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The biannual newsletter of the British Stammering Association Scotland
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BSA SCOTLAND SUMMER SCHOOL

BSA Scotland secured £13,250 from BBC Children in Need to deliver an intensive course for children who stammer, aged 10-14, during the school summer holidays 2007.

The course was held at an outdoor activity centre in Argyll from 5-10 August. Twenty-four free places were offered to children and early teens from all across Scotland (Grampian, Ayrshire, Perthshire, Fife, Lothians, Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Highlands and more). In the event, and to our surprise, all participants were boys this time around!

The course combined outdoor activities with sessions on communication skills, positive thinking, problem solving and strategies for dealing with stammering, high school transition, teasing and bullying.

We hoped participants would become more confident all round communicators who would feel able to express themselves more freely and participate more fully. We did not focus narrowly on fluency as a measure of individual success, as this can be easy to establish but hard to sustain following intensive therapy.

We targeted the 10-14 age range as it is an important time of transition – from primary to secondary school and from childhood to adolescence. First impressions and fitting in with peers are high priorities for this age group, and for the child/young person who stammers, being 'the only one' in your class, school



or social group can lead to low self esteem and the beginnings of social withdrawal. The sessions on dealing with teasing and bullying were very constructive. Participants brainstormed collective strategies and gained practical experience of handling comments through role play. Combining stammering therapy and outdoor activities was very productive as we were able to draw analogies between how participants managed their fears during the outdoor activities and how they might approach speaking situations.

Eleven speech and language therapists from across Scotland, plus BSA Scotland staff member Jan Anderson were involved in running the communication skills/speech therapy component of the programme. Seven therapists were present at any one time. The opportunity for specialist teamwork was very

attractive to therapists who wanted to develop their expertise in supporting young Scots who stammer.

We also welcomed a visiting speech and language therapist and lecturer from Palestine, Itaf Arafat, who joined the group to observe its progress

throughout. Itaf made a special contribution to the team and later commented "I talked to my students and promised to teach them about my wonderful experience at the intensive course. I can't find words to thank you. I shall pray always that I will have the chance to pay back some of your hospitality".

Participating children and young people are completing rating scales and questionnaires to evaluate the impact of the course and these will be analysed and reported in due course. Meantime, here is a selection of comments from children, parents and therapists ...

Children and young people

"It made a big difference in my life. I came here with quite a bad stammer, but ever since I've been here and met new people who stammer like me, it has made me feel more confident. I used to think that I was the only one who stammered. I wasn't too confident when I spoke out. But now, I know I'm not the only person out there who stammers."

"I have learned hundreds of useful things. It has all been very exciting. I have made lots of friends. It has helped a lot with my speech. It's been the best holiday of my life and I hope it can happen again."

"I have learned how to control my stammer better in group situations. We had fun and made loads of friends and I really enjoyed the group work to learn to control my stammer better."

Parents

"I am writing ... to thank you for giving our son the opportunity to attend the BSA

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Scotland Summer 'Scool. He enjoyed the week so much – he came back like a new boy and has so much confidence. Our family and friends cannot believe the difference in him. He enjoyed meeting other boys the same as him and doesn't feel alone anymore. The timing of the course was superb for him starting secondary school. I hope that this sort of thing can get funded on a yearly basis to benefit others. There is not much in our area for boys who stammer and it was very interesting for us, as parents, to meet other parents and share our experiences at the pre- and post-course events ..."

"The children did activities together outside of speech therapy that allowed them to see that stammerers are just normal kids and that the stammer need not hold them back in life. Our son was delighted to mix with so many boys who stammered as he sometimes feels like 'the only one' here in Aberdeen!"

"My son had a wonderful time at Summer 'Scool. As well as speaking much more fluently he has grown in confidence and will now order for himself in a restaurant, for example. He loves practising his new sliding techniques and we can't get a word in edgeways! He loves telling jokes now. It is fantastic to see him so happy."

"My son has become a more confident person, being away from home and realising that he was not alone with all the

difficulties that go along with stammering. He has certainly grown up and his self esteem has improved dramatically. He has also become more confident in applying strategies learnt at the course in his every day speech."

