MS MUTUAL SUPPORT
ARMED FORCES MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SUPPORT GROUP

Newsletter **December *2022***

MS MUTUAL SUPPORT
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Soldiering On Awards
2022 Finalist

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Newsletter Deadline:

Friday 24th February 2023

Cover Photo:

Christmas 2022

FORWARD

The year 2022 is finally drawing to a close and what an unbelievably tumultuous year this has been, it will surely be remembered mostly for all the wrong reasons. But, it is good news that Mutual Support has gone from strength to strength continuing to gain many new members, new volunteers have joined the coordinating team. We have had two successful residential weekend and although we didn't come first in the 2022 Soldiering On Awards, we were proud to have gained recognition in the Family Values category (see p18). Better luck next year!

We have quite a few articles in this edition written by members of our incredible group. This is exactly what we always like to see, It makes for a much more interesting newsletter, so thank you very much to all who have contributed.

We had our support and respite weekend in Derbyshire from the fourth to the sixth of November, it was an excellent meeting again, so informative and entertaining (see rogues gallery on p11). Seriously, I could probably fill this newsletter with everything we experienced on that weekend. The coordinating team has taken on your ideas, suggestions and feedback from the weekend and it is clear that we have a lot to do. It is also very apparent that we need to update and step up our group publicity to get Mutual Support better known, we have already collated some great ideas in this respect and thankfully we already have enthusiastic volunteers who are keen to get cracking. However, if you have any ideas about how to get our name 'out there' then please let us know. Well done and a big thank you to the events team for all of your efforts in organising these meetings, well done to Jack and Julie for entertaining us all with the pickle night and also Fiona and Rachel for quizzing us. It's the first time I've been for a while so I had forgotten just how invigorated we all feel afterwards, my mind was buzzing with so many thoughts. So, if you haven't been before or haven't been for a while then I can highly recommend that you do.

We had two members, Fran Hinton and Jim Watson who successfully completed the London Marathon this year. Read about their experiences on pages 14 to 17.

Who is Martha Stewart? Find out on pages four and five.

Of course, the year 2022 was the year that our beloved Majesty Queen Elizabeth II passed away. Many of us would say with great pride that she was our boss! I personally have only ever seen her for real from a distance while on parade in Dortmund, Germany in 1984, Graham and Heather tell us of their first hand experience of meeting her majesty for real on pages six, eight and nine.

The next Spring residential S&R weekend has been provisionally booked for the 12th-14th may 2023 at the Hayes Conference Centre in Derbyshire. This is very advanced notice, and at this time may be subject to change but we will provide you with firm details as soon as we possibly can.

The team wishes you a very enjoyable festive season and we hope you have a safe and healthy 2023.

Bill Land (editor)

communicationsvolunteer@mutual-support.org.uk

Sister Hannah & Positive Mental Attitude

Following my diagnosis of MS, I was determined to retire. After six months I missed people so I looked for a part time job. In the Express & Echo was just what I was looking for:

Disabled person wanted to Mentor disabled people

Well although at the time I was using one and occasionally two walking sticks', I didn't regard myself as disabled (because to my mind, disabled people needed wheelchairs). I phoned anyway to ask about the post. I was asked what I had that caused me to use sticks and, when I said I had MS, I was told to look at the definition of disability:

You are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative affect on your ability to do normal daily activities. If you have MS, HIV, cancer, a visual impairment or a severe long-term disfigurement, you are considered disabled from the point of diagnosis.

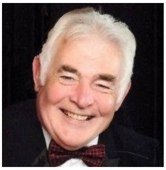
So that was it, I was eligible and applied. The position was to cover the Leonard Cheshire services four days a week in the Southwest. After my interview I was offered a job share for two days a week in Devon, Cornwall and South Somerset with my partner covering North Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset. I accepted and was introduced to the other successful candidate, Sister Hannah who I was to work with for the next five years.

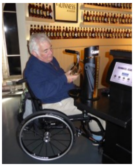
As well as working with me for Leonard Cheshire, Sister Hannah worked as a chaplain in Royal United Hospital, Bath and also HM Prison, Bristol. She was a wheelchair user who would have been around 4' 6" (1.37m) tall and looked as though she would have blown away in a gust of wind. She had to live with a condition called dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa (also the subject of a TV documentary ' The Boy Whose Skin Fell Off'), which causes the skin to blister and fall off. Regularly diagnosed with pressure sores, she rarely followed doctors' advice to take bed rest and rose every morning at 5am to say her morning prayers in her assisted living accommodation.

Her condition eventually resulted in her being advised to have her legs amputated below the knees. She conceded to the decision and underwent the operation. On coming to, she waited patiently in bed for doctor's rounds and cheerfully greeted to surgeon who said, "*Good news, Sister Hannah, I am pleased to report the operation went well. However, I should have discussed before surgery, there is the matter of limb disposal. Ordinarily amputations go to the hospital furnace, are you happy with that?"*

"Don't you dare", said Sister Hannah. *"Dig a hole in the ground, put them in and put a note on top saying – MORE TO FOLLOW."*

Mike Moxey





MS-UK
Supporting your MS journey

We are here to support anyone affected by multiple sclerosis...

