

Swanfield Monthly

February 2011

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Public Computer access in the Centre

If you don't have a computer at home, find it difficult to use one, or are just looking to pass the time, then this is for you!



A grant from the MS Society Scotland and a kind donation from the Pass IT On computer charity have enabled the Centre to offer access to the internet using a computer with **extra, exciting features!** Read on to find out what excitements are in store....

- 1) Access to the internet, web-based email, printing, and basic word processing and spreadsheet functions.
- 2) A keyboard with ENORMOUS, multi-coloured buttons to make it easier to use.
- 3) A trackball mouse that is easier to use than a 'normal' mouse: no movement of the arm is required, they allow users to be more accurate in moving the cursor, and they don't need to be moved around the table.
- 4) And, best of all, extra software to help with writing documents:
 - ⇒ **PENFRIEND:** this can predict words as you start to type them, cutting down the number of letters that you need to press. It can learn your writing style, which makes it more accurate. If you use the headphones provided, the programme will also repeat words back to you so that you can be sure it has been spelt correctly. It can even read the whole document back, if you find it difficult to read. There is an on-screen keyboard, so you can use the mouse to select the letters rather than using the normal keyboard.
 - ⇒ **READ AND WRITE (GOLD):** many of these functions are similar to Penfriend. Additionally, there is a spell-checker and a dictionary. There is the option for the programme to read text out loud to you—not just what you have written, but from the internet or another document. This means you don't have to read it yourself from the screen. There is a 'fact-finder' tool which will help you to combine information and pictures from different sources into one document, and creates a bibliography of these sources.

All documents you create can be saved on the computer. Please ask for assistance if you would like to use Penfriend or Read and Write: a separate account can be set up for each person, which will make it easier and easier to use each time you do. If not, though, just sit down and help yourself!

The small print: All documents are saved on the computer at the users' own risk, although files can be password-protected. The Centre cannot take responsibility for accidental deletion.

Investing in Volunteers

The management committee has always valued the significant contribution of the volunteers in the Centre. Our volunteers fill a range of roles, from Barochamber Operator, physiotherapy, fundraising, IT support, website management, cleaning, and DIY. We are also currently recruiting for reception cover. The commitment and effort from all our volunteers is phenomenal, and the Centre could not provide the range of services and support that it does without them.

Therefore, the Centre is applying for the 'Investing in Volunteers' accreditation. There are *many* advantages to this, and not enough room to list them all here. Essentially, it means that an organisation's practices match rigorous, nationally recognised standards. There is great focus on enhancing the volunteer's experience and enjoyment, with proper training, support and appreciation of their work and motivation. The Centre benefits by having a happy, properly trained workforce and knows that the oxygen therapy is being delivered in accordance with national standards. It is also more attractive to both potential volunteers and funders, as it shows that there is great attention paid to this important issue and a commitment to high management standards.

Centre business:

Invitations were sent out to all members recently to a General Meeting on the 2nd March. The reason for the meeting is for members to vote on changes to the Centre's Constitution, following changes in the law and in the way the Centre operates.

If you did not receive your invitation please contact Alice Syson on 555 0809.

If you cannot attend, please fill in and return your proxy form to ensure that as many votes as possible can be received.

If you can attend—please do! At least 25 members must be present for the meeting to go ahead.... Let us know if you are coming!

Membership and 200 Club renewal:

All Centre and 200 club memberships are due for renewal by the 31st March 2011. The costs are unchanged: **£7 for full membership, £3.50 for associate membership, and £16 for the 200 club.**

If you are not already in the 200 club—this is a rare opportunity to join! See the website for an application form or ask in the Centre.

New Counselling service

As advertised in the last newsletter, there is now a confidential phone line for you to contact the counsellor. This is **0131 553 7220**. If you don't reach her, leave a message and she will call you back. If you require immediate assistance, however, please ring the MSRC 24 hour Counselling helpline on 0800 783 0518.

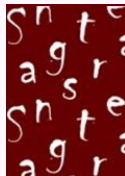
The service is up and running and full details are on the website.

Fundraising events:

Do you like football? Do you like lovely music? Do you like gardens? Do you like shopping?

We're seeking volunteers for various events—can you help at any of them?

⇒ **Sangstream** is an Edinburgh choir which sings traditional and folk music from Scotland and around the world. They are holding a concert on the 18th March (7pm) to raise money for the Centre, and have asked whether three people could help with tea and coffee in the interval. The venue is to be confirmed, but will probably be on the west side of Edinburgh. Singing with them will be Mairi Campbell of The Cast (and musical director of the choir), Alan Johnston and Mike Slessor, and the excellent choir from Broomhouse Primary school, so it will be a very entertaining evening. Posters will be in the Centre soon.



