



CHAIRMAN'S WINTER MESSAGE 2009

With the approach of the festive season, your Branch Committee has been trying to clear the decks so we can enjoy this special time with friends and families. We reckon there is much to be done to improve the lot for people affected by MS not just here in Ayrshire and Arran but throughout Scotland.

At last with other like minded Branches, we have managed to get the UK Society to hold a special general meeting in Perth on Saturday 14 November to try and clear the air of the clouds which have hung over the Scottish Society for some time now. We must find a better way forward.

Your Committee feel Scotland must remain as part of a larger UK Society but have clear powers to deal with Scottish matters and campaign for the local Scottish membership. We argued this viewpoint in Perth. We hope you agree with our stance. Although our motion was passed, a lot of work still needs to be done.

Still on the campaign trail but more locally, we were all disappointed to hear there are no plans in the overall redevelopment of Ayrshire Central Hospital for the Douglas Grant Unit and Pavilions 10 and 11 to be upgraded. We know from many of our members' personal experiences just how inadequate the facilities are for the disabled especially in the Pavilions. The working environment for staff who do a grand job is totally unsatisfactory. The set up is just not fit for their intended use.

Both Harry Travers and I took the opportunity at a public meeting to let the Chairman of the Health Board and the Deputy Minister for Health just how we and other disabled charities feel about these failures. We battle on.

On a cheerier note, we can now offer members and friends our customised Christmas Cards with a wide selection and attractive designs. Many of us felt our cards must clearly identify with the Branch. Cath Minto has been very busy organising their printing and sale. Please support us. At £3.25 per pack of ten, they offer real value at this season of giving and will be a real boost to local funds.

Subject to the vagaries of the postal service, your membership renewal forms from London HQ should now be with you. To save post and hassle you can hand your forms, your subs and any donations you care to make to any member of the Committee or our Kilwinning Office. They will ensure that Carolyn MacIsaac, our membership secretary, gets them and liaises in bulk with London. Remember all these monies stay with the Branch locally to take our work forward. Your renewal will boost our efforts to achieve our target of 400 members.

Full details of our local Group Christmas activities are in your Newsletter, but a special mention for our Christmas Social Evening on Thursday 3 December at the Menzies Hotel, Irvine and the Branch New Year Lunch on Saturday 9 January at the Gailes Lodge Hotel. Hopefully something for everyone so come along and enjoy good cheer and fellowship. Hope to see you all.

It was mentioned to me that next year, 2010, sees the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Branch... any ideas for celebrating?

May I and your Committee wish you all a peaceful and enjoyable Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Take care and stay warm.

Donald McNeill
Chairman

NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS!

From 1st December 2009, we will be taking over our new premises at 84 Main Street, Kilwinning KA13 6AG, but we will continue to use our present office for a while yet. The telephone number and email address at the new premises will remain the same.

REAL WINNERS IN THE NEW YORK MARATHON

The Press and TV will tell you all about the final placings in this year's major endurance test that took place on 1 November, but over the last three years the Ayrshire and Arran Branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society is the REAL WINNER with over £23,000 going to our local funds. It is now evident that due to the ready assistance of our supporters, old and new, the 2 Lauras - Laura James and Laura Robertson of Mauchline

- will have raised over £13,000 for Branch funds - a tremendous effort well in excess of their original target of £7,000.

If you add in the £10,000 raised by James Kyle of Kilmarnock in 2007 and Andrew Sinclair and Stephen Wilkie of Ayr in 2008 you can see just how much their very real personal achievements brings practical benefits to people with multiple sclerosis in Ayrshire.

Donald McNeill, chairman of the Branch, said "We cannot thank the participants and their many supporters enough. As an independent charity run entirely by volunteers and with no paid staff we do not seek or receive any Government grants We pledge that all monies raised locally stays locally to benefit people affected by MS and their families. Clearly, our aims strike a chord with the Ayrshire public. In our 40 years existence they have never let us down. If anyone out there wants to go for it in 2010 the Branch would be delighted to help."

If you wish to boost the 2Lauras final total visit their website which can be found at www.justgiving.com/the2Lauras



NEW CUMNOCK GROUP

The New Cumnock MS Group meets at the Lochside Hotel in New Cumnock from 6.30 on the last Tuesday of each month.

For further details please contact Caroline Duncan on 01290 333846.

CALLING GIRVAN & MAYBOLE

A small group is now up and running to promote friendship and fellowship. The group meets the first Wednesday in the month at 10.30am in the Royal Hotel, Girvan and a warm welcome is assured to all affected by MS. To find out more, contact Margaret Armour on 01465 710302.

HENDERSON CENTRE GROUP

Meet on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 1 - 4pm in the Scout Hall behind Henderson Church, Kilmarnock. Contact Catherine Honeyman by calling 01563 539537.

This of course now means we have groups running in Ayr, Cunninghame, Girvan/Maybole, Kilmarnock and New Cumnock. Well done to all the local group organisers.



Wishing all of our members, colleagues, friends and supporters a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year



CUNNINGHAME MS DROP-IN CENTRE

We meet in St. Johns' Church Hall at Stevenston on Thursdays between midday and 3pm.

