



Lancashire & Cumbria Branch  
GAIN Charity  
Bilsborrow Village Hall  
Bilsborrow  
Near Preston  
PR3 0BL

## SPRING/SUMMER 2017 NEWSLETTER



It is rare for the newsletter to begin with sad news, but it is with heavy hearts and deep sadness the committee of the Lancashire and Cumbria branch of 'GAIN' announce the passing of Ann Birchall in March following a bravely fought, short illness. Ann was well known at our branch open meetings and some people will have met Ann and her husband Colin in the past at the charity conferences around the country. A very popular, highly esteemed and much loved committee and branch member, Ann was also a fun loving and compassionate lady. A former Guillain Barré Syndrome sufferer, her role as Volunteer Contact for the GAIN charity in

the Burnley area, gave Ann the opportunity to visit patients in hospital or at home or make contact by telephone to give much comfort, help and invaluable advice, as well support and friendship. At open meetings Ann was always at the fore, welcoming attendees with a warm hug, a big smile and kind words. She was also editor of the newsletter which showcased Ann's computer talents and in her capable hands the publication became the success we all know. Baking was another talent which was hugely popular at branch meetings; in particular Ann's chocolate cakes and apple pies were especially delicious and immense favourites with everyone. Ann was a special member of our GBS family and will be sorely missed, but never forgotten by those who knew her. On behalf of everyone at the branch, our heartfelt condolences and much love are sent to Colin and sons Andrew and Neil, their wives Jane and Siobhan and granddaughter Isabel.

### ***ANN – a few words from Sybil:***

*This is such a difficult piece to write, Ann leaves a void that cannot be filled. She was "the pulse and hub" of our branch; the lively fun-loving, thoughtful person who kept us all together with her concern and care for others. She was our P.A. - always in contact by phone, e-mails, Facebook etc. with many members of the group - caring, concerned, supportive and helpful, I never knew her to be bad-tempered or down. Ann always saw the funny side of things and was irrepressible in her enthusiasm for life. Colin and Ann were perfect together, but even Colin had a job to "keep her down". Throughout her fight with cancer she was optimistic and fought it with every breath. Ann you will be so greatly missed but will be in a corner of all our hearts forever.*

The date for the 2016 Christmas Party arrived swiftly and once again committee members were busy setting the scene for the festivities. As usual, Tim was in charge of the raffle and was assisted by Audrey and Glenis, it has to be said that thanks to Tim there is always a superb range of raffle prizes waiting to be won, while on adjacent tables items of regalia were displayed and available for purchase, along with a varied range of homemade items including some very colourful Christmas wreaths and tasty jams and chutneys made by our Chair Sybil. Glenis Gill, our 100 Club Co-ordinator brought a huge range of trinkets and jewellery that made ideal Christmas gifts, for stocking fillers we also had a range of various toiletries and perfumes.



In the kitchen, which is always a hive of activity prior to the start of meetings, crockery was laid ready and the tea and coffee pots primed. The wide variety of sweet and savoury fare brought by committee and branch members for the Jacobs Join buffet later in the afternoon were also set in place ready for devouring by everyone.

Sybil warmly welcomed each of our members as they arrived. It is always lovely to see old friends and this meeting was no exception, it was a pleasure to see ex-committee member Mike Bonney, and Lizanne Wilkinson who was unable to attend our previous meeting due to illness, we were pleased to see that both were soon chatting to familiar faces and new ones too.



We were all thrilled and very surprised when Tom Dixon, accompanied by his daughter Lynn, walked into the hall unaided to join in our festive fun. This was a huge accomplishment, as Tom had spent many, many months in hospital at Lancaster and latterly Preston recovering from GBS. Sybil, as local contact had visited Tom during his very long stay in hospital, and so the committee were aware of the huge fight that Tom had fought, but none of us were prepared for the overwhelming sense of pride that caused tears of joy to roll down many of our faces after witnessing Toms achievement.....his recovery is nothing short of a miracle. WELL DONE TOM!!

