

blether

The biannual newsletter of the British Stammering Association Scotland
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As people who stammer, we often feel trapped within ourselves, unable to give the world a true account of who we are. We accumulate layers of armour – inhibition, avoidance and self-censorship – that we hope will protect us from humiliation and rejection but that usually end up merely isolating us. By fixating on perfect speech as our sole means of relating to others, we become convinced that we are failures as communicators. But what if we moved beyond this assumption to consider that speech involves more than just avoiding hesitation, deviation and repetition? That communication involves more than just speech?

This is one of the aims behind an ambitious new project devised by BSA Scotland in collaboration with the Citizens' Theatre in Glasgow that is bringing together young adults who stammer for a series of drama workshops. Through improvisation, play and spontaneity, the workshops, led by drama worker Louise Brown, encourage participants to lose inhibitions, to escape perceived limitations, and to take pleasure in using the whole body expressively.

At the first session, we were invited to introduce ourselves to fellow group members by sharing two truths and one lie about ourselves. Then, chatting in small groups, as if at a party, we spun endless yarns based on the lies. So we had a cat breeder who had produced a man-sized cat, a wealthy woman from Perthshire with a mildewy swimming pool, and someone who'd flown in from Greece specially to attend the session.

What is Posh and Becks' love nest like? Or the Queen's bedroom? Or Vin Diesel's bathroom? These questions



Campbell Lauder and Cian Bell, project participants. Picture Julie Howden

formed the basis of further activities as small groups collaborated to create their own visions of these bizarre worlds, which they then presented to the others.

In session two we explored status – what it feels like to adopt a high-status persona or a low-status persona and how this affects how we behave towards others. How might such a person walk ... talk? We then played out all sorts of improvisations based on the interaction of pairs of 'high' and 'low': teacher and pupil; policeman and driver; parent and child. All were explored from both angles, so as well as a disdainful teacher tyrannising a pupil we were treated to a cocky teenager running rings around his ineffectual father.

This pilot series of workshops, and the group of young adults who stammer that is becoming established through it, will inform a longer term project, 'Outspoken', that proposes developing a piece of theatre on the theme of stammering. The resulting play will be performed at the Citizens' Theatre and toured round selected secondary schools in the spring of 2009. Scottish Arts Council funding of £19,250 has already been secured and the balance for the

project is currently being sought.

Meantime, we hope that through our participation in the current sessions we will become more confident all-round communicators who will feel able to express ourselves more freely wherever this matters in our lives.

Fellow participants have commented:

"The workshops have been brilliantly led. The pace is fast – exciting! I have learned that standing up and facing people in a crowd is not that difficult – even when they're people with different perspectives. Being taught about gesture, the body and its place in space has made me more aware of self-expression and unconventional ways of communication."

"It's really nice to meet people who have the same problem as you with speech, because it's easier to say what you want when everyone understands you frequently have difficulty speaking. Everyone is friendly and we always have a good laugh."

"Working with the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre has been creative, challenging and uplifting so far. I appreciate the sessions and wish to develop even more in an acting way."

By Simon Vaughan

And now for the BSA Scotland news

By Frank Geoghegan-Quinn

Over the last few months BSA Scotland has been engaged in a process of looking at its organisational structure and general means of operation to see if improvements could be made. With the invaluable assistance of Chris Jay, consultant with Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland, we have been considering such issues as internal governance, staff and volunteer training and development, financial management and accountability and generally looking to update our policies and procedures in a number of areas. Chris has also been helping us to draw up a business plan for BSA Scotland, of which more later.

Members of the BSA Scotland Committee (Convenor John Mann, Vice Convenor Claire Pirnie, Pete Hancock and Frank Geoghegan-Quinn) together with Scottish Development Manager Jan Anderson and BSA Chief Executive Officer Norbert Lieckfeldt formed a subgroup, which has met on a number of occasions since September 2007 to consider various issues identified as needing attention, with input and guidance from Chris.

BSA Scotland is now in the fifth year

of its existence and it is timely for us to take a fresh look at how we run things. It has proved to be a large and at times difficult task, the work of which is not yet complete, but it has been instructive and has shown how far BSA Scotland has come; but also what changes we need to make to allow us to function more effectively with our limited resources

One of the most immediate changes to be implemented is the increase in the number of meetings held each year by the BSA Scotland Committee. The addition of a third meeting in the annual calendar should facilitate better decision making and clearer forward planning and will also give the committee more breathing space during meetings to discuss matters in more depth thanks to a less crowded agenda. Jan is also actively looking at further IT training in a bid to ease the administrative burden and give more time to the many other demands of the job. We are also in the process of recruiting a volunteer to help with financial record keeping as the review process has led to agreement that BSA Scotland should have more autonomy in this area.

