



THE BEAR FACTS

MAGAZINE OF THE PRIMARY BILIARY CIRRHOSIS FOUNDATION



AUGUST 2002 **Issue No. 20**

It has been quite an eventful few months for us at the Foundation, as June the 28th saw us on the move again. Our previous office at Glenfinlas Street was only temporary and we now have lovely new offices at 54 Queen Street in Edinburgh, which are much more permanent. This is yet another milestone in the evolution and development of our charity. Anyone who would like to pop in for information, or even just to see us, is more than welcome. Maybe some of you would like a wee rest after all of those Edinburgh hills! We have plenty of tea, coffee and biscuits and are here for you.

Again, may we thank our courageous London Marathon runners and also take this opportunity to thank the runners who will be taking part in the New York Marathon on behalf of The PBC Foundation. Who would have thought such a young charity of just under six years, would be in a position to proudly boast of such fantastic support. Of course, this charity is run on your goodwill, kindness and support, consequently the charity's success, is your success.

You may remember we are in the process of awarding a further Research Grant, of £75,000, which we are all extremely excited about. We have received four applications from Dr Matthew Wright of the University of Aberdeen, Dr Dermot Gleeson of the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield, Professor Margaret Bassendine of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and Dr David Jones of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. These excellent applications are currently under peer review and we hope to make an announcement as to who has

won the award in our next issue. This will be our fifth research award, which is a fantastic achievement. Each project answers more questions about PBC, which brings us closer not only to a better understanding of the condition, but also to better treatment and hopefully to finding a cause and eventually a cure. I say to you again, *your* success.

Those of you who are admirers of our Honorary Patron, Delia Smith, may be interested to know she has autographed a copy of "The Bear Facts" for us to include in our Charity Auction, which is taking place next August. The organisation of this event is being carried out, yet again, by Helen Whitmore and we'll keep you informed of her progress in the next issue.

I'm sorry I was unable to attend the Conference in Wales, however, I'm sure you will all join me in thanking Val & Norman Harris, Professor James Neuberger, Dr Jane Metcalf and Jill Johnson for their sterling hard work and commitment in bringing top quality information to our members at a local level. Events

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of this kind are far more informative than a few pages in our magazine a few times a year, with the added and much valued bonus of being able to speak to the country's top hepatologists and dietician in person. Yet again, your success.

We love receiving your letters, keep them coming, but don't forget our new address, 54 Queen Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3NS, which is also mentioned on every page.

Keep well.

HEARTFELT THANKS

Floral Funds

Sheila Filsell, mother of Susan, is a member of Glenrothes and District Floral Art Club. A tombola was held at their AGM which raised £100.00 for The PBC Foundation. Our thanks to all concerned.

Road Runner

The daughter of Margaret Hirst from Glasgow recently took part in a women's ten kilometre road race and we were sent £50.00 of the sponsorship money raised. Please pass on our thanks to your daughter for thinking of us.

Belated Birthday

Brenda Debenham of Suffolk delayed her sixtieth birthday celebrations so she could hold a party, for family and friends, in her garden. Brenda requested donations instead of presents and sent £285.00 to The PBC Foundation. Our thanks to everyone for their kindness.

Magic Mini



John Davey and his partner, Beverly, took part in the Mini London to Brighton run on 19 May. They had a great day out, with over two thousand Minis taking part and managed to raise £300.00 for The PBC Foundation in sponsorship. Our thanks to both of you and to your Mini for such outstanding performance!

Daphne & Co

Our thanks to Daphne Rimmer of Norwich and her friends who sent the proceeds of their five pence collection which, this time, totalled £27.60. As requested, this amount has been placed in our Research Account.

Linda's Lolly

Linda Fraser of London recently celebrated her fiftieth birthday and requested donations be made to The PBC Foundation instead of presents. Linda sent the amount of £710.00, which she asked to be split equally between the General Account and the Research Account. Many thanks, to you and your friends, for your generosity.

(Editor's Note: Collette reckons you don't look a day over thirty!)

Ruby Revenue

Irene & Jack Carruthers of Cumbria celebrated their Ruby Wedding Anniversary in May and requested donations instead of presents. A total of £205.00 was sent to The PBC Foundation and we would like to thank Irene, Jack and all their friends for giving so generously.

Quiz Quids

"We have all that space upstairs, perhaps we could use it for a social event.", thought Pam Napier of Norwich. It was decided to hold a Quiz Night and, to make it worthwhile, raise funds for charity. Our charity was chosen as a colleague, Celia Boon of Great Yarmouth, has PBC. Letters

were sent to local branches of Barclays Bank inviting teams to enter and the amount of £430.05 was raised on the night, which Barclays Bank matched! Our thanks to all concerned, but especially to Pam, Celia, Ruth Chambers (Quiz Master), Christine Pizer (Scorer), Sue Baldwin (Raffle Organiser), Cheryl Ford, Chris Neve and Helen Hoy who prepared the venue and organised refreshments.

Birthday Bonanza

Janet Gordon of East Lothian recently collected £260.00 for The PBC Foundation at her 65th birthday party. Many thanks for your kindness, Janet and we hope you had a lovely time!

(Editor's Note: Collette reckons fifty-five, not sixty-five!)

Fundraising Fun

Sally Ashworth of London, together with Lisa Courtney, organised a fundraising dinner for members in the London area and raised £140.00. Our thanks to everyone who went along and we hope you all had a good time.

Banding Together

The Welbeck Estates Brass Band recently asked if anyone would like to go 50/50 with a fundraising concert. E Scotthorne of Nottinghamshire let them know she would for The PBC Foundation research fund and was sent a cheque for £145.75, which was duly sent to us. Our thanks to everyone who took part in this event.

Our Condolences

Margaret Higham of Lancashire has asked if we would mention her husband, Benjamin, who died on 28 June at the age of sixty-six. Benjamin had always been fit and healthy, therefore, his sudden death came as a great shock to Margaret, his children and grandchildren. We would like to pass on our sincere condolences to Benjamin's family and also thank them for sending a donation to The PBC Foundation in his memory.

