



BERKSHIRE MS THERAPY CENTRE NEWSLETTER

MAY 2026

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Welcome to the latest edition of the BMSTC Newsletter.

We are really pleased to be able to bring you a report from our Chairman, Neil Dawkins, on page 2. Look back at Digesting Science and MS Awareness Week on pages 11 and 13 respectively and find out about our upcoming relaxation course on page 16.

You can find out about lots of interesting news on Pippa's Pages on pages 3-5, as well as reading about updates to our staff team on page 7.

We are thrilled to have so many contributions from our members this edition. Read about one of our younger members Georgina on page 10 and follow her on Instagram! Our member Kate recently took part in a fascinating trial for a potential new treatment for MS. Read her story on pages 14-15. We also have a variety of accessible activities recommended by our members on pages 8-9.

Very many thanks to all our fundraisers who have been busy supporting the Centre. See pages 19-22 for more details, plus the latest events organised by our Fundraising Team and other ways in which you can support the Centre.

Please keep your news coming, we love to hear from you.

With best wishes

Gill

Claire

Gill Braid, Newsletter Editor, gill@bmstc.org
Claire Frew, Newsletter Editor, claire@bmstc.org

Deadline for contributions for next issue: 10 July 2026

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Neil Dawkins

Hello and welcome everyone to the second BMSTC newsletter of 2026.



I hope you're all keeping well and enjoying the occasional bouts of sunshine that are beginning to filter through. I went to support our marathon runners on 26 April and got a bit sunburnt as it was such a lovely day. Congratulations to team BMSTC for completing the course in those conditions, and thanks to all of you who come up with fundraising initiatives no matter how big or small. It is much appreciated.

The Trustees along with the Management team are still busy ensuring we can continue to provide the level of support you have always experienced at BMSTC.

Top priority remains the need to address the imbalance between our expenditure and our income. We are faced with a very challenging financial year ahead and hope our membership will continue to help us to keep on top of this situation from a donations and fundraising perspective.

By the time this has been published our longstanding oxygen therapy volunteer Malcolm Cook and I will have attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace to acknowledge receipt of our King's Award for Voluntary Service announced last November. We could only take two people but this is recognition for all our volunteers who give so much time and energy to the Centre. You can read more of the award presentation itself held at Wokingham Town Hall in this newsletter. The award is displayed proudly in reception.

I hope you will have met Freia Pagdin who is our new Senior Fundraising Manager. She has joined at a difficult time for charities but she is full of energy and enthusiasm and I have no doubt she will be a big success, as will those who report to her. Please say hello if you come across her. If you have any suggestions please feel free to share them with her.

Our Treasurer Rachel George is stepping down due to personal circumstances, but will remain as a Trustee which is a real bonus for us as we will continue to benefit from her experience and knowledge. Over the last two years Rachel has overseen migration to a new accounting package and redefined the monthly reporting so we get monthly a level of detail most charities would be lucky to get quarterly or even less. We are lucky to have recruited Dave Dyer to replace Rachel and the handover is underway. More on that next time.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the newsletter – as always it's packed with great content including accessible activities suggested by members, member stories, a review of MS Awareness Week and the Digesting Science family event. My email address is neil@bmstc.org if anyone wants to contact me about anything. Or feel free to contact any of the other Trustees.

Neil Dawkins, Chair of Trustees

PIPPA'S PAGES

BANK HOLIDAYS

The Centre will be closed for the following Bank Holidays this spring/summer;

- Monday 25 May
- Monday 31 August



CHANGES TO ACUPUNCTURE APPOINTMENTS

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we are having to pause our acupuncture service for new clients for the time being.

If you already have an appointment booked with our therapist Ron, this should go ahead as usual. If you are already on the acupuncture appointment waiting list, Ron will be in touch to let you know when he hopes to be able to offer you an appointment. We will keep you updated if the situation changes in future on our blog.

Thank you for your understanding. If you have any queries, please contact Nikki at nikki@bmstc.org.

CHANGES TO MOTABILITY

From 13 April, Motability customers who start a new lease, including drivers under 30, are getting weekly traffic light scores via a black box, like those used for younger drivers to get cheaper insurance. More than four red ratings over 12 months could see drivers removed from the Motability scheme, which allows eligible disabled people to lease a new car using part of their benefit payments.

A number of other changes have been introduced by Motability recently. They include lowering the mileage cap from 20,000 per year to 10,000 and charging 25p per extra mile, up from 5p per mile.

Find out more on our blog at: <https://bmstc.org/news/changes-to-motability/>



STOP PRESS – Motability has withdrawn compulsory black boxes as of 14 May

PIPPA'S PAGES CONT'D.

CHANGES TO THE DISABLED PERSON'S RAILCARD



If you've got a blue badge or disabled person's bus pass, you may now qualify for a Disabled Person's Railcard as the eligibility criteria for the scheme has been expanded.

