

On a very personal journey with Martin Dent

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of circumstances. "All in don't apply' it said and immediately I was intrigued since it was providing a double benefit. Firstly the possibility of relocation and then the added bonus of training in a career in IT," Martin remembers. It was an opportunity he seized with both hands. Computers suited Martin and in 1984 after five years with HMCE, having become an accomplished programmer, he was ready to move onwards and upwards. Beginning with the Milk Marketing Board he had found a career that would see him move through the ranks to Project Manager and finally to IT Manager for Unigate covering the UK and European Foods Division. Extensive travel was required and Martin was flying backwards and forwards to European destinations as well as visiting the many UK offices and depots. In the meantime Martin was to face a situation of a different kind and something by his own admission that hit him like a bolt from the blue. "I remember the day, the room, the consultant and his exact words all so vividly. But not the day before or the day after," he tells me. It was 1995 and Martin had just been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. That such a minor symptom as neck pain could herald the onset of a life-altering condition was indeed a bombshell. "The pain was eventually eased by the use of steroids and I even remember tiling a bathroom on them," he smiles, which reveals a very real sense of fortitude even in the most trying

of circumstances. "All in all I remained in pretty good shape for the next four years," he ends. Everything started to change in 1999, when Martin's symptoms began to present themselves in earnest. "I'd just returned from working in France and as one flight touched down I was due to board another plane the very next day en route to Italy for a family holiday. Unfortunately, I had left France with more than my suitcases, catching campylobacter, a nasty form of food poisoning. Although I rested up in Italy, it had knocked me for six and from that point on I started to rely more and more on the use of a walking stick." Within eighteen months, Martin's mobility had deteriorated further and constant travel and flights were becoming problematic. "I asked to be moved from my position and revert back to project management and therefore have a base in one office." This was agreed and Martin was supportive of the work of his successor and equally, was very much left to operate autonomously. In 2007, aged 53, Martin elected to retire due to his ill health. This meant that he remained in control and as ever his decisions were running ahead of his symptoms. Shortly into his retirement, Martin happened across a leaflet about the Samson Centre for Multiple Sclerosis and his first thoughts were "Why didn't anyone tell me about this before? Living just a quarter of a mile away and knowing nothing about it!". Within a week of first seeing the leaflet Martin had joined,

soon thereafter became a Trustee and then two years later took on the role of Chairman of the Trustees, a position he still holds today. "The Samson Centre is such an amazing place for people living with multiple sclerosis. It provides physiotherapy, exercise and oxygen therapy all within a supportive and welcoming environment. It also offers an excellent opportunity to talk to other people who have a real understanding of living with what is essentially a progressive and debilitating condition." In Martin, we see a life with balance, humour, travel, entertainment, health, charitable commitments and his two grown up children all playing important roles. This year he and his wife Eda have cruised round the Baltic Sea which has seen them both onshore and offshore as they took in the coastlines of

**SAVE.....
THE DATE
.....at a glance**

Thurs 19th Nov 2015
an Evening with Michael Owen, at the Cobham Hilton. Ticket only event.

Sat 5th Dec 2015
the Samson Centre Xmas Fair at the Clock House, Milford, 10am - 2pm.



Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Russia. Previously they have taken a Safari in South Africa, visited Crete and Cyprus as well as spending holidays within the UK. They enjoy the theatre, eating out and quality family time. Eda is calm, sensitive and also has her own part-time career. I am looking out over to the greenhouse on the left and Martin is sitting in his electric wheelchair. I ask him who looks after their garden. This time I know the answer before he tells me, "It's Eda." It doesn't surprise me in the least as I capture a garden that is their haven and something they can enjoy peacefully together. A private space to enjoy with no interruptions, suggestions or intrusions from the outside world.