After Sybil had given a few announcements, committee member Rosie Hyslop gave a short resumé about spearheading 'Rosie's Project' and her subsequent meeting with staff at the University of Cumbria, Lancaster. It was with much pleasure that Rosie announced the acceptance and support by the trustees of GAIN charity for the development of an 'app' covering all aspects and ages of Guillain Barré Syndrome and associated neuropathies. The 'app' will be written by a specialist team at the university in collaboration with Rosie and GAIN charity's director, Caroline Morrice. Discussions are at an early stage, and updates will be given at open meetings and via the newsletter as they happen. Rosie also thanked Sybil for her very kind and generous donation to 'Rosie's Project' funds.



Once the announcements were completed it was time for the festivities to begin, as is customary at the Christmas party, once everyone was seated at the tables we began with the Tortoise Drive. For those of you who are new to the meetings our tortoise drive is the branch version of the old family favourite Beetle Drive. Prizes were given by Sybil for the highest and lowest scores recorded. The merriment continued with the recitation of the humorous poems of Pam Ayres by Angela Mills, a friend of Sybil's. During the tasty buffet, Father Christmas (Tim) drew the raffle, those lucky enough to have their ticket drawn were spoiled for choice by the array of prizes. Following the raffle the 100 Club numbers were drawn and those fortunate to have had Lady Luck on their side will have received a cheque shortly after the meeting. As always everyone had a great time chatting to friends and acquaintances, it is always lovely to see so many people mingling and sharing experiences, stories and enjoying each other's company.

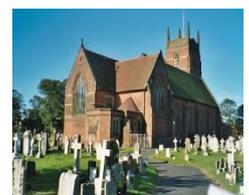


The afternoon past by far too swiftly and soon it was time to bid farewell after we had wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.



The first open meeting of 2017 took place on March 11th, once the tables and chairs had been arranged, the meeting was ready to begin with our Chair Sybil and the committee giving a warm welcome to those attending the meeting, there were 22 in number and it was a pleasure to meet new members Marjorie Swain and her brother Alan from Burnley for the first time – we do hope they enjoyed themselves and trust they will join us again at further meetings. We also met Roy Finden and David Roberts who had travelled to the meeting specifically to hear the talk on the War Memorial Trail at St Annes.

It is the norm at our meetings to welcome guest speakers, and at the March meeting we welcomed Fiona Wilson and her husband, Branch Secretary Gerald who together gave a very interesting talk on the St Annes Parish Churchyard War Memorial Trail. Fiona began by telling us about St Annes-on-Sea Parish Church having memorials to one hundred and thirty five men who served King and Country, one hundred and thirteen from the Great War and thirty eight in WW2 are listed on the boards in the Memorial Chapel. Fiona had been approached by a member of the church, with the idea of a graveyard trail to commemorate WW1, and accepted the challenge. Painstaking research by Fiona and Gerald into the names on the churchyard war graves took many, many hours, they encountered and uncovered many deviations in dates, names and information. The churchyard memorials relate to either those who died on active service, perhaps having been invalided home, or are memorials on family graves to those killed in action and buried elsewhere in Commonwealth War Cemeteries.



The whole of the congregation at St Annes Parish Church got involved in setting up the trail, each grave was adopted by a church member or someone from the local community. Several relatives stepped forward to adopt and other



people took on men who lived in the same road, or followed the same profession or were in the same regiment as a relative. Each grave was marked with a poppy wreath and a marker board and information sheet giving as much information as is known about the man's life and service and the manner of his death. Information has come from Commonwealth War Graves and other sources on the internet, St Annes Express, Lytham Heritage Archive and St Annes Church Parish Magazine of the era. It was interesting to learn of the men's family life and their parents and siblings, we were all stunned to learn of so many young men who had lied about their age, in order to fight for their country.

Gerald took to the floor to tell us how on 2nd November 2016, he and Fiona travelled to London to accept on behalf of the St Annes Parish Bellringers an award as a finalist in the Acts of Remembrance category of the Remember WW1 awards, sponsored by the Daily Telegraph. Received from Dame Julia Cleverdon, the award was one of 25 recognising the many efforts around the country to remember the sacrifice of World War 1. In 2014 the bellringers of St Annes Parish Church rang a Quarter Peal in memory of Isaac Street, the first man from St Annes to die in WW1, on the exact centenary of his death on 26 August 1914. A Quarter Peal comprises approx. 45 minutes of continuous ringing and over 1200 changes of bell sequence and requires a team at least six expert bellringers. Since then a further 18 Quarter Peals have been rung in memory of a further 55 men from St Annes, who died in the service of their country in the First World War.