Until now, the Disabled Person's Railcard had only been available to those receiving certain benefits or with certain medical conditions. It will remain available to those people. However, eligibility has been expanded to cover a wider range of both visible and non-visible disabilities, meaning more people will be able to apply for one. The criteria now includes those who:

- Have a blue badge.
- Have a disabled person's bus pass (England, Scotland and Wales).
- Have a disabled person's Freedom Pass (London only).
- Can't drive on medical grounds.
- Receive Armed Forces Compensation Scheme benefits.
- Receive Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit for 20% degree of disablement or higher.
- Are without speech.

There are also plans to extend eligibility again in September to include people with some long-term or degenerative health conditions and neurodivergence that have a substantial impact on a person's ability to travel by train.

The Disabled Person's Railcard gives you a third off most fares. It can also be used to get one-third off a Transport for London (TfL) travelcard for zones 1-9 and Oyster pay-as-you-go travel on the London Underground, London Overground, Elizabeth line, London buses and more.

If you're a wheelchair user and will be staying in your chair for the journey:

you and a companion can get 34% off anytime singles or returns and anytime day singles, and 50% off anytime day returns, both standard and first class, on adult and child fares. You don't need a Disabled Person's Railcard to get these discounts. But to take advantage of them, tickets must be purchased from a staffed train station ticket office.

The Railcard costs £20 a year or £54 for three years. You can find out more at: <https://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/eligibility-expansion/>

Source: Money Saving Expert

PIPPA'S PAGES CONT'D.



FACING FORM FILLING?

Centre member and trustee Ros Hatt has shared the following useful information on completing forms;

Be it for PIP (Personal Independence Payment), Blue Badge, ESA (Employment Support Allowance) etc., the claim forms can be daunting.

But, did you know guidance is available to assist you when completing them? On the PIP form, you might say YES, you can walk 50m... but can you do so safely? Repeatedly? In a reasonable time compared to someone without a disability? See, it isn't a simple Yes or No response.

Utilise the support available out there from those who know how the forms are reviewed and how you should best explain your circumstances.

1. MS Society – MS Benefits Advice Service offers free advice to people affected by MS call 0808 800 8000 or email msbenefitsadvice@dls.org.uk
2. Citizens Advice – Adviceline (England): 0808 278 7819 or visit www.citizensadvice.org
3. Communicare – email office@communicare.org.uk or call 0118 9263941

Please note, the MS Specialist Nurses are not available to complete forms with you – they request that you contact one of the services mentioned above.

And my advice? Avoid Yes/No replies – use “sometimes”, or “it depends/varies”. MS is unpredictable and uncertain after all!

Ros Hatt

IS YOUR INFORMATION UP TO DATE?

Now that we have switched to a new database, we are taking the opportunity to update our members' details, including contact information, communication preferences, gift aid eligibility and so on.

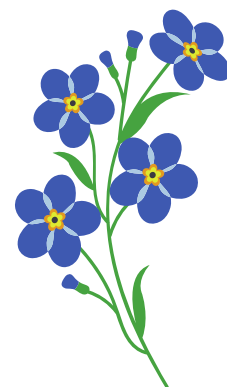


We've been trying to catch people at reception but if we haven't managed to ask you yet, please ask at reception for your details form so we can make sure we have all the correct information for you.

If you have any queries, please contact Nikki on nikki@bmstc.org

BMSTC FAMILY

WITH DEEPEST REGRET



We have sadly lost some special friends to the Centre in recent months.

We send our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of our member Suzanne Small, who passed away in March. Suzanne had been attending physiotherapy classes and oxygen therapy since 2019. She and her husband Robert raised donations for the Centre when they celebrated their Golden Wedding last year. Robert sadly also passed away recently.

Our member Adrienne Maynard passed away on 20 April. Adrienne had attended physiotherapy since 2018. We send our deepest sympathies to her husband Tony and the rest of her family and friends. We would like to sincerely thank Tony for asking for donations to come to the Centre in Adrienne's memory.

Our member Helen Hales passed away on 13 April. Helen first came to the Centre in 2000 and attended physiotherapy until a few years ago. We send our deepest condolences to her husband Roger and the rest of her family and friends. We would like to sincerely thank Roger for asking for donations to come to the Centre in Helen's memory.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER UPDATE

GOODBYE

GOODBYE TO REBECCA

In April we said goodbye to our Fundraising Manager Rebecca. Rebecca has written the following message;

“After 2 fantastic years working at the Centre, I am saying farewell as I move on to another charity. It has been a privilege to work for an organisation that is so incredibly caring and committed to its mission. I can honestly say that I have never worked anywhere with such a great sense of community, nor have I worked anywhere that consumes quite so many biscuits!! I am going to miss all the staff, volunteers and members that make this place so amazing. I will keep in touch and look forward to hearing about all the successes and developments through colleagues. The Centre does so much great work, I want to wish you all the very best.”



Thank you for all your hard work Rebecca, you will be missed. We wish you lots of luck in your new job, keep in touch!

