

MORAY MENTAL HEALTH

A Scottish Charity No. SC020830

Newsletter

Christmas 2014

CONVENER'S LETTER

Dear Members,

With Christmas fast approaching we look forward to our own Christmas Party at the Resource Centre, Maisondieu Road, Elgin on Saturday 13th December. I hope to see you there—it will be great fun as usual.



The AGM was a success. There was a good turn out by our members and the meal was first class, but I did find it very stressful the way we were rushed from the bar/lounge area to the room we were having our AGM and meal.

I would like to thank all committee members and members for the fund raising we have done for our charity this year. It has been hard work but well worth it, so I can't thank you enough.

I would also like to thank John Meldrum, our Treasurer for the way he keeps our accounts. It is first class work and every penny is accounted for. In my view the Treasurer is the most important role in any committee. So thanks again, John.

I hope you are all well and doing fine. Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and an even better new year.

Yours,
Peter Hay Stewart
Convener.



You are invited to our
CHRISTMAS PARTY
On Saturday 13th December
At Moray Resource Centre at
10.30am



Please bring a lucky dip prize (£1)
Raffle Prizes also welcome

How I have learned to cope with anxiety

My name is Louise. I have suffered from anxiety for about 3 years now and it was only last November that my doctor diagnosed me with severe anxiety and panic disorder.

In the beginning I was convinced there was something more medically wrong with me, there had to be. I couldn't feel the way I felt and there be nothing wrong. I would have endless days of feeling like I was going to pass out—with sweating, shaking, a constant squeezing sensation in my head, heart palpitations and feeling like I couldn't breathe. Sometimes I would go into a full blown panic attack where the sheer terror of absolutely nothing would put me to my knees. I ended up in Accident and Emergency quite a few times, convinced I was having a heart attack, or a brain hemorrhage. I went for every test possible and one by one they were ruled out..."*You're fine, that's fine, its fine!*" I wasn't convinced. So last November I was signed off my work in what I can only describe now as a black week of nothing that I barely remember. I was prescribed diazepam along with anti depressants and beta blockers, and to be honest it took me quite a few days to pluck up the courage to take them thinking they were going to kill me! I decided I didn't like the side effects they gave me. I think that was the time that I really knew I had a mental health disorder and I needed to get better.

So has begun a very long year for me, a year where I have wanted to give up so many times as it's too much hard work. Despite this I have persevered. I am still persevering and taking each day as it comes. I have good days and bad.

My doctor first introduced me to Mindfulness , and I must say I laughed at him when he described it. *I mean taking a whole 10 minutes to eat a single square of chocolate? By smelling it, tasting it, thinking how it felt in my mouth, the saliva, the swallowing sensation?* But I tried it. I bought books on Mindfulness, my best author being Jon Kabat-Zinn, and I downloaded an app for my phone called *headspace.com* which for me is my life saver. It's a guided daily meditation that starts you off for 10 minutes a day and you gradually build on that. It makes you face how you feel, how even if you are panicking you can sit with the sensations and be ok with them. They are

just symptoms of anxiety and they do pass. It takes a long time to believe it but it is true. I know how my body will react now to various life elements. I can expect to feel unwell if I don't have enough sleep, or if I drink alcohol or caffeine; also if I don't get enough sunlight or fresh air or exercise. I now go to a weekly gym, walk daily and ensure I get enough sleep. I drink decaff coffee and herbal tea. These all help me to maintain my stress levels and therefore keep anxiety at a minimum. I do meditation usually in the mornings and sometimes in the evening and feel great after it.

To practice mindfulness is quite easy once you know how. Basically you are putting yourself right in the moment. *Feel your feet on the floor wherever you are, smell what is around you, look to see new things. And remind yourself that you are ok, that everything is ok and that all is well.* If you are in the moment you cannot be in the past and you cannot be worrying about the future! Above all I accept that I have a mental health issue. I enjoy life and if I feel ill I accept it, face it and deal with it. Six months of Mindfulness can be as effective as taking antidepressants! I would rather be in the moment, facing it than taking a pill and sweeping it under the carpet for another day. But that is just my view and I fully understand and support those that need to take it.

