



South East Wales Branch Newsletter

Message from our Treasurer

Welcome to the January 2025 issue of the South East Wales Branch newsletter. We had a very busy 2024, with our supporters and fundraisers going from strength to strength. As Treasurer of the South East Wales Branch, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported us throughout the last year.

2024 marked my 25th year with the Branch. I joined in 1999 and I can truly say that last year was another fantastic year in terms of fundraising and we are pleased to see that, due to all of your efforts and support, the amount raised in 2024 exceeded the previous year! Without all your donations, sponsored events and fundraising activities, we would not have been able to help our MND community as much as we have. We cannot thank you enough.



Deborah Gwilym,
Branch Treasurer

On behalf of the Branch, I would like to wish everyone in the MND community– those living with MND, their families, friends and carers, volunteers and supporters – **a Happy New Year.**



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Family Conquer Penyfan to raise over 12.5K for MNDA

In April 2024, Alice Stewart's dad, Hugh, was diagnosed with MND. The family wanted to raise money for the MNDA, who had been so supportive of them. So, in November, Alice Stewart, her family and friends climbed up Penyfan to raise money for our Branch.

Alice has written an interesting and informative account of the day, which is summarised here.

"My mission started on 30th October with packing! Richard's weather app said it would be warm and cloudy, so pack very little. Mine said it would be cold, with a north wind and cloud, so pack everything!! Did I believe the Everest base camp conqueror or some dodgy weather app? As a woman, I thought my luggage was a little light, so just before the boot of the car closed, I went a waterproof jacket, a hat and a pair of gloves!

"On my brother Robert's advice we started early. The plan was to meet in the Pont ar Daf carpark at 8am and be walking at 8.30am sharp. Everyone arrived: coming from Cambridgeshire, Dorset, London, Gloucestershire and with a late comer from Columbia!

"We started on time after a short briefing by Robert, telling us that we would walk at the pace of the slowest walker - me! This would come back to haunt him later! So off we set. Within a few minutes I had to stop talking and explain to my cousin Mark that I wasn't going to answer his questions, but he was welcome to carry on the stream of

conversation and I would grunt in appreciation! After another 20mins we stopped to strip off a layer and look back with pride that we had done quite well. The car park was out of sight, shrouded in thick fog!

"As we got higher, the air got colder and damper and the visibility deteriorated further, so that we had to stop to put back on the layers, fishing out the gloves, hats and waterproofs.

"Eventually, after passing some lunatic fell runners wearing shorts and t-shirts, we came across a cairn, which indicated (so I thought) that we had made it - Hooray! I was overjoyed until it was pointed out this was the top of Corn Du (873m), we still had a way to go.

"I won't lie, my heart sank. Was I going to have to remain silent and climb on for another hour?! By this time visibility was very poor and, since we had crested the hill, we started going down. Really? I couldn't believe it... I knew it meant only one thing, more climbing at some point!

"We trudged on and out of the glooming was another cairn... Was this it? And YES on this windswept point of beautiful views that had to be imagined, was our destination. The only other people we could see were coerced into taking photos of us. Amidst a rosy glow of satisfaction and steamed up glasses, we felt a huge sense of achievement (and personal relief!).

Family Conquer Pen-y-fan to raise over 12.5K for MNDA

"As the wind howled, with chattering teeth and frozen hands, we agreed not to dawdle and began our descent... we were going down and I could enjoy all those conversations I was unable to have going up!

"About 10 minutes later we came across a Y in the road. Where were the others? A shout elicited nothing in return. Which fork had they taken.. the blue route or the red route? We agreed the blue and set off.

"Ten minutes later I knew we were not on the right route... this was too gentle, too easy... where were we? Passers by told us we were going in the right direction for the Pont ar Daf car park. After a scrabble in my pocket for my glasses and phone, I dialled my brother to ask him what we should do... carry on or return? You could hear the relief in his voice. We should carry on and wait on that windy ridge for them.

"When we got to the ridge, it was blowing an almighty gale. There was nowhere to shelter and more layers had to be added. Just as we had decided time to keep moving down as we were getting cold, they appeared and as a collective we headed south, only to be greeted by the Man of the Day... Christophe Egerton Warburton, my cousin Sarah's husband, on his way up!

"36 hours earlier, Christophe had been at Cop17 in Columbia and had promised his wife he would be home on Friday night until his plane was cancelled. So ever resourceful and wanting to keep his word, he flew from Columbia to Miami, Miami to Boston, Boston to Heathrow, taxied from Heathrow to Reading, trained from Reading to Newent, and taxi to

Pont ar Daf car park. All followed by running up Pen Y Fan. A real achievement and genuine feat of endurance!