MS-UK Peer Support Service

MS-UK is excited to introduce our brand new MS and Work Peer Pod to our peer support service! This is for those who are living with MS and working, in whatever profession.

As always, you can get involved in our peer pods including our newest ‘Work and MS’ pod launched last month for those who are working and living with MS. If you would like to join our pods, please visit our website by clicking here to find out when they take place and email us at peersupport@ms-uk.org for Zoom details.

Find out more about the Peer Support Service

MS-UK Registered Charity Number 1033731

Call: **01206 226 500**

Email: info@msuk.org

Th UK-MS Helpline: **0800 783 0518**

Our mailing address is:
D3 Knowledge Gateway, Nestfield Road, Colchester CO4 3ZL

Martha Stewart!

My name is Anna, I'm 46 and I have MS. That's a massive sentence, I've never written it before. I'm still firmly in the closet with my diagnosis, it's new, it's been terrifying and I'm not quite ready to share it with the real world.

I say that and yet, here I am outing myself to everyone who reads this. However, I feel like this group offers me a level of protection that other groups and socials don't. Most other groups would not understand the use of the words "I'm a crowbag MS'er" yet here I feel you might get that!

I'm not a complete crowbag I have to tell you. I've lived with the effects of MS for about 32 years as my Mum had MS, diagnosed around my age. She died in March 2021 aged 72, officially from "complications due to MS" and thereafter swiftly followed a diagnosis for myself about 6 months later. Was that a massive slap in the face? A bash over the helmet with a spade? Yes, it was. Did I feel like fate had handed me a more unfair turnout than guard duty on the back gate over Christmas? Yes, I did. I couldn't for a while bring myself to even say the word MS, my brother came up with the solution of referring to it as **M**artha **S**tewart! If anyone had been overhearing our conversations earlier this year, they would have feared for Martha's life.

I've had my suspicions about Martha for a while now. I'm pretty sure she was the one causing my bad back, I'm sort of convinced she's the reason I feel like I'm losing my marbles sometimes and can't remember names or dates or places. It was definitely her fault that when my Mum died, my wonderful Mum, my legs went numb and the numbness spread slowly up my back providing us with amusing nights of stick the pin in and see where it hurts. I'm pretty sure that b**** killed my Mum, although I am also laying the blame at the door of ignorant professionals, who know nothing about neurology and can't possibly think of joining up dots to treat a person holistically. But I digress and that's a whole other story.

Eventually, you have to tell certain people. So, you pick the closest first. Telling my 3 kids was the hardest thing. They obviously associated it with Nan and we all know how that turned out. I worry for their futures, they are young and fit and healthy, but so was I at 22. I worry about my future and how it will affect them, not wanting to become a burden. I worry that my husband will go off me, it's not the most sexiest of diseases now is it? I worry that my house will not be suitable in the future, having just got our mortgage paid off (thanks Mum) and life was becoming a little more comfortable. I worry about the treatment and what side effects it may have (I'll come to that later). Mostly this year has been worrying about every aspect of my life, from who will walk the dog if I can't, to who will give me health insurance if we go on holiday? It's like Martha decided to hitch up her skirt, jump on my back and now we're tabbing through life together and she weighs a ton!

The things people say to you, who mean well, but actually it shuts you down talking about any of it: "Don't let it get the better of you" "We're in this together" (we're totally not!) "They have meds for that nowadays" "I know an Aunt Fanny who had that" I know they mean well but my brother's reaction of saying "Do you want to go outside and throw eggs at a wall?" has so far been the most helpful!

Continued………..

The one thing I did learn from my Mum's experiences, was if you are not satisfied with medical professionals, then find another one. I battled for years on behalf of my Mum to get professionals in place who knew what they were talking about. This feels like a postcode lotto sometimes. In my case, in Cumbria, it felt desolate.

Having eventually convinced a nurse practitioner that I really needed to see a neurologist (I couldn't see a GP, even with numb legs), I was referred and told there was a year's waiting list. There was a time I would have accepted this with a shrug of what can you do? But, I did my research, I found an MS specialist in the North of England and I paid to see him. I know, I know, but this got me where I am today, on his NHS list in Preston, under his care, I trust him, he got me a treatment plan and I travel two hours every month down there to receive my infusion and two hours back home again. That might sound like a long winded plan, but you know what, it's a period of stability in a rather rocky world and I would rather sacrifice the travel time than fight a system right now. Which leads me on to say, we pick our battles. Fight for the stuff that's important, but don't waste your precious energy on sweating about the small stuff.

I'm on an infusion of Tysabri once a month, it's difficult to know if it's doing anything or not. The only way I'll know is if I get worse or if future scans show more lesions, I guess. When discussing the pro's and con's I was told you could contract the PML virus, which could kill you…or it could work and you have no further relapses! Well, that's a toss-up, but no greater risk than joining the Army and risk getting blown up, or not! I didn't get blown up, so fingers crossed for no PML!! A game of odds! I think we all must be risk takers, to a certain extent, or why would we have followed our chosen careers?!