Corner Shop

PBC Video £10.00
(Birmingham - 15/09/01)

PBC Video £10.00
(Birmingham - 02/11/96)

T-Shirts Extra Large £ 8.00
(round or 'V' neck)
Large £ 7.50
(round neck)

Recipe Book £ 3.50

Badges (New Design) £ 2.00

Pens (New Design) £ 1.50
black barrel/green neon trim,
black ink

Pens (Old Address) £ 0.50
black /gold trim, black ink

Please note that all prices quoted include postage and packing at inland UK rates, overseas postage will cost a wee bit extra!

Keep The Money Coming, Please

John Mortimer's character, Rumpole, described his wife as "she who must be obeyed". The PBC Foundation's equivalent is "she who doesn't understand the word no when she wants something done". So here am I writing an article to encourage your giving to The PBC Foundation. First of all, can I start with two big words - thank you. On behalf of The PBC Foundation and especially on behalf of those to whom we are able to bring some help and support. I am pleased to have this opportunity to say thank you to everyone who has supported us with donations and I hope your generosity will mean I have to keep saying thank you in issue after issue of "The Bear Facts". Yes, I am afraid this is me banging on about money again because we need it to make the charity work. We started out as a cottage industry (Collette & Snoddy's cottage to be precise) and the work was

Printer Tragedy

It is with regret we inform you of the tragic demise of one of the longest standing members of The PBC Foundation - our trusty old printer. The printer has been with us since the very beginning and thousands of letters have passed through its gleaming plastic shell (well, gleaming it wasn't, but it was plastic!). These letters included those to new members, letters of congratulations, begging letters, letters in response to queries and letters just to say "hello". On a more serious note, I hope this acts as a reminder of why the General Account is so important to The PBC Foundation. Without it, there would be no new printer, no magazine, no information packs, no Gillian, no Vicky, *etc, etc*. So, please, as well as donating to the Research Account, remember to donate to the General Account. **Vicky Nicolson, Assistant Administrator**

Where There's A Will ...

In all of my professional life, which I wish was shorter than it actually has been, I have never met a client who said "I saw an article in this charity's newsletter and I want to leave them some money.". On this basis, I have hitherto not written about Wills for "The Bear Facts", however, as many of you know, Collette can be very persuasive, so here is an article. Most of us do not want to think about our mortality, yet we know our lives are finite and it is, therefore, only sensible planning to make a Will. Many people assume if they do not leave a Will their whole estate will pass to their widow, or widower. This is not necessarily the case in either England, or Scotland. It depends on how much one leaves and what sort of assets one owns. The rules are quite complex and different in the two jurisdictions, so it is not possible, in a short article, to cover how an intestate estate devolves. Do have a Will prepared professionally. It is not for nothing that homemade Wills are known as lawyers' friends. And, when you do make a Will, why not consider leaving something to help The PBC Foundation's work? Small charitable legacies are quite commonplace and, as we say in Scotland, "many a mickle makes a muckle". If anyone wants more information about this please feel free to contact me through the office. **Murray Burns, Director**

done by the cottage's inhabitants. We have grown beyond the point where it is possible to run only on voluntary, unpaid labour and it is unrealistic to run it from anyone's home. So, we need Gillian and Vicky and they need somewhere to work. The bottom line is we need £2500 each month to keep going. I know all of our members would like to see a cure for PBC and raising money for the Research Fund is, therefore, very attractive. We shall, of course, always respect your wishes if money is sent for Research, but I would ask that you consider donating to the General Fund. Money can transfer from ordinary purposes to research, but it cannot flow the other way. The issue of moving money is always looked at at Directors' meetings. Research is always going to be a long term matter. Our Lottery funded

programme seems to be making good progress again and our advisers are considering applications for a grant for the money we currently have. But, it is spending from the general fund which is bringing hope and support each day to the membership. It may be unglamorous things like the help lines and information packs and the like, but they do make a difference. If you are still reading this thanks for bearing with me. Thank you for support - and remember if you pay tax you can make the government contribute too by completing a Gift Aid declaration (details from the office). I know a lot of effort goes into fundraising for us, so if you keep sending the money, it will be my pleasure to keep writing the Thank Yous. **Murray Burns, Director**

The Bear Facts about Bear Bile and Urso

A number of members have contacted us saying they do not want to take Ursodeoxycholic Acid as they have been informed it is made from bear bile. Ursodeoxycholic Acid is, in fact, made from synthetically manufactured bear bile, in laboratories, by scientists. Indeed, it is illegal to use, or import, bear bile in the United Kingdom. Also, a comment was made that our polar bear logo could be misleading, however, although Urso is synthetically made, thereby giving us only a tenuous connection to polar bears, we thought the bear would be a good logo and also provide a catchy name for our magazine. Please be assured, your medication has not caused harm, pain, or suffering to bears, or any other animals.

Do You Carry a Donor Card?

For many people, carrying a donor card, or being on the national register for organ donation, is a bit like making a will, therefore, they put it off because they feel it brings their death closer. This year has not only seen a growth in waiting lists for all organs, but also a drop in the donor rate - there are over five thousand people in the UK waiting for an organ transplant and many will die waiting. When a loved one dies, we do not immediately think about organ donation and hospital staff do not always feel able to ask if we will consider it but, if we carry a card, are on the national register and family members know our wishes, the decision is much easier. Please think about taking this step and encourage your family and friends to do the same. All you need to do is telephone the Organ Donation Literature Line on 0845 6060 4000 (calls charged at local rate) and they will send you a form to complete, together with a donor card for you to carry. You can also log onto the website at www.nhsorgandonor.net. I know I can never thank my donor, or her family, for the wonderful gift of life they gave me and it would be lovely to think all those people on the waiting list could have the same opportunity I had. Thank you for thinking about it and special thanks to those of you who register. *Tilly Hale, North West Regional Co-ordinator*

(Editor's Note: An NHS website, enabling people to become organ donors, has been launched which contains medical facts about donating organs, as well as personal accounts of donor and recipient experiences. Designed by UK Transplant, the NHS Special Health Authority, the site allows potential donors to enrol online. You can find this new site at www.uktransplant.org.uk.)

Help Needed!

