on request.

### Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)

EFT is a form of acupressure based on the same energy meridians used in traditional acupuncture but without the invasiveness of needles. Instead it uses a combination of simple tapping with the fingertips on certain points on the head and chest together with voicing positive affirmations whilst thinking about a specific problem e.g. a physical problem such as pain or an emotional problem such as addiction.

### Osteopathy

A natural whole body system of touch and manipulation aimed at helping headache, backache, stiff muscles and joints.

## CONTACTS

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