

The Redbridge Branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society Year Book 2013



MS

Multiple Sclerosis Society

Chairman's Report 2012-13

This has been a roller coaster of a year, with the sad passing of Marjorie, the retirement of Joe Hill, the appointment of Thomas Murtagh as our new centre manager and the improvement of many of the facilities provided by the centre.

The death of Marjorie Collins

When we first discussed the possibility of having a day centre for patients with multiple sclerosis in Redbridge, Marjorie was a key figure in the fund raising and the negotiations with the local health authority. She was our first chair person and subsequent president. She dedicated her life to the Multiple Sclerosis Society, but particularly to the centre and our members and it was only fitting that she was awarded the MBE and that the centre bears her name. As members of the Redbridge Branch, we are all grateful to Marjorie for all she did for us. She will not be forgotten.



The death of Shirley Sasse

This year we also mourn the death of Shirley Sasse, a wonderful character who did so much for the centre particularly in welfare and fund raising, roles that she undertook selflessly despite her considerable disabilities. Shirley was always devoted to Marjorie and her ideals, and perhaps it was no surprise that she died so soon after Marjorie.

Joe Hill's retirement

Joe Hill retired in October after being our centre manager for over ten years. Throughout this time Joe was responsible for all the many activities essential for the smooth day to day running of the centre, from supervising the voluntary workers, transport, building maintenance and the negotiations with the local authority and the Multiple Sclerosis Society on our behalf, not forgetting his essential role in preparing the centre for our many fund raising events. On your behalf may I again thank Joe for all he has done for us and the centre. I was worried that we would lose Joe's input following his retirement, but has agreed to stand as committee member and hopefully become our treasurer, a role in which I know he has had considerable experience and we welcome his continuing involvement in the future.

Following Joe's retirement we were without a centre manager for several weeks. At that time our difficulties were compounded by the resignation of several of our volunteers who unfortunately disagreed with your committee's

recommendations for improving the activities within the centre. Potentially this left us with insufficient drivers and volunteers such that at one stage we were near to having to close. However thanks to the dedication of your committee and in particular Denis Rose taking the role of transport manager and with recruitment of new volunteers we were able to overcome our difficulties and I am sure that you will agree that the current transport and centre activities are now much better than before.

Thomas Murtagh our new centre manager



Much of the improvement in the centre's activities follows the appointment of Joe's replacement, Thomas Murtagh whom we welcome as our new centre manager. Before his appointment he was known to us as he had previously been a volunteer at the centre. New brooms inevitably bring new ideas and enthusiasm and already we are seeing the benefit. By now you will all have seen his great personal and organisational, computer and IT skills. I know he was the right choice and we must all do our utmost to welcome Thomas and encourage him in his new appointment.

Fund Raising

We will soon be receiving a large donation from the Mayor of Redbridge's Charity appeal. Councillor Chris Cummins, last year's Mayor of Redbridge generously named the Marjorie Collins Day Centre as one of his two designated charities and we are grateful for his wonderful support.



The ladies from "For Those in Need" continue to raise money on our behalf. This year they donated money for the beautiful wall clock in remembrance of Marjorie. Also with their donations we were able to purchase the televisions which are now being used as information boards in the entrance and main hall of the centre. This is a significant improvement enabling us to provide our members with up to date information of the centre's activities, lunchtime menus, future events and any new developments in the battle against Multiple Sclerosis.

AIMS continue to raise money on our behalf and this year we have also received substantial donations from David and Kerry Kendall, the Rotary Club of Wanstead and Snaresbrook and Dolly Sasse, Shirley's mother. The Prince of Wales Public House, The Woodford Spiritualist Church and Mr. and Mrs. Bourne. Their efforts are much appreciated.

Over the last year we have had several very successful fund raising events. These have included last summer's hog roast and our recent spring fun day organised by Linda Summers. Both were well supported and raised in the region of £2000. It was unfortunate that at last month's fun day the fire engine was recalled on an emergency before anyone had the opportunity of guessing the weight of the fireman. Hazell Liddell's Auction of promises supported by a cabaret provided by "The Rat Pack" was also a great success and raised over £1000. The horse race night organised by June Lynch was also a great success and I hope all these events can be repeated next year.