As you know, I have recently become a Director of The PBC Foundation and am in charge of fundraising. All those who know me will know how much I enjoy organising fundraising events, such as the team taking part in the New York Marathon later this year and another Charity Auction in Autumn 2003. However, here is where I come to you, our members, for help. Many of you already raise money for our charity, which is great because, as you know, we rely totally on donations and fundraising to keep going. I'm afraid, though, that fundraising seems to be slowing down quite a bit. We're not asking you to abseil down the Tower of London, but maybe you could have a coffee morning/get-together where you could have a little raffle, or hold a video night and charge an entry fee of £1.00 (hey, it's cheaper than going to the cinema!)? It is events such as these which keep your Foundation going and they are very much appreciated. So, come on, let's all do our bit for The PBC Foundation! If you need any raffle tickets, or collecting tins, please contact Gillian, or Vicky, at the office and they will happily supply them! *Helen Whitmore, Director*

Fundraising Direct Christmas Catalogue

The total amount of money raised from the Fundraising Direct Christmas Catalogue for 2001 was £169.39 - a wonderful amount of money, however, I'm sure we can all do much better this year! Most people send cards and exchange gifts at Christmas and what better place to buy everything you need than the Fundraising Direct Christmas Catalogue, thereby donating to your favourite charity at the same time - why raise the bank balances of high street stores, when you could be raising our bank balance instead?! The new catalogues are available from our office at 54 Queen Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3NS, therefore, if you would like to raise funds for The PBC Foundation in this way, please contact us and we will forward a catalogue to you. As usual, 25% of the price you pay for items in the catalogue will be sent to The PBC Foundation.

Recipe for Success

Some time ago, Daphne Rimmer of Norwich sent a book of favourite recipes to us, which she and some of her friends had compiled, in order that we would be able to sell it to raise funds. As you will see in our Corner Shop, Daphne's recipe book is now available for £3.50 (which includes postage and packing) and we hope many of you will give it a try. The recipes are all excellent - all tried and tested and all good, nutritious, home cooking. Our thanks to Daphne and her friends for their time and effort, but most of all for their patience, we hope the wait was worthwhile.

Pet Fostering

Pet fostering is a very worthwhile service provided for people, living alone, who have to go into hospital and may not be able to afford cattery/kennel fees. Cats have been my life for many years and after having to have my last two put to sleep, leaving a huge gap in my life, I decided this would be a very good idea. I was put in touch with the local pet fostering service and, after a lengthy chat with my local organiser, I was told papers about fostering would be put in the post to me. However, the following evening, a phone call came - could I take a cat three days later for four weeks? Yes, of course I could! He duly arrived. A large, all white, miniature polar bear (with a tail!), who had one brown eye and one green eye. We eyed one another up and it wasn't long before he made his set of rules and I made mine and at the end of the four weeks, neither of us really knew who was boss! During the first two days, I could not find him for an hour or so, which was a bit of a puzzle. Then, I saw there was a very small gap behind my cooker. He had gone in there, walked round behind my units, under the window wall, along another one and an hour or so later, after making no sound at all, there was a clatter and he burst through the door under the sink bringing all the cleaning things with him (was this a hint?) and looking very pleased with himself. My coffee table wedged up on one end proved to be a very good

stopgap! I then reorganised my kitchen, removed my plants from the windowsill, cleared my collection of small teapots and kitchen accessories, closed gaps between cupboards and remembered to keep cupboard doors closed. Not until then did I realise the scratching post was for ornamental purposes only! His favourite position for sleeping was on his back with his back legs crossed, his front paws tucked under his chin and his head to one side. What a poser! We had become very good friends by the end of his four weeks and I was sorry to hand him over, but I think he enjoyed his holiday. Feeling lonely is a very personal thing and can be very isolating, but if you can look after someone else's pet, you will not only be helping someone in distress, but also gaining the comfort and companionship of an animal who just wants to be loved. For anyone in Scotland who is interested in pet fostering, please contact PFSS (Pet Fostering Service Scotland) by writing to them at PO Box 6, Callander, Perthshire, FK17 8ZU, or telephoning Shirley McIntyre on 0131 661 8585 who is the Regional Organiser for Edinburgh and the Lothians. If anyone in the rest of the United Kingdom would like more information, you could try contacting the above, or asking your local vet, or rescue centre, who would be able to help you. *Joyce Smith, Edinburgh*

Missing Person

Teresa Pawson, our Regional Co-ordinator for Lincolnshire, has a parcel to post to Mrs L Ramden - there was no address, or other information, given in Mrs Ramden's letter. The only clue Teresa has is the bank's address, on the cheque, which was on the Isle of Man. So, Mrs Ramden, if you're reading this, please contact Teresa as soon as possible, her telephone number is on the Regional Co-ordinators' page.

Magazine by Email

"The Bear Facts" is available by post, or by email in Adobe Acrobat.pdf format (which is available free of charge from <http://www.adobe.com/>). If you would like to receive your copy by email, please send a message, as follows:

To: bearfacts@pbcfoundation.org.uk

Subject: Subscribe

Please only put your name, postal and email addresses in the body of the email.

Making "The Bear Facts" available via email is an attempt to cut down the ever-increasing costs of printing and distribution. Please remember that whether you choose to receive your magazine by post, or by email, we continually need funding in order to ensure its production and distribution.

Receipt Rationing

Please note The PBC Foundation will no longer issue official receipts unless specifically requested, or cash is sent. This is to keep our operating costs to a minimum.

Travel Insurance

In the last edition of "The Bear Facts" we printed contact details for Norwich Union who, we had been advised, would offer travel insurance to people with PBC. One of our members has since telephoned to let us know they refused to insure her. She has, however, given us the name and telephone number of the company who did insure her, which are: Travelcare Ltd, 0800 181532.



Vitamins Supplements . . . Friend or Foe

Jill Johnson

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham

There is a lot of confusion surrounding the topic of vitamins, how many we need, why we need them, how we get enough and is there such a thing as too much? In this article, I hope to dispel a few myths and answer some of these questions.

There are about thirty vitamins and minerals required by the body. Although most of these nutrients are only needed in very small amounts, they are essential for health. The main role of most vitamins is involvement in metabolic pathways in the body. They aid building of cells and tissues such as skin, nerves, bones and

teeth and help to make energy from the foods we eat.

