

Spring 2024

# NEWSLETTER

Keeping you up to date with News and Events



## Successful Anniversary Ball

We celebrated our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a Grand Ball at Kingswood Golf Club on 27<sup>th</sup> April. Over 100 guests enjoyed a drinks reception with a wonderful pianist, a delicious three-course meal, magician, professional photographer, live music and dancing. The band, Ronnie Scott's Rejects, were fantastic and the dance floor was full until the end.



The evening was a huge success and a real **celebration of everything that Dyscover has achieved**. It was lovely to see such a mix of people enjoying the evening – members, staff, volunteers, trustees (both past and present) and many Dyscover friends and supporters. We are delighted to announce that the event has raised an incredible **£8,400!**



We would like to say a **huge thank you to our sponsors – Russell Cooke Solicitors, D&J Anderson Properties** and to all the programme advertisers.

Our thanks to everyone that donated raffle and auction prizes, Kingswood Golf Club for hosting the event so well, and the volunteers that helped on the night. Thanks also to Ashley the photographer, the committee that helped Liz to plan it over the last 18 months, and **Ambassador Suzie who spoke so brilliantly** about her experience of having aphasia and how Dyscover has supported her.



## Aphasia conference

In April, nine Dyscover members travelled to Warwick University for a two-day **conference on Wellbeing and Aphasia**.

Dyscover's own Gill Jackson and a colleague, Gill Pearl, led and organised the conference, but **people with aphasia played central roles** in designing and running the event.

Rosemary introduced the idea of wellbeing using a 'stress bucket'. Dyscover Ambassadors, Paul, Maggie, Suzie and Sarah described activities that lift their mood. Other sessions looked at relationships, research, music and art. Feedback was positive.


**The Tavistock Trust for Aphasia** supported the conference with a major grant.



## To find out more about Dyscover

Please go to: [dyscover.org.uk](https://dyscover.org.uk) or contact us for details of our online visitor sessions on Zoom or to receive our regular newsletters.

## Follow us on social media

 search for Dyscover

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**Long-term support and opportunities for people with aphasia**

## John Woollatt

It is with great sadness that we report the sudden passing of our Chair of Trustees, John Woollatt, which has come as a great shock to the whole Dyscover community.

John joined the board of trustees in 2018 when working as a consultant for our previous landlords. He became Chairman later that year. John brought a sharper business focus to the Trustee Board, but always with a friendly style and an awareness of the traditions of the charity, restraints of the third sector and how to develop a small business.

He was very involved at every level in all aspects of Dyscover's service and general business operations, including the practical aspects of fundraising. John was the driving force behind significant internal growth that has been successfully achieved during these years.

It was also his business vision that led to our aspirations to expand our online service, which he was still actively leading.

John leaves behind an enormous gap which will be difficult to fill. His humour and calm management style will undoubtedly be missed by everyone involved with Dyscover.

All our thoughts and best wishes are with Jackie and all their family.



## Spotlight on Service Manager and Lead SLT Julie Samuel



Julie has spent most of her career as a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT), but her very **first job was as a stewardess with British Airways**, where she enjoyed flying long-haul to destinations around the globe.

Her new post at Dyscover is the first time Julie's SLT work has taken her outside the NHS, where settings included a stroke unit, general inpatient, and neuro-rehab. Before joining us last October, **Julie was Clinical Lead at Epsom's**

**Community Neuro-rehab unit**. She knew about Dyscover, having referred people to us.

"I know I have big shoes to fill," says Julie, "following on from Gill and Rosemary. But I am very well supported by an experienced and committed team. I was also **lucky to have had an overlap with Rhona**, which was hugely valuable."

Julie is getting used to the wide spectrum of activities at Dyscover, including the charity world, fundraising and working with trustees. **What does she enjoy most?** "Getting to know our members, both face to face and online."

Dyscover's survey of services for people with aphasia throughout the country had revealed a huge need to expand these. Julie will be involved in **planning a development of our online services** to help meet this need.