It was unfortunate that the Caribbean evening had to be cancelled because of the snow, but it will take place later in the year as well as an "Upstairs /Downstairs



Downton Abbey Night" which we hope will take place later this year.

The importance of fund raising cannot be overemphasised. I suspect that a lot of our members are unaware of the year on year costs of running the Marjorie Collins Centre. Each year our expenditure exceeds our income and each year our reserves dwindle. We estimate that within the next five years the centre will be in serious financial difficulties unless our fund raising is increased. In the current economic climate fund raising is more difficult and there are so many charities fighting for funding that we will have to develop new initiatives for raising money. To this end we have formed a sub-committee dedicated to fund raising and finding ways in which the centre can best be used.

Our next fund raising project will be to replace the chairs in the centre, but from now our priority must be raising money to finance the running of the centre rather than raising money for new or replacement equipment. This will certainly prove difficult.

The future changes in the use of the centre

This year John Pettifer, our vice-chairman organised a series of discussions with our members aimed at finding out your views on how the centre could be best used and what services it should provide. In the current financial climate it is important that not only are the services we provide as efficient as possible but that these services are those which our members actually need. The results of these discussions are currently being analysed and hopefully will result in the centre providing better facilities to the benefit of our members.

Much of our financial losses are due to the costing of the therapies, in

particular physiotherapy, which we have subsidised for our members and members of other branches of the Multiple Sclerosis Society. Year on year these expenses are no longer sustainable, and we have now been forced to cut therapies to once a week, or if more than one session is given then the full cost will have to be met by members or their relatives. We will have to review the charging of therapies for members from other branches. And we will have to review how treatments are given, particularly with the possibility of group therapy sessions rather than individual treatments.

Our Multiple Sclerosis Nurse Specialist

It is now some ten years since Sarah was appointed as nurse specialist for Redbridge. She was one of the first nurse specialists to be appointed. Her appointment was only made possible by the Redbridge Branch having raised half of her salary for the first eighteen months of her appointment.

The agreement was that our branch would subsidise her salary for a period before her salary was paid entirely by the Barking, Havering and Redbridge Trust.

During the first few years of her appointment she provided a session based at the Marjorie Collins Centre. Here she had a clinic room, and our members, who form the majority of patients with Multiple Sclerosis in the district, had direct access to her services. This accessibility and the service she provided were excellent.

Sarah then resigned her position and transferred to the multiple sclerosis service at The National Hospital. However after a period she was unhappy with her situation and with our references and support she was again appointed as nurse specialist in Multiple Sclerosis at the Barking, Havering and Redbridge NHS Trust.

Unfortunately her new (current) contract did not include providing a session at the Marjorie Collins Centre. This has resulted in our patients, often with considerable disabilities having to attend clinics at Queens or King George Hospital rather than being able to see Sarah during their regular visits to the Marjorie Collins Centre.

This year I had hoped to achieve the return of our MS nurse specialist to do clinical sessions at the centre. I fear this will be impossible. My letters to the chief executive at Queens Hospital were initially ignored but a reply was eventually received after some five months! However by this time I expect that the fate of our MS Nurse Specialist had already been sealed following internal discussions on how to make savings at Queens. At the beginning of the year Sarah was offered redundancy which she accepted and her job has essentially been cut as part of the contraction of the hospital services in keeping with the current financial climate.

My personal view is that the decision to axe Sarah's post is unacceptable and in doing so the local health authority has reneged on their original agreement to us made when we first financed her appointment.

I hope you were able to read the recent article in the Ilford Recorder. It presented our case well, but it appears that our case for the continuation of an MS Nurse Specialist for Redbridge has been ignored. Perhaps we should be considering protests in the near future, but as yet the situation is far from being optimistic.

New facilities at the centre

If members need to smoke then so be it. I hope the shelter for smokers has been successful.