No single food can provide all the vitamins in sufficient amounts, but a balanced selection of foods usually can. The body's needs have to be met, but not grossly exceeded because imbalances can have adverse consequences.

If you are eating well with a good appetite and are keeping to a healthy weight you can get the correct balance of vitamins from a balanced diet and extra vitamin supplements are not needed.

The main food groups are:

- Proteins: meat, poultry, fish, pulses, eggs
- Starches (carbohydrates): potatoes, bread, rice, pasta, cereal, crispbreads (particularly wholemeal/ grain varieties)
- Fruit and Vegetables: all fresh, frozen and tinned vegetables, fruit and salad items

Choosing foods from each of these groups (as shown in the table) will allow sufficient variety of foods to provide all the vitamins required for health.

Food Groups	Bread, other Cereals and Potatoes	Fruit and Vegetables	Milk and Dairy Foods	Meat, Fish and Alternatives	Foods Containing Fat; Foods Containing Sugar
What is Included	Bread, rolls, chapattis	All fresh, frozen canned fruit and vegetables	Milks, cheeses, fromage frais, yoghurt	Meat - beef, pork, lamb, bacon	Butter, margarine low fat spreads, cooking oils
	Breakfast cereals, oats	Salad vegetables		Meat products: sausages, beefburgers	Mayonnaise and oily salad dressings
	Pasta, noodles, rice	Beans and lentils		Liver, kidney	Biscuits, cakes and puddings, ice cream
	Potatoes, sweet potatoes	Fruit juice, dried fruit		Chicken, turkey	Chocolate and sweets
	Maize, millet			Fish and fish products	Crisps and savoury snacks
	Plantains, yams, green bananas			Eggs	Sugar, sweetened drinks
	Beans, lentils			Beans and lentils, nuts, textured vegetable protein, other meat alternatives	
Recommendations	Eat lots. These foods should make up one-third of the diet.	Eat at least five portions a day. These foods should make up one-third of the diet.	Eat or drink moderate amounts.	Eat moderate amounts of all foods in this group.	Use fats and oils sparingly. Don't eat the other types of food too often.

Fruit and vegetables are of particular importance as they contain certain vitamins which help the body defend itself against harmful toxins. These toxins are known as free radicals which travel in the blood stream and damage tissues. They have been linked to certain cancers and heart disease.

So, eating a variety of fruit and vegetables and aiming for five portions a day is very beneficial. However, certain questions spring to mind - what is a portion and how do I eat five portions per day?! Well, it is not as difficult as it sounds..... honest! For example, some lettuce, cucumber and tomato in with your usual sandwich filling will count as one portion and if you follow lunch with a piece of fruit and perhaps have another piece as a snack you are already three down! Two to go..... vegetables or salad with your tea will count for the remaining two. The following list will give you a guide as to what is a portion.

An average portion of fruit would include:

- 1 slice of large fruit, eg melon, pineapple
- 1/2 avocado, or grapefruit
- 1 apple, pear, large clementine/satsuma, peach
- 2 medium fruit, eg apricot, kiwi, small tangerine
- 5 small fruit, eg damson, passion fruit
- 1 cupful small fruit, eg berries, grapes, cherries
- 2-3 tbsp stewed fruit
- 1/2 - 1 tbsp dried fruit
- 1 glass of fruit juice

An average portion of vegetables:

- 2 tbsp green or root vegetables, or very small vegetables such as peas, sweetcorn
- 2 tbsp tinned tomatoes, beans, pulses, mushrooms
- 1 dessert bowl full of salad

It is natural that there are always some days where you do not get the full five portions but don't worry no-one's perfect all the time!

By following this advice you will have a good balance of vitamins to meet your needs and will not need additional supplements. However this only applies if you are well, have a good appetite and are not losing weight unintentionally. As mentioned in previous articles, it is of the utmost importance to keep nutritionally well with any type of liver disease so, if your appetite is poor, or you are struggling to maintain your weight, the last thing you want to do is fill up on high fibre foods and fruits and vegetables. Although they are rich in vitamins, they are quite low in calories and protein, so are almost 'wasted' food.

It is better to have smaller portions of vegetables and salad and limit fruit as snacks to concentrate more on high calorie, high fat foods. In this situation it is beneficial to take a multi-vitamin supplement to replace what a varied diet would usually provide.

Another consideration for people with PBC is what are known as fat-soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E, K). Some vitamins are dissolved in water in foods and in the body and some in fats. Again, to quote a previous article, some people suffer with reduced bile flow, which directly affects fat absorption.

This shows itself via bowel movements. If fat is lost in your motions, stools are pale, greasy, floating and difficult to flush away. If fats are being lost in stools then vital vitamins can be lost too. It may be that a general multivitamin supplement is sufficient to replace these losses, particularly if you are eating small amounts and taking nutritional supplement drinks as these are also fortified with vitamins. If you are not sure, check with your Dietitian, GP, or hospital Consultant.

Overall, a mixed, varied diet will provide all the nutrients we require for health when we are well. However, in times of illness, needs for certain nutrients may increase and eating habits and appetite may change. In these circumstances a healthy eating diet may not be appropriate and vitamin and protein/calorie supplements may be needed. It is important to be aware of this and seek advice from your local Dietitian, or GP, if you are concerned.

PBC and Pregnancy

Professor James Neuberger
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham



Professor James Neuberger
(photograph courtesy of Linda & Terry Wilkinson)

There have been several requests to The PBC Foundation by people with PBC who wish to become pregnant and who would like to learn more about it, therefore, I have been asked to write a little bit about PBC and pregnancy.

It is perhaps trite to stress this, but it should be remembered pregnancy is a normal state of health and not a disease as, with the increasing emphasis on ensuring mother and baby do well during pregnancy, there is always a tendency to turn both in to patients. There is no doubt overall outcomes of pregnancy have been greatly improved with the introduction of modern obstetrics: the concept that nature knows best is not always true.

In considering pregnancy, one has to bear in mind not only the mother, but also the child.