Volunteers have always played a key role at Dyscover and Julie hopes to recruit more of them by establishing formal links with education placement teams at universities that run SLT courses.

Julie and her husband David have three grown up children. When she has any spare time, Julie enjoys yoga, walking the dog and music.

# Around Dyscover

## Funding update from Alice

**Director of Business, Alice Owen, writes:**

I am pleased to report that last term (amongst others) we received both a large **£10k grant for core costs and an unrestricted £10k individual donation** – both of which are really vital for Dyscover as they **enable us to allocate the funds where they are most needed.**

On a personal note, I must let you all know that **after 18 very happy years at Dyscover I will be working my last term.** I know the 'Dyscover elastic' won't allow me to disappear (nor would I want to) and I'll be a regular at our fundraising events; still very much a member of the Dyscover family!

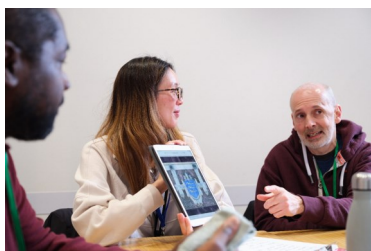
Our recent reunion with some of the **staff who have worked for Dyscover during the 30 years**



was lovely and just a small sample of the many remarkable people I've worked with over the years.

## Research

Six of our Wednesday morning members are involved with an **exciting City and Kings**



**University research project**, looking at ways to improve accessibility to digital content, such as tv, videos and social media, to support the needs of people with aphasia. They are exploring and developing the use of bespoke, innovative features to **create a 'toolkit' which is tailored to an individual's needs**, eg, limiting background noise so the actor's voice is clearer. We look forward to continuing to support this project.

## Staff news

Last term we said goodbye to SLT Lin. Replacing her is **Emma Hubbard** (centre photo), who we welcomed at the start of term. She will be taking on the leadership of the Wednesday groups at Leatherhead and a new online foundation group.



We are very sorry to be **saying goodbye to our Office Manager, Karen Thompson**, who will be retiring to Chichester. Karen re-joined the Dyscover team in 2021 and has played a pivotal role in managing the office. We look forward to welcoming Dyscover's new Office Manager, Shirley Etere.



## Ambassador in action

Our ambassador team co-ordinator, Caroline, accompanied **member, Jenni, at an Ashted WI meeting.** Many audience members came up to Jenni afterwards to say how impressed they were. They are also raising funds for Dyscover.



## Top Draw Club

Welcome visitors to the Thursday group were **Nick Clark (left)**, the volunteer who has run our Top Draw Club for the last 10 years and **Simon Northam**, who is taking over from him. Together they drew the latest winners with Trustee/Group Volunteer Barry winning the top prize of £150! Simon was warmly welcomed by everyone to the Dyscover team and we said a **huge thank you to Nick for all his hard work.**



# Groups in action



## Escape if you can!

Volunteer Steve dressed the part in his mechanic's boiler suit, when he led the Wednesday PM group in an activity that he had created and organised. Their task was to escape from the mechanic's garage and drive away.

But first the members, plus staff and volunteers, had to solve various clues to find the car keys. This was challenging but a lot of fun.

It involved identifying numbers in song titles, which set off spontaneous singing to produce the answers, finding clues to unlock combination padlocks, reading clues backwards with a mirror, popping a balloon and many other tasks.

There were two teams at opposite ends of the room. Amid plenty of laughter, they both solved all the clues, with one team just five minutes in front.

## Moving on

Two years ago, the Thursday PM Foundation Group started with five members and now has 11 - all having acquired aphasia within the last three years. In the Summer term they will be progressing to an Extend Group.

Friendships have been formed and members feel understood and supported. Using aphasia-friendly feedback forms, they reported an **increased confidence in their ability to communicate**.

They will now have supported conversations around **'moving on' with aphasia**, using an Extend Group programme.