Things to celebrate…I walk my dog every day, I manage my 3-story house still, I have a full time job, I'm married and he hasn't decided it's too unsexy yet (and importantly I can still remember his name), I have 3 wonderful kids who are out there living life to the max, I can still drink gin! So, Martha, stick that in your pipe.

For anyone else out there, who might still be in the closet, needing to know you're not alone, needing to have someone to understand that Martha is a b**** and wants to throw eggs at her, or quietly wants to sit with her for a bit, I just wanted to say I get it. What I have learnt is that my Mum's blueprint for survival and living with this condition, does not have to be mine. That's taken some guts to say, because it worked for her, the stiff upper lip, bury your head in the sand approach that got her through 32 years of it. I think I will find my own blueprint, I think I will (eventually) ask for help when I need it, I think I will talk to others that I can connect with. I will find out about the hacks and tips and take advice. It's a learning curve, but if once upon a time I could haul my backside through basic training, I can haul my way through this too. We all got through it with a little help from friends, instructors and learning to pace ourselves. Life with Martha is no different, so have faith in yourself and find your own blueprint that works for you.

Anna Marie Todd

Meeting HM the Queen
The Royal Tournament 1982

I had the honour of meeting both Her Majesty The Queen and *Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester, GCB, CI, GCVO, GCStJ, GBE at the Royal Tournament.

Princess Alice at the time, was the director of the *Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) with the rank of Air Marshal, as a result, the WRAF contingent was tasked with providing her with an honour guard lining the red carpet and I was to present her with a bouquet. As the limousine arrived a mobility scooter was placed for her to use, this was my cue to step forward and present the bouquet. However, being of advanced years and running late she grabbed the bouquet and took off for the lift like she was on the starting grid of F1. As the officers and staff ran to catch up with her the WRAF contingent did what we do best in such a situation we burst into laughter and applauded her and as one we said: "That's how the WRAF make an entrance".

I met Her Majesty The Queen later at the Royal Tournament (RT) as part of the honour guard. Whether she had been informed of her Aunt's late arrival I don't know but, she was on time! Her Majesty took the time to stop and talk to every member of the honour guard to ask how we were all doing after the incident in Hyde Park. It meant so much to all of us that she took the time to check on our welfare after what had been a very traumatic few days for all of us.

At the beginning of the RT, I and another member of the WRAF were tasked with replenishing the Royal Box 'facilities' before and after each performance. Every morning we would take inventory and then visit that well-known High Street Chemist, the only problem being no one had thought to ask the various occupants of the 'Box' what they would like so we had to buy one or more of everything! Before the days of Marmalade sandwiches, I think I know what the large handbags were for that all the Royal Box occupants carried, I will forever regard myself as a perfume buyer by appointment!

I will always remember them both with great affection and gratitude; the service they gave to this country should never be forgotten.

Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester, GCB, CI, GCVO, GCStJ, GBE (born Lady Alice Christabel Montagu Douglas Scott; 25 December 1901 – 29 October 2004) was the wife of Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, the third son of King George V and Queen Mary. She was the mother of Prince William of Gloucester and Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester.

She became head of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in 1939 as Senior Controller, changed to Air Commandant on 12 March 1940, and was appointed Air Chief Commandant on 4 March 1943, when she took over as director until August 1944. When the WAAF became the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) in 1949, she was appointed an Air Chief Commandant (equivalent to Air vice-marshal) in the new service on 1 February 1949, she was promoted to Air marshal on 1 September 1968 and to air chief marshal in the Royal Air Force on 23 February 1990 and remained so until the WRAF was disbanded in 1994.

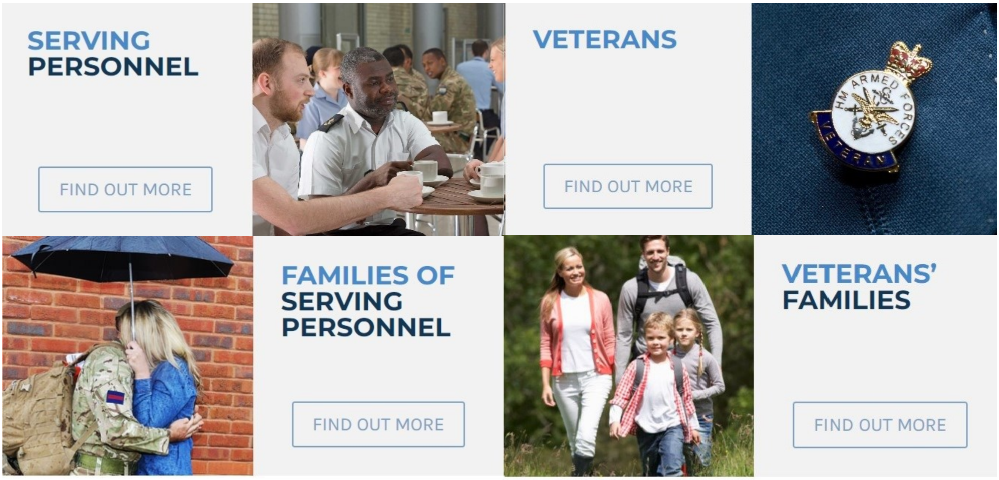
Het Smith

thewarriorprogramme

Our programme enables individuals to manage their emotions and to develop the resilience, focus and motivation to succeed in today's world. The programme has been developed over the last fifteen years to meet the demands and challenges experienced by past and present members of the armed forces and their families.