WELCOME TO FREIA

Freia Pagdin joined the team as our new Senior Fundraising Manager in April. We'll let her introduce herself;

“Hi all, I'm Freia Pagdin and I'm delighted to have joined the team at the Centre. I bring a wealth of experience to the role, having worked in small charities, the NHS and public sector for over 15 years in both Fundraising and Communications.



My most recent role was with specialist education charity Inclusion Education, which supports young people with mental health, additional learning needs and neurodivergence to re-engage with education. During my 6½ years with Inclusion I shaped the communications strategy and messaging of the organisation as well as developing new projects, programmes and funding streams.

At home I have two teenage boys – Theo (15) and Otis (13) – and Milly, our working Cocker Spaniel, who all keep me busy. I'm also a keen reader and love going to see bands and live music – so always happy to hear about any concert fundraisers you might have links to! I recently become a Trustee for Hampshire based Domestic Abuse charity, Stop Domestic Abuse.

We know we are facing challenging times at BMSTC but I am really excited to see what we can achieve together.”

Welcome to BMSTC Freia, we're so pleased to have you.

YOUR IDEAS FOR ACCESSIBLE ACTIVITIES

In the previous newsletter, we asked for your ideas for accessible activities and days out. Thank you for your replies. Here are your suggestions so far - if you have any more, please keep them coming to claire@bmstc.org

Member Claire sent us these suggestions - she currently uses a lightweight collapsible scooter that fits in the car boot and it manages all these places.

Kennet Canal Walk Aldermaston

Park at Aldermaston Wharf, RG7 4UY

Scoot along the canal side on a flat, smooth path all the way to Sulhampstead and back, approx 5km in total. There is one road crossing and a couple of slopes to go past the locks but all doable on an electric scooter or wheelchair.

There is a pleasant cafe at Aldermaston Wharf with lots of outside seating.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/canals-and-rivers/places-to-visit/aldermaston-wharf>

Greenham Common Newbury

Park at the Control Tower Burys Bank Rd, Newbury, Thatcham RG19 8BZ

You can scoot all round the Common land in multiple directions. The paths are gravel tracks all on one level.

<http://www.greenham-common.org.uk/ixbin/hixclient.exe?a=file&p=greenham&f=greenham.htm>

There is a cafe at the Control Tower open a few days of the week; <https://www.greenhamtower.org.uk/>



Thames Riverside Reading

Park at Kings Meadow Rd, Reading RG1 8DF

Scoot along the riverside on the Thames Path, up to Caversham Bridge then cross over to the South side and it is tarmaced all the way up to Rivermead.

<https://www.visit-reading.com/things-to-do/walking-and-cycling-routes/the-thames-path>

Bucklers Forest Crowthorne

Park in car park off Woodcote Green, Crowthorne, nearest postcode RG45 6LN.

An excellent place to visit with lots of easy paths through woods and shrub land in the grounds of what used to be the Transport Research Laboratory. Information boards and a mini-museum tell you about the wildlife of the local area and the transport research that once took place there.

<https://tbhpartnership.org.uk/greenspace/bucklers-forest/>

Snelsmore Common, Newbury

4 miles north-west of Newbury, RG14 3BQ (nearest)

There is an Easy Access Trail of 0.75 miles on a paved path through the common, which is perfect for wheelchair and scooter users. There is also a small cafe and plenty of parking.

<https://www.bbwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/snelsmore-common-country-park>

ACCESSIBLE ACTIVITIES CONT'D.

Norden Centre for the Arts, Altwood Road, Maidenhead

Member Lesley says, "I really enjoy visiting Norden Farm It has good access and great for cinema/live events/cafe/bar."

Visit; <https://norden.farm/> for more details.

Thomley Glamping pods, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire HP18 9JZ

Member Caroline says, "This one is for parents - have a look at Thomley. Glamping pods available which are fully accessible."

Visit; <https://thomley.org.uk/>

Little Explorers, family adventures in Oxford

Caroline says, "I also find the Facebook group called little explorers very valuable. There is a website too but the FB page is more useful - there are always accessibility comments which help me plan family days out."

Visit; <https://littleexplorers.com/>

West Wittering Beach, West Sussex

Member Candice says, "West Wittering beach has beach and sea accessible wheelchairs available to 'hire' for the day. They have huge inflatable wheels, so they can be pushed on the sand easily. You have to ring them to book one, and you pay a £20 deposit (in cash), and when you take it back you get the £20 back."

Visit; www.westwitteringestate.co.uk/accessibility/



Thank you all for taking the time to share your suggestions! We'd love to hear about your days out and about over the summer.

MEMBER STORY - GEORGINA TELLS US ABOUT HOW SHE SHARES HER MS EXPERIENCES ONLINE AS MS QUEEN GEE

I have lived with autoimmunity for as long as I can remember. My first diagnosis was Hashimoto's disease at 11 years old, around the first time I was admitted to hospital. I thought all kids visited doctors monthly, I thought that was normal.

Growing up, the list of diagnoses grew too. PCOS. And then MS.



My MS diagnosis changed everything. After being in denial for three years, I learned that MS was something I needed to pay attention to. My body was screaming for it.