After this most interesting of presentations, we held our Q&A Forum, this is popular with members old and new. It gives the opportunity for queries and questions to be raised and hopefully to quell any worries, those who are going through their journey with GBS can achieve peace of mind from the forum and those who are recovering find the friendship and help received is important, it is also the perfect face to face platform for helping people realise that they are not alone and others do understand. Our forum is to give support and encouragement, swap hints and tips that have helped during recovery and to suggest items others may have used to make their journey easier, some of which might be new to other members.

*It should however, be noted that we cannot give specific answers to medical queries and questions relating to treatments, none of our committee members or volunteers are medically trained, their comments come from purely personal experience. We suggest raising medical queries with your Consultant Neurologist, GP or other health professional responsible for your wellbeing.*



We had a delicious array of cakes and biscuits to enjoy with our tea and coffee, most of which were homemade by our members and the ladies of the committee. The branch is very fortunate to have such excellent bakers in our numbers, we are very lucky that they are so willing to share their finished confectionary with us. During refreshments, Tim drew the raffle and once again the winning ticket owners had a lovely selection of prizes to choose from, this was followed by the 100 Club draw, with the lucky winners receiving their cheques through the post.

As usual at our open meetings the time swiftly passed us by once more, and after a very interesting and informative meeting it was time to wish a safe journey home to everyone who had travelled to be with us and bid a fond farewell.



Grateful thanks are extended by Sybil and the committee to everyone who kindly helps with the washing up, tidying the room etc. at all of our meetings once they have ended, it is of huge help to us and appreciated so much.



This edition of the newsletter has been edited by Rosie Hyslop, who would be pleased to receive articles, anecdotes, stories and any hints and tips that can be shared with our members in future issues.

Please send contributions to Rosie via email to: [roshyslp@aol.com](mailto:roshyslp@aol.com)

We will be repeating our warm welcome at our next open meeting on June 17<sup>th</sup>, and we have it on good authority that MENCAP representative Pat Ascroft gives a very humorous talk about her travel to and adventures in the Arctic.

Our branch AGM will also take place at the June meeting, giving Sybil our Chair and the committee the chance to brief everyone about the past year and our hopes for the coming year. It is usual at the AGM to welcome one of the GAIN charity's Trustee's, so please do come along to say hello.

**2017 Meetings**

**Bilsborrow Village Hall, Bilsborrow at 2pm**

**JUNE 17<sup>th</sup>**

Branch AGM & Pat Ascroft, MENCAP – speaking on her adventures in the Arctic

**SEPTEMBER 9<sup>th</sup>**

Ruth Gibbons, giving a talk titled Eat Well, Feeling Good

**DECEMBER 12<sup>th</sup>**

Christmas Party & Jacobs Join

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**2018 MEETINGS**

March 10<sup>th</sup>

June 16<sup>th</sup>

September 16<sup>th</sup>

December 8th

**CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA BRANCH ARE:**

**Sybil Loxam, Chair – [sybilloxam152@gmail.com](mailto:sybilloxam152@gmail.com) Gerald Wilson, Secretary – [Gwilson404@aol.com](mailto:Gwilson404@aol.com)**

GAIN is a registered charity that offers support and information for those who are affected by Guillain Barrè Syndrome, CIDP and associated inflammatory neuropathies.

For further information or support, please contact GAIN head office using the following:  
GAIN, Woodholme House, Heckington Business Park, Station Road, Heckington, Sleaford, Lincolnshire. NG34 9JH

Tel: 01529 469910 Helpline: 0800 374 803 Email: [office@gaincharity.org.uk](mailto:office@gaincharity.org.uk) Website: [gaincharity.org.uk](http://gaincharity.org.uk)