We are now running online courses which run for 5 days and residential courses which run for 3 days.

We have also developed an online resource to enable all existing participants to continue to embed the techniques taught on the Programme and are running regular training via Facebook live and Zoom. We advertise all these sessions by email and on the Facebook closed site. If you do not currently receive regular invitations, and would like to, please contact us at enquiries@warriorprogramme.org.uk.



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BOOK CALL FREEPHONE 0808 8010898 OR CLICK ON **CONTACT US AND SEND US A MESSAGE.**

Thank you for your continued support, stay safe and best wishes.

The Warrior Team.

Did you know, we are also on twitter?
Follow us @ twitter.com/mss_msupport

Her Majesty and our Smiles, Stutters and Delirium!

My story about HM The Queen Elizabeth started in the late 1970s. I had been posted to RAF Benson and worked in the Communications Centre (COMMCEN) My colleagues and I worked shifts, the COMMCEN was open 24 hours a day. We often prepared signals for The Queens Flight, who were based there, so it was with a feeling of pride that we had something to do with transmitting flight plans for the Royal Family.

One of us would have sent the flight plan for HM to fly to Canada to open up the Commonwealth Games in Canada in 1978. I was on night duty in the COMMCEN when I got a phone call from the Telephone Exchange at about 2 a.m.

‘COMMCEN Benson, SAC Duncan speaking, how can I help?’

‘Good morning, this is [so-and-so], [some sort of] secretary to HM The Queen, speaking from Buckingham Palace. I need to get an urgent signal message to Her Majesty in Canada where she is opening the Commonwealth games. Can you help?’

‘Eh?’ The chap had to repeat the whole thing once more for me.

‘Yes of course I can help, sir. Let me put you back to the PBX, so the operator can put you through to The Queens Flight duty officer. He can originate a signal and give it to me to prepare and transmit.’

Of course the telephone operator had been listening in to our conversation and picked up the call immediately and from there transferred him to TQF duty officer.

I never did get a signal to transmit, so presumed TQF had a direct line to HM. I did chat to the PBX operator about the call. The chap also had to repeat himself to her. It was not very often that we ever got calls from the palace.

The next time was much more personal; fast forward to 2004 when I worked in CIO-J6 -Ops in the Ministry of Defence, London as a Flight Sergeant.

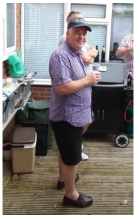
The MOD had been extensively refurbished over a few years. Our offices were dotted around central London, so we moved into our renovated offices in early 2004, which a few weeks later were going to be formally opened by HM The Queen Elizabeth. The Brigadier in charge of our office informed myself and an RM colleague to have uniforms on for the day. Suddenly during her visit, there was a change of plan, the RM and I had to go to the library and wait with others there. It happened that we were the only two in uniform in the library, the rest being MOD civilians.

The Royal Marine was asked to stand with some civilians near the books on war and technology, whilst I was asked to stand near the entrance to the library. After a slight pause the door was opened, camera man and others opening the doors to allow The Queen entrance into the corridor of the library. She was shown around by officers with scrambled egg on the peaks of their headgear and yards of gold braid on their uniforms.

I was beaming at her and as I was so close to the entrance she walked right up to me, also smiling.

‘So this is your special library where you find information, Flight Sergeant?’

Continued……….



I couldn't put a proper sentence together. I stuttered and stammered and I am sure The Queen thought I was having a stroke, and it was a definite possibility that I was suffering from one. Whether or not I made a sensible sentence or not I have no memory. After a pause, she wandered off to see my RM colleague, with equally hilarious results; he seemed to be suffering from delirium tremens* from head to foot. After a short stroll and chat The Queen left the library to visit other areas within the ministry.

Maybe I should have asked if she remembered the urgent message from the palace back in July 1978. She probably would have done.

* a severe psychotic condition occurring in some persons with chronic alcoholism, characterised by delirium, tremor, anxiety, and vivid hallucinations.

Graham Duncan

Welcome To our new members

We've had four families join since our last newsletter, a very warm welcome to them living in Hampshire, Inverness-shire, Essex and Germany. Greetings to you all and your children. We encourage you to share your experiences of military life and also your MS journey. Any questions you have can invariable be answered by the other participants of the friendliest MS support group in the world.