Two to three years after my diagnosis, I experienced a major depressive episode. Coming out of it, MS Queen Gee was born. I didn't think much of it initially, I was simply seeking connection with people with MS. I didn't expect the sheer volume of comments, messages and following that followed. Then I realised: this conversation was needed all along.

Day in and day out, I create content about MS symptoms and how to navigate life with MS. But the content closest to my heart will always be the emotional side of MS, how MS depression actually presents, cognitive symptoms, grief and identity after diagnosis, lost relationships, and how to advocate for yourself in healthcare settings.

I now host monthly online meetups where we share, bond and humanise the mess that is MS. Everybody is allowed to be themselves. No disability olympics, but no toxic positivity either.

I would love to have the Centre's younger members join one of our next meetups. The online community offers flexibility and energy conservation, with people joining from around the world.

It is also my dream to one day host in-person meetups specifically for younger people with MS in Berkshire. I believe there is something uniquely powerful about being in the same room as people who truly understand your experience.

Well, that's all from me for now. Take care x Gee.

Follow me on Instagram, TikTok or Youtube: [@msqueengee](#)

If you want to share anything, you can email me at themsqueengee@gmail.com

DIGESTING SCIENCE - A GREAT SUCCESS

Back in February, five families came to the Centre to join our interactive Digesting Science event, hosted in partnership with the MS Society and MS nurses. The idea was to bring families together to learn about different aspects and themes around MS in a fun and engaging way. We had some great feedback from attendees and hope to run future sessions. If you are interested, please email anwen@bmstc.org.

“

It was informal, the children enjoyed the activities. They absorbed some of the information as it was presented in a very child friendly manner.

”



“

It will help bridge a gap in the understanding for our children to grasp more about MS and why I am like I am on some days.

”

“

Our children will be able to understand more as they grow up and understand their parent with the condition.

”



“

Lovely ladies, explained all activities well and made them fun. Enjoyed meeting other people with MS and talking about different symptoms and other relevant topics i.e. claiming benefits. Enjoyed the refreshments!

”

COME ALONG TO THE CARERS' LUNCH CLUB

When you are diagnosed with MS, the effects do not stop with you. The effects are felt by those around you. Carers and partners play a huge role in how you manage your MS and their support is crucial. The Reading, Wokingham and Districts MS Society Group runs a partners and carers lunch on the second Thursday of the month. Anyone who cares for someone with MS is invited to attend. You will be given a very warm welcome and the cost of lunch is covered by the MS Society.

It is a lovely opportunity for family members to socialise over a delicious meal, with other people in similar situations.

Peter, whose wife has MS, has been going along to the group for a couple of years;

“What I have found is that the group is not open to deep discussion of aspects of becoming a carer, be they emotional, financial or practical, in a focussed way but if you are prepared to stick with it and gain trust of the existing carers then some useful information can be gleaned. For me the main benefit is to just be with people who are dealing with the same issues of caring for a person whose needs are steadily increasing at a faster rate than your own. Heather (group founder), for instance cared for her husband for over 25 years and that shows me that however uncertain the future looks for me, if she can cope so can I. It is my hope that in 20 years from now I can show that perseverance to future carers.”

Roger, who cares for his wife Carole, has been attending the group for 7 or 8 years after being introduced by a friend. He likes how they meet in different venues across the area each month.

Roger says, “We have a mutual understanding of each other's situations. It's great to take time out to chat to people who understand and to be able to support other people and share tips and information.

Anyone is welcome so please get in touch and come along!”



Roger

If you are interested in going along or just want to find out more, please email Khalid at khalidkathy@btinternet.com or Marianne at mcross@ntlworld.com

LOOKING BACK AT MS AWARENESS WEEK

20-26 April was MS Awareness Week and we had a great time spreading the word about MS and about the support the Centre can offer.

We were interviewed on That's TV Thames Valley and featured in the Wokingham Paper. We held a hilarious sold out Bingo event which raised around £600. Jackie and Claire from the Centre joined the MS nurses and an NHS neurophysiotherapist at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and we shared some very special stories from our members on our social media and blog. Our member Louise was the star of our video up on the giant screen outside Reading Station all week and our collection at the station on Friday was a great success.

Thank you to everyone who got involved with this fantastic week, raising both awareness and donations!

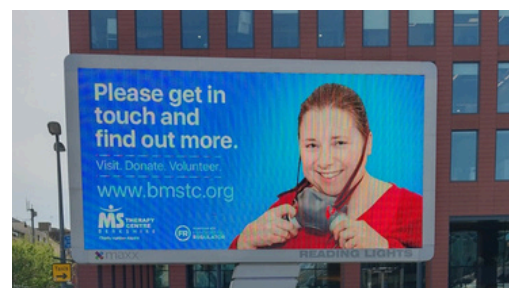
You can catch up with any members' stories you have missed on our blog at www.bmstc.org/news



Jackie from BMSTC with MS Nurse Sarah



Jackie from BMSTC with RBH Neurophysiotherapist Sarah



Supporter and member Louise on the big screen at Reading Station



Supporter Fiona was happy with her prize at the bingo!



