

*Hilary Hinchliffe 1919-2008*

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Hilary Hinchliffe MBE on July 14<sup>th</sup>. Hilary was the first to see the value of the various neurological support groups working together to help all people affected by a neurological condition in West Berkshire and she set the ball rolling. Hilary was a founder member of the West Berkshire Neurological Alliance.

*Molly Davison writes:* A quick glance around Hilary's lounge confirmed that it was the home of someone very special providing clues to a remarkable person. Doors led to a spacious conservatory which provided a good view of the rear garden with a profusion of well-tended plants: an ideal place for children's play and an exciting playground for her cat.

The large dining table was covered with a substantial cloth to allow transformation into a huge working area and usually provided clues to her latest activity. I suspected this table had witnessed many happy family celebrations with her husband and their four children. It was seated at this very table that I gained first hand knowledge of Hilary's dynamism. Hilary was convinced that WBNA could host a Neurology Conference. With the financial cushion of a lottery grant and the agreement of Baroness Susan Greenfield to be keynote speaker, success seemed possible. Over the next two years the conference team gathered and planned around this table to help turn her dream into reality. Few of the 150 conference delegates will ever forget that special occasion but only a very few can appreciate the dynamism and determination of the lady whose hard work and vision made it all possible.

It was the same vision and her remarkable empathy with, and compassion for, the plight of any individual facing difficult circumstances that resulted in her initiating the founding of West Berkshire Neurological Alliance. Years before she had identified the need for a specialist nurse for sufferers of the rarer neurological conditions. Hilary lived to see the appointment of such a nurse. She also worked tirelessly for the release of Frank Williamson, a prisoner serving a life sentence for a crime she was convinced he had not committed. Sadly she will not live to see the day when he is eventually released.

Looking around the room the collection of books and newspapers gave an insight into Hilary's eclectic literary exploits and an explanation for her excellent grasp, and interest in, current affairs and the political scene. The walls throughout her home provided evidence of Hilary's appreciation of the arts and a huge photographic montage depicted the activities of her expanding family.

Sadly it was only after her death that I became fully aware of the activities of the young Hilary and briefly caught site of the events that had shaped the life of such a wonderful person. Most of the people at the service to celebrate her life brought different memories. However, as applause sounded around the parish church she had fought so hard to save, everyone agreed with the sentiments of her son when he patted her simple basket-weave coffin and said 'Well done Mum'.

## Health and Social Care Awards

Professor Christine Collin and Carol Allen, supported by West Berkshire Neurological Alliance were nominated for the Leadership for Improvement Award at the NHS National Awards Ceremony held at Wembley Stadium on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008. *David Roberts writes:* Sadly the team did not win the national trophy, but it speaks volumes that the role of Specialist Neurological Nurse is able to make such a positive impact on the national stage of the NHS. Congratulations must go to all those who supported the Specialist Nurse project, particularly the Motor Neurone Disease Association for their invaluable support and funding, together with other charities and the tireless commitment of John Holt. The general consensus of opinion among other contenders was that, in order to make change work, there has to be a commitment to leadership, and an overwhelming belief in the improvements which can be achieved for all concerned, coupled with a dogged determination to enlist the support of the majority and overcome all constraints. Looking ahead, it was very encouraging to see and hear of the successes from around the country in the other categories; for innovation and quality, led by positive attitudes with the belief that it 'can be done', despite the politics and funding issues. Good luck to us and to each of the other finalists.

## NSF Special Event

The Berkshire West Implementation Team for the National Service Framework for Long Term Neurological Conditions has organised a special event on 16<sup>th</sup> September, to which all our group members have been invited. It is heartening to see such a move and we shall ensure that the needs of those with rare conditions are included in the discussions. Last financial year saw the Community Neuro-Rehab team established and this year that team has consolidated with psychological support services added to its portfolio. This year stroke services have been allocated new money and we are delighted to see that a Stroke Nurse

Specialist is being appointed. We continue to press for further neurology and allied service developments to fill the many gaps and achieve a fair balance across Berkshire West. Uncertainty over the future support that South Central Health Authority might give to the regional Neuro-Network is something we have challenged vigorously. This backwards step must not be allowed to get in the way of the progress we can make in Berkshire West.

## MNDA Open Garden Event

Reading and District Motor Neurone Disease Association will host an Open Garden event at Englefield House, near Theale, on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August between 2 – 5 pm. The 7-acre garden and deer park, with magnificent views over the lake and surrounding countryside, together with restored, walled kitchen garden will be open to public. Entry costs £3 per person and teas will be served in the Long Gallery. Please come and give your support.

## Diary dates to note

Our 2008 AGM will be on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30 pm in The Parish Room at St John's Church Hall, Newbury. Our Guest Speaker will be Beverley Searle, Head of Community Care and Well-Being at West Berkshire Council and Berkshire West PCT. Please join us from 7.00 pm for a glass of wine, nibbles and some conversation. RSVP using the enclosed form or email

[secretary@wbna.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wbna.org.uk).

Our last Open Meeting of 2008 will be held on November 13<sup>th</sup> when the speaker will be Duncan Goodes of South Central SHA. Open meetings are held at St Joseph's Church Hall, Newbury, 1.45 for 2.00 pm. Free admission includes tea and biscuits.

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