A study published recently from Eric Gershwin's group in California looked at the reproductive risk factors associated with PBC. Just over one hundred and eighty women with PBC were compared with two hundred and twenty-five matched patients as controls. Interestingly, many more of the controls had no children, compared with the people with PBC (24% compared with 16%) and whilst 16% of those with PBC had five or more children, only 8% of the controls did. These findings suggest women with PBC are more likely to have children and are more likely to have more children than others. Reasons for this are not entirely clear, but are of considerable interest when the high female preponderance of PBC is considered.

PBC Presenting in Pregnancy

Sometimes PBC is diagnosed in pregnancy and there are many possible reasons for this. One is that, during pregnancy, women have bloods checked and when abnormalities are found investigations are undertaken, which may reveal PBC. Sometimes, the symptoms of PBC do become more pronounced and this will lead to the diagnosis being made. I am unaware of any evidence that the natural history, or course, of PBC is affected in any way by pregnancy.

Prior to Pregnancy

Before pregnancy, the woman should always try to be as fit as possible and correction of any medical problems is important. There is some evidence, now, that making sure the mother-to-be has enough vitamins is also important. In people with PBC, it is advisable to discuss any risks of PBC with the doctors. Those people with early disease usually have no problems, although those with advanced disease may run into problems during the pregnancy as a consequence of the scarring within the liver. In general, however, those with advanced liver disease are less fertile and the chances of pregnancy reduced.

You should also consider any medication you are taking. This will include not only those prescribed by doctors, but others you may buy from a pharmacy, also herbal remedies and vitamins. All such medications must be considered potentially toxic to the baby and it is always a good concept that the minimum of medicines should be taken.

Questran (Cholestyramine) may impair the absorption of some vitamins. This should be discussed with your doctor and supplementation considered. The main vitamins, which can be affected, are the fat soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. These vitamins can be replaced by tablets or by injections.

During Pregnancy

The safety of Ursodeoxycholic Acid in pregnancy has not been fully established. The current literature suggests UDCA should not be used in women who are pregnant but, again to my own understanding, this is primarily because its safety has not been proven. UDCA is used to treat some diseases of pregnancy and reports suggest it is without adverse effect on the baby. As always, with any medication, you have to balance the risks and benefits. It is important to be aware of the risks and benefits to make an informed and sensible decision.

As indicated above, women with PBC may have reduced fertility. If they become pregnant, then the pregnancy is likely to proceed normally. Itching and tiredness may increase more so in those with PBC than in others, but both itching and tiredness are found in normal pregnancies.

At the end of the pregnancy, you will need to discuss, with the healthcare professionals, how far it is desirable to push during delivery. Due to the presence of portal hypertension, there is a risk of varices developing and these could rupture during delivery. You will need to discuss this, in advance, in order that a sensible and safe plan can be in place before the delivery occurs.

Effects on the Foetus

Apart from the potential effects of drugs on the foetus, I am unaware that babies of women with PBC are at any increased risk.

Overall, therefore, many people with PBC can expect to undergo pregnancy safely. It is important to prepare for pregnancy, make sure the risks to the foetus are minimised and that pregnancy would not have a significant risk to the mother's health. The effects of drugs and medications must be considered and a view taken on whether to continue with medication, or not, before the onset of pregnancy. Whilst during the pregnancy there are no particular concerns, other than the possible rupture of varices, this will need to be considered before and after pregnancy.

Although there is a slight risk of PBC in first degree family members, there is no known way in which PBC can be transmitted, therefore, the baby should be treated entirely normally.

Finally, do remember that some drugs are excreted in breast milk and, therefore, it may not be a good idea to breast feed if you taking medication.

We realise you probably don't want to think about Christmas at the moment, after all (in theory), it's still summer! However, needs must and the following is our Christmas card selection for this year - we hope you see something you like but, if not, remember you can always order from the Fundraising Direct Christmas Catalogue.



Christmas Eve
£4.00 per pack



Wait For Me!
£4.00 per pack



Winter Friends
£3.75 per pack



Star of Wonder
£3.50 per pack



Christmas Trio
£3.50 per pack



Ruins of Guisborough
£3.00 per pack



Away in a Manger
£3.00 per pack



Christmas Eve
£3.00 per pack



Virgin with Angels
£2.99 per pack



On the Roof
£2.99 per pack of ten

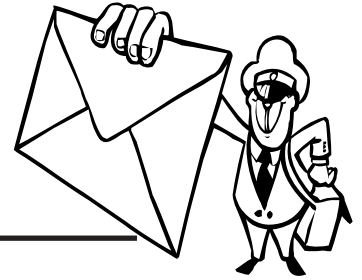
If you would like to order any of the above Christmas cards, please complete and return the enclosed order form, together with a cheque made payable to "The PBC Foundation", to:

The PBC Foundation, 54 Queen Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3NS

LETTERS

In each issue, we will nominate a star letter and the winner will receive £25.00. We want to hear your news and views on anything - not only PBC. This is your magazine and we need input from you. For this page only, please address correspondence to: The Editor, The PBC Foundation, 54 Queen Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3NS, Scotland, UK.

LETTERS



Dear Editor

After reading an article in the Mirror Magazine about aspartame and the effects of this additive, I cut it from my diet and, within three days, felt a very noticeable difference. I wondered if other members removing aspartame from their diet may also feel a benefit.

Lin Cawkwell, Sussex

(Editor's Note: If you would like further information, please write to Additives Survivors Network (UK), 63 Downlands Road, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 5EF, or visit their website www.additivesout.org.uk)

Dear Editor

It is over two years since I was diagnosed as having PBC. My GP took some blood tests, when I visited him with a mild ache in my leg, then referred me to a Consultant Physician. I assumed it was a muscular condition (I'd ignored the tiredness, putting it down to being sixty-one), however, when I was referred to a liver consultant due to "an abnormality of the liver", I heard myself speaking in a much higher-pitched voice than usual, squeaking things like "I'm fine - there's nothing wrong with me!". I must have been bordering on hysterical (thereby ruining my attempt to appear a calm and sensible lady) as the Registrar told me to calm down. I saw the Hepatologist at St James' Hospital who told me I had PBC. He put me in touch with The PBC Foundation, which has made a huge difference to how I feel and has totally alleviated my initial negative response to the diagnosis. The first person I spoke to when I rang the number on the leaflet was Snoddy. He won't remember me, or my babbling "Am I going to die?", to which he replied "Of course you are - you might be run over by a bus!". He then told me about Collette, how she'd been diagnosed eight years before and who is doing fine. So, bless you Collette, Snoddy and The PBC Foundation for making me feel so normal again.