Claire from BMSTC with supporter and member Graeme

A NEW FRONTIER IN MS TREATMENT: KATE'S CAR-T TRIAL JOURNEY

Last year, we shared news on our blog about a ground-breaking milestone: the first UK trial of CAR-T therapy for multiple sclerosis (MS) had successfully treated its first patient.

CAR-T therapy works by modifying a patient's own T cells—a type of white blood cell—to target and destroy specific cells in the body. These cells normally help fight infection, but in autoimmune conditions like MS, they can mistakenly attack healthy tissue. Already used to treat certain blood cancers, CAR-T therapy is now being explored as a potential long-lasting treatment for autoimmune diseases such as lupus and MS.

One of our members, Kate Lang, took part in this pioneering trial and shares her experience below.

Can you tell us when you were diagnosed with MS and how it's affected you?

"I had my first episode just after my son was born about 13 and a half years ago. I completely lost sensation down one side of my body—but then it disappeared, and nothing much happened for years.

Things changed after my second son was born 10 years ago. He was seriously ill and spent six months in hospital. Not long after, I went for a run and it felt like my shoe was too tight. It was at this point my mobility started to decline.

It took around two years to get a diagnosis. After a lumbar puncture three years ago, I was told I had secondary progressive MS. It started in my leg, but now affects my arm and hand too. I can't walk as far as I used to, and I can't run anymore."

How did you find out about the trial?

"I was taking the only available medication for secondary progressive MS, but it lowered my heart rate so much I became bradycardic which meant it wasn't safe to continue. For MS on the NHS at this time, this is the only treatment option.

My consultant at University College London Hospital asked if I'd consider joining the trial. My mobility was getting worse, I have young children, and I want to stay as active as possible which is why I decided after some initial deliberation that I would go for it. It could be amazing, it might work, it might not, but I felt I had nothing to lose and it could be a treatment for MS patients in the future.

After a long screening process, I was accepted and started the trial in October 2025."

What does CAR-T treatment involve?

"The process starts with lots of hospital tests. Initial bloods, screening questions and a consent form. The next stage is when they collect your T cells, this is done by inserting a line into your groin and plugging you into a machine, similar to one that is used for dialysis which filters your blood, isolating the cells that it needs and after a period of about 6 hours, all of your blood is returned to your body, the line is removed and you get to go home. It was a long day and you feel exhausted afterwards.

KATE'S CAR-T TRIAL JOURNEY CONT'D.

The cells are then sent to a lab where they're modified into CAR-T cells designed to target inflammation in the body. Once the cells are ready, you go back to the hospital to start treatment. On day 1 you will have a PICC line inserted in theatre into your arm. This takes around 30-40 minutes, you will then return to the ward for treatment to start.

The first chemotherapy session marks the start, there are 3 sessions on concurrent days followed by two rest days. During this time you stay in a hospital hotel very close to the hospital. Following this, you become an inpatient and this is the day the new CAR-T cells are given back to you via a catheter."

"It wasn't easy—but I felt in safe hands"

"The chemotherapy made me very unwell by the third day. I was admitted to hospital with dehydration and severe sickness.

But the team deal with this kind of treatment every day, especially for conditions like leukaemia. Their experience and professionalism made a huge difference, I felt reassured and well looked after throughout.

In total, I was in London for about a month, though it can be up to three months depending on how treatment goes."

Recovery and monitoring. How did you feel after treatment?

"The worst symptom for me was a severe headache. When I got home, I was completely exhausted. I couldn't drive for two months or go out much, which was especially hard over Christmas.

My immune system is still compromised, I have to be cautious when unwell and have to have all of my childhood vaccinations again. The treatment essentially resets your immune system.

At first, I had weekly hospital visits, then monthly, and now every three months. They monitor me closely with MRIs, blood tests, and neurological assessments to track any changes."

Looking ahead

"It's a one-off treatment, but I will be monitored for 20 years. With secondary progressive MS, it's difficult to know if it's worked, I will only really know if things don't get worse.

Clinical trials are essential if we want progress. There hasn't been anything quite like this in MS before which is why I want to talk about it and share my experience so others who may be considering the trial understand what's involved. Looking back, it wasn't as daunting as I expected, and although it was tough, really it was just a small chapter in my life.

I feel very privileged to have taken part. This kind of research could make a real difference to people living with MS."

If you'd like more details about this exciting research, please visit [the UCLH website](#)

You can also follow Kate's journey on Instagram: [@katesmstrialupdate](#)

NEW INTRODUCTORY RELAXATION AND MEDITATION COURSE COMING SOON

Join our next 6-week online Relaxation and Meditation class starting on Tuesday 2 June 2026 at 11.30am and led by our Yoga teacher Uddhava. The class will cover a range of different relaxation and meditation techniques designed to help calm the mind and reduce stress so that you can find what works best for you.