Creating the business plan has been

no less daunting than the organisational review as it has invited us to do some 'blue sky thinking' about the future direction of BSA Scotland. We have been asking ourselves some very searching questions about the need for BSA Scotland's services and how we measure the impact and effectiveness of what we do. Alongside this, we have been trying to think strategically about where BSA Scotland will be in five or even ten years time. This is an ongoing process as the business plan is designed to be a living instrument which is revised in the light of experience and tailored to meet the requirements of prospective funders. The final part of the consultancy from Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland will involve Jan working on a more detailed income generation and financial management strategy with Karen Winning, one of Chris' colleagues, which will likely involve working on a substantial bid to the Big Lottery Fund so that BSA Scotland can seek to access sufficient funds to consolidate and expand on its work.

Finalising the business plan over the next few months and continuing the work of the organisational review subgroup through the summer will consume a lot of time and energy but will ultimately leave BSA Scotland in much better shape; secure in the knowledge that the progress we have made over the last five years has made a lasting difference to the lives of people in Scotland who stammer, excited by the prospect of growing and being able to reach out to many more and ambitious for the future.

A word from our Convenor

Like most people who stammer, I found school an ordeal at times. Speaking out in class was a frightening experience, making friends was difficult and it wasn't uncommon to be targeted by the school bully. Thank God, therefore, for physical education, the only time in the week when I could escape the stresses and strains.

The minute I was on the football or rugby field I felt at ease. John the lonely, shy boy who had problems speaking in class became confident as part of a well-oiled team. Immersed in the game, I forgot my problems and, as I gulped for breath, my stammering almost disappeared. Oh, for a

Summer 'Scool in those days, or the opportunity to meet a famous sports person who stammers like Glasgow Warrior and Scotland rugby star, Kelly Brown. As a child it would have been so good to have met other people who stammer, to have heard how they were coping at school, and to know that there were inspirational people like Kelly out there. That said, it is wonderful that BSAS has been awarded funding for another residential summer school this year and that Kelly Brown will be attending our next Open Day on 27 April. As usual it is going to be a busy summer for BSAS!

I hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of Blether which is dedicated to our friend and former BSAS Vice Convenor, Sandra Stewart, whom we sadly miss. I am sure Sandra is watching over us with a smile and that she will be happy to see we are continuing to work in innovative ways to help those who stammer of all ages.

John Mann



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(see back cover)**

tellin' stories

Open Day for children and young people who stammer, families and professionals, April 27, Scottish Storytelling Centre Edinburgh

Kelly Brown, Scottish rugby internationalist, will be joining children and young people who stammer and their families to tell his story at our upcoming Open Day at The Scottish Storytelling Centre on Edinburgh's Royal Mile on Sunday 27th April.

Kelly (25) will be the best known of a number of young adults addressing the gathering with inspiring tales of how to get ahead regardless of stammering. He commented, "*Stammering shouldn't hold you back. It's important to know you can do whatever you want.*"

Children and young people who stammer will also be entertained by action packed sessions of games, drama activities, cartoon and puppet workshops on the theme of 'superheroes and villains'. There will also be time to talk about issues such as dealing with teasing and bullying.

Tellin' Stories is a free workshop and

information event for children and young people who stammer, family members and interested professionals such as teachers and speech therapists. People from all over Scotland are welcome to attend. Robin Harper, Green MSP for Lothians, who is a

former teacher and Co-Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Children and Young People, will be opening the event.

A drama worker associated with renowned TAG Theatre Company will run the drama games. Speech and language therapists will offer a presentation on what we know about stammering alongside group discussions for mutual support/information sharing.

In addition, there will be a chance to find out about the BSA Scotland Summer 'Scool, a free residential course for 10-14s, combining outdoor activities and group speech therapy, funded by BBC Children in Need for the second time this summer. Participants from last year can use this as a chance to catch up with old friends ...

There will also be an opportunity to view films about stammering and discuss our training CD Roms, aimed at helping

school staff support stammering pupils at primary and secondary level.