Joan Stevens, Leeds

Dear Editor

Earlier this year, I asked for your advice on DLA and was sent a wonderful letter to send in with my claim. The application was a success!!! Granted, I have multiple autoimmune diseases (PBC, Sjögrens and Raynauds), plus a urostomy from having cancer three years ago, but I am positive the letter I sent with my application really helped. Without DLA, I would be in dire financial straits if I had to give up work - which may not be long now as it is becoming a struggle with joint pain, fatigue, etc. I know it is only money, which will not take the pain away, but the future now looks much brighter as I no longer need to worry. A big thank you to you all for caring and giving and may the sun always shine on you all.

Chris Semmens, Norwich

(Editor's Note: If you would like to send Chris an email, her address is chs@tandarra.freeserve.co.uk)

Dear Editor

I wondered if you might mention that I've found the cream 'Oilatum' very helpful in relieving the itching.

Dot Stern, Shropshire

Dear Editor

Please put the balance of my cheque towards the cost of producing and posting the excellent, informative and very comforting PBC magazine, which is also much enjoyed by my GP after I've read (and re-read!) it. He says he can always learn something from it - I guess he probably enjoys reading "Snoddy"! He has prescribed a cream which works like magic on the itch, 'Eurax' - "slap it on", he says and I certainly do. With grateful thanks to you and your team. **Peggy Grealey, Norfolk**

Dear Editor

I hope you like this

The difference is incredible
It really truly is.
When phoning The PBC Foundation
You really get a buzz!

There aren't any keys to press,
No "choose line one or two".
A person comes on the line
And speaks direct to you!

They even keep their promises,
Their word they do deliver.
From diets, travel, itching,
Even talk about your liver!

They really have the answers,
They do know what to say.
No "fat cats" and no money,
But your fears they do allay.

All we can say is "thank you",
To the whole Foundation team.
Who simply want to help and care,
So effortless they make it seem.

Evelyn MacIntosh, Lanarkshire

Dear Editor

The PBC magazine is always worth receiving and so informative. One thing I can tell you is Ursodeoxycholic Acid has finally cleared the itch! It has taken three to four years - just as the Consultant said at the time - so you might be able to pass on this good news. Another preparation, which has been a blessing, is The Body Shop's Vitamin E Cream Body Wash when bathing. Also, I've recently stopped using Evening Primrose to soften the water and substituted Sodium Bicarbonate - marvellous stuff!

Sally Jones, Hampshire

Dear Editor

I have been diagnosed as having PBC for almost a year now. At first I didn't feel as if anything was wrong with me and the shock of being told I had this condition took some time to sink in. Since then, however, I found The PBC Foundation through the internet and the information I found there inspired me to contact you in the hope I would not feel so alone. I received an information pack within a couple of days, including a copy of "The Bear Facts". I can't tell you how supportive this has been and I would just like to say a big 'thank you'. I still don't know what is in front of me, as I work full-time and find the tiredness and nausea quite a battle sometimes also, because I look healthy, no-one quite understands.

Brenda Schofield, Stirling

STAR LETTER : STAR LETTER : STAR LETTER : STAR LETTER : STAR LETTER : STAR LETTER : STAR LETTER : STAR LETTER : STAR LETTER

Dear Editor

Last year, my family and I went to Florida for a holiday - what a beautiful country America is! The American PBC Network held a meal in our honour, as I became involved with them as a chat room operator on the internet. Over the last few years, I have met quite a few Americans on-line and, as they asked to meet my family and me when we flew over, they stayed in the same hotel. We all met up late one afternoon and I can honestly say I have never met such lovely people in my life - they

were all so welcoming and friendly. Jean Haynes, one of the ladies I met, handmade a quilt, which she displays at shows around the country to raise money for the cure of PBC in America. The quilt really is a work of art, with very intricate workmanship and expert stitching. We all went to eat at Brannigans Restaurant and had a terrific time and I still feel humbled that these people travelled huge distances to meet us. I must admit I went to Florida with preconceived ideas (from watching movies) that Americans would be rude, brash,

pushy, bad mannered and unfriendly - but the complete opposite is true. Three weeks after our return home, the terrible images of the twin towers outrage were shown around the world and I would like to extend my sincere condolences to everyone touched by this disaster. Our holiday was so good, we are saving very hard to go back next year, when I hope to meet up with more people with PBC.



Pictured holding the quilt are Sandra Tropple (left) & Jean Haynes (right).

All in all, I can thoroughly recommend the USA.

Terry Dixon, Gloucestershire

Dear Editor

I was fascinated to receive the video of the 2001 conference in Birmingham, in fact, my doctor has asked to borrow it! What a brilliant idea to film the proceedings as so many of us cannot attend the real thing - what would we do without The PBC Foundation. Thanks to all of you for your very hard work.

Edwina Peters, West Sussex

Dear Editor

I must write to tell you, yet again, what a reviver "The Bear Facts" is to me - reading the letters and articles gives me so much comfort, especially as I also have CREST Syndrome. Reading of my fellow sufferers coming to terms with the effect on their lives bolsters my endurance and my attempts to remain tranquil and cheerful - and Snoddy can always raise a smile. It makes me glad to know I can rely on you all for sustenance.

Kathleen Pullinger, Bournemouth

Dear Editor

Last year, my eye consultant inserted punctal plugs into each tear duct in order to retain the natural moisture of my eyes. This has worked very well and has enabled me to continue wearing contact lenses. **Vicki Oman, Tyne & Wear**

Dear Editor

On 2 April 2002, my partner John Creed (who has PBC) and I returned from five days in Paris. Prior to our holiday, John had become tired, lethargic and less able to concentrate - there were all sorts of symptoms, but I put them down to his underactive thyroid, or PBC. Paris was truly beautiful, however, our trips to the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, etc, were very slow and had to be precisely planned so as not to involve too much walking. Before leaving for Paris, I had asked my daughter-in-law to make an appointment with our GP, therefore, we went to see him the day after we returned, with a list of John's symptoms. After our GP read the list, John was told he had to go to A&E. We were completely in the dark as to what was wrong with him, however, PBC seemed to ring a bell with one doctor. It was decided John should have an endoscopy and although we did not receive much information about this procedure, a nurse friend of mine copied some pages from a patient information booklet for us. John was off work for two months, however, had it been a normal operation without the wonderful endoscopes, he would have been off a lot longer. Unfortunately, when John was ill, I didn't have time to contact

Dear Editor

The following was on display in the Outpatients Department of our local hospital

Why Worry

In this life, there are only two things you need to worry about:

Either you're well, or you're ill.