## Across the world

We have been successfully **running our unique groups online** for nearly



four years. This is the favourite **choice for over 35 members** on a weekly basis – wherever they may be!

**Someone in Brazil at 7am**, another in Dubai at 2pm and the rest of the team in and around London at 10am.

## Kingston flyers

**Members shared memories of their first flight.** Julian recalled his exhilarating glider trip in Cornwall and John shared details of his first flight in the 1940's in the lumbering Stratocruiser airliner.



# Groups in action

## Reading group

Dyscover's weekly Reading Group chose Graham Norton's book as their **first whole novel together**.

They have set an ambitious goal of reading **one chapter a week**, using strategies they have learnt in the group to support their independent reading at home. For most members, this is the **first time they have read a book since their stroke**.

One member's wife told us that her husband is able to **'read quite a few subtitles on the TV now – another step forward!'**



## Social conversation



Each week our groups revolve around supported conversation related to a specific topic. But we love the social interaction that takes place when **natural conversations evolve during coffee breaks**.

One of our largest groups meet on Wednesday mornings and solid friendships are formed amongst this supportive peer group. Volunteers also gain a great deal from each other as they share ideas and suggestions on **how to best support people with aphasia**.

## Spotlight on Phil Edwards



Thursday morning member Phil was an **IT expert** while most of us were still struggling to understand it. In fact, for much of his banking career he would spend a lot of time away from home, **travelling to different**

**countries to explain the new systems**. This work took him to the USA, Hong Kong, the Middle East and most of Europe

He retired aged 64 and was enjoying life when, after nine years, he suffered **two strokes just two weeks apart**. The first was minor, but the second resulted in three weeks in hospital, followed by three months at a rehab centre.

Learning to write with his left hand was a real challenge.

Phil has been **coming to Dyscover for two years** and looks forward to meeting fellow members. "Some speak better than I do, others not as well," says Phil, "but it is **very good for me to try and communicate with everyone**."

One of the recent sessions that gave members plenty to talk about was 'dressing up'. **Phil came along in an impressive Victorian gentleman's outfit**, as our photo shows. The outfit was his daughter's idea when he gave her away at her wedding. That was some years ago and Phil and his wife Kathy now have two grandchildren. But the outfit didn't get a second outing until its trip to Dyscover, when it received many admiring comments.

Cars have always been a great interest of Phil's and he has set himself the **goal of driving again**.

# Have you Heard

## PPA update

Rosemary continues to lead our service for people living with Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA).

She has been promoting the service through **visitor sessions, networking events and a webinar** for the London based organisation, Rare Dementia Support. New posters and leaflets will also help spread the word.

PPA is a rare condition, but there is a **steady stream of new enquiries and referrals**. Since January, 16 couples have received assessment, advice or therapy sessions. Group sessions build friendships and resilience – seven couples now meet every three months and we have run four online sessions for people who have a parent with PPA.

Feedback is positive: 'thank you for the constructive and enlightening session' **'I find the group meetings reassuring and comforting**, in that we are all facing the same things' 'We appreciate your time, support and good advice and suggestions'.

## Equality training

All staff recently **updated their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion knowledge** and understanding at a training course. Many important things for Dyscover to consider going forward. Staff very much enjoyed the pictures representing the difference between equality and equity, one the many takeaway points.

## Gardening

The courtyard garden at Leatherhead is looking lovely, thanks to the expertise and leadership of our volunteer gardener, Sue Edwards. Sue is now supported by a QEF volunteer, Adam, and they make a great team. We are always **keen to hear from anyone who is interested in volunteering in the garden**. You don't need lots of experience; Sue is happy to provide guidance. Please do get in touch with our Volunteer Coordinator Liz [lgrace@dyscover.org.uk](mailto:lgrace@dyscover.org.uk)

## Activities

**RIDING** We launched our **first ever horse-riding course last term**, in collaboration with Horsley, Bookham and Leatherhead RDA.