"While my son has benefited from attending weekly speech therapy sessions, the course gave a unique opportunity to learn these strategies in a fun and concentrated environment with other young people."

"I would not hesitate to recommend this course to other parents of stammering children. Stammering is not life-threatening and as such does not attract much funding, but the negative effect it has on children's lives is heartbreaking. I hope that you are able to raise funds to run the course again."

Speech and language therapists

"Most rewarding thing I have ever done in my job as an SLT!"

"This course gave me the confidence to continue to develop my skills with children who stammer across different age groups. It has given me the drive to improve the service currently available within the department's geographical area. The intensive nature of the course and the way that outdoor activities, whilst fun, are such positive learning experiences incorporating our therapy targets has been the highlight of my working life this year."



BSA Scotland Committee news

Following our most recent Committee meeting in October, we can confirm that John Mann will continue as Convenor of BSA Scotland for another year. Sandra Stewart has stepped down from the role of Deputy for health reasons but will remain on the Committee as an ordinary member. Sandra has made a fantastic contribution to BSA Scotland during her two years on the Committee to date, we miss her and hope for her return to strength and well-being in the near future. Claire Pirnie will take the role of Deputy for the coming year.

We now have two Scottish Trustees on the BSA General Committee: Pete Hancock and Frank Geoghegan-Quinn, both of whom will play a key role on this year's Committee. Liz O'Connell and Carolyn Allen, speech and language therapists who have been consistently active on behalf of BSA Scotland, have filled the two three-year places that fell vacant this summer. Robin Lickley, Roz Urquhart and Gary Boyd have been accepted invitations to serve as co-opted members. Robin is a senior lecturer with a special interest in stammering and dysfluency at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. Roz is an art therapist, woman who stammers and Chair of the Edinburgh self help group. Gary is the parent of one of this year's Summer 'Scool participants and the only brand new face at the Committee table! We thank Eddie Phillips (former BSA Trustee), Callum Wells (former elected member) and Dev Arumugam (former co-optee) as they step down, wish them the very best and hope for continuing association. We welcome our new and returning members enthusiastically and look forwards to their involvement in future developments.

These are exciting times for BSA Scotland. We recently underwent an organisational review, thanks to Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland's capacity building programme and are now working closely with Chris Jay and Karen Winning, expert consultants, to develop a business plan, staffing and funding strategy to ensure the effectiveness, growth and sustainability of the Scottish branch over the next 5-10 years.

A word from our convenor

It is my great pleasure to continue as BSA Scotland Convenor. I had to think seriously before putting myself forward for another year (one of these days I will return home from a meeting in Edinburgh/

Stirling/Aberdeen to find my wife has changed the locks and my bags are sitting on the doorstep!) but it has been a thoroughly rewarding, confidence boosting experience and I look forward to building on our achievements.

As you will read in this issue, 2007 has been a busy, fun-filled year for

BSA Scotland. We are currently organising our programme for 2008, delayed slightly by our organisational review, for which thanks must

go to Chris Jay of Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland. The 2008 programme is likely to include the now traditional 'walking and talking' weekend (20–22 June) at a venue to be confirmed, a second Open Day for children and young people and a further Open Day for all ages. We are seeking Children in Need funding for a second Summer 'Scool and Scottish Arts Council/ other funding for a joint project with Glasgow's TAG Theatre Company, working with young adults who stammer to foster participants' drama skills and ultimately develop a professional touring production on the theme of stammering for secondary schools. It is hoped this can get underway in January 2008. More on all of these next issue, meantime, please check the website for updates ...

John Mann



Highland connections

Our most recent Open Day in Inverness, May 2007, attracted more than 40 participants, including children and adults who stammer, parents, spouses, partners, speech and language therapists and teachers. All valued the opportunity to share ideas and experiences.

The day included testimonies on living with stammering, presentations on childhood stammering and the role of telemedicine in delivering therapy to people in rural areas and a wide range of workshops. The latter included approaches to therapy, avoidance reduction, public speaking and self help as well as a parent discussion group and session on supporting stammering pupils in school.