If you're well, then you have nothing to worry about.

If, however, you're ill you have two things to worry about:

Either you will get well, or you will die.

If you get well, there's nothing to worry about.

If, however, you die, you have two things to worry about:

Either you will go to Heaven, or you will go to Hell.

If you go to Heaven, you have nothing to worry about.

If, however, you go to Hell,

You'll be so busy shaking hands with friends,

You won't have time to worry about anything.

So, don't worry - just be happy!

Lyn Lowe, Essex

our PBC friends, so, to read the article on varices in the April edition of "The Bear Facts" was a great help. John was on beta-blockers, but developed a rash all over his body, therefore, the hospital doctor advised him to stop taking these and to take steroids for a week to see if he was allergic to the beta-blocker. If there are any other PBC sufferers who have had similar problems with varices and how they were treated, or any other information, we would be pleased to hear from you.

Chris Silver, Kent

If you would like to reply to any of the letters featured on these pages, please do so by sending your letter to The PBC Foundation (unless stated otherwise), marked for the appropriate person's attention and we will forward it.

MARATHON EVENTS



Stewart Pearce

London Marathon

Yet again, I have been overwhelmed by the response to our request for funds in support of our team of runners in the Flora London Marathon. Last year's total of £5,689.20 has been well and truly beaten by over £2,000.00 and, at the time of writing, we are expecting further sponsorship money from two of our runners! As you can imagine, it must be a labour of love for our runners who, after the run is over, still have to run around all their sponsors to collect their promised money! I was in London on the day, Sunday 14 April and, once again, we were lucky with the weather - dry and not too hot - although some of the runners were certainly sweating over the last two hundred yards down the Mall in front of Buckingham Palace. First home for us was Stewart Pearce of Devon in a time of four hours and fifteen minutes, followed by Kristian Burrill of Birmingham and Mike Furniss of Yeovil. Two of our runners were unable to participate for medical reasons however, despite that, Gary Uden still managed to raise £447.00 and Jo Pearce of Devon has promised to run for us next year. I want to pay tribute to all of our members, their families and friends who supported us so gallantly. In particular, thanks must go to Garry Bright of Essex who had a private entry for the London Marathon and managed to raise £1,630.00 in sponsorship! I hear Garry suffered a broken ankle a week after the marathon - I hope you feel better soon. Our thanks must also go to Trevor Smith of Newark who, through a lot of hard work, perseverance and persuasion, managed to raise £1,000.00 in sponsorship. I have been able to secure the two places lost through health problems for next year, which means, if all goes well, we will have seven runners in London on Sunday 13 April 2003 and I am happy to say all seven places have already been filled - but don't let that put you off! Anyone who would like a place in 2004, should let me



Mike Furniss

know very soon to give themselves plenty of time for training. I would like to thank not only our runners and sponsors, but also you for your support. Let's see if we can raise as much money next year - sponsor forms will be included with the next issue of your magazine! *Peter Barnes, South West Co-ordinator*

The 2002 Flora London Marathon

I have always been a person who likes to stay reasonably fit and would say I enjoy running, although not over great distances. However, I started to run more often and became 'addicted', certainly according to my long-suffering wife, Linda! Linda had PBC for several years until she had a liver transplant on 6 June 1997 and the transformation of her life following the operation at Kings was fantastic. I was so grateful, I wanted to give something back to The PBC Foundation as the foremost organisation striving to find a cure for this condition. Therefore, running the London Marathon to raise money for The PBC Foundation seemed to be a marvellous idea. I first applied in 1999, but was not accepted and the same thing happened in 2000, although I could have taken part by raising money for another charity, but this would not have allowed me to raise money for the charity closest to my heart. I was finally accepted for entry into the 2002 marathon. Training began in earnest after the excesses of Christmas and, although I was not looking forward to training during the winter months, the winter was very mild, so it never became a chore. Due to work commitments, I felt I had not managed to fit in enough training (I had stopped playing football to ensure I was not injured before the marathon) and was



very nervous as the big day arrived. I left early to make sure I arrived in good time and was pleased I had done so as the crowds were even larger than I imagined. The camaraderie, as we waited for the start, was fantastic which (as I was on my own) helped take my mind off the impending hours of pain. The weather was ideal for running and, although I planned to start slowly, I was

quickly caught up in the euphoria and went off in the leading groups, behind the elite, before I slowed down to a comfortable pace. I even managed to smile when I was overtaken by a fairy! I watched the time at every mile and kept a steady pace, waiting for 'the wall'. The crowds calling out my name were a great incentive and certainly helped alleviate any weariness and, before I knew it, I was running up the embankment and the end was in sight - no wall! I crossed the line in two hours forty-nine minutes and felt very pleased with myself. I made a quick phone call to Linda, then went home to celebrate with my family. This was my first and last marathon and one of the greatest sporting days I have ever had. It was very gratifying when I found I had managed to raise £1630.00 for The PBC Foundation. As a footnote, I went back to playing football on the 27th of April and broke my ankle, which required surgery to insert pins and a plate - I will not be running for some time! *Garry Bright, Essex*

(Editor's Note: We would all like to pass on our thanks to Garry for running the marathon on behalf of The PBC Foundation and raising such a fantastic sum of money. We are very pleased to hear you are now well on the road to a full recovery!)

