

Autumn 2023/Winter 2024

NEWSLETTER

Keeping you up to date with News and Events



Happy 30th Anniversary to us

In the year building up to our milestone anniversary, we have been encouraging supporters to take on a 30th Anniversary Pledge to raise funds. The challenges have included everything from swimathons and sponsored walks to afternoon teas, an art workshop, a sky dive, making and selling mincemeat and putting on concerts! A huge thank you to everyone who has taken part or donated. The total is already an amazing £13,500. Do please keep the pledges coming in!



Come to the Ball

The big finale of our year of celebration is the **30th Anniversary Ball on 27th April 2024** at Kingswood Golf Club. Tickets include a 3-course meal, magician, auction and live music and dancing until late! Tickets: [Dyscover 30th Anniversary Ball \(jumblebee.co.uk\)](https://jumblebee.co.uk)

We are looking for businesses to sponsor this amazing event. If you or someone that you know might be interested, you can find out more here [30th Anniversary Ball Sponsorship](https://30thanniversaryball.com) or contact lgrace@dyscover.org.uk.

To find out more about Dyscover

Please go to www.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

- To find our page on Facebook search for Dyscover non-profit organisation.
- @dyscoveraphasia
- @DyscoverAphasia
- @dyscoveraphasiacharity

Long-term support and opportunities for people with aphasia

Update from the Trustees

Happy New Year to all our members and supporters.

We finished our year with a **very successful Christmas party** at Tyrrells Wood which was enjoyed by all. **Well done Suzanne. Thanks also to Liz**, who raised £1,291 with the successful hamper raffles.

At the last Trustees meeting we welcomed **two more Trustees, Vanessa Ward and Alison Lambert**, who will bring new skills to our board. We also welcomed our **new Head of Service, Julie Samuel**, and said a heartfelt thank you to **Rhona**, who has guided us through the last year, now turning her attention to some exciting travel plans.

We are nearly ready to take our next steps in **applying for funding** to expand our **online services**, which is an exciting next step following over a year of hard work.

Our new **website is close to coming online** and we all look forward to its launch.

Finally, I would like to **thank all the Trustees** who do so much for Dyscover; their contribution is greatly appreciated.

John Woollatt, Chairman



Spotlight on Fundraising and Volunteer Coordinator **Liz Grace**

Acting as Minnie Mouse must be the **most unusual thing** Liz has done in her four years at Dyscover! Last Autumn, she stepped in at the last moment to **take part in a balloon debate** – and won. Fundraising is only part of Liz's role; she is also the coordinator for our invaluable volunteers.

Liz's previous experience includes recruitment and working at Epsom's Volunteer Centre. She was looking to move into either **volunteer management or fundraising**, when she saw that Dyscover needed someone to cover both these roles. Liz's community fundraising role is busy and varied, arranging events such as a CSI evening, quiz nights, Bridge events, open gardens, and concerts. Her **family are often involved**, too. Husband Joe ran the London Marathon for us, and daughters Lauren, Tash and Sadie are willing helpers. She also supports individuals who are raising money for us. The biggest event on Liz's horizon is the **30th Anniversary Ball in April**.

Now that Dyscover is running both face to face and online groups, Liz's **volunteer recruitment work is expanding**. She may handle up to 100 queries from potential volunteers each year.

Liz really enjoys her varied roles. "It's great when events go well, and I know that the money raised is going to benefit such a great cause." She also enjoys "getting to know our amazing volunteers; **seeing them develop in their roles** and making such a difference to our members."

To **relax away from work**, Liz enjoys walking her dog Milo and doing Pilates.

Around Dyscover

British Aphasiology Society

The BAS annual 3-day conference last September dedicated its first day to **Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA)**.

Rosemary delivered a presentation called 'Mixing and Matching – curating effective peer support for people living with PPA'. Five of the couples we support through our PPA services shared their **key ingredients for effective peer support**. Rosemary worked collaboratively alongside Jean Rutter. Both were surprised and honoured when, at the end of the day, they **received the Clinical Comet award**.



Anniversary artwork

An Art working party met last term to plan our **Anniversary Art Project**. Members have been consulted about how they would like to celebrate 30 years of aphasia support through Dyscover. We are keen to highlight the frustrations and isolation of aphasia, but also to depict the positivity and strength members gain from attending Dyscover. The **artwork will be produced by our members** and we hope to display it locally to raise awareness.