We were delighted that Fergus Ewing, Minister for Community Safety and local MSP, was able to open the proceedings. The presentation on childhood stammering was provided by Dr Cameron Stark, public



Fergus Ewing MSP

and support to everyone who attends – a challenging prospect as our audience includes parents with young children who are showing early signs of stammering, who may hope to find how they can help their child stop stammering, alongside adults who stammer persistently. We trust, however, that even these apparently diverse perspectives can be brought together in a constructive way.

Parents learn from adults who have

health consultant for NHS Highland and himself a person who stammers.

The aim of Open Days is to provide information

continued to stammer how they can best alleviate the stresses that may surround early stammering. They leave with a new understanding of what it means to stammer: it can be challenging and painful but need not be a barrier to participating fully in life and achieving one's potential. Adults who stammer feel satisfied to impart their knowledge so that children who stammer will be handled more sensitively and appropriately today.

"My wife and I had a great time. We met lots of interesting people and learnt things we never knew before about stammering."

"I really had thought it was just my son and me who were dealing with this problem. Now I realise we are not alone".

We are grateful to Highland Council, Scotmid and the Inshes Church for their various forms of financial and in kind support. Thanks also to Sharon Daye, speech and language therapist, her colleagues and members of the Inverness Stammering Support Group, who put in a huge amount of effort locally to ensure the success of the event.



Blethering at Glencoe

Around 30 people joined BSA Scotland's second 'walk and talk' social and fundraising weekend at Glencoe, 22-24 June. The group attending this life-affirming weekend included people who stammer, speech and language therapists and assorted friends and partners. The majority of participants currently live in Scotland, but we warmly welcomed Allan, Nara and Vince who all travelled from the far south to join us.

As everyone knows, this summer was extraordinarily dreich and the midsummer weekend was no exception. By some extraordinary good fortune, however, the climb up Beinn a'Bheithir was completed with only a hint of rain during a short stretch of the descent. Views were limited,

the mist surrounded us at the top and the midges were in evidence in the forest, but the sense of achievement amongst our band of largely inexperienced Munro climbers was intoxicating.

Beinn a'Bheithir consists of a ridge and two peaks, both of which are Munros. All of the group who attempted the climb made it to the ridge, most made it up Sgorr Dhearg and a good number clambered up the second peak, Sgorr Dhonuill, achieving two Munros in one day. The small group that did not participate in the climb walked in the local area and are to be thanked for preparing a delicious dinner for the returning throng.

The weekend involved much conversation, communal catering, singing,

laughter and wanders to the Clachaig Inn, as well as discussion about BSA Scotland's future priorities and how to best use the £4K sponsorship raised. Plans include an awareness raising campaign to promote early referral in Scotland as it was noted that many children continue to be referred far too late. It seems, sadly, that doctors still urge parents to wait and see if their children will grow out of stammering. In addition, we'd like to offer a workshop for adults who stammer. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of sponsors and pay tribute to those who raised money for us: Nara Miranda; John and Cora Mann; Paul Mann; Ian O'Connell; Callum Wells; Allan Tyrer; Stephen McAleese; Claire O'Neil and Andy Z; Isabella Curnow.

We returned baggy eyed from all the energy expended whilst walking and talking but euphoric from all the support given and received throughout the weekend.

Quotes from participants

"The climbing was sensational, a new and eye-opening experience. The excitement of climbing two Munros was immense and intense. It was a brilliant weekend from beginning to end."

"I found my confidence grew a lot over the weekend. It was bizarre and wonderful being around so many folk like me – people who stammer."

"I enjoy the opportunity to meet with people who stammer, therapists and relatives in a social setting. I met many new people and enjoyed feeling comfortable in stammering – always the case at BSAS events."



During the Edinburgh International Film Festival 2007, Jan Anderson had the opportunity to interview Jeffrey Blitz, director of award winning 'Rocket Science' about his personal experience of stammering, the diverse ways he has managed it and the message of his current film. 'Rocket Science' tells the story of a stammering teenager who joins his school debating society. It is a deeply personal and profoundly film that manages to portray stammering in a popular light.

The moral of the tale...

"Essentially, I feel everybody stutters – it's just that some of us do it with words, while others do it in different ways. Everyone has their own thing that they believe ought to be simple, but they find it's not simple at all – and people feel a great deal of shame about that. So, stuttering was a metaphor for a lack of mastery over the world that everybody feels in one realm or another. The human mechanism is just too complicated. It breaks down in all sorts of ways at different ages and stages in life. I think, if we can arrive at a point where we are more accepting of ourselves, we're just happier in general."