Following a popular taster session last Easter, we worked with the RDA to develop a very special **opportunity to learn to ride**, and get to know the animals over a four-week structured course. David was a rider before his stroke and was thrilled in week one to manage a trot, something he was not sure he would be able to achieve so quickly.

**GYMNASTICS** We completed our **third term at Leatherhead and Dorking Gymnastics Club**. Spaces are already being filled for the Summer Term.

This activity has become a real favourite among members. Maggie said she **'felt it has helped in many unexpected ways** including walking, balance and general agility'. Sarah added that she **'had felt fitter and stronger while on holiday recently'**.



## David Jackson

We are very sad to report the sudden passing of **Gill Jackson's beloved husband David**. Our



thoughts are very much with Gill and family at this time.

Gill says that if it wasn't for his encouragement and support at the beginning and over the years, Dyscover may never have happened!

# Fundraising

## Our marathon men

Two of our supporters completed their first marathons. Our **grateful thanks to Andrew Palmer** (near right) who ran in Manchester and made £975 and **David Anderson**, whose London run raised £2,700.

They have **both seen first hand the importance of the work we do**. Andrew was inspired to support us as his mother worked as an SLT at Dyscover for 15 years, while David is the nephew of one of our members and volunteers in an online group.



## Anniversary Quiz

Our 30th Anniversary Quiz Night was held at The Bear in Oxshott and **expertly**



**hosted, as usual, by Simon Edmands**. It got quite competitive between the Dyscover staff and volunteer teams! Winners were the Wacky Racers, who were delighted with their mystery prizes. The evening raised over £700.

## Comedy night

The Loose Beavers comedy event was a sell-out and raised almost £350. Many thanks to **Alex and all the improvisation performers** for putting on such a great show.



## Birthday fundraiser

Online member Filomena celebrated her birthday by asking friends to make a **donation to Dyscover instead of buying presents**. Our grateful thanks to Filomena and her friends; £517 was raised.



## More 30th pledges

Members are continuing to make Anniversary Pledges to raise funds for us.

Both **Nick and Maggie undertook physical challenges**. Nick raised £343 by cycling for 45 minutes on a static bike.



At one of the Dyscover gymnastics sessions Maggie did 5x30 seconds full planks, 30 bounces on the space hopper and 30 star jumps on the trampoline. She made £229.



## DontSendMeACard

**Switch to ecards and help Dyscover**

Looking for an alternative to greeting cards? We have teamed up with DontSendMeACard, where you can send ecards instead and give us what it would have cost to send physical cards. Details: [dontsendmeacard.com/ecards/charities/dyscover](https://dontsendmeacard.com/ecards/charities/dyscover)

# Round Up

## Anniversary Art Project

During the Spring term, Alison ran five workshops in the face-to-face groups, developing a theme of celebration and positivity, marking 30 years of supporting people with aphasia. The members used printing and marbling to create a collective piece of balloons, featuring words that describe how they feel about Dyscover.

The final piece was exhibited at Leatherhead Theatre over the week of our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. At the wonderful launch event, staff, volunteers, members and the Art team gathered to mark the occasion.



## 'Music speaks'

Our anniversary celebrations began with a musical event led by **internationally recognised Choral Director and Vocal Coach Mark DeLisser**.

Mark led a thrilling two-hour choral workshop for members and relatives, inspiring people with aphasia to sing when the spoken word is difficult.

Mark was great fun. He guided several members to sing by themselves. Mark has promised to return. He feels music is so important: **'when words fail, music speaks'**.



## Easter activities

A group of **online and face-to-face members** met up for a coffee and pastry at the Teddington Park Hotel and enjoyed a relaxed social time practising communication, with the support of two of our regular volunteers Barry and Dee.



We also visited Bushy Park for the ever-popular **Companion Cycling**. Our online **Pilates** coach Natalie led a seated in-person session in Oxshott.



## CONTACT US

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