Funding update from Alice

Director of Business Alice writes:

Last term I **secured further PPA funds** via the lottery, Awards for All fund and a Surrey Carers grant. The latter supports some of the work we are doing for partners of people with PPA.

We came **very close to being awarded a very large grant** last year (down to the final 6). However, it wasn't to be this time. It was a really good experience to have greater engagement with funders and to **gain insightful feedback**, which was both affirming and thought provoking. It has provided us with a better understanding of how larger grant funders process applications, which should benefit us in the near future.

Thank you, Rhona

Dyscover's founder, Gill Jackson, remembers:

I first met Rhona when she took my job in the NHS after I left to start Dyscover, almost 30 years ago. We stayed in touch and after she had her children, she **joined Dyscover to lead the Kingston service**.

Rhona has always been a kind and caring therapist, encouraging everyone to reach their potential and **always with a smile**. She adapted to Zoom groups during the Covid crisis with skill and enthusiasm and over the past year has **managed the whole service**, bringing in ideas she has developed over the years.

Rosemary adds: I have so enjoyed my 15 years of working with Rhona. She is a kind and down to earth therapist with huge skills and experience. Rhona is always **calm in a crisis** and expert at flying by the seat of her pants, which has often come in useful!



Training

Our most recently recruited volunteers who work

with face-to-face groups took part in our **Aphasia Awareness Training**, led by Speech and Language Therapist, Maggie Stapleton. Having learned more about aphasia and the impact it can have on people's lives, the volunteers practised conversations with some of our members. **We are grateful to our Aphasia Ambassadors**, Jenni, Nial and Bryan for assisting with this practical aspect of the training.

Where space allows, **we welcome external participants and students** to these sessions. Please contact us for further information on these workshops.



Groups in action

Something to celebrate

We haven't got room to include all the inspiring stories members shared with their groups when the topic was **My Greatest Achievement**. Three examples illustrate their courage and commitment.

Julian celebrated **passing his driving assessment** by driving to his group meeting. He said, "It's scary, because you know that if you get it wrong, you won't be able to drive again. Everybody reminded me that I had been able to drive before my stroke and said, 'You can do it!'. Getting my licence back has **given me back my independence.**"

Martin memorised the Tube stops in advance and **travelled across London independently** to visit a friend for lunch. He used several modes of public transport for the first time since his stroke. Now he is **building up courage to consider steps towards a possible return to work.**

Phil recently **received an MBE from Princess Anne** for his services to Policing and Anti-Corruption work. Says Phil, "**We were made to feel like royalty.** You receive the award in a room with the Princess. It's organised superbly with only the recipient ahead of you present. Princess Anne was delightful and I spoke with her for a couple of minutes."



Zooming

The topic of **family history** ran across all our groups and **members shared some fascinating stories and photos.**

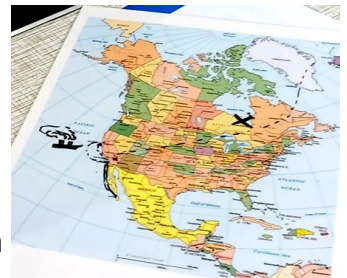
Tuesday PM Zoom member Dayle showed members a couple of items that were very special to her: a silver christening bowl and a **beautiful chain of silver threepenny pieces**, both made by her grandfather who was a silversmith.



One of the joys of Zoom is when members are able to **share items spontaneously during conversation.** Several Tuesday Zoom members have been telling stories of their **successful crops** of fruit and vegetables.

Aids and tools

Staff and volunteers are finding our new **laminated map resources** so helpful in supporting members in their conversations. Kingston member John told his group about a cruise down the West Coast of California and Mexico. Volunteer Bee was able to track (and illustrate) his journey on our map of North America, with the help of a dry-wipe marker.



Float my boat

The task for the Thursday morning group was to **design and build a boat** that would float on water and hold the weight of as many coins as possible! Members discussed the design and worked together. The boats were floated on water in a washing up bowl. **All passed the test and took the weight of 25 coins**, so they were all declared winners!



Groups in action

Nick's quiz

Thursday morning member **Nick** created a fantastic quiz for his group, which not only showed off the breadth of his own general knowledge but also generated lots of discussion, rivalry and fun in the session! All the members joined in, **debating whether a potato is a vegetable** and working together to reach a consensus on team answers.