My earliest speaking experiences were stuttered. My father stuttered and his approach had always been to accept himself as a stutterer. He learned techniques to stutter softer, but not to eliminate blocks entirely. I was much more frustrated. I went to see speech therapists who talked about how important it is not to avoid stuttering – but I was obsessed with avoiding it. As a result, I developed a tremendous vocabulary. My father said it would require a lot less energy to accept that I stuttered and that it's not such a big deal – but he has a different personality. He doesn't care what anyone thinks about him. From a very young age, he marched to his own beat. I wanted to be a really social kid and at 12-14 you just want to blend in. I tried the things that worked for my dad, but they didn't work for me.

I became very good at avoiding stuttering. I contorted sentences in all sorts of crazy ways and drew upon words that kind of meant what I wanted them to mean. When I was 15, I decided

I wasn't content to be shy about whether to speak in public. I would have these great arguments that would bloom in my head and I wanted to share them. So, I joined my debating team. In the first year I was tragically bad and my stuttering had never been worse. But in public speaking you develop a theatrical voice that is not your own and the more comfortable I became with this new voice, the less I stuttered. By the time I was in my last year of high school, I was amazingly good at debate. I was almost completely fluent and it carried over into my life outside as well. I didn't have anxiety about stuttering anymore. I won the state championships and was the president of the team. All my sense of self was invested in debate and I did brilliantly!

By this time, I had already been through many forms of speech therapy. However, speech therapies were very difficult for me because it was only on the phone or in high-pressure situations that I would stutter. In casual conversation, I almost never stuttered. Generally, when you are modifying your

speech you have to modify it 100% of the time for it to really work. As I was a really fluent kid 60% of the time I didn't want to adopt an artificial way of speaking all the time. So, it was only when I found debate and my brain figured out a more organic solution that things really started to work for me.

From the time I graduated high school and until my film 'Spellbound' came out, I went through a period of incredible fluency during which I would tell people 'I am a stutterer', and they would say 'that's absurd, you are perfectly fluent'. I started to research a documentary about stuttering in Los Angeles and met Vivian Sheehan. The whole Sheehan approach is very much about accepting yourself as a stutterer. I was very fluent and sat in on a group therapy session and said 'I'm a stutterer too' and they said 'Shut up, you're not a stutterer at all!' And I said, 'No really, I still experience the mental exertion that goes into not stuttering. I still have to think through my sentences. I am good at it, but they don't just pop out.'

While my speech was very fluent I started to direct in the advertising world and telephone conference calls became how I would get a job. Suddenly, I became very self-conscious on the phone. Whatever my brain had been doing that had enabled me to be fluent, I lost the ability to do. I could hardly say anything, not only on commercial teleconference calls, but also with family or friends. I was utterly tongue-tied. It was incredibly frustrating. My stuttering became worse than in my teenage years. I went to see a prominent speech therapist who tried to teach me behavioural modification techniques that meant I became aware of something that I had mastered by not being aware of it. Suddenly, the whole thing just collapsed on me. It was very dramatic and it happened in a short period of time.

I then started doing speech therapy that involved breaking a sentence down into chunks before you say it. Somehow breaking things down and thinking things through really helped.

But let me just jump off on a weird but significant tangent ... around the time I was leaving graduate school I developed a fear of flying. All of a sudden, over the span of six months, I started to obsess over stories of plane crashes. The thought that I would have to fly somewhere meant I would not sleep. A friend suggested I try taking Xanax before flying and I overcame my fear entirely. Around that time I asked if there was anything that I could try drug

wise for stuttering that I didn't need to be on all the time. I learned about a drug that had tested quite well, but there were some side effects. So, I went on Zyprexa for a while. It made an enormous difference but the side effects are unfortunate. You can put on weight. If you don't get 10 hours of sleep ... its bad! I wasn't happy about the side effects but I took it long enough for the situations that were really difficult, like high-stress phone calls, to get easier. I went from being hardly fluent at all to being almost entirely fluent in just a couple of weeks. I will try out Pagonclone when I go back to the States in September because it supposedly has fewer side effects. It's not for everybody and, as with any drug, you do not know the long-term consequences. However, if

used cautiously, I believe they can make a tremendous difference.