One family have an RAF background and the hubby is still in service, two others are still serving in the Army, and the fourth pair, the RN. The new members are:

Katherine and David Brooks
Caroline and Matt Tope
Kayleigh and Matthew Cameron
Callum Chalmers and Tamara Zabavina

If you have a Facebook account you might like to know that Mutual Support has its own Facebook page. If you have not yet joined us there and would like to, please search for Mutual-Support, or click on this link: Mutual Support. Apply to join and I will grant you access right away. It's a good place to ask questions and share support, there are daily MS bulletins, some signposting, some banter and a good way of keeping in touch with each other.

If your dependent children are over the age of 18 (unless still in full time education) could you let me know, so I can remove them from our membership list. Our benefactors request information about who they are funding.

Also, please let me know if any of your contact details have changed so we can keep you apprised of upcoming events. The easiest and quickest way is to email me:

membershipvolunteer@mutual-support.org.uk

Welcome once again to all of you and to all the **1164** members.

Graham *(Hunky Dunk)* Duncan
Membership Volunteer

If you're a disabled person looking to apply for an Access Card, click here:

Start Your Application

Nimbus, a disability consultancy service, developed the Access Card in response to frustrations shared by disabled people and a major live music promoter in how disability was evidenced and needs for reasonable adjustments communicated.

- For disabled people, the frustration was in repeatedly sending in personal documents which bore no direct relation to the needs of the individual.
- For the venues, it was frustration in interpreting these documents and the additional admin burden it placed on their staff.

Our goal was to produce a single consistent method of communicating between customer and provider; therefore simplifying the process for both.

Since its initial development, the card is now widely accepted at major event venues across the UK and beyond, and even more widely taken simply at face value.

The technological development behind the card now means that an unprecedented technical response to disabled peoples' needs is now possible and a live API allows for online ticket sales (and more) to be genuinely achievable for the first time for disabled people.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions.

Martin Austin MBE
Managing Director
Nimbus Disability
0330 808 5108
martin@nimbusdisability.com

Welcome to Sportability

The world of Sportability sees people getting out of their wheelchairs, off their crutches and sticks and into canoes, gliders, microlights or sailing boats.

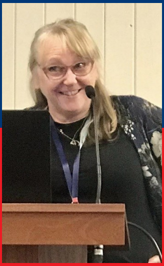
Whether quad biking or BloKart sailing, shooting shotguns, air rifles and pistols, or bows and crossbows, it's about turning their back on 'disability' and JUST DOING IT!

Rogues Gallery Autumn S&R weekend










HMS PICKLE

Courage grows under difficulty

SINGALONG
ON
PICKLE







A life in the sun

Recently I spent ten weeks courtesy of the NHS. It started as a chest infection, non MS – but because I had lost so much strength, I passed seven weeks of that time in Mardon neuro rehab centre Exeter. They have a newsletter made of residents' contributions. Here, for what they are worth are a couple of my submissions.

Sunshine

How times change. These days we have a couple of days sunny weather and the UK grinds to a halt with the government advising us to:

- Try to keep out of the sun between 11am to 3pm, when the UV rays are strongest.
- If you have to go out in the heat, walk in the shade, apply sunscreen and wear a wide-brimmed hat.
- Avoid physical exertion during the hottest parts of the day.

Perhaps we should remind our therapy team as we are encouraged and challenged physically *joking folks*!

I was lucky to have been born into a service family and having started life in Northern Ireland, spent 2 years in Gibraltar.

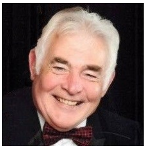
Before my siblings appeared, my parents enjoyed taking me to the beach. Mother told me later the bridge of my nose was prone to peel so she would protect it by wetting and sticking on bus tickets. There was a strange choice of sunhat however...

Some six years later, father got another 18 months in the sun, this time in Ghana, West Africa. Initially we were put up in transition accommodation for a fortnight to acclimatise. The advice was to uncover for no more than 10 minutes on day one and build up by five minutes per day thereafter. Again beach called regularly.

In 1973 I was posted to Malta with the Royal Marines where we spent weeks at a time soldiering around the Mediterranean including Corsica, Sardinia and Cyprus carrying heavy packs as we went. I later married a naval nurse I had met there. In the hot summer of 1976 I remember her enjoying the sun using homemade suntan lotion of coconut oil mixed with vinegar.

These days, as my MS responds adversely to any rise in core body temperature, I am happy to follow the guidelines. How times change.

Mike Moxey



Motability

Your smart move for receiving smoother payments

When you're due a payment such as your Good Condition Bonus, you want to be able to access the money as soon as possible. So why wait for your cheque to be delivered - and then wait again in a bank queue to pay it in.

Simply by adding your details to your Motability Scheme online account, you can receive future payments directly into your bank account. Your details will be kept secure and only ever used to pay money to you. Plus you'll receive an email when a payment is made, so you'll know the money is on the way to you.

A few moments filling in your bank details could mean a lot less time waiting in the future.