**VOLUNTEER
ASSISTANT
PHYSIOTHERAPISTS
NEEDED
at the
Samson Centre
Training given
For further information
contact Jackie Payne**

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samson
centre for MS

**Newsletter
Nov/Dec
2015**

Fundraising Matters.... ...it improves lives

During the course of 2015 we have had support from business clubs, companies, social groups, sports clubs, trusts and individuals of all ages. People have baked cakes for us, have eaten cakes for us, cycled, swum, walked, run, swung golf clubs, sung, hurled themselves over obstacle courses, dressed up, dressed



down, stood on street corners with collecting tins, nominated us as their charity of the year, donated, held or attended quiz nights, dinners, lunches, discos, dances, bought raffle tickets, bid for auction items, given their time as volunteers and so the list goes on. What they all have in common is that they have done these things in the name of the Samson Centre for MS and in no small way have helped to improve



the lives of very many people living with multiple sclerosis in this area. We are a totally self-funded charity that could easily be over-looked. However, with the help of others, we achieve great things. Each year we provide over 3,500 physiotherapy sessions, almost 4,000 exercise classes, over 2,500 oxygen



therapy treatments to people who are living with multiple sclerosis in Surrey and surrounding areas. Research has shown that exercise and fitness are essential to the health and well-being of MS sufferers. MS affects one in 600 of the UK population but whilst this chronic disease is as yet incurable, it is treatable. Here at the Centre, we pride ourselves in providing a welcoming environment. Social interaction is important for people living, or caring for someone, with multiple sclerosis. Over a cup of tea or coffee, sufferers,

their families and carers use the lounge area to meet up and talk to others in a similar position to themselves. Our support and facilities offer practical solutions that assist in managing this most difficult of conditions. This enables people of all ages who are living with this lifelong autoimmune disease to enjoy the best quality of life for as long as they possibly can. With costs in excess of £200,000 per annum your support enables us to do this. However, the year is not quite over and if you would like to support us before the year has ended we would love to hear from you. For those of you who have already supported us in 2015, I simply ask that you continue to do so for many years to come. Together we are "Making Samson Stronger" which will enable us not only to offer improved facilities for the future but also assist us to help even more people with MS. I take this opportunity to thank all our supporters and send you our good wishes for what remains of 2015.

**Martin Dent
Chairman**

**Providing therapies for MS sufferers
in Surrey and surrounding areas.**

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This newsletter is published by Samson Centre for MS
All views expressed in this publication are individual and do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Charity and its supporters



*On a very personal journey with
Martin Dent*

*“A man in
control”*

We continue this month with the personal journey of Martin Dent, member, Trustee and Chairman of the Samson Centre. Here, we gain a unique insight into the role that multiple sclerosis has played in his life. I am sat opposite Martin in his sitting room looking out over a beautifully kept garden. He is quiet, reflective and considered and has for the past six years been Chairman of Trustees for the Samson Centre for Multiple Sclerosis and so I pose the question, “In three words how would you best

describe the qualities you bring to your role as Chair?” A gentle smile passes across his lips. Intuitively he has the measure of me and knows that I will already have chosen my own three words. Now he contemplates the question and how closely our thoughts will match. He ponders a while, not because it troubles him but simply because he wants to beat me at my own game. He provides the first two answers ‘balance’ and ‘fairness’ and then there is a pause before he finally delivers his third word ‘cohesion’ and immediately

we both know that he has laid the trump card. Sadly, his word and not mine but it absolutely sums up what he brings to the role. Martin is the glue that holds it all together. Having overseen the building of the new physiotherapy suite and about to embark on the charity’s most ambitious project yet, that of completing a new extension to incorporate counselling quarters as well as increased oxygen therapy capacity, what has brought this man to where he is today. Perhaps it can be said that ‘control’ has been at

the core of his adult life. Whilst never controlling, he is a man who knows his capabilities and how far he should push himself before handing the baton to someone else. Therefore he remains in control. In his early twenties, having begun a Civil Engineering degree at Sheffield University he soon realised that he had embarked on the wrong path. He stayed for two years and made the most of his time by becoming chair of the students’ entertainment committee and arranging weekly discos and bands to entertain some twelve to thirteen hundred students. He learned disciplines that have remained with him for life: facilitating, the sharp end of negotiating, motivating, influencing, managing, listening, appreciating when to wade in and knowing when to watch from the side lines. After that second year he took away from the university far more than he gave up. “It was the 70’s,” Martin recalls. “What wasn’t there to learn! Not only were there the students to entertain (and have escorted off the premises at times!), you also had the bands, security staff, the bar and even drugs to contend with. Anything went or it would have done if you’d let it! You certainly had to have your wits about you.” Having walked away from his degree, HM Customs and Excise beckoned where he worked as a VAT Inspector until an internal document caught his eye shortly after a posting to Birmingham. “Normal rules