True to the American character, if you can find the 'magic bullet' solution, you go for it. So, for example, in America people are also using the SpeechEasy device. I tried it but it gave me a headache. It didn't work at all for me, but I know stutterers for whom the difference has been magnificent.

I think the big trend in the US, and probably ultimately around the world, will be the 'psycho-pharmacological'

treatment of stuttering.

Note: Xanax is used in the treatment of anxiety and depression and Zyprexa is an anti-psychotic drug – both can have severe side-effects. At present there is no medication available in the UK that can be prescribed specifically to help with stammering.

For information on the pharmacological treatment for stammering, go to: www.stammering.org/adther_drugs.html.

If you could live your life again with or without stuttering?

"I would absolutely stutter. I mean without hesitation! It's a great character builder. In retrospect, I think it made me a tougher kid and that serves me well now."

"Paul Ashley"
"Yes, miss"
"Neil Bowsher"
"Yes miss"
"Jeremy Campbell"
"Jeremy Campbell"
"Jeremy Campbell"

The teacher and 25 children turned to look at me, a seemingly paralysed five year old child at the morning roll-call. Small titters of laughter permeated the air. The teacher moved on. I was red-faced, embarrassed, terrified.

I think that was the first time I recall having a stammer, and it made an ordeal out of the simplest of daily tasks. Even today, I still feel some of those nerves when asked to introduce myself, to speak aloud, even meet people for the first time.

From that young age, so scared was I of being heard to stammer, my whole strategy in dealing with it was avoidance. I would avoid contributing to a discussion, even if I had something important or relevant to say. I would obsess about how to phrase things differently in order to avoid saying words which I knew I would stumble on. In fact, my whole behaviour seemed at times to revolve around preventing people from hearing me stammer.

Having read a little bit about stammering, I now know that I have a covert stammer. Indeed, many people express surprise when I tell them I have a stammer. I have become so used to last-minute word swaps and rephrasing of sentences that most of the time I sound

fluent. I was never referred for speech therapy because I was never considered to have a problem with speaking. But in my mind I know that it is always there, rippling just below the surface, being suppressed but occasionally breaching my well-trained defences!

Over the years I have discovered certain situations and emotions which increase the likelihood of my stammering.

I stammer more when tired or under the influence of alcohol, for example. I am more likely to stammer when under stress, particularly when speaking in public or during an argument – and of course the very act of stammering undermines my point! As an anaesthetist, I'm constantly put into stressful medical situations which demand effective communication with patients and colleagues, and again my stammer can become problematic.

Equally, there are times when my stammer doesn't affect me. I am a singer and have given several solo performances in the past. Why is it that I can sing in front of a large audience and know that I'm not going to stammer, yet give me a speech to deliver and I'm quivering?!

Although I've never had any formal speech therapy, I've developed my own ways of achieving greater fluency. I speak aloud every night before going to bed, imagining a vast audience in front of me. If I have to speak in public, I practise and practise, thinking about words which

might catch me out and considering how I might rephrase a sentence if I have a last-minute urge to stammer.

As a doctor, the availability of free time to pursue non-medical subjects is woefully limited. However, I've recently had three months off between jobs, and this has given me the opportunity to attend the Edinburgh stammering self-help group. It has been fascinating to

No more fear

By Jeremy Campbell

meet other people with a shared experience, and refreshing to learn that I'm not the only one to have gone through this – though when I was growing up it certainly seemed so! In the group, I've enjoyed bringing my stammer to the surface in front of people, standing before an audience in silence and feeling confident, and even stammering voluntarily. I've discovered that much of my stammer-related behaviour has been about fear – the fear of what others will think if they hear me stammer, the fear of embarrassment, the fear of being that five year old schoolboy all over again. For me, the famous words *"We have nothing to fear but fear itself"* have particular relevance. In reality, I don't think people really care whether I stammer or not – what is more important is to have confidence in what I have to say, to accept that my stammer is a part of me and to never let it get in the way of my hopes and dreams.



