Winter 2026

Oxfordshire Branch Newsletter

Another hugely successful 'Walk to D'Feet' for 2025

Once again last year, we had a wonderful day on Saturday 8th November. The rain and wind stayed away, the sun shone and the trees, in their autumn colours, were truly spectacular. 133 amazing people came together to walk through the beautiful grounds of Blenheim Palace Park and the best bit - we raised close to £7,000!

A massive thanks to our walk supremo - Jill Garner!

It was in 2017 that Jill decided to join the Oxfordshire branch as our first formal fundraiser. At that time, she wrote in the newsletter: *"Since my wonderful and loving father had an unwelcome diagnosis of MND, I decided to join the local Oxfordshire branch, whose volunteers have provided me with a positive way of looking at this horrible illness. I am becoming a volunteer fundraiser to raise awareness of the impact of MND. Anything I can do to feel like I am helping in a small way is good for those with MND, good for their families and good for me".*

In November, Jill organised her last walk. She said, *"I can't thank you all enough for the lovely card and flowers, they are beautiful. I feel so humbled and I hope that you know that you are all absolutely blooming marvellous in everything you do!"*

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...continued - 'Walk to D'Feet' 2025

Jill's work has been hugely beneficial to the branch over the last 8 years and she really will be missed. She first offered to run very enjoyable children's events at the Happy Valley Festival in 2017, organised largely by Rachael Marsden, which was attended by hundreds of people. It then became a popular event for her fundraising at future festivals and local fairs. She helped Sue Butler with the Southmoor Village fundraising events and many other local fairs, over the years. On behalf of the branch she has stepped in to support numerous fundraising quizzes, barn dances and race nights, run by others.
Lesley Ogden remembers her infectious enthusiasm and sense of fun at the Summer and Christmas Fairs in Didcot and at the weekend Roke Festival at a pub where she attended all the sessions and even served at the bar when it was short staffed. She ran stalls often with artistic gifts she had made herself. Jill could always be relied upon to enthuse attendees with her bubbly, fun-loving personality and got them to spend their money generously, while informing them about MND and the support that the MNDA and the branch could provide.

In 2019 Jill took over the running of the annual Branch Walk in Blenheim Palace Park and continued to do so for six more of them, which through her hard work became increasingly popular and raised many thousands of pounds for the branch and the MND Association as a whole. Jill is in the process of handing over the walk reigns to other Oxfordshire Branch committee members, so here's to the 2026 Walk to D'Feet!

Fundraising & Awareness

Let us know what's happening!

We'd love to hear about your fundraising or awareness activities and include your stories in the next newsletter. Please email details and attach photographs, if you have them, to: Keith Bird, Oxfordshire Newsletter Editor **keith.bird@mndassociation.org**

Oxfordshire Branch Committee Contacts

Chair:	Sue Butler - sue.butler@mndassociation.org	Branch contact:	Lesley Ogden - lesley.ogden@mndassociation.org
Treasurer:	Roger Payne - roger.payne@mndassociation.org	Newsletter/Social Media:	Keith Bird - keith.bird@mndassociation.org
Secretary:	Cathy Burch - cathy.burch@mndassociation.org	Committee members:	Safina Akhatar - safinaakhatar@hotmail.com

Ellen Wang with her Rollator "Cathy No-Fall"

You will remember that we have featured Ellen Wang in our previous newsletters, who is living with MND. Ellen was keen to share what a huge difference her new Rollator has made to her everyday life. Ellen said *"I've named her "Cathy No-Fall" because with her help I can now avoid all the MND-related falls and ensuing concussions to my head! I named her after our wonderful Oxfordshire branch secretary, Cathy Burch, who was delighted with this naming"!*

Ellen went on to say *"being a kind of halfway house between walking and a wheelchair, I have been instructed by the excellent Sherene Butler, who came to my home. This will surely change my life, which has hitherto, in my 6 years of MND, been dependent on literal support from my partner, Graham Wilkins. Cathy No-Fall has really given me new freedom. I can now easily get to the library, supermarket, my GP surgery, the pharmacy, etc. Beforehand, these things needed careful planning and Graham being free to accompany me".*

"I am indescribably happy with this development"!