⇒ **The annual Edinburgh Charity Game** is being held on the 27th March at Tynecastle, organised by Rivals 4 Charity. This football match is between fans of Hearts and Hibs. Again, the Centre will be benefiting from the extraordinarily generous hard work of others, and they are expecting to raise around £7,000 for us. We have undertaken to supply four volunteers to man the turnstiles on the day. You'll be needed from about 1.00pm—can you help?



⇒ **Shopping!** Well, who doesn't like shopping centres? There are 7 can collections this year—details are on the right.

⇒ **The annual opening of Dr Neil's Garden** is on the 21st and 22nd May from 2-5pm each day. Volunteers man the gate and the plant stall.



There will be free entry to all the events (including the shopping centres), and reasonable expenses are available. Please let Alice Syson know if you would like to attend these events and help out at the same time!

Fundraising and Donations

Donations: The Centre is very grateful to the following for their generous donations:

Dorothy Burns
Edinburgh Bar Association Benevolent Trust
Lee Robertson
Lee Boyd (Architects)—instead of sending Christmas cards
There will be a new 'Donation Board' on the website soon, with a twist on the Swan motif—keep an eye out!

Fundraising:

The Christmas card sale at St George's West raised £1800. Big thanks to all who helped out on Mondays.
The Gentleman's Smoker on 13th February raised £1900, and forms part of the money raised by Rivals 4 Charity (see box, above)

Suggestions Box

The following suggestions were discussed at the last committee meeting:

- Clearing the car park of snow and ice: during the heavy snow in December, it had proved difficult to clear the car park properly. The council were asked to clear it, but they can take a day or two to get here. In future the car park will be saturated with grit and salt, but patience is requested on Mondays if snow has fallen over the weekend. If friends and families of members can help out then all help is appreciated!
- Handing out personal data to other members: the Centre was asked to allow members to 'opt in' to a scheme to allow their personal data to be handed out to other members. However, under Data Protection laws and the Centre's own confidentiality policy the Centre is not allowed to do so. There is nothing to prevent members from sharing their contact details with each other. The Centre is very happy to pass on messages, or inform a member that another member wishes to contact them.

Children in the Chamber: a clarification

Members have been asking about the situation with having children here for treatment, and so here is some background to the current policy.

Members may remember that in 2009 we welcomed several children from Italy who came to have Oxygen Therapy to help with their autism. During this time, some members asked for some sessions to be kept as 'children-free', to prevent being disturbed.

Since a few Italian families were staying for a month at a time, the staff and committee at the time decided to create two sessions per day when the children could attend, keeping all other sessions child-free. Given the already crowded schedule, these were set at 8.15am and 4.00pm. At the time, care was taken to cause the least possible disruption to members although there were a few minor adjustments to the session schedule.

As no Italian families are attending now, the 8.15am session has been discontinued and the current committee re-considered the timing of the 4.00pm session, in the light of varying closing times of local schools and other factors that make it difficult for mothers to attend. However, while the Centre naturally remains keen to assist any children who might benefit from oxygen therapy, it was agreed that changing it would require major alterations to the session schedule, with knock-on effects for members, so at present the time of 4.00pm is being maintained.

Dates for your Diary

Events:

Sangstream concert Friday 18th March (*see left*)
Dr Neil's Garden opening: Sat/Sun 21st & 22nd May 2011
Rivals 4 Charity football match: Sun 27th March 2011

Can Collections:

Saturday 19th March: Cameron Toll
Saturday 30th April: Gyle Shopping Centre
Saturday 28th May: Ocean Terminal
Saturday 25th June: Sainsburys at Craighleith
Sunday 26th June: Sainsburys at Craighleith
Saturday 24th September: Gyle Centre
Saturday 26th November: Ocean Terminal

Committee meetings:

9th March 2011
23rd March 2011

Membership and 200 Club renewal:

OPEN NOW: 1st February—30th March 2011

General Meeting:

Wed 2nd March 2011

AGM:

Wed 5th May 2011

200 Club winners:

Here are the recent winners of the 200 Club (£10 each).

24th Jan	Keith Hunter	7th Feb	Roy Paterson
31st Jan	Gillian Thorpe	14th Feb	Ken Grindlay