The catering has changed slightly. No longer do we have cold meat etc. sandwiches every week but the local chip shop benefits due to us buying portions of chips for chip "butties." Roll and Sausage or Hot Dogs are available every now and then served with a portion of onions.

We are all looking forward to Christmas, and on that topic, we break for the holidays after our meeting on 17th December until 21st January.

Have an enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

Margaret Shuttleworth

BRANCH WEBSITE

By the time you read this newsletter, the Branch Website will have its Christmas pages operational for 2009. Once again this year, there's a variety of festive trivia, fun, games and competitions.

The site, as usual, contains a wide range of news and resources and for people affected by MS in the local area. It's well worth taking a few minutes to log on to: www.msyrshire.com

YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Members will be receiving invitations from our London HQ to renew their 2010 membership with the Society. We would sincerely hope you do so and continue to join with your other 400 colleagues in our local work.

It was good to see the renewal form is a lot simpler. The Branch knows that many members do not have access to a cheque account to send off their £5 subscription and any donations they make. All of your Committee have agreed to accept renewal forms and all cash from members with Carolyn MacIsaac, our membership secretary, banking them locally to our Branch accounts.

You can also hand in renewals and cash to our Kilwinning office. Carolyn will then liaise with London to ensure your membership benefits remain intact. We think with the postal strikes this makes good sense and encourage you to use it.

If anyone has any queries about their membership or renewal please contact Carolyn on 01292 471476.

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL NIGHT

The Christmas Social Evening will take place on Thursday 3 December at the Menzies Hotel, Irvine at 6.30 for 7pm. Everyone is welcome, for more details call 01294 558866.

KYLE COFFEE CLUB

Our meetings on the last Wednesday of the month continue to be happy, busy, enjoyable events with good food, coffee and scones, good surroundings (Dobbies), and good company. What more could you ask for?

The weather may be unreliable, but that has never stopped us yet! A very warm welcome is extended to new members and the group continues to grow.

In November a trip to Holyrood was planned for 12 of our members following on from John Scott's visit to the group in August. It is always good to see government in action, so we are greatly looking forward to this.

Christmas lunch this year will once again be at Dobbies Garden World, Ayr, on 9th December at 11.45am for 12 noon, and we look forward to a lovely meal. This will replace our usual coffee club meeting in December and give our members more time for shopping for those last minute things.

We would take this opportunity to thank the staff at Dobbies Garden World for their constant support and consideration. Nothing is too much trouble and service with a smile is guaranteed.

We would like to send good wishes to Morag, undergoing some treatment at the present time and to Jean who sustained a shoulder injury recently, for a speedy recovery.

At this time of the year, holidays for some of us are just a memory now, but for others in the group plans are already being made for their next break so we look forward to hearing about those to brighten the dark winter days.

Best wishes for a happy Christmas and New Year to everyone. Hope to see you all in 2010.

Irene MacLean & Carolyn MacIsaac



WELCOME TO DARREN

The Branch would like to pass on a message of welcome to Darren Miller, the new West of Scotland Area Development Officer.

Darren fills the gap which was left when Esther Threlfall, the former WoS Development Officer, parted company with the Society several months ago.

We wish Darren every success in his new post and look forward to working with him over the coming months and years.

What's On Where This Winter

Cunninghame Drop-In Group

Every Thursday 12 noon–3pm in St John's Church Hall, Stevenston. Contact Iris on 01294 471066

Henderson Centre Group

Meet on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 1 - 4pm in the Scout Hall behind Henderson Church, Kilmarnock. Contact Catherine Honeyman on 01563 539537

Kyle Coffee Club

Meet on the last Wednesday of each month at 10.30am Dobbies Garden Centre, near Ayr. Contact Irene McLean on 01292 478962.

New Cumnock Group

Last Tuesday of each month from 6.30 pm onwards at the Lochside House Hotel in New Cumnock.

Girvan/Maybole Group

First Wednesday of the month at the Royal Hotel, Girvan. Call Margaret Armour 01465 710302.

Yoga Class

Each Monday at 7.15pm at the Biggart Hospital, Prestwick. Call Jean Howie on 01292 268434

Branch Social Evening

Next Social Evening is on Thursday 3rd December at 6.30pm for 7pm prompt at the Menzies Hotel, Irvine (formerly the Thistle Hotel). Call Harry on 01294 558866 for details.

Branch Committee

Meets on the second Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm at Biggart Hospital, Prestwick. All MEMBERS are welcome to attend. Contact Harry Travers on 01294 558866.



Christmas & New Year Opening Times



The Branch Office will close for the holidays at 3pm Friday, 18th December and will re-open at 11am on Monday 11th January 2010.

During these times, non-urgent messages may be left on the answering machine by telephoning 01294 558866.

Messages will be checked regularly.

If you need urgent help over the holidays, please call the MS Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8000



BRANCH CONTACT LIST

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Mr. C. Thomson	01292 282225
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Mrs. C. MacIsaac	01292 471476
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MS Ayrshire and Arran Branch Office is located at 84 Main Street, Kilwinning (Tel: 01294 558866) Open weekdays from 11am–3pm. Website www.msayrshire.com

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