Sign in to your online account →

More from the Motability Scheme

Motoring
Vehicles, tech and trends →

Everyday tips
Getting out and about →

Places
Accessible travel ideas →

Scheme news
Updates on the Motability Scheme →

My 2022 London Marathon Journey

In late 2021 I decided to apply for a place at the 2022 London Marathon, where if successful I could fulfil one of my lifetime ambitions and secondly try to raise some money for Mutual Support who over the last few years have given Dean and I an enormous amount of help and support so thought it was best for me to try sooner rather than later as I hit the BIG 60 in Sep 2022.

At the end of February I received a phone call from the MS Society saying I was being offered a place and I immediately said YES. I had already started doing short jogs from the start of the year but quickly realised I needed to up my game and get some sort of training plan in place. Who better than DJ Chris Evans to help so purchased his book '119 DAYS TO GO' and printed off a copy of the official TCS London Marathon Beginners Training Plan.

I started doing three runs a week, two shorter and one longer and gradually increased each run. It wasn't much fun on my own and sometimes could easily have given up so I joined 'Parkrun' which is a five kilometre weekly walk, jog, run or whatever you fancy in loads of locations throughout the country. I did mine at Huntingdon, five miles from home and met a couple of ladies from the local running club who were also doing the London Marathon and went with them occasionally on longer runs which gave me lots of encouragement and incentive. They had entered a half marathon over the August Bank Holiday and said it would be good for me to build stamina and run with a few hundred others so with that said I did it and pleased with my time of 2 hrs, 34 min and 26 secs. I started doing a weekly exercise class called 'Hips, bums and tums' to strengthen my core and gradually felt better in myself. I also attended an excellent training day in July, despite it being a rail strike day, at the MS Society HQ in Finsbury Park with various speakers on nutrition, training, clothing, injuries etc you name it they covered it. Two of the speakers had previously done the marathon so everyone gleaned as much information as possible from them.

Next thought, was how I was going to raise the £2000 requested by the MS Society. I set up a JustGiving page and contacted numerous family and friends telling them what I was doing and money started flooding in. Dean is a member of the MS Therapy Centre in Huntingdon where they had a kitchen, however, since the pandemic could not afford to employ someone to run it. I offered to do soup, sandwiches and cakes once a month on a voluntary basis and divided the profits made between them and my Just Giving page, so again win win for both parties.

During the rather warm summer we had and runs getting longer I was getting up at 6am and heading out for 7.30 laden with a small rucksack carrying water and snacks as unlike race day there were no drink stops and of course comfort break venues!!!! I soon found places like in a local museum and cafes were always obliging, phew. My longest run was 23.02 miles which took 4 hrs 30 mins and easy 25 degrees centigrade by the time I finished. Running, fitness classes and fundraising basically took over my life for seven months but would I have had it any other way DEFINITELY NOT.

Continued………..

I kept a diary of distances and routes which just on runs alone covered 500 miles and in total with walking etc on 'rest' days I covered over 1000 miles so on average over the 30 weeks I did about 33 miles a week.

Training now all done time for the day itself, nervous definitely yes but hugely excited and felt so proud of what I had done, only a little bit to do now 26.2 miles ha ha. I had travelled to London the day before with a friend and yes another rail strike day but we had already decided to go by National Express coach as had thousands of others.

Cambridge to London Victoria was quite scenic especially as it passed some of the race route. We did a bit of exploring around the Mall, had a good carb meal and I was out for the count by 9pm in the Union Jack club, my friend said I snored like an pig!!!!

Sue woke me at 6am and we had a leisurely and hearty breakfast before facing the Tube challenge to Blackheath with 42000 other participants. I spoke to lots of people from all walks of life with varying reasons for taking on this huge challenge which was so inspiring to hear and thought to myself come hell or high water I would do it, be it on my knees, I WOULD FINISH.

I even met a celebrity Antony Cotton, aka Sean Tully a barman and knicker stitcher from Coronation Street who had come to see off a friend.

My wave, a group of 1000 people started at 10:45 and the atmosphere was something else, very over whelming and so much more exciting than I could ever have imagined. I shed a few tears here and there as I felt so honoured and privileged to play a part in such an iconic event thinking how proud my parents would have been of me. For the first couple of miles when people called out things like 'Come on Fran', 'Keep going Fran' I kept looking in their direction thinking who's that thinking I only knew of 2 people definitely coming; eventually the penny dropped I had FRAN printed on the front of my vest doh!!!!!!!! The crowds were absolutely fabulous, supportive and so very kind, handing out sweets, food, and even little glasses of beer outside one pub.

There was so much entertainment throughout from steel bands, dancers, cheer leaders, loudspeakers banging out music from pubs and personal instruments and even a pipe band in full Scottish attire, I asked one of them if he was a 'True Scotsmen' and he just chuckled!!! Before I knew it I had got to the six mile point at Cutty Sark where I had arranged to see my friends so that was a real boost and just reaching any landmark was such a great feeling. Getting over Tower Bridge was another milestone as it was the half way point.

Unfortunately, at that point I started to get cramp on and off and despite stopping to stretch it out, it accompanied me right to the end like a bad penny!!! Again, with the huge support and encouragement from the crowd and knowing how many people had so kindly supported and sponsored I gave myself a serious talking to saying just keep putting one foot in front of the other and I would soon be there. After Canary Wharf and getting to the 20 mile point I was just so emotionally charged up and seeing others looking like me I then pushed them on and tried not to think of my injury.