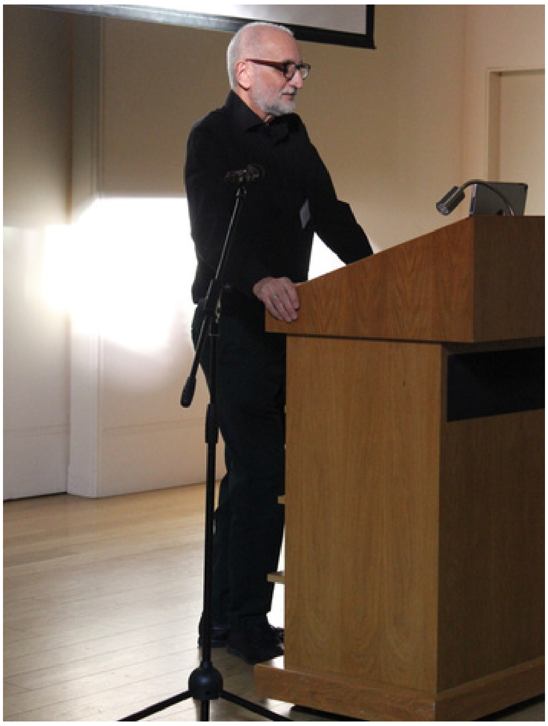
A huge thank you from the Oxfordshire MNDA Branch

Your fundraising efforts and donations, large and small, this year, have enabled the branch to provide financial support to local people and their families, affected by MND, such as:

- Support grant contributions to respite care, wet room adaptations, stairlifts, a profiling bed, essential equipment not provided by statutory services
- Quality of Life grants for therapy sessions, specialised ramps, contributions to a holiday, short breaks
- Carers' grants towards holidays, short breaks and special treats
- Young persons' grants towards a holiday or a day out, driving or music lessons, school trips
- Fares to meetings
- Funding for our support meetings and expenses for Association Visitors who provide individual support to people and their families affected by MND
- Contributions to research projects and services provided by the MND Association.

Link: Donate to our branch

Celebrating Oxford Biochemist Colin Kleanthous

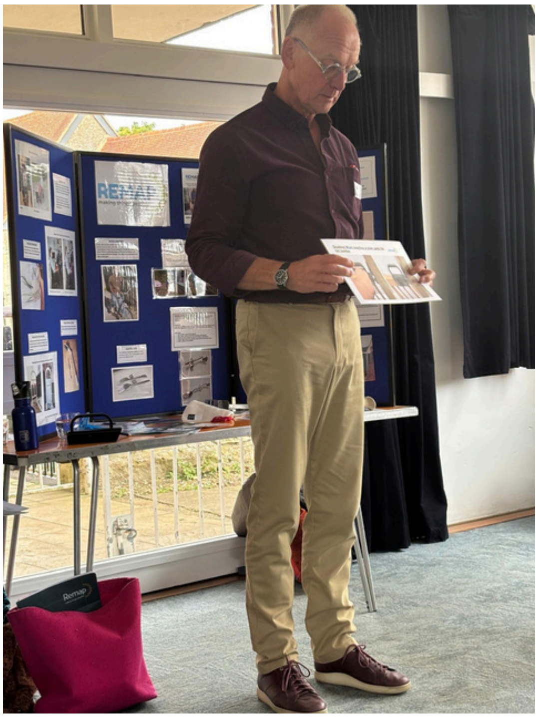


I am a professor of biochemistry at the University of Oxford. I was diagnosed with MND in December 2023, having experienced symptoms typical of the bulbar form of the disease, three months prior to this. Since then, I've continued working in the Department of Biochemistry where I oversee the work of postgraduate students and research associates. Although unable to speak, I communicate with my group through text-to-speech software on an iPad, provided by the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre that generates speech eerily like my real voice, including my favourite swear words! We are a group of microbial biochemists, investigating how bacteria like E. coli assemble their outer membrane. This is a critical structure that protects the organism against several classes of antibiotics. I am also a co-founder of a spin-out company, Glox Therapeutics, (gloxtherapeutics.com), which develops next-generation protein antimicrobials, designed to combat antibiotic resistant bacteria by penetrating this protective layer.

In April 2025, my Oxford colleagues organised a one-day symposium in my honour at Lady Margaret Hall college (kleanthoussymp.wordpress.com). The invited speakers at the symposium were all leaders in their specific areas of bacterial research. Many of the 135 attendees were my ex-PhD students and researchers - I've been running an academic lab for 35 years - but also friends and colleagues from my university days. I was humbled by the sheer number of people wanting to attend. Attendees came from far and wide, Australia, USA, Japan as well as mainland Europe and UK.