My

stammer and I have never been properly

acquainted. Recently, as a scholar of 21 years of age, the mystery of what it is and how to fight it has become an issue.

From our first meeting, at the age of ten, I chose to take no notice of it. I remember being upset at home one day. My mother noticed and made an appointment with my primary school teacher. The teacher did some research and believed that the best thing to do in my case was:

- 1) take no notice of the stammer
- 2) encourage me to practice reading aloud
- 3) give me a lead role in the school play!

Later, as a teenager, if I began to stammer, I would simply smile and pronounce "Hey, don't laugh I have a stammer". Since most conversations involve ripostes of one form or another, being upfront seemed like a necessary survival tool. By being extrovert or 'in your face' with people, I was able to

counteract any negative criticism. There was a down side, however, because in conversation, I wasn't really listening to others, rather thinking about how to avoid stammering – 'what should I say next?', 'how do I come in?' I wasn't really tuning in to what the other person was saying. This way I looked out for myself and kept my emotions intact. I was lucky to win over good friends who listened to me and I had a family that loved me. On the down side, I think I had very little patience and was

challenged. I stammered more than ever before in my life. It was a real shock to my system, being so aware of my speech. However, the key word was patience. Everyone was from a culture different to my own, and each person carried his or her own style of stammering. Some had a more pronounced stammer – the range was immensely diverse. I needed to be patient and listen because I wanted people to do the same for me. This was new. I had been so used to being comfortable

and in control that I had not learned how to be patient and compassionate in conversation. ELSA really changed my approach to listening.

Thanks to the organisers and workshop leaders who made the experience possible: Edwin Farr, Anita Blom and Gina Waggott from ELSA and Jan Anderson and Lulu Black,

from BSA Scotland/TAG Theatre. During the week we prepared imaginary project plans to change the world for people who stammer and I particularly liked the drama workshops by Lulu and Jan – a nice, neat balance.

It all succeeded in empowering me to 'Stand up, speak up'. I now want to share what I have learned to empower others to take part in an ELSA meeting.

Stand up, speak up!

By Cian Bell

unaware that others might have something valuable to say to me.

The European League of Stuttering Associations (ELSA) Youth Meeting, 14-21 July 2007, was a painful, exciting and life-changing experience for me. My preconceived notion was that it would be a breeze. I arrived in Nijmegen full of confidence and audacity. Immediately, however, I was out of my depth and felt



BSA conference

Between 7 and 9 September, BSA members from across the UK came together in Telford for the BSA Conference. The Scottish branch of the organisation was well-represented, despite certain mishaps experienced en route by some of our number, who, instead of the expected trip from A to B, ended up having to travel from A to Z through all the other letters of the alphabet! Their determination to get there in the end was an object-lesson in perseverance, commitment and good humour which could well be applied to stammering.

The presence of the Scottish delegation lowered the average age of conference attendees considerably, testifying to Jan Anderson's energetic leadership of BSA Scotland and the efforts of Scottish support

groups in bringing in new blood. This vibrancy was exemplified by the popular drama workshop led by Jan, Roz and Cian, which aimed to get participants communicating with the whole of the body, not just the voice. It was also evident in the way the group seemed to draw to it delegates from elsewhere, particularly those who had come from abroad. Among the countries represented by these new friends were Croatia, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Nepal and South Africa. On both nights we stayed up, rather later than was sensible, to talk and enjoy one another's company. It was heartening to find so much in common with people from so far afield and to realise that stammering, despite the many forms it can take, is a shared experience and need not be

suffered in isolation.

The conference proper provided a varied programme of lectures, seminars, workshops and films. Highlights included the two thoughtful and encouraging keynote addresses; an introduction to techniques used in neuro-linguistic programming; a discussion of how the Disability Discrimination Act affects people of stammer; a demonstration of the Voice Amp, an electronic fluency aid; and many inspiring examples of public speaking by people who stammer.

Let's hope that the next conference builds on the achievements of the last and that the Scottish presence will be even stronger.