We are grateful to The Nancie Massey Charitable Trust, JTH Charitable Foundation, John Watson's Trust and New Monklands Primary School for generously contributing funds to this event.

Come join us for all or part of the day...



Training for local support groups

Representatives from stammering self help groups around Scotland met in mid April at Wester Caputh Lodge in the beautiful surroundings of rural Perthshire to undertake training on how to further strengthen and develop the network.

Financial support from Voluntary Action Fund's GO4Volunteering strand allowed us to secure the services of consultant, David Alexander, who facilitated an intense Saturday afternoon on how to set up a voluntary sector organisation, the role of a management committee, the role of trustees and how they can work effectively together, planning for the future and where to look for funding. Thanks to David for sharing his expertise with us. Discussion continued over a walk by the silvery Tay and dinner preparations. Late Saturday evening saw a variety of other activities:

some of the attendees discovering a shared love of German band Ramstein, plenty of singing (including in Spanish and Swahili), games which involved banging pencils on the floor/holding each other's knees (don't ask) and much sympathy for "cumbersome Colin from Cumbernauld" (again, don't ask).

Sunday saw further discussions about how to put into practice what we had learned. A lot of work is now required to translate this knowledge and shared experience into practical support for the groups. All who participated left the weekend with new knowledge and ideas about how we can contribute. Over the coming weeks and months, we hope the groups will start to see the benefit of this fresh thinking, so if you have always wanted to attend a meeting in your area, now could be the best time to do so.

Frank Geoghegan-Quinn

Walk'n'talk weekend rescheduled to 12-14 September 2008

Join us for our third legendary walk 'n' talk weekend, now re-scheduled from June to September, 2008. BSA Scotland has booked exclusive use of cosy Gulabin Lodge, an independent hostel for up to 30 people at Glenshee, Perthshire.

People who stammer, spouses, partners, friends and speech therapists are welcome to attend this weekend of walking, talking, communal cooking, earnest discussion and laughter. On Saturday there will be a sponsored (optional) climb up one of four Munros within easy distance of the hostel. Alternatives are available for those seeking a more gentle outdoor experience.

Practicalities

Arrive Fri for dinner/depart Sun lunch.

Cost: £45 (dinner/bed – Fri/Sat; b'fast – Sat/Sun; Sat pack lunch).

£10 discount if you raise sponsorship.

£20 deposit secures your place.

Contact BSA Scotland for details/to book.

Kelly Brown was raised in the Scottish Borders where he developed his passion for rugby. Having started his career with his local club, Melrose, Kelly, 25, is now playing professional rugby with the Glasgow Warriors and has represented his country on the international stage, including the 2007 Rugby World Cup.



"I'm not too sure when I started stammering. My first real memory was when I came back from a school ski trip in primary seven. I was asked to stand up in front of the school and speak about it to the class. I had a script – but when I stood up, I just couldn't say anything. Thankfully, one of the teachers noticed that I was struggling and they asked me lots of questions about it – as soon as they did that it helped me get through it.

My memories of stammering after that are quite vague. I'm not exactly sure how much it affected me, whether I stammered more than now. I've got some memories of stammering in high school. For example, in fifth and sixth year I remember having several parts in school shows. I would go through the script with the music teacher, changing words and sentences around so I could actually say them – but I wouldn't say my speech was really a big issue.

I had some speech therapy in primary school, but I wasn't very motivated. I thought I was fine without it. Speech therapy isn't a top priority for boy of 11 or 12! My parents had been told not to force the issue so it didn't become a major psychological issue. In fifth year of high school I had a few more speech therapy sessions, which helped, but as soon as I noticed an improvement, I probably thought I'd cracked it and I'd lose interest – and then it would gradually get worse again.

My Dad stammers. He's Irish and works as a vet. He's a keen rugby man and plays golf. He's done a lot of after dinner speaking and is quite a social animal. Stammering certainly has not held him back, in fact, exactly the

opposite. He uses stammering as a tool to make people laugh! He's not sensitive about it. Looking back now, I guess he helped me to adopt the same attitude. Dad can still stammer quite a lot. I couldn't say whether he stammers less now than he used to – we never really notice. It's just part of who he is. It hasn't stopped him from doing anything.

I just kind of accept my own stammering too.

Ideally, I wouldn't have it, but it's just part of me. The main thing I have learned is that so much of it is down to whether you have confidence, and, as someone wise once said to me, "stammering is something that happens more when you try not to stammer".