Classic cars

The Wednesday afternoon group enjoyed an **interactive talk on Classic Cars** prepared by volunteer Steve. His talk included a mixture of facts and figures and a 'top trumps' style interactive game. He brought in **an assortment of car parts** and some classic car door handles, which prompted much discussion.

Guess the spice

Aphasia-friendly conversation tools and pre-prepared materials play an important part in group discussions.

We spiced up the session for our Thursday morning members with a **Guess the Spice** activity.

Members sniffed a selection of spices and herbs, **using labels to help name them** and photo resources to help describe how they are used. This fun and inclusive activity generated some interesting conversations around cooking and food preferences.



Spotlight on John McGrath



Kingston Group member John spent his **career with a private bank**, the oldest in England. National Service gave him a wider window on the world when he was **selected to join the King's African Rifles**.

He became a logistics officer, looking after food, shelter and transport.

When he returned to the bank, John also became a reservist and joined the **Thames Battalion of the Parachute Regiment**. For nine years he volunteered when the regular battalion were short and was sent to virtually every NATO country.

He was enjoying retirement until a **stroke came out of the blue** seven years ago. "Hospital was awful," remembers John and for

the first few months he was "unstable and full of tears". Then about 18 months later, he had a sudden realisation: "This is all wrong, **this isn't going to defeat me**".

Physio really helped and after NHS speech therapy he found local charity TALK Surrey, who provided one-to-one conversations. John started coming to Dyscover four years ago. "It gave me confidence," he says. "**Dyscover makes me do some homework, which is a good thing**. The topics are good, new things to talk about and the conversations are stimulating.

It's an adventure when you're talking to people. In spite of their difficulties in talking, people know so much. **Everyone is different and brilliant in their own way.**"

John and his wife Sarah have two daughters and two grandchildren. His hobbies included climbing, Rockhoppers, sailing and walking. He enjoys meeting up with old friends and hopes **to stay physically mobile and independent**.

Have you Heard

Activities

GYMNASTICS

Members took no time in setting themselves fairly impressive challenges, supported by the brilliant team at Leatherhead and Dorking Gymnastics Club. It takes a certain amount of **courage and self-belief** to overcome physical barriers brought about by stroke. However, the team carefully design apparatus and equipment each week to encourage members to **take on something new**.



GOLF

Dyscover's golfers returned to Betchworth Park last term, under the coaching of Disability Golf Pro Karl Spurrier. Karl's understanding of aphasia and expertise in coaching players with physical disabilities enables **members of all abilities to participate**. Barry, ex-member, now group volunteer and Trustee, provides additional practice sessions.



IHF

Last November, we started our **third online course** for members of the Irish Heart

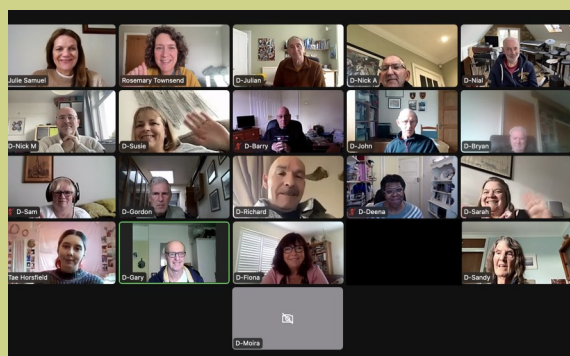
Foundation (IHF). The 12-week structured course aims to provide information on aphasia recovery and how to develop strategies to **support and develop meaningful conversation**. There is a lack of provision across Ireland for aphasia support and Dyscover are delighted to continue developing this partnership with the IHF as part of our **strategic aim to help more people with aphasia**.



Reading Uni students

Rosemary and Julie co-presented to around **60 Speech and Language Therapy students** at Reading University, as part of their aphasia module. They learned about the life participation approach to aphasia and **practical supported communication** techniques.

The students were then joined by **20 Ambassadors** to give them time with 'experts by experience'. They were given some structure for their conversations, with the key aim of getting to know the members. The students were enthusiastic and said the session had exceeded their expectations.



Feedback from students included: 'The session was **so helpful and so different** from classroom based-learning.'

'It cements learning and understanding.'