There are many books on the market about Mindfulness and the app that I use is headspace.com



I completely recommend this app for anyone that wants to learn about mindfulness and the book that I found particularly helpful was *MINDFULNESS FOR BUSY PEOPLE – TURNING FRANTIC AND FRAZZLED*

Outing to Pinz

For our last outing of the year we went to Pinz, the ten pin bowling complex in Elgin that was formerly known as Bowl 2000. We were there last October, and as everybody enjoyed themselves so much we decided to go back!



The bowling got underway at 11 o'clock. Our party was allocated three lanes with five competitors in each—fifteen of us attended in total. David Anderson and Peter McLeman both started well and, as most of us had bowling experience, quite a competitive spirit began to emerge! Credited with winning last year, David Lumsden was keen to match previous form and wasn't far behind.

An hour's bowling consists of ten stints of bowling—at each stint a person gets two attempts at knocking over the ten pins with the object of the game being to knock them all down. If you can do it with the first ball more points are earned, but generally one point is awarded for each pin overturned.

It is very difficult to amass more than 100 points. By the end of the session only two people had managed to do it. One competitor had 111 points, and surprise, surprise, David Lumsden had been able to turn things round and was a clear winner with 117 points.

It has to be said that every contender did well, and should be thanked for making the event so entertaining.

We had lunch at Pinz after we had finished bowling and, as our October trip is always a half day one, the outing ended at 1 o'clock.

Our A.G.M.

At the AGM on 29th September the following were elected to the Committee:

Office-bearers

Convenor: Peter Stewart
Vice Convenor: David Anderson
Treasurer: John Meldrum
Membership Secretary: Janice Gordon
Minute Secretary: May Duncan
Excursion Co-ordinator: Jenny Trigg

Other Committee Members

Irene Mitchell
Mary Mackie
David Lumsden
Tom Bailey
Rosalind Campbell
Graham Clark
Peter McLeman
Rosie McCabe
John Barclay

Our guest speaker, Louise, was welcomed to the meeting and she gave a short talk about Mindfulness as a method of coping with anxiety

John Meldrum gave an encouraging Treasurer's Report, recording a balance of £2652.93.

Peter Stewart thanked several people for the service they had given to MMH during the past year. He spoke about our fund raising efforts—Norma's scarves, the Roth's Coffee Morning and the recent Sponsored Walk. He commended our efforts to raise funds ourselves and not rely entirely on grants from other bodies.

Getting to know.... Peter McLeman

Peter, you have been a Committee Member for some time now, and are often at the Drop-in and at Bus Runs. Thanks for agreeing to tell us something about yourself. Where do you come from originally?

I come from The Black Isle originally. I've been in this area for around forty years, and the last three years in Elgin.

I believe you were involved in an accident some time ago. How did this affect you?

A young lad ran underneath my truck with a motor bike. I carried on for four years when depression hit me big style. I lost my job through ill health and eventually retired.

What has helped you deal with this?

I attend various groups that deal with mental health. Having a faith and attending Church have been important to me, SAMH helped me a lot. I was introduced to MMH by the late Chris Heynes. I attend the Drop-in on Saturday mornings, and go on most bus trips and to the Christmas and Burns events.

What family do you have?

My family could not deal with my mental health issues. I have two daughters and two sisters, and I'm in a better relationship with them now.

What do you enjoy doing?

I like listening to Christian music, old time dancing, country and western music. I like meeting and helping people, taking photos and bus travel.

How will you spend Christmas?

I am going to my sister in Dingwall.

Thanks very much, Peter, for telling us more about yourself



A CHRISTMAS TRUCE

As we remember World War 1 this year, it is worth recalling the Christmas truce that took place on Christmas Eve 1914. German and British forces stood facing each other, separated by a strip of flat ugly land intersected with barbed wire. Suddenly amazed British soldiers saw lights come on along the line of enemy trenches. Then came the unbelievable sound of singing—German soldiers singing 'Silent Night, Holy Night'. When the sound died away the British soldiers replied with 'The First Noel'.

The singing by both sides went on for an hour and was followed by invitations to cross over to enemy lines. One German with great courage began to walk across to the British trenches, followed by other Germans, hands in pockets, to show that they had no weapons..