By Simon Vaughan

(pic: Simon, centre, with Nara and Dev)

Our journey started at St Andrew's Bus Station in Edinburgh, from whence the overnight bus took us to Manchester Airport. After a cramped journey, we arrived at the airport at the uncivilised time of 4am and had to run for our flight to Croatia and the International Stuttering Association (ISA) 8th World Congress for People who Stammer.

In 2006 Claire Pirnie and I had been fortunate to get funding from BSA Scotland towards attending the International Fluency Association (IFA) World Congress in Dublin. We learnt a lot about stammering and became more aware of an international level. However, the IFA congress was mainly aimed at speech therapists and researchers and, although a number of people who stammered attended, we were very much in the minority. At the ISA congress people who stammer make up the majority of those attending.

The congress was held just outside Dubrovnik, in costal Cavtat which, for one week in May, was transformed into the stammering capital of the world with people coming from Africa, India, Asia, Australia, North and South America and across Europe to share ideas and opinions about stammering and enjoy being in the company of other people who stammer.

For Claire it provided the opportunity to meet up with young people she had met at an ELSA youth meeting two years earlier and for me to begin friendships which would continue at my own attendance at the ELSA meeting in July. Both of us met people from all over the world whom we'd met in Dublin as well as new people from many countries. Scotland's representation was made even stronger when, at the last minute, we were joined by Jan Anderson, who received an ISA scholarship.

In many ways it is difficult to pick out particular highlights of the meeting. Each day offered a mixture of lectures and workshops, many concentrating on the main theme of the meeting, 'Inclusion: Creating our place in society'. The day started with keynote speakers from all over the world, most of whom were people who stammer. Many emphasised the importance of self-help in enabling individuals to accept stammering as part of themselves. All were recognised internationally within the field of stammering self-help, speech and language therapy and and/or research.

There were also a number of presentations from people who stammer explaining how the self-help movement worked in their own countries, especially those where stammering is not high on the agenda and where national associations are either non-existent or still emerging. A number of interesting workshops were held which demonstrated ways that people have learned to cope with their stammer. The emphasis here was mostly on finding ways to accept stammering as part of your life, not in trying to eradicate it.

worked with as opposed to fought against. It was great to hear the sometimes heated debate that differences in approach caused.

I also became aware that a lot of the work that is being done by BSA Scotland: the drama project, Open Days and so forth, shares similarities to work that is taking place across the international associations – and that Scotland is really holding its own when it comes to raising awareness and providing opportunities for people who stammer.

I will take away a wealth of



Croatian journey

By Roslyn Urquhart

Jan, Roz and Claire in Dubrovnik

One of the most inspiring speakers was Anita Blom who told her story of transforming from a confident and talkative child into a teenager who practically gave up speaking and who endured terrible bullying, into an adult who has become a leading member of the self-help movement and Vice Chair of ELSA. Her story really demonstrated how meeting other people who stammer can completely change people's lives.

As well as the workshops and presentations, there was plenty of time left for socialising, including a trip to Dubrovnik and gala dinner in its spectacular castle.

It is hard to sum up the experience in a few words. I have felt very lonely and isolated as someone who stammers, at times, but at the congress I realised that people from every country stammer, in every language. When you once believed that you were the only person who stammers this is a completely liberating experience. The congress also served to strengthen my opinion that stammering is something that can be accepted and

memories, but perhaps the one that will live me the longest is our last evening in Croatia, having a meal with people who stammer from all over the world. We each took a turn to stand up and speak about our week together. It is an experience I will never forget – a group of people, brought together by stammering, relishing the chance of talking in front of a large audience and everyone getting a round of applause from members of the public who stopped what they were doing to listen to us.

Claire and I hope that our experience in Croatia will continue to inspire us in our roles as BSA Scotland committee members and strengthen our involvement in self help groups where we want to share our enthusiasm to ease the isolation of people who stammer and encourage them to become more accepting of themselves.

We also hope we will inspire other people who stammer from Scotland to attend the next world congress in Beijing in 2010.

blether

Communication Forum Scotland

The Communication Forum Scotland Civic Participation Project is now well underway. BSA Scotland is a founder and leading member of this umbrella group and is hosting this specific project to develop a toolkit to enable policy makers to better engage with people with a variety of communication difficulties, including stammering. Project worker, Amanda Bennett, has achieved a huge amount during the short life of the project to date. She is working tirelessly to put communication disability firmly on the agenda of the Scottish Government. The toolkit will include specific reference to stammering and good practice examples from people who stammer. It is due to be launched in March 2008.