The monthly cinema club continues to be a success run by Delroy and our new centre manager and members seem to be enjoying bowling on the Wii system. This has been made possible by our new sound system and we are currently awaiting quotes for blinds to cut out light from the skylights.

Another vital improvement has been the replacement of our computer system. Would you believe that up until this year our computers were second hand and refurbished, often using unacceptable pirated software, with internet access which frequently failed. Well, our new computers have considerably improved the situation and reliable internet access and wi-fi is now available throughout the centre which is also now covered by closed circuit television surveillance.



Our relationship with The National Centre

Our relationship with the Multiple Sclerosis national centre remains difficult. You will remember the frustration we experienced during the purchase of our latest ambulance. In June of this year I had a meeting with them in Edgware mainly to discuss the mechanism for Joe's replacement. I came away from that meeting with a degree of optimism, but unfortunately myself and your committee considered that we are still not given sufficient priority and support. Indeed for a lot of the time they have proved to be inaccessible, failing to respond to numerous phone calls and emails. This resulted in our being unable to appoint our new centre manager until over two months after Joe's actual retirement. This left us very vulnerable and without great efforts from your committee, the centre would have been rudderless. I still look forward to a time when we will be able to rely on the support of the national centre, but as yet there is little evidence of this. I am currently discussing the situation with the chair persons of the other Multiple Sclerosis centres to see if they experience similar problems and to assess what action if any will be necessary to improve our relationships. We are all working to improve the lives of those with multiple sclerosis and my personal view is that the patients and hence the centres that are the core of the society and that the role of

national centre is to support us, not vice versa. Nevertheless we will be continue to try and improve our relations with central office.



Finally may I express my thanks to your committee, in particular our secretary Janet who has done so much in the preparation of our minutes and events. During this year we had several resignations, but my thanks go to all the volunteers and drivers for their continuing work, particularly during our difficulties last year. I am now confident that personal agendas are now in the past and that your committee is now

committed to working to maintain and improve the centre's activities to the sole benefit of our members.

Many of you have remarked how the atmosphere within the centre has improved. Long may it continue.

John Jestico
Chairman

Financial Report 2012

The financial position for the year ended 31 October 2012 continued the downward trend that has existed for many years with expenditure exceeding income by more than 66k. Although a significant amount of this related to the depreciation of the value of our lease for the Marjorie Collins Centre, fittings and equipment and the motor vehicles, the funds available in the bank and in cash reduced by more than £48k to £79k.

As was reported last year, National Centre hold some £55k of legacy money left to the branch. This has not been reflected in the accounts.

The branch was nominated as one of the Redbridge Mayor's charities for 2011/12 and several events were held to raise funds. We understand that this will result in the branch receiving more than £20k shortly.

Your committee has attempted to increase income by promoting a number of fund raising social events and this has been reasonably successful. However it is still disheartening to find that at most events there are considerably more outsiders than members. Unless you members support the branch to the full, the Marjorie Collins Centre will cease to exist as a viable entity in only a few years time.

In an attempt to find a new income stream, a sub committee was established to investigate ways in which the Centre can be used to generate funds. This work is ongoing but it is proving very difficult to generate any interest. Members themselves might be able to help here. If any of you has contacts in business or elsewhere that might be interested in using our facilities, please introduce them to the Centre Manager.

Over the past few years, the branch have subsidised therapies made available at the Centre. During the last financial year this cost us nearly £14,000. This is clearly unsustainable in the long term so your committee has recently restricted the subsidy to Redbridge branch members with MS and then only to one session of each type of therapy per week. It is too early to predict the exact saving this will bring but recent trends point to something close to £3000 over a full year.

Best wishes,
John Harragan

Transport Officer's Report for 2012

When it came to writing this report, I thought about all the people I should say thank you to. There are so many. So here goes, in no particular order: Alan Coleman, Mike Davison, David Promfret, Steve Henesey, Edward Orisakiya, Delroy Hutchinson, John Pettifer, Joyce Taylor, Paul Fortune, Sunil Jeediginta, Natalie Wooton and Martin Pringle. All these wonderful people have given us their time to volunteer as drivers and escorts. Also a big thank you to our centre manager, Tom Murtagh, and our Chairman and Vice Chairman in actively recruiting volunteers, who have been a huge benefit to the transport department.