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The Mother and Daughter Disco that very nearly didn’t get off the turntables raises over £2,000

With three days to go, Megan and Marion Hambly the mother and daughter duo behind the amazing girls night out ‘Mother and Daughter’ charity disco had to quick step into action. They had to put on their dancing shoes early and tap into a new venue to host their event. Nineteen year old Megan told us, “With practically hours to spare, we were told that our venue had unfortunately been double booked. We had sold around 140 tickets and the thought of having to cancel our event was a devastating prospect. It was extremely difficult and I have to admit there was a split second when all we wanted to do was throw our hands up in the air and cry at the thought of all the hard work and effort that had gone into organising this event. Not only, would we be letting down all our friends and family who had purchased tickets we also knew that we would be unable to support two very special charities the Brain Tumour Charity and the Samson Centre for MS. However, we soon realised that cancelling was not an option and with luck the Samson Centre was available”. Megan and Marion hosted their event in memory of close family friend Amanda Jeffes, who sadly died of a brain tumour last year and for John Hambly who lives with MS – Marion’s husband and Megan’s dad. Amanda herself, first had the idea for this event and wanted to divide the proceeds between the Samson Centre for MS and the Brain Tumour Charity. Megan adds, “We just knew that this event



Mother and Daughter duo Marion and Megan Hambly with a few of their ladies
photo by kind permission of “Lauren Marsh Photography”

had to take place and we are hopeful that it is something that can be taken up by others too because it offers a wonderful opportunity for some mother and daughter bonding or just a fun night out. All with the added bonus of raising some money to help people living with brain tumours and multiple sclerosis”. If anyone is interested

in holding a ‘Mother and Daughter’ Disco for the Samson Centre for MS and the Brain Tumour Charity and would like help to organise one, contact Denice. In the meantime, the next charity ‘Mother and Daughter’ Disco that Megan and Marion are hosting is booked for Saturday 15th October 2016, at the Samson Centre. Be sure to save the date.

AN EVENING..... WITH..... MICHAEL OWEN takes place on Thurs 19th November at Cobham Hilton Hotel, Surrey, 6:45 for 7:30pm. Tickets are £65 and include a welcome drink, three course dinner inc tea or coffee and half a bottle of wine. Michael will be joined by entertaining after dinner speaker Peter Brackley and the evening’s host tv commentator Ian Darke. Tickets available from Jackie Payne and Liz Darke on 01372 468934 or email:darkecards@aol.com

London Marathon 2016

We have one place available for someone who can fly the Samson Centre for MS flag and raise as much sponsorship money as possible for people living

with MS in Surrey and surrounding areas. This year has seen a record number of applications and so spaces will be at a premium. If you think you can get your family, friends and colleagues to support you why don’t you run for the

Samson Centre for MS. For further information contact Jackie Payne. Don’t forget, if you have already secured your own place in the ballot, you could still run for us and help us raise much needed funds.

**The
SAMSON
CENTRE
weekly
prize draw of up to
£25,000
pick up a leaflet**



BEST YEAR EVER

Our Street Collections for 2015 have now come to an end

and I would like to thank all the kind people who volunteered their time, whether it was for one hour or, like many of you, at a number of our collections. The total raised this year from the 14 collections was a record breaking £10,518.39. This year we have been very fortunate to have had additional people helping us who were not Samson

members. Relatives, friends and neighbours have joined in, which has helped immensely. I am now applying for licences for 2016 and should have the dates confirmed shortly. If you can assist at any of our street collections then please contact myself or Jackie. Your help would be much appreciated not least by the very many people living with MS who use the Centre. Let us make 2016 another incredible year for the Samson Centre for MS street collections. Many thanks Carol Kitching.