Gifts were exchanged, cigarettes shared, and even a football match was played. The men had agreed among themselves to declare peace. The top commanders of both sides did not approve—friendship between enemies would hinder warfare. But there was peace on Christmas Day.

Childhood Revisited

Our outing in August was a journey back in time, revisiting childhood in the wonderful world of make-believe that is called Storybook Glen.

It is situated on the western outskirts of Aberdeen, and is a secluded valley in a rural setting, containing about eighty different fascinating characters. There are old favourites like Snow White and Goldilocks, or newer ones like Postman Pat, Bart Simpson and the Trolls dotted around the grounds. Interspersed with swings etc. where children could play.

The focus is very much on younger people, but it brings back memories to older ones as we were all young once!

I liked the Lion, Tin Man and Scarecrow who were following the Yellow Brick Road best. Looking back at my life I seemed to relate to them somehow: I felt an affinity for them.



There was also the cow that jumped over the moon, and not far away stood a real cow—at Old MacDonald's Farm. Several types of animal were on show in enclosures including goats, sheep, a pig, rabbits and chickens.

An old tractor was on display too. From the Fairy's Castle on top of the hillside above the farm there was a spectacular view of a large part of the Glen. Benches there let people sit and enjoy the sun.

Another separate part of the attraction was called the Den in the Glen. It was partly a play-barn and partly a restaurant. We had lunch there—thankfully a table had been reserved for us as a lot of people were using the facility. The car park, too, was nearly full.

High tea was in Aberdeen at the Staging Post. As usual we were well fed, the pancakes being warmed maybe straight from the girdle.

We left the city in the midst of a downpour. We had managed to avoid the rain that had been forecast until then, so it didn't really put a damper on an extremely good day out.

John Meldrum

Our Fund Raising efforts

Various fund raising events have taken place this year consisting of our own efforts to raise funds for our outings, social events, Newsletter, public liability insurance and administrative costs.

In the summer we organised a **COFFEE MORNING** in Rothes which raised about £350. Then in September we raised £653 through our own **SPONSORED WALK**.

All this time Norma has made her individual effort—through **KNITTING SCARVES** she has now raised £575!

Thanks to all who supported these efforts in any way.



Welcome to new members

Joining us recently are the following new members:

Stuart Walker
Douglas Reid
And June

We hope you enjoy being part of MMH!

Laughlines

Recently MP Rory Stewart announced the birth of his first child - after delivering the baby himself.

Alexander Wolf Stewart arrived so quickly on November 12 that his dad had to deliver him on the bathroom floor before a midwife could get there.

And on Twitter, one user wrote: *"This is what Cumbria needs; AN MP WHO REALLY DELIVERS!"*

As a ship approached the coast of New England, a heavy fog set in. The ship's radar detected what appeared to be another vessel in its path, so the captain sent the following message: "Change your course 10 degree port".

Shortly they received a reply: "Change your course 10 degrees starboard."

The captain became annoyed and said: "I am a Lt. Commander of the U.S. Navy. Change your course!"

This was the response: "I am a seaman 3rd class. Change your course!"

By now the captain was furious. His message read: "This is a battleship! Change your course!"

Moments later a message arrived that said: "This is a Lighthouse. Change your course!"

DID I READ THAT SIGN RIGHT?

On a public washroom door::

TOILET OUT OF ORDER. PLEASE USE FLOOR BELOW

On a repair shop door:

WE CAN REPAIR ANYTHING (PLEASE KNOCK HARD ON THE DOOR—THE BELL DOESN'T WORK)

Notice in a farmer's field:

THE FARMER ALLOWS WALKERS TO CROSS THE FIELD FOR FREE, BUT THE BULL CHARGES

Outside a secondhand shop:

WE EXCHANGE ANYTHING—BICYCLES, COOKERS, ETC. BRING YOUR WIFE AND GET A GREAT BARGAIN

This Newsletter is produced by Moray Mental Health

a registered charity whose members have a common interest in mental health issues, whether or not they have mental health problems themselves.

MMH offers friendship and support to those with such problems, and seeks to improve services and conditions for those with mental health issues.

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by 28th February 2015

Making Members Happier