Whilst you can't change the world around you, you can change how you respond. The class is open to any member who is new to meditation as well as those who want to deepen their understanding and build their own practice.

There is now a large body of evidence that meditation has a powerful influence on our health and well-being. It has been shown to relieve depression, lower blood pressure, assist in pain control and release anxiety. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to decrease the effects of stress on our bodies and minds and improve our quality of life. This is especially important for people with MS as they often find that stress can aggravate their condition.

Feedback on Uddhava's past courses has been very positive. One recent attendee said;

"I just wanted to say thank you for letting me join the class . It is very helpful and we so benefit from the mindfulness teaching. I sometimes forget how challenging living with MS is. Your classes bring calmness and a relaxed sense that we so desperately need. I thank you."

Class details

This introductory 6-week class runs from Tuesday 4 June to 7 July on Zoom and is open to all members of the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre, their family members, and carers.

How to sign up

Please email ms@bmstc.org and we will forward your contact details to Uddhava so he can send you the Zoom link.

NIKKI'S PAGE

Hello everyone, it's been a busy few months!

Pippa (Centre manager), Sue and Carol (volunteer receptionists), Penny and Gregg (trustees) all attended the Presentation Ceremony for the King's Award for Voluntary Service at Wokingham Town Hall on 3 March with the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire, the Mayor of Reading and High Sheriff in attendance. They received the award on behalf of all our wonderful volunteers and accepted a beautifully engraved crystal trophy and a certificate which many of you may have already seen on reception. If you haven't seen it yet, please do come and have a look!



Malcolm Cook (volunteer oxygen operator) and Neil Dawkins (chair of trustees) will also be representing BMSTC by attending a special Summer Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on Friday 8 May for the King's Award. We look forward to hearing all about it and seeing some photos of the special day.

I am delighted to confirm that we will be having our very own special summer garden party for our current volunteers to celebrate the King's Award on Friday 5 June to tie in with National Volunteers Week. Invites have been emailed out to volunteers that have volunteered at the Centre over the past year. We are also looking for local companies and supermarkets to sponsor the event or make donations of food and drinks, so if you have any contacts with any companies or supermarkets that might be interested in helping, please do let me know.

I am pleased to welcome Sarah and Colin Preece as our new volunteer oxygen operators. They have now finished their three months shadowing with Malcolm and have started running some sessions.

As always if you know of anyone who would like to come for a tour, become a member, or to volunteer at the Centre, please give them my contact details: email: Nikki@bmstc.org tel: 0118 901 6000 and I will be happy to get in touch with them.

PHYSIOTHERAPY UPDATE

By Anwen Hall, Physiotherapy Manager



MS Trust Conference

In March Petra and I attended the MS Trust Conference. As always, it was a great opportunity to hear from some of the leading medical experts in the MS world, speak with other healthcare professionals and share good practice and some of the challenges we face. Talks included changes to diagnosis and terminology, diet and lifestyle, menopause and osteoporosis to name a few. Commonly talked about were the changes to the McDonald criteria which is used to diagnose MS, leading to more people being diagnosed at an earlier stage. Throughout the conference the interplay between MS, aging and other external factors were acknowledged and the benefits of exercise, diet and lifestyle recognised alongside treatments and/or symptom management. If you'd like to know more about any topic, let us know.

Classes

Over the last few months we have had some exciting group classes on offer including Indoor Cycling and our debut seated dance class. The dance class was led by Petra and was very well received. One of our attendees said;

"I love moving to music, but can't do it standing, so this was perfect. The class made me stop worrying about anything else and it was wonderful to switch off and lose myself in the movement and music."

Although we won't be able to run this as an ongoing class we are looking at how we can run it more than once a year and following feedback exploring how feasible an online option is. Next up is our Falls Prevention class starting mid May.

We also were joined for six weeks by Lucas, our latest Oxford Brookes student. Lucas was very complimentary about the Centre and the team and wanted to thank all of the members that he met and worked with across his placement.



Looking ahead the Physiotherapy team have been learning more about the importance and benefits of exercise with MS.

Off the back of this we are going to spend a week looking at how we can educate and help ALL of our members to achieve the recommended amount and type of exercise specific to their ability, that they should be doing- watch this space for further information and dates!

Additionally, if there are any particular activities you would like us to cover during this week, let us know.

FUNDRAISING

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

by Freia Pagdin, Senior Fundraising Manager

Well it's hard to believe I've been part of the team for nearly two months now – and what a time it has been!

I just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone at the Centre who have been so kind and welcoming – you really have made starting in this new role so much easier with your support!

It's a busy time for us in fundraising – we were sad to see Rebecca go but looking forward to sharing plans on how the team will work going forward – we have our hands full being a person down at the moment but we do really appreciate your patience and support as we navigate this time. We are in the process of recruiting for a new member of the team – so watch this space for further updates. Once up to capacity, we'll be pushing ahead with some different areas for campaigns and fundraising opportunities – so please do talk to me if you have any warm contacts or connections you feel would be supportive of our fundraising in the future.