Continued……….

No sooner was I looking at Big Ben and said only a mile to go so found some energy and went go girl passing Buckingham Palace then turned onto the Mall and well it was like take off for that finish line crossing it a mere 6 hrs 8 mins and 26 secs after starting. How did I feel apart from knackered, elated, on top of the world and buzzing saying not bad for someone sixty years and two weeks old and I need a cup of tea.

After collecting my medal and kit I had dropped off before the start I went to meet my friends at the MS Society post event venue where they offered massages, showering facilities and food and drink, and most importantly 3 cups of tea!!!

One last mission was to get back home via tube and train and since when has there not been escalators at St Pancras, steps going down were worse than up but thankfully after my massage my friend did not need to give me a piggy back. Got on the extremely busy train but still having my race number getting a much needed seat was no problem. We arrived home at 21:45 with the front door and surrounding area covered in balloons, banners and flowers, curtesy of other friends.

I have given myself a couple of weeks off to recover and get back into the swing of normal daily life and after initially saying never again I am now thinking maybe, possibly, so watch this space for my next adventure!!!!

Fran Hinton.

At the time of publication, Fran has raised a very impressive **£2293.56.** The final total may be even higher. Well done Fran and a great big thank you from us all. (Ed)

London Marathon 3 Oct 2022
My experience by Jill Watson

Where to start…..it has been a crazy busy year for Jim getting ready to run this year's London Marathon, he trained so hard (I'd say SUPER hard but he dislikes super in front of anything) ha ha!

He would go to work, come home, run, eat, sleep and repeat. This was his life for weeks, the one thing I will say about him is that once he commits to something he is all over it 100%, he suffered injuries along the way but I, being the kind, compassionate, empathetic soul that I am (lies, all of it!!) would get the Epsom salts for his bath and was even known to apply deep tissue massage lotion on afterwards, we'll leave that there!

We drove down to RAF Northolt on Saturday 1st October, early, where we left the car and then jumped on the train to London Waterloo via the Excel centre in order for Jim to collect his Race Pack, we had thought it would be extremely busy but were surprised we were straight in and out in a few minutes. Once he was registered we made our way back to Waterloo and then onto our home for the next two days the Union Jack Club (well worth a stay if you ever go to the Big Smoke).

Continued……….

We checked in then met up with friends for dinner, an early night was definitely needed.

Sunday arrived and I was feeling really rather anxious, I don't really like London (too busy) but was excited and really proud of Jim for undertaking this once in a lifetime run. We headed to the meeting point in Green Park (no toilets btw) and not so good when you could literally pee for England. Anyway, I saw him off into the Red zone as this is where he was to start, then I had to make my way to the station to catch the tube to meet our daughter and another friend. Cue having a major wobble walking to where I had to get to, don't do so well on my own with things like this so I did what all big girls do, and cried!!!!

Finally, met up with said daughter and friend and we started to work out which tube station we needed to get to the next mile point, everything felt so rushed but the buzz was exhilarating!!

All of this time we were able to track Jim using the Marathon app, so we were constantly getting to the closest mile markers to see if we could spot him. Cutty Sark was nearly the 16 mile point I believe and this was our best shot of seeing him, sure enough we got a fairly decent spot behind the barrier and there…….for a split second we saw him and I was so happy to see him (looking remarkably well too), to toast his achievement so far, we did what any good wife, daughter and friend would do……… went in the pub for a pint!! Well deserved too I say.

After the light refreshment we headed over to Horse Guards to meet up with him there, he had done it and we hung around congratulating all of the athletes who had completed it and received their medal. It wasn't too much longer that he appeared. We took the obligatory photos' and all headed back, albeit slowly, to Union Jack Club. He had a pint and some food then off for a shower. There were lots of people in the hotel walking in a very similar style to Jim, awkwardly!

We took a stroll, a very gentle stroll, down South Bank to see the City all lit up, it was lovely and a great finish to a SUPER busy weekend.

Jim, you are amazing and my very own MS Superstar, thank you for doing this I am so very proud of you xx

TCS London Marathon 2023

Apply to join our London Marathon MS Superstars team and run with us on 23 April 2023. You'll be helping to raise awareness of MS and fund life-changing treatment and care.

Apply for the 2023 London Marathon

Soldiering on awards - October 2022

What an honour for Mutual Support to be finalists in the Family Values category of the Soldiering on Awards. It was a privilege for Jack Russell and myself to represent such an amazing group and you all, at the awards ceremony.

We travelled to London for the two and a half hour journey, sharing the train with a child who really didn't travel well and whose travelling guardian didn't cope with sick children either. Luckily, ever prepared, I had spare wet wipes, bottles of water and a plastic bag…which proved to have a tear at the bottom which we fortunately saw before disaster struck.

We caught a tube to Westminster Bridge, lots of steps there, and walked across the bridge to the Park Plaza hotel and joined the very long queue to check in.