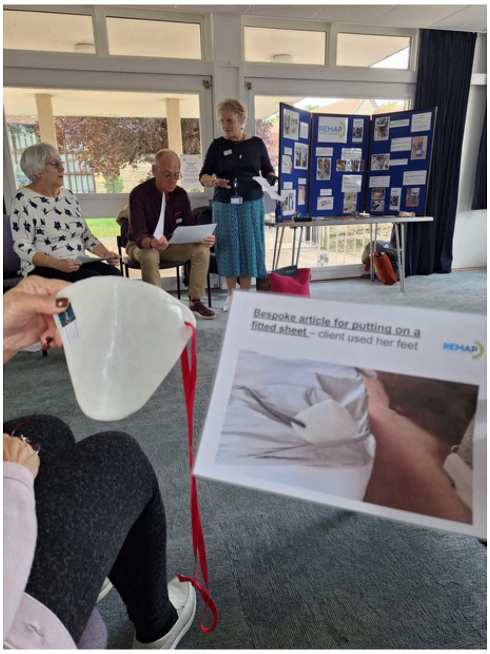
We could have had twice the number at the meeting were it not for the lack of space. Although the reason for the meeting was sad, the day itself was brilliant. The science on display was state-of-the-art and I could deliver the closing remarks using my iPad. The mood at the meeting was upbeat and joyous, no doubt helped by the lovely setting, the good weather we enjoyed that day and the delicious banquet laid on by the college and finished off by a free bar. Unfortunately, yours truly couldn't indulge in the food and drink because of my MND. The MND association was very much in attendance at the meeting; the association provided us with posters, balloons, badges and banners that were prominently on display. What made the day particularly special for me, was having members of my family present, including my partner Dominika, my brother Harry (who lives in the US) and my children, Sophia and Victoria.

Family & Friends Support Groups News



In September the Friends & Family Group enjoyed a visit to their Abingdon meeting from three volunteers from the REMAP organisation, which is a charity that produces aids and equipment for people with disabilities, where there are no alternatives available. This service is free to individuals and delivered by volunteers, who are experienced engineers, scientists or craftsmen, with access to a wide variety of skills and expertise (see get in touch below).
Philippa and Chris, former Occupational Therapists, explained how to access advice and help from the local Oxfordshire REMAP group and talked about many examples of solutions to problems they've provided. These include cutlery adaptations, adapting an exercise bike to give foot and leg support, adapting walking poles and a commercial walker with foam tubing to keep a hand in place, also some adaptations for musical instruments to enable playing. In the past members of our own branch have been provided with bespoke bags for wheelchairs, a magnet sewn into the back of a hat to attach to a headrest to keep the head from dropping, an adaptation to enable drummer, Terry, to continue to use his drum pedal. Mike, a former engineer showed examples of 3D plastic aids he had made to enable all sorts of adaptations to various equipment (see photo).

Association visitor, Jackie Reeves, said that she had found the talk very useful. She said, "REMAP often has simple ideas I would never think of myself. I will be able to tell the people I see about the way the group can help, for instance, they had made a simple hoist to get a mobility frame into the boot of a car."



How do I get in touch?

Online: www.remap.org.uk
Email: oxfordshire.enquiries@remapgroups.org.uk
Phone: 01732 760209

or your health professional can make a referral. Their leaflets are available at our meetings, or can be sent to you online from:

Email: lesley.ogden@mdassociation.org

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Fundraising & Awareness

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Keith Bird - Newsletter Editor - keith.bird@mndassociation.org

...continued - Family & Friends Support Groups

In November the Friends & Family group welcomed Amanda Munday, our popular massage therapist, at their Abingdon meeting. Once again she used her healing hands to give relaxing therapy to those who requested it. 22 people attended, in spite of cold weather and found a warm welcome, good company and a chance to chat to new people, volunteers and old friends over refreshments, which included homemade cakes.

In October, the Friends & Family Group met with Tagreed Ismail, our new CSC (Community Support Coordinator) and Ginny McCluskey at their Banbury meeting, at the Banbury Cricket Club and again on 9th December.

The next get-together in Abingdon will be Tuesday 24 March 2026 and in Banbury we are planning one for February.

Welcome to our new Regional Community Support Co-ordinator

Tagreed joined the MND Association in August 2025, with a background in Volunteer Management and Community Engagement. A passionate advocate of the invaluable work volunteers do, she's keen to get stuck in, championing our local volunteers as they provide vital support to the MND community. When not working, Tagreed enjoys playing netball and tennis, reading, crafting (or trying to!) and going on adventures with her family.

mnda
motor neurone disease
association

MND Association Oxfordshire Branch

New Year Event

Date: Saturday 31st January 2026

Venue: The Barn, Christ Church,
Northcourt Road, ABINGDON, OX14 1PL
Time: 2pm to 4pm

Changes, Priorities and Developments in the Oxford MND Care Team

Come and meet the care team, part of the Oxford MNDA Care and Research Centre at the John Radcliffe Hospital. The MND Nurse Specialist, MND Occupational Therapist MND Psychologist will each talk about their work and projects. Phillippa Sharpe, Occupational Therapist, will talk about the equipment loan library and there will be an opportunity for people to bring SMALL ITEMS along, that they might like to donate.

Our New Year Event is open to all our members, fundraisers and supporters, and allows for attendees to socialise and ask questions. Invitations are being sent out but if, for any reason, you don't receive yours, please contact:

cathy.burch@mndassociation.org

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