"It was agreed that the majority of the group should turn around and summit with him, whilst Olivia and I carried on going down. Like two grannies, we tiptoed downwards taking care not to slip while we caught up on all the news, having not seen each other for over 5 years.

"Once we reached the car, we decided that we had a least a half an hour wait until the others joined us. We were wrong! Everybody arrived back at the cars at 11.30am. The climb from start to finish had taken 3 hours. I really am the embodiment of a Series 1 Landrover going up, but must have had the handbrake on whilst going down!

"Hugh and his lovely wife, Sally, gave us a superb lunch and they showed me their new bedroom/bathroom which is fit for purpose. It has versatile winches/hoists in the ceiling, with everything on one level and is wheelchair friendly. The big excitement is that Sally is about to take delivery of a wheelchair friendly van, which will mean they can go to places that have been very difficult lately.



"Your generosity has been quite frankly overwhelming and I cannot thank you enough. It was your friendship and belief in me that got me up that dank hill without a cross word being uttered - so many, many thanks."

Thank you so much Alice, your family and friends for raising over 12.5K, plus gift aid, for our Branch. It is appreciated so much!

Risca RFC Veterans Host Grand Final of Renaissance Touch Rugby Cup

Last month, three of our MND South East Wales Branch volunteers - Judith, Roseann and Tannwen - visited Risca RFC to receive a cheque for our Branch. Here we have a vivid account of the event, written by Jason Williams, Risca RFC Veteran:



"On a sunny afternoon in September 2024, Risca RFC was alive with energy and camaraderie as it played host to the grand final of the Renaissance Touch Rugby Cup. The event marked the culmination of a season-long competition, bringing together ten teams from all corners of Wales for an unforgettable day of sport, community, and charity."

A Celebration of Touch Rugby and Unity - "The Renaissance Touch Rugby Cup, a highlight in Wales' touch rugby calendar, has been a showcase of skill, teamwork and passion. Teams had battled fiercely throughout the season in various tournaments to earn their spot in the prestigious final at Risca RFC. On this special day, the pitches buzzed with activity as players demonstrated their speed, precision and tactical acumen, delighting a lively crowd of supporters."

More Than a Game: Supporting MNDA - "While the competition on the field was spirited, the event held a deeper purpose - raising awareness and funds for the MNDA, chosen in honour of two individuals deeply connected to Risca RFC: Natalie Crandon, whose memory lives on through the efforts of the club, and Kenny Waters, a former Wales International and beloved Risca RFC player, who continues to bravely face the challenges of MND. The community's commitment to supporting the MNDA was evident throughout the day. Raffles, donation buckets and heartfelt speeches highlighted the importance of the cause and the shared determination to support those affected by this devastating disease."

A Day of Triumph and Reflection - "The grand final itself was testament to the quality of touch rugby in Wales. Each of the ten teams brought their best, delivering thrilling matches filled with fast-paced action and sportsmanship. The cheers of the crowd and the collective spirit of the players made the event a true celebration of sport. For Risca RFC veterans, hosting the event was both an honour and a deeply personal endeavour. The day was a chance to remember Natalie Crandon's legacy, show solidarity with Kenny Waters, and unite the wider rugby community in a shared mission of support and compassion."

A Legacy of Hope and Community - "The success of the grand final not only underscored the popularity of touch rugby, but also highlighted the power of sport to bring people together for a greater good. The funds raised for MNDA will go a long way in supporting the vital work of the charity, and the event served as a reminder of the resilience and strength of the Risca RFC community."

"As the sun set on an incredible day, players, supporters, and organisers alike left with hearts full of pride, having witnessed not just a grand final, but a testament to the enduring spirit of rugby and humanity. Risca RFC's commitment to making a difference, both on and off the field, ensures that the memory of Natalie Crandon and the ongoing journey of Kenny Waters remain at the heart of their efforts—a fitting legacy for a day that was about so much more than the game."

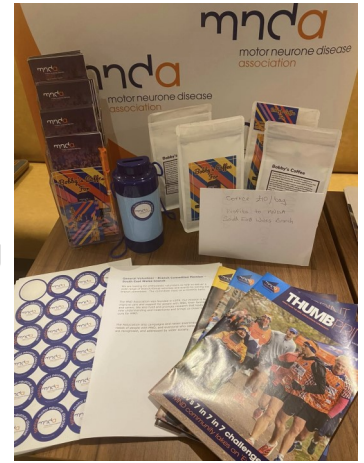
Thank you so much for your support, Risca RFC Veterans.