That's something I've tried to take on. If you stress about it too much it only has an detrimental effect.

The only thing I really find a challenge is doing TV interviews. It's fine because you can do several takes but even so, I don't really like watching it back. Most people might not even notice the times when I stammer but I can pick it up exactly. Although I'm quite self accepting most of the time, this can make me self-critical. Talking face to face with journalists is fine. I'll sometimes stammer, but nowadays I don't really care, as long as the person

I'm talking to already knows I stammer. If I'm talking to someone new and they don't know, and I start stammering or blinking, what worries me is that they must be thinking "what the hell is this guy doing?" So, sometimes I'll mention my stammer in advance. It changes from situation to situation.

I don't have any massively long terms plans at the moment. I just want to keep on winning at rugby and being

successful for Scotland. From a speech point of view, I would definitely like to improve, but because I'm fairly confident and comfortable with myself, I don't really have a strong drive to make changes. I'm also incredibly busy!

I guess, in conclusion, I'd say you can't afford to be too critical of yourself. If you can make a joke of it,

you can make the situation funny. For example, I might say "Oh, come on, spit it out Kelly!" I've done a few speeches and I just make a joke about stammering at the start, stuff like "I've been stuck with this for twenty five years so you can put up with it for twenty five minutes". This tends to put both the audience and yourself at ease which obviously helps – and it often gets a big laugh!

"You're not alone. It is a fairly common problem. As long as you feel confident and comfortable with yourself, your speech need not hold you back at all, mine hasn't. At school and Uni I just got on with it. No one is perfect – and there are much worse things than not being able to talk from time to time."

My name is Connor...

I am just a regular 12 year old kid with a mum, dad and two monsters as brothers; with one problem which I share with my brothers, dad and granda, we all have a stammer.

Having a stammer is tough and quite hard at times because you really have to think about what you are going to say or you end up stammering. Like my dad and granda, at a young age they did not say a thing without stammering. My dad was bullied badly at school and because of this he took the choice not to speak so that he would not be bullied. My dad was seven years old before he began to speak. He did not get the help that I have. I met my speech therapist when I was in nursery and she is amazing and has helped me a lot. It was through her I was put in touch with the BSA Scotland,

where I met Jan Anderson and her colleagues. Jan and BSA Scotland have helped me lots too.

As a family we have found that through the generations the stammer has become less prominent, and also as brothers, the stammer is more prominent in me than in my two younger brothers.

I was bullied for my last four years of primary school. I found this hard to deal with. I felt that no one knew what I was going through because there was nothing they could do to make the stammer go away.

Going to the Academy was easy, it was a piece of cake, but staying there wasn't that easy. Rumours had spread that I had a stammer and it felt that if someone wanted to have fun, they

would have a go at me, 'the boy with the stammer'. The first day was okay because my stammer was not as prominent but gradually it began to be more noticeable and I started getting picked on again. I've been tripped up, pushed, laughed at and even had water poured over my head. I've come home crying and not wanting to go back the next day. I just don't want my brothers to go through what I'm going through.

I attended the BSA Scotland Open Days in Birnam and Dundee. This was when Jan Anderson told me about a kids camp 'Summer 'Scool' which I attended. It was great, making friends that understood what I was going through, conquering fears and building up confidence. I get my confidence from knowing that I am as unique as everyone else but having a stammer is just something a little bit more unique, something that makes you you.

Connor, Aberdeenshire

In December, last year I became the owner of a SpeechEasy. The device works on the principle of choral speech, ie, that when a person who stammers speaks in unison with someone else, most people will be fluent. To create this effect, the SpeechEasy uses a method called 'altered auditory feedback', where the words that the wearer says are repeated back to them in their ear with a slight delay and at slightly altered pitch, meaning that when you speak you hear yourself echoed back in your ear with a squeaky voice which fools the brain into thinking that you are speaking along with another person.

Although I have come a long way in accepting that I stammer, I am also aware that there are still times when I really struggle with my speech and can feel quite disabled by it. I was recently offered a promoted post at work which has brought with it a lot more responsibility. Part of my job involves working on a mental health crisis response telephone service where clients phone up, often in very distressed states, and sometimes on the brink of suicide and serious self harm. My job is to respond to people and to liaise with other services over the phone to help deal with any emergencies. Working in a front line job in mental health also means that I often come across situations which can become very confrontational and I

sometimes find that my level of fluency, especially on the phone, means that others can have difficulty in comprehending me.