Banstead Christmas Fair

We had a stall at the Banstead Combined Charities Christmas Fair, where some of our talented members sold their artwork. Christmas cards and homemade chutneys and biscuits were also on sale.

The event was very well attended, and we were delighted that **lots of artwork was sold**. Sales raised £170. Our thanks to the artists for their donations to Dyscover and to volunteers who ran the stall.



Fundraising

Who stays?

Our **Balloon Debate evening** was a huge success, raising £819. Congratulations to Minnie Mouse, **aka Liz Grace**, who was the winning contestant and so got to stay in the hot air balloon that was falling to earth.



Thank you to Simon Edmands for all his hard work arranging this event, Trustee Achim for his help and Ambassador Barry for his great speech.

Nork Christmas

We were delighted to once again be asked by Banstead Rotary to help with their Christmas collections. A **team of 11** walked around the streets of Nork, with our volunteer Santa on his sleigh, knocking on doors and collecting donations.



Concerts

We are very grateful to **Ashted Choral Society** for their donation of £743, following their Christmas carol concert and to St Paul's Church in Nork and the band **Low Key Affair** for their concert which raised £250. Dyscover Ambassador Sarah spoke about her experience of aphasia and how Dyscover has helped her.



Our Marathon runner

David, the nephew of one of our members, is running the London Marathon to fundraise for us this year. He gave a talk to the Thursday morning group about his previous sporting achievements, including triathlons and how he is going to be training for this challenge.

You can show your support here:

[DYSCOVER LIMITED: David's London Marathon 2024 \(enthuse.com\)](https://www.dyscover.org.uk/david-marathon)

Cathy's ride

Dyscover supporter Cathy Woodall (second from left) **cycled for nine days through Vietnam and Cambodia** with three friends, covering 450 km. They all enjoyed meeting so many different people along the way. The toughest part was definitely the humidity! Cathy has raised £1,020 for us.



Bridge

Andrew Robson, the **Times Bridge Correspondent**, ran another very successful masterclass. We welcomed 64 guests, who had four hours of expert tuition and enjoyed afternoon tea. The event raised £1,447.

More 30th pledges

Photos by Paul Leatherhead member Paul raised £1,000 by selling his amazing photographs.

Zoe, the 10-year-old granddaughter of Kingston member Julian, completed a swimathon. She managed 100 lengths and raised £1,137!



Mole Valley Silver Band raised £1,145 from their concert at the Good Shepherd Church, Tadworth. Our thanks to the Band and to volunteer Jim for all his hard work.

Pat's Art Workshop Volunteer Pat ran a two-day workshop for her former students. She provided lunch and Ambassador Paul went along to talk about aphasia and Dyscover's services. £1,174 was raised.

Jo's Quilt Raffle Volunteer Jo's quilting group held a raffle and raised £2,250.

Member Andy did an indoor skydive, raising £360.

Yoga fundraiser by Zoom member Dayle's husband raised £700.

Richard's Swim Member Richard Craze raised £864.69 in a swimathon and growing a moustache in 'Movember'.

Round Up

Christmas lunch

Over 100 members, relatives, volunteers, staff and Trustees came together for our annual Christmas Lunch at the very welcoming Tyrrells Wood Golf Club. They were joined by representatives of the community partners who help to make our Challenge programme so successful.

A delicious lunch and festive merriment were flanked by a very successful hamper raffle, long service volunteer awards, presentations and some special goodbyes.



Hamper raffle

It was a great success last year when we sold tickets for the raffle both online and at the lunch. We did the same thing this year and raised a splendid £1,291.

Our grateful thanks to **everyone who donated** items for the raffle and the team who **assembled 23 attractive hampers**: 15 for the lunch and 8 for the online draw.



Top Draw

A heartfelt 'Thank You' to volunteer Nick Clark, who has been **running our Dyscover Top Draw club for 10 years**. Sadly unable to attend our Christmas lunch due to his devoted caring responsibilities, Liz made a special mention during the lunch to recognise his commitment over such a long period.



During Nick's time running the club, it has **raised a huge £25,500 for Dyscover** and generated the same amount in prize monies! Nick now hands the baton over to Simon Northam.

Annual shares in the club cost just £10. Half of the cost of each share goes to Dyscover, with the rest distributed as prizes. Full details are on our website: www.dyscover.org.uk

CONTACT US

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