Health and Wellbeing Events

Volunteers from our Branch recently attended two health and wellbeing events, organised by the Blaenau Gwent Integrated Wellbeing Network.



The first was a women's wellbeing event at the Ebbw Vale Learning Action Centre and the second a men's wellbeing event at Blaina Community Sports Club.



These events were very well attended and were a fantastic opportunity for us to network and promote to the public the work of our Branch.

We look forward to attending more events like these.



Bucket Collection

Thank you to everyone who supported us at our bucket collection in Tesco Risca. We raised over £300 for our Branch, which is very much appreciated.

Pictured here is our newest Branch volunteer, Simona. Thank you to all our volunteers who helped look after our stand and who talked to people about the work of our Branch.

Marathon Success

What a fantastic weekend it was at the Cardiff Half 2024!

Thank you to the amazing participants in the junior half and the half marathon, including #teamhowells, who took part to raise money for the South East Wales Branch.

We are also grateful for our very welcome cheerers, and for the support from branch volunteers, friends and family.

Thank you all so much!



Supporting our Community

We are so grateful to everyone who has donated to us during 2024. Your fundraising, donations and support have continued to increase year by year, and we cannot thank you enough for your help. Your donations of **over £62,800** during 2024 have enabled us to support a number of grants. These grants have been used **towards** a range of items/activities, including:

- Bathroom adaptations; a vehicle adaptation; a house adaptation; driveways; a new boiler
- Driving lessons; taxis
- Counselling for a person diagnosed with MND
- Quality of Life Grants towards holidays and moving house
- Beds; a stairlift; a table; a chair
- A Carer's Grant towards purchase of exercise equipment, enabling the carer to be able to exercise at home
- Gym membership
- a donation of £10,000 to the MNDA's CEO's Appeal 2024*

* The MNDA CEO's Appeal is used for support grants, children's counselling, healthcare projects, biomedical projects, cost of living campaigns, funding tablet devices with communication software, helping to fund expert research

We couldn't do this without you. Thank you everyone. For more information about the grants we may be able to provide, please see our website: <https://www.mndassociation.org/support-and-information/our-services/financial-support-information-for-people-with-mnd>

Forthcoming events



mnda
motor neurone disease association

St Michael & All Angels Church
LOWER MACHEN

Charity Fund Raising Concert
in support of the
motor neurone disease association (MNDA)
South East Wales Branch

The BTM Band

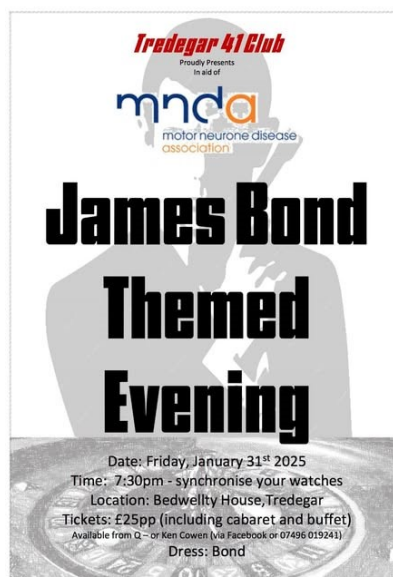
3.00 pm Sunday 19th January 2025
Lower Machen Church Nr Newport NP10 8GU
Followed by Tea & Cake
To get tickets at £12 under 18s free
Scan the QR code
Or find THE BTM Band Charity Concert on Eventbrite.com

Can't make the concert?
You can still donate at <https://givealittle.co.uk/MNDA>
or scan this QR code

Need help buying tickets?
Contact us at

facebook.com/LowerMachenChurch/
lowermachenchurch/
lowermachenchurch@gmail.com

Tickets available on the door - Please contact the church to book them to avoid disappointment



Tredegar 41 Club
Proudly Presents
in aid of

mnda
motor neurone disease association

**James Bond
Themed
Evening**

Date: Friday, January 31st 2025
Time: 7:30pm - synchronise your watches
Location: Bedwelty House, Tredegar
Tickets: £25pp (including cabaret and buffet)
Available from Q - or Ken Cowen (via Facebook or 07496 019243)
Dress: Bond

8th February:
Branch Development Day

19th February:
Branch meeting

19th March:
Branch meeting

We hope that you have enjoyed our newsletter. If you would like to be added to our email circulation list for the newsletter, or you have any feedback or comments, please get in touch. If you have any stories, articles or fundraising activities you would like to see in a future edition, please submit them to our editor, Sharon Harford, via email: sharon.harford@mndassociation.org