As mentioned in the newsletter, we are delighted to be one of the charities supported by Phyllis Court this year. As part of this they would love to have some volunteers help them to sell raffle tickets at their celebration event during Henley Regatta from Tuesday 30 Jun – Sunday 5 July. We've got a few sessions to cover so if you're interested in helping then please do talk to myself or Jackie for more details.

The Go Challenge 2026 – Beside the Seaside is in full swing and it's just amazing to see the enthusiasm and support for this wonderful event – we hit the £2,000 mark on day one so can't wait to see how far we can go this year!

We know we are facing ever more challenging times but we'll continue to work together to support this wonderful community created at BMSTC – I'm so pleased to be part of the team.

Until next time,

Freia
freia@bmstc.org



Petra and Amanda
taking part in the Go Challenge

THANK YOU....

FUNDRAISING

Thank you to Phyllis Court for choosing us to be their Charity of the Year. We are very grateful for their support and look forward to working together in partnership over 2026.



Clubbercise Camberley and Deepcut with Caroline raised £90 for the Centre and R and G Racing raised £60. A huge thank you to everyone who donated and thank you to our member Caroline for organising this!

Thank you to everyone who took part in the Easter Raffle – it raised a brilliant £1,000! A special thank you to Tesco Wokingham, John Lewis Reading and Rosie's Chocolate Factory for donating prizes.

We'd like to say a huge thank you and well done to our Reading Half Marathon team – Michael, Victoria, Matt and Lewis – who raised over £3,200 for the Centre! Please get in touch if you'd like to run the Reading Half for us next year.

Thank you to our member Graham who has nominated us to the Skipton Building Society for a donation. If you are a member of Skipton Building Society yourself, you can nominate us via your local branch.



Thank you to our amazing collectors who have raised these wonderful amounts so far this year;

- Tesco Napier Road 23 Jan – £504.41
- Henry Street 21 Mar – £639.06
- Tesco Newbury 28 Mar – £291.01 *
- Reading Station 24 April – £1571.99
- Ascot Races 9 May – £2508.42

*Plus an additional £5,000 donation from someone who got chatting to one of our collectors and donated online later!

Got a fundraising idea? Come and see the fundraising team in the office, email freia@bmstc.org or call us on 0118 901 6000.

THANKYOU



FUNDRAISING



FUNDRAISING MUSIC GIG FOR THE CENTRE

Centre member Simon has organised a gig to raise funds for BMSTC taking place at the Purple Turtle in Reading from 3pm on Sunday 31 May. Chameleon's Music for MS will feature Baby Maker, Lots Of, Doops, Sundaughter, Hööf and more. Tickets £10 plus £1 booking fee online or £12 on the door, over 18s only. Thank you Simon, sounds like it will be a great afternoon/night!



Buy your tickets at; <https://wegottickets.com/f/18825>

SPONSOR ELSA TO RUN 10K

Elsa is a Centre member with MS and she has fundraised for us on countless occasions, including the Reading Half Marathon, Wargrave 10K and even sky diving! This year, she's running the Green Park 10K on 31 May. You can sponsor Elsa and help her raise even more money for the Centre, thank you.



Sponsor Elsa at; <https://www.justgiving.com/page/elsa-agbangla-5>

And if you'd like to take part in your own fundraising challenge (it doesn't have to involve running or jumping out of a plane!), have a look at our events on www.bmstc.org/events or drop us a line, we'd love to hear from you!

ENTER OUR MEN'S WORLD CUP SWEEPSTAKE!

The FIFA Men's World Cup takes place from 11 June to 19 July. Join in our World Cup Sweepstake and you could win a bottle of prosecco! Tickets available at Centre reception, £2 for each entry. Good luck!



FUNDRAISING

AN AMAZING LONDON MARATHON

We'd like to say a huge congratulations and thank you to our amazing London Marathon team who ran 26.2 miles for the Centre on a very warm day. They have raised a wonderful £14,000 plus Gift Aid for the Centre, which will make a huge difference.

Our runner Ruby said, "It was a privilege running the London Marathon for the Centre, I feel so grateful and lucky. It was something I will never forget. Thank you for allowing me an unforgettable moment in my life!

We have limited charity places available for next year's London Marathon so if you or anyone you know is interested in taking on this wonderful opportunity to support us while running this iconic bucket-list race, please visit www.bmstc.org/londonmarathon

Also, if you have entered the London Marathon ballot and are lucky enough to get a place, we'd love to welcome you to our team too.

Please email claire@bmstc.org with any queries.



Team members Elliot, Chris, Ruby and Simon (below) show off their medals



SPONSOR THE GO CHALLENGE TEAM

At the time of going to print, our latest Go Challenge - Beside the Seaside - is in full swing!

As recipients of The King's Award, we wanted to recognise this great honour in our event - so this year's Go Challenge is taking in the King Charles III Coastal path, finishing the 1889km route at Buckingham Palace in time for tea with the King. We will be covering the distance virtually on the exercise bikes in the gym, during physiotherapy classes and during activities at home such as walking.