I am very pleased to report that transport is running very much in the way I wanted it to run, for the benefit of our members.

What is encouraging is the great atmosphere that exists in the Centre now, but we are not going to rest on our laurels and we will keep recruiting drivers and escorts in a never ending effort to improve our transport service for those who need it. At some time in the future, we will have to decide if we need to replace any of the fleet.

Thank you

Dennis Rose



Centre Co-Ordinator Report

Hello, everyone. Although I will have met most of you by now, I wanted to start off by greeting you all and introducing myself. My name is Tom Murtagh, and I have been centre manager now for around 3 months. Since leaving university, it has been my ambition to work for a charity and I was thrilled when I got the chance to work for the Redbridge branch of the MS Society. As some of you will know, this centre has been extremely important to my family and me over the last 13 or so years. My Dad Terry started coming here in the early 2000's and has been a regular (and loud!) attendee ever since. This centre, as I'm sure it has been for a lot of people, has been a real help for him and our family as a whole. This has been a major reason why I started volunteering here originally and why I wanted to take the role as centre coordinator.

I'm sure it comes as no surprise to anyone when I say my first months here have been fast-paced to say the least! From 'Health and Safety' to snow days, I think its fair to say that things have been challenging since the start of the year. The time so far has flown by, I can't believe I have been here a quarter of a year already. My main focus has been to learn as much about the day to day running of the place, which I'm sure you can imagine is quite a task! At this point I would like to thank everyone who has helped me find me feet over these first few months, I am extremely grateful! I would like to thank all of our fantastic volunteers on behalf of everyone here, who do a fantastic job and without would not be able to open. You will read their names often in the book but it is their hard work in this centre that keeps us running so I am going to name them here: Del, Dennis, June, John H, John P, Janet, Dennis, Carol R, Lily, Angela, Maria (Mum), Pam, Sue, Hymie, Phyliss, Cilla, Denise, Maureen, Dorn, Penny, Edward, Steve, Martin, Sunil, Carol C and all of our students from Redbridge College. Lastly I would also like to thank all of the members here for making me feel so at home and have made me smile so much since I started.



Now to look forward. We have an amazing centre here, filled with fantastic people, members, volunteers and committee. We have a great wider community of supporters who have helped this centre and continue to support us at events and with their own fundraising efforts. It is in this time of change that we need to galvanise support more than ever. It is in every member's interest to do whatever we can to raise the profile of this centre, whether that be attending events, collecting on flag day or simply by sharing our message in the community. I know that with the help of everyone who cares about this centre, we can grow it in to being a flag ship branch for the whole society. We

are blessed with an amazing building with some outstanding facilities that we must make use of if we are going to survive and achieve our goals. The MS Society is a huge national organisation that we are a part of. They have a widely recognised brand that we must tap in to get our message and our hard work across.

We have a lot to celebrate at this centre and this is owed to all the hard work and effort everyone has put in since it opened. The environment in which we operate now though is different to how it was in 1991 and I know we can adapt and grow to continue our successes. There will be times over the coming months and years when we are told things that we may not necessarily like but we must adapt and keep putting our members first.



We have lots to look forward to this year. We have our long awaited Caribbean Night in a months time, which was originally blighted by snow in January. I'm sure it will be well worth the wait and be an enjoyable evening of entertainment. We have quizzes, race nights and a cockney night all in the pipeline, as well as several potential venues for outings. I am always keen to hear ideas and thoughts of everyone to help us plan these events, so if anyone does have any then please let me know!

Best wishes,
Tom Murtagh

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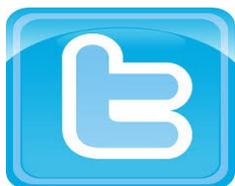
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