When the chance came to try the SpeechEasy at the Edinburgh Self Help

Voice in my ear

By Roslyn Urquhart

Group I was initially very sceptical, but I was surprised by how it helped my fluency when reading aloud. I then decided to go ahead with trialling one. I am fortunate to have people in my life who were able to fund buying my device, but I am very aware of how expensive it is. Not only is it a substantial financial investment, but also an emotional investment. The SpeechEasy is not a cure. I was always aware of that. I know there is no cure for stammering, but it is something that helps some people become more fluent. At first I felt guilty that I had decided to get a device. I felt that I was 'cheating' and going against my belief that stammering needs to be accepted and worked with as opposed to denied. I was worried that I was looking for a quick fix and that maybe all the hard work I had done over the last few years had been for nothing. I was concerned that I would become dependent on it, that I wouldn't be able to make a phone call without it and that I would go into a blind panic if I had forgotten to take it to work.

The SpeechEasy has not proved to be an easy option, it is sometimes difficult to concentrate on the 'voice in my ear'.

There are times when it is too noisy to use it and I still stammer when wearing it. It has, however, helped me to slow

down my speech and it has enabled me to become more coherent on the phone. I have not followed the advice of the manufacturer and inserted an 'em' before a word that I will block on, as I am aware that this

could be dangerous for me and allow me to fall into the old habits of using fillers. Instead I am persevering with voluntary stammering as a way of getting the device working when there is a silent block. I don't wear it all the time, mostly I only wear it on the phone, or in situations where I feel I may be misunderstood. I am not trying to pretend that I don't stammer. I think, to get the most from it, people really need to be aware that this is not a cure; it is also not an easy way out. I think there needs to be a certain degree of self acceptance and also that individuals need to have good support around them and an understanding of the physical attributes of their stammer and the behaviours that result from stammering.

I am still learning how to use my device. I have found that it is helping me in difficult situations, but I realise that I am at the beginning of my journey with my SpeechEasy and I am curious to see where it will take me.

From Sickness to Light(ness)

– I must find a Cure

I was given a copy of the fifth issue of Blether at the 8th World Congress for

By Michael Winkler, Dresden, Germany

People Who Stutter in Croatia in May 2007. I browsed through it and stumbled over an article by Frank Geoghegan-Quinn. In his 'Am I bovvered?' column he mentioned words like 'cure' and my teenage-idol Robert Smith. Dealing with one of my former favourite pop groups and their songs somehow revealed parts of my own life and **my way** with stuttering.

'Stammering is not an illness and therefore does not require to be cured – by therapy, by drug or by device. It may require to be managed, accommodated, reconstructed or made room for using any number of techniques, methods or therapies but attempting a cure can only lead, in my opinion, to a cul-de-sac of frustration, anxiety and missed opportunity. It is far better in my view to think and talk about healing', Frank wrote in this article.

The topic of stuttering is quite a controversial one, and I think the problems start with definitions. If one considers stuttering only a physical disorder, eventually leading to repetitions of syllables and words etc., then I think that there is no cure. Cure – in contrast to 'healing' – may even sound a bit absolute as if things are just black and white. As with everything, things start to get interesting when we get to shades of grey or colours. Grey values might be the emotions we have while stuttering, the pain and embarrassing feelings, or the joy we feel when we conquer our fears.

Anyway, let me get back to 'The Cure'. I became in touch with them when mastermind Robert Smith and his compañeros accomplished their commercially most successful album 'Disintegration'. During 1989 and 1990 I was also sort of disintegrating. Well, not really myself but my home-country, the German Democratic Republic, mostly known as East Germany. When something – such as a state – dies it has tremendous effects on its inhabitants. It was 'Lullaby' which made me a Cure fan, and in Autumn 1990 I even tried to look like Robert Smith. Well, at least my hair



looked similar, but he had no opportunity to wear fancy GDR model glasses, and I did not like his make-up! I started to collect their records and found the 1982 album entitled 'Pornography' quite soon. Smith, aged 23 then, wrote a set of eight songs and I would be joking to call these songs happy and easy-listening. Titles like 'A Thousand Years', including positive lines such as 'It doesn't matter if we all die', or the weird 'Pornography' itself may take the listener to a place

where she or he doesn't really want to go. Maybe, maybe not. Almost 17 years later, it looks like a cure to my own stuttering. The name of another song, 'Siamese Twins', could be related to the relationship between me and my stuttering. 'Cold' and 'A Strange Day' were my favourite ones, and the already mentioned song, 'Pornography' – the last one of the album – contains the line 'I must fight this sickness, I must find a cure' at the end.