A quick shower and change and we were good to go and join the throngs in the main reception area for the awards where the Taittinger (event sponsors) champagne was waiting for our arrival.

Stupidly, I decided I would wear heels. Now these are my go to heels that have a rather thick elastic across the top of the foot to keep everything where it should be. Some of you, as I do, may experience that our feet sometimes do their own thing and escape from shoes quite easily. Well, I walked into that room like some form of human Bambi, clutching onto Jack for dear life, excuse the pun, to keep me stable and upright.

Well that didn't last long as once the canapes arrived I needed stability and my hands to receive the delights on offer. The shoes had to go!

Moving through to the main event hall, we enjoyed an evening of military entertainment, speeches and delicious food before the ceremony began.

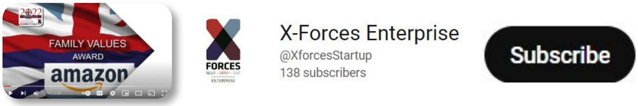
The stories were both moving and inspirational and the winners justly deserving. Sadly we were once again 'bridesmaids'.

Congratulations to all those that won but in my eyes, we are all winners.

Thank you so much to all of the organisers, performers and sponsors for making such a special and memorable night.

Julie Russell

Winner Family Values Award
SOA 2022



Be sure to visit our Mutual-Support Facebook group for the latest news and views.

We need more hotels with a ceiling hoist

Fully Accessible Holiday Rental

London's first fully adapted holiday accommodation has opening in Worcester Park in SW London. More info here

New London Hotel with hoist

The Pan Pacific Hotel in Bishopsgate, London, has 2 executive rooms fitted with Guldman hoists. For more info

ON COURSE FOUNDATION

Support On Course Foundation

The only golf specific military charity based in the United Kingdom.

Our aim is to support the recovery of injured and sick Service personnel and veterans through nationwide golf events and employment in the golf industry.

Click here to find out more

NHS
Veterans' Mental Health
High Intensity Service
Hampshire and Isle of Wight

If you are a veteran and experiencing a mental health crisis, you can call NHS 111...

and tell us you are a veteran if you are in need of urgent support. You can also contact us via email: snhs.veteranshis.se@nhs.net and you will be referred into the Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service.

For more information visit: www.solent.nhs.uk/join-us/armed-forces-programme/his/

Please note, this is for **Hampshire and the Isle of White**.

To download an information leaflet:

https://www.solent.nhs.uk/media/2659/veterans-leaflet-a5-11-dec-2020.pdf

https://spencerbull.me/

Our very own Spencer Bull has put together his own website showing just how privileged and positive he feels about the opportunities and adventures he has had over the last seventeen years or so since his MS diagnosis. Take a look.

HEALING WAVES

ocean therapy

What We Do

We enable individuals to access the ocean in a safe way to participate in water sport activities. This is so they can experience and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of the ocean.

Why We Do It

We want to better the lives of others and to provide them with opportunities for new meaningful experiences that they might not otherwise have, whilst providing respite for all.

How We Do It

We currently deliver Ocean Therapy through surf, paddle and Flowrider sessions. Please click on the services tab to find out more and book your first session!

Contact us: Healing Waves was the literal ‘brain wave’ by friends, surfers and support workers in Jersey Channel Islands.

Upper Sheil
La Grand Route De St. Martin
St. Martin
Jersey
JE3 6JR.

Email: healingwavesoceantherapy@gmail

Carers' Session

Here are the main points from the carers' session held at the autumn S&R weekend with handy links:

carersUK
making life better for carers
What is a carers' assessment
What is an Emergency Plan

CARERSMART
Carer's discounts

CEA CARD
Cinema Card

Carefree
Carefree Carer breaks

mobilise
Together we care and thrive
Online Support for carers

charityworkerdiscounts
Cashback card join free

GOV.UK
Council Tax discounts

healthwatch
Have your say

Very many thanks to **Emma Handley** from the Derbyshire Carers' Association.
Call: **01773 833 833** or email: info@derbyshirecarers.co.uk

16 or under?
Get your free MS Star

If you are 16 years old or younger, we want you to know that Mutual Support is really proud of you. You are an MS Star!

Does your mum or dad have MS and are they a member of Mutual Support?

YES

Then just tell us what it's like to have a parent who has MS or anything else about how you feel? In return we will send you a **FREE** enamel pin badge to show that you really are an MS Star. (Offer ends: Fri 24th Feb 2023)

Ask your mum or dad to send it to Bill, the editor by email at:

communicationsvolunteer@mutual-support.org.uk

Write as much or as little as you want.

Include your name and address, how old you are, and your mum or dad's name. Then we will send you this cool pin badge to prove that you really are an MS Star.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Thanks

Parents: Please give us consent to publish what your child has written, we will treat everything you send us with complete confidentiality, we will not print addresses and we will not keep any details relating to your child, we can even publish what they say anonymously if you wish, just let us know.

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&
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Helen Spear Support Volunteer	serving-stc-2@mutual-support.org.uk

As at December 2022