Thank you to everyone who is taking part.

If you are not taking part yourself, please think about sponsoring the team and help them raise the £6,000 target. Thank you. You can donate to the challenge at reception or sponsor the team online at;

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/gochallenge26-besidetheseaside>



MEETING DIARY FOR MS GROUPS

**These activities are not organised by BMSTC.
Please contact the organisation directly for more information.**

MS NURSE



If you see an MS Nurse from the Royal Berkshire NHS Trust you can have your appointment at the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre. Please book your appointment directly with the nurses on 0118 322 5474 or email rbb-tr.msnurses@nhs.net.

They are at the Centre on the third Monday of each month.

Please note, it is not possible for the MS Nurse to see members who are not eligible to be seen by consultants within the Royal Berkshire NHS Trust.

If you are unable to keep your appointment with the Nurse at the Centre please call her on the number above or contact the Centre on 0118 901 6000 on the day.

THE MS CARERS SUPPORT GROUP



The MS Carers Group meets for lunch at various pubs and restaurants at 12.30pm on the second Thursday of each month. It is funded by Reading, Wokingham and Districts MS Society Branch.

New members are always welcome. If you would like to join please email Khalid at khalidkathy@btinternet.com or Marianne at mcross@ntlworld.com

See page 12 for our article about the group

MEETING DIARY FOR MS GROUPS CONT'D.

READING WOKINGHAM AND DISTRICT MSQUARED

MSquared is part of the MS Society and is a social group for people diagnosed with MS, their family members and friends.

The meetings are arranged at the request of the attendees and there are regular social events. For more information email: msquaredrwd@gmail.com



READING, WOKINGHAM AND DISTRICTS MS SOCIETY DROP-IN

Earley Crescent Resource Centre, Warbler Drive, Lower Earley, Reading RG6 4HB on Wednesdays 10am-1.30pm.

Call Vanessa on 07492 786695 or Judy on 07812 676762 or visit www.msreading.org.uk for more information.



EAST BERKSHIRE MS SOCIETY

Activities include Pilates on the first Friday of the month in Crowthorne, Thursday coffee club in Maidenhead and coffee morning on the third Friday of the month in Windsor.

For full details of all events, see <https://www.mssociety.org.uk/support-and-community/local-support/local-groups/east-berkshire-group>

Email eastberkshire@mssociety.org.uk or call 07395 465993



THE HENLEY MS SUPPORT GROUP

The Henley MS Support Group meets socially for lunch on the third Wednesday of every month. If you would like to go along, please contact organiser, Maddie, directly by email: maddie@starames.co.uk

THERAPIES AT THE BERKSHIRE MS THERAPY CENTRE



Physiotherapy sessions and exercise classes

We run a variety of 1:1 sessions and classes as well as APS, FES, re-assessments and new assessments. Yoga is available online.

Please contact the physiotherapy team on 0118 901 6000 to find out more.

Oxygen therapy

Monday-Saturday

To arrange a session or seek more information, please contact the Centre on 0118 901 6000

Counselling

Counselling is available online, by telephone and face-to-face. Call the Centre on 0118 901 6000.

Footcare

Available every Thursday.

Call the Centre on 0118 901 6000 for more information.



Complementary therapies

The following therapies are available at the Centre:

Acupuncture/acupressure (£18) (currently not taking on new patients)

Reiki (£18)

Massage (From £30)

Appointments can be made by telephoning the BMSTC reception on 0118 901 6000. With your permission, your contact details will then be given to the therapist you request who will then make appointments directly with you. Please note that you will pay your therapist directly for these treatments.





EVENTS COMING SOON AND USEFUL DATES

- **11-22 May 2026**

Go Challenge- Beside the Seaside

www.bmstc.org/go2026

- **25 Monday 2026**

Bank Holiday Monday

Centre closed

- **31 May 2026**

Fundraising Gig, Purple Turtle

See page 21 for details

- **2 June to 7 July**

Introduction to Relaxation and Meditation

www.bmstc.org/relaxationcourse

- **31 August 2026**

Bank Holiday Monday

Centre closed

- **28 September 2026**

AGM

www.bmstc.org/agm2026



NEXT TIME...

Our next newsletter is due in August and we want to hear from you! Have you got any advice to share? Got a celebration you want us to join in or anything else you want us to tell our members?

Please email gill@bmstc.org or claire@bmstc.org or call Claire on 0118 901 6000 (usual working days Mondays to Wednesdays).

Deadline is 10 July 2026 and we look forward to hearing from you!

For details of all our forthcoming events, please go to www.bmstc.org/events, email ms@bmstc.org or call 0118 901 6000.

We will be holding a quiz night on Wed 9 Sep at the Jazz Cafe, Reading. Keep an eye on the blog and our social media for more details!

Berkshire MS Therapy Centre

Bradbury House, 23a August End, Brock Gardens,
Reading RG30 2JP

Email: ms@bmstc.org Website: www.bmstc.org

0118 901 6000 (please leave a message if we are not there)



Charity no: 800419