Later, I often wondered how a 23 year old man could write songs like this. Well, it was and still is sort of a self-therapy for him. This therapy of 1982 seemed to be successful since at the end of 1982, and in particular 1983, Smith (he wrote all songs and lyrics) came back completely changed. Songs like 'Let's go to Bed', 'The Lovecats' or 'The Walk' (from their 1983 album 'The Japanese Whisper') seemed to be from Smith's Siamese twin brother who tries to enjoy life. It was pure pop, colourful and with a trace of self-irony. No-one would have thought what Smith admitted later, that he was thinking about suicide just months before.

Well, let's take a step ahead in time. At the beginning of the new millennium, in 2000, I purchased my last Cure CD. I realised I had enough of this cure. Smith's and his group's music gave me a lot but it was time to let them go. I realised that only much later. The Cure helped me to see music from a different angle, to get a bit out of the mass movement of the



people around me, although in the former GDR the so-called 'Grufties' formed almost a mass

movement themselves. In some way it almost seemed to me that Robert Smith must have gone through similar experiences as I did with my stuttering. Perhaps there is even a need to go down to the very bottom of one's being to find one's soul. Helplessness, depression and the deep wish to have change in one's life might be the basis for real happiness and contentment eventually.

Sure, it does not necessarily need to be The Cure that finds your path through your own history of stuttering. It could be anyone or any other group as well. What's important is to become aware of the various links in your life and to see life as a big network, a big puzzle with everything in place ... every moment, every picture, every colour. It also means that one is well advised to get away from black-and-white-thinking. The first step might be a grey-value-thinking, the next step being thinking in colours. Sooner or later we may even recognise the millions of pastels, bright and neon tones. And yes, there are water and oil colours and dozens more. Everyday is a new composition of colours and stuttering might be our brush. It is up to us whether and how we use it.

After all, we may even realise that there has never been sickness in stuttering, and sure, where there's no sickness, there's also no need for a cure. It only needs the will to see the light behind the shadows.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jan Anderson, Frank Geoghegan-Quinn and Norbert Lieckfeldt for their inspirations.

The picture of Robert Smith was taken from the website www.lankelot.eu/index.php/2007/05/11/1819/.

Last but not least, I mustn't forget to thank Robert Smith and The Cure for sharing their music.

And yes ... after all these years I still like the song 'Fight' from 'Kiss Me, ...' (1987) most.

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Sandra Stewart

Our angel of the North

We were all shocked and deeply saddened by the news that our former Vice Convenor, Sandra Stewart, died on 5 January. Sandra was generous spirited, optimistic, fun, energetic, warm-hearted and hard working. She played a central role at so many BSA Scotland events and activities: the 2004 Stirling conference, the 2005 Aberdeen Open Day (which she co-ordinated), the Birnam, Dundee and Inverness Open Days, and the Knoydart summer social. She will be sorely missed by BSA Scotland, the stammering community in the Aberdeen area, her partner George, her family and many friends. What follows is a brief selection of many tributes from those who knew her...

"As a speech and language therapist with a particular interest in dysfluency therapy I feel I was privileged to have known and worked with Sandra over a number of years. Seeing Sandra's energy at close quarters was simply an amazing sight. Working with her on projects such as the establishment of the Grampian Support Group and the inaugural BSA Scotland Open Day in Aberdeen are memories that will stay with me. Sandra would have gone on to make major contributions to stammering-related projects in Scotland and beyond. Her track-record speaks for her – Sandra made a difference." **Ludo Thierry**

"Sandra and I first met at the Stirling Conference. I knew at that moment that we would become friends and that she was a special person. Sandra was a dynamic force – a motivator and a shaker. She had an enormous passion for life and was a great supporter of people who stammer. We shared so many common passions – one of which was yellow cars! She was always so full of life and a real inspiration to myself and others. We often used to speak on the 'phone and meet up at various BSA Scotland venues and we always seemed to be so compatible with each other. Sandra had a great interest in angels – so with this thought in mind ... may her



special angels wrap and protect her and, in their wings, carry her to her special place of love, light and eternal peace. Sandra, I will miss you so much. Your friend." **Veronica Mills**

"I first met Sandra at the BSA Conference in Leeds, 2003. The first evening of any conference is a getting to know each other session and Sandra, being the outgoing person she was, was very early engaged in making new acquaintances. On hearing the lilt of that Highland accent I introduced myself and for the remainder of the weekend we had many a conversation.