OSCR Registration

BSA has now registered with the Office of Scottish Charities Regulator as a cross border charity. It will soon be entered on the Scottish Charity Register with the charity number SC038866.

BSA Scotland Race Night raises £2,000

BSA Scotland Committee members, John Mann and Liz O'Connell, and Martin Ramsey (speech and language therapist) were the driving forces behind our recent successful Race Night in Glasgow on 27 October. The event attracted over 120 people, raised awareness of stammering and resulted in a clear £2K contribution to BSA Scotland funds. Thanks to those who donated prizes and helped out in advance and on the night. Your efforts are much appreciated.

blether box

Contact Jan Anderson
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8 Barclay Terrace
Edinburgh EH10 4HP
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bsascotland@stammering.org

Development weekend for self help representatives

The Edinburgh Stammering Support Group secured a grant via GO4Volunteering, to host a weekend of training and mutual support for key representatives from self-help and support groups for adults who stammer across Scotland in Spring 2008. The group is currently investigating venues and agreeing the programme, to include operational issues such as applying for charitable status, satisfying OSCR, running a committee as well as practical and creative ideas for running group sessions. The training will have input from an SCVO trainer and BSA Scotland. Venue and exact date to be confirmed.

For more information contact BSA Scotland.

Scottish telephone support group

The BSAS Telephone Support Group takes place on the third Tuesday each month. Up to eight people can 'phone in, and everyone can hear, and be heard by, everyone else. Meetings last from 8-9pm and calls are charged at your local evening rate. Everyone is welcome, whether you want to get on your soap box, desensitise yourself to talking on the 'phone or simply have a bit of a blether. Sessions are very informal. Our main aim is to give everyone time to speak, and to ensure a friendly, understanding and supportive audience.

Recent sessions have been very successful, with lots of new faces (or should that be voices?) and discussions ranging far and wide over many topics.

How about getting in touch with a friend from your local support group, or with someone on the 'Speaking from the Heart' yahoo group? If you both call in you'll be assured of having at least someone familiar on the line. What is there to lose? You have lots to gain.

There are no further dates in 2007. The next session will be on January 15th 2008. Just call 0845 458 4180 at 8pm, mention BSA, and you will be put through to the group (ignore the pre-recorded message asking for a PIN, just hold until the operator answers). I look forward to hearing from you.

Andy Whittall

(Further sessions will be posted at: www.stammering.org/scotland/telesupport)

New support groups

BSA Scotland Committee members are joining an open meeting for a new support group for adults in Forth Valley who stammer, to take place in Stirling on 21 November 2007. John Mann and Roz Urquhart will be sharing their experiences as Chairs of the Glasgow and Edinburgh self help groups, while Jan Anderson will share news of BSA Scotland activities.

The group is being supported by local speech and language therapists with a commitment to supporting adults who stammer: Mary Turnbull, Joyce Firth and Nicola Smith. If you are from the area and require information, please contact: joyce.firth@nhs.net
SLT Department: 01786 434078

Watch this space and the website for news of a proposed Dundee group as well...

Speaking from the heart Yahoo group

The Scottish stammering e-community is an e-mailing list and internet forum promoting discussion of interesting topics related to stammering. The e-community keeps members informed of what's happening around Scotland and further afield. Membership has recently risen to 66, activity levels are on the increase and the e-community is developing into a beneficial resource for all those with an interest in stammering.

To become a member, just e-mail speakingfromtheheart-subscribe@yahoo.co.uk

You will then receive e-mail messages posted by group members and BSA Scotland such as questions and discussion points raised by members and alerts to upcoming events, media coverage, journal articles and more. It's what we make it ...

Callum Wells and Dev Arumugam

FG-Q is away...

Regrettably, Frank Geoghegan-Quinn has been unable to contribute his customary 'Am I bovvered' column to this issue due to other commitments. Frank is threatening to hang up his clogs. If you feel bovvered about this, mail bsascotland@stammering.org, pleading in the strongest terms for the continuance of his witty, wise prose...