Sandra left her conference with the distinct intention of spreading the word to the Highland region and did everything in her power to make a success of the Grampian Stammering Support Group.

I remember, with admiration, her taking up the challenge to help BSA funds by travelling extensively addressing Rotary Clubs. Yes! Sandra was a doer and was brave enough to extend her comfort zones.

We met again when she was party to organising the Stirling BSA Conference, her enthusiasm undiminished

Determined to play her full part in the proposed BSA Scotland, Sandra travelled from her home in Aberdeen to the early meetings held in Edinburgh. It

was no surprise when she then went on to take an active part in the fledgling organisation.

Sandra had experienced some hard times in her life and I was really thrilled for her when she met a new partner in George. A relationship so tragically cut short by her untimely death.

I had not been part of Sandra's scene in recent times, due to family commitments, but she leaves with me memories of a wonderful dynamic human being who was an inspiration to us all. She will be sadly missed." **John**

Derks

"I was genuinely shocked to hear that Sandra passed away. She was such a lovely lady who always had a smile on her face, even in the face of adversity and recent ill-health. This is a huge loss to the Scottish branch of BSA. I will always remember her as an excellent Vice Convenor and someone who you could rely on to support you and say a kind word when you were nervous before an Open Day or were feeling down. I know that she will be sorely missed by everyone at BSAS and the Aberdeen self-help group as she did so much to raise awareness of stammering and help those, like myself,

who find speaking a trial at times." **John Mann**

"The sheer randomness and cruelty of life never ceases to take my breath away. I will remember Sandra as a warm, bubbly, fun-loving person who never had a smile far from her face. She lived life with optimism, vigour and zest and never seemed to let the frustrations of living with a stammer get her down. Her boundless enthusiasm was infectious and it was always a joy to be in her company. Sandra was unique, and I shall miss her very much." **Frank Geoghegan-Quinn**

She had an enormous passion for life and was a great supporter of people who stammer.

Sandra Stewart, 1954 – 2008

Scottish telephone support group

"I joined the BSA within the last six months. The telephone is an area in which I experience great difficulty and a certain amount of fear, however, for the past two months I have used the BSA Scotland telephone support group. The benefit I have gained is the freedom from my general fear of speaking on the 'phone and the knowledge that other participants, who are very welcoming, have the patience to wait for me to finish speaking. Mostly I'm not used to being among other people who stammer. I find it reassuring to listen to others with similar problems. What I hope to gain from the telephone support group is the confidence to be able to practice using techniques I have learned during speech therapy on the 'phone. Also, to give some support back to others in similar circumstances." *Sheila Carroll, Wishaw.*

The BSAS Telephone Support Group, facilitated by Andy Whittall, 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.

The next session is on May 20. Just call 0845 458 4180 at 8pm, mention BSA, and you will be put through to the group.

Further sessions are posted at:

www.stammering.org/scotland/telesupport

Scottish Yahoo group seeks new moderators

'Speaking from the heart', the Scotland based e-community for sharing information and promoting discussion related to stammering, is looking for new moderators as Dev Arumugam and Callum Wells are both moving on. Since its foundation, and under their leadership, membership has risen to 80. We are now looking for two new enthusiasts (BSA members) to take it on. To find out more, mail: speakingfromtheheart-owner@yahoo.co.uk

To join, e-mail: speakingfromtheheart-subscribe@yahoo.co.uk

Heartfelt thanks to Callum and Dev for bringing the group this far.

BSAS Elections 2008

Two three-year places are up for election on the BSA Scotland Committee this summer. Any BSA member living in Scotland can nominate themselves (adults who stammer, parents of children who stammer, speech therapists). To find out more about being on the committee, or to access a self-nomination form, contact BSA Scotland (see

left) or visit:

www.stammering.org/scotland/elections.html

Nominations close on Friday 20th June. If there are more candidates than places a postal election will take place over the summer. Successful candidates will join the committee in October 2008.

blether box

Contact Jan Anderson
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