New York Marathon

In November this year my boyfriend Neil Jones, his two brothers, Phillip and Stephen, together with their friend Steven Friedl, will be putting on their running shoes and jetting half way across the world to take part in the New York Marathon to raise money for The PBC Foundation. I'm sure the twenty-six miles will be like a walk in the park for Phillip and Stephen, as they have run a few marathons before, but for Neil and Stephen it will be their first attempt. We aim to raise at least £5000 and we need your help! You will find a sponsorship form enclosed with this issue of "The Bear Facts" and, for the first time, we are sending these to our members all over the world, so here's your big chance to help



Left to Right: Philip Jones, Stephen Jones, Neil Jones, Steven Friedl.

us raise a record-breaking amount for PBC! Also, if anyone knows of a company who would like to sponsor our runners, please either contact the office, or telephone me.

Neil, Phillip, Stephen and Steven have offered to stick logos all over themselves - but draw the line at wearing silly outfits! I'd like to say a big thank you to the four runners

on behalf of everyone connected with The PBC Foundation and wish them good luck. So, lets hope Mr Friedl can "keep up with the Jones" and that we raise lots of money and lots of awareness at the same time.

*Helen Whitmore, Director
(01902 606566)*

(Editor's Note: Please make cheques payable to "The PBC Foundation". If any of our overseas members would like to sponsor the runners and make a donation, you can do so by sending cheques in your own currency, or calling in to a travel agency to have cheques made payable to "The PBC Foundation" in pounds sterling.)

The State Street Caledonian Challenge 2002

Our walkers were Robert Bruce, John McColm, Susan Holden and Chris Barlow and their Support Team was Andrea Carney and Richard Wynn. All those mentioned work for P&O, Scotland (Robert & John) and England (the rest). The company paid £100 for the four walkers to enter and they had to raise £2,000 for Scottish Charities before The PBC Foundation and a local hospice were given any money. The company at Cairnryan & Fleetwood were excellent and allowed all types of fundraising to go ahead. After attending the pre-walk talk, it was an early night on the Friday (with little or no sleep), before an early and hectic start to reach the starting line on the Saturday morning at 8.00am. To the sound of bagpipes and cheers, they were off, in what turned out to be the overall weather of the weekend ... rain, rain and more rain! Fiona, Amy and I met them at Kinlochleven (after twelve miles) and helped feed and change them before kissing them goodbye and heading for a pub lunch - us not them! We stopped off at the Glencoe Visitor centre where a lovely lady asked me why I was in the area. On telling her my husband was walking for a little known charity called The PBC Foundation, she proceeded to give me £5

sponsor money as her daughter had had two liver transplants because of it! On driving to the next checkpoint, I saw Robert away in the hills. I peeped the car horn and shouted - after all, there were



From left to Right: Chris Barlow, Robert Bruce, Susan Holden and John McColm.

two thousand walkers - but it was him and he said not only did he hear me, but I woke all the sheep! The conditions worsened so we left them in Andrea's capable hands and went to our hotel. We could not contact them by phone, so guessed a rough time for finishing. On arriving at Loch Lomond, Robert was having a massage and John was sitting on a chair, not quite believing

what he had achieved. Susan soon arrived, but unfortunately Chris had had to retire at forty-two miles due to an injury. Needless to say, there was Champagne all round, fifty-four gruelling miles in twenty-two hours forty-one minutes. I don't think they could quite believe it, but they have the medals to prove it and I am so proud of them. The support team were fantastic, Fiona, Amy and I had a lot of laughs - especially when the handle fell off my bedside cabinet (there Amy - everybody knows now!). More than anything, I want to thank the people who sponsored them, all of you for sending money, my Mum for asking everyone and anyone and all our families who worked themselves tirelessly to raise funds. I would like to say a personal thank you to Marion & Drew of the Thistle Inn in

Stranraer who have been more than generous with their time and money, but most of all I want to thank Robert for his generosity in doing this for his 50th birthday. His toenails are still multi-coloured, but it has been worth it. The total amount raised was approximately £6,000, of which I hope The PBC Foundation will receive between £2,000 and £3,000. They all said never again, but never say never!!!

*Annie Bruce,
East and South Scotland Co-ordinator*

REGIONAL CO-ORDINATORS

For details of your nearest co-ordinator please contact:

The PBC Foundation 54 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 3NS
Helpline: 0131 225 8586 Fax: 0131 225 7579

Message from Our Honorary Patron

I spent a lovely weekend in Norwich during which I attended Delia Smith's "Have Lunch with Delia" in her restaurant at the Norwich City Football Club. Delia and her husband are Directors of the Canaries and can usually be seen at all their games. The football ground is on the outskirts of Norwich on the banks of a river, which has recently been developed with an attractive towpath and moorings for pleasure boats. I had the pleasure of meeting Delia who sends her warm wishes to all of our members. Whilst in the South East, I decided to spend a day sightseeing and ended up visiting Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, which is the sight of an Anglo-Saxon King's burial. For anyone interested in this time in English history and is visiting the south east, this is certainly worth a visit!

Peter Barnes, South West Co-ordinator

E-mail: info@pbcfoundation.com **Website:** www.pbcfoundation.com

Ireland Meetings

The Dublin group meets for a cup of tea and a chat at the Gresham Hotel in Dublin, from 8.00pm until 10.00pm, on the first Tuesday of every month. Our next dates are:

**1 October; 5 November;
3 December**

If you would like any more information, please contact Maureen on 679 8812.

Northern Ireland Meetings

Whiteabbey group meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month at 7.30pm in The Day Room, Ground Floor, New Ward Block, Whiteabbey Hospital, Doagh Road, Whiteabbey. Please come along and bring your family and friends for a chat - tea and sandwiches are provided.

wales

Last May, at the Regional Co-ordinators meeting, I was really excited at being asked to organise this year's conference in Wales. After making numerous phone calls, visiting various venues

slow. Many of our members ask that The PBC Foundation arrange these conferences, as they are not only an enjoyable day out where you can gain valuable information, but you are also able to meet with others who have the same condition. Our fear is that if such poor attendance continues, it may not be a viable option to continue with our conferences and this would be a great pity. Please remember our speakers are giving up their valuable spare time for you and appreciate your support. If you feel we are failing you in some way, come to the conference, you could use this opportunity as a sounding board and have your say - we are all in this together. I would like to thank those of you who have sent for tickets and also our other members who unfailingly help in other ways. In a slightly different vein, I know the lack of articles for "The Bear Facts" has meant it is now printed three times a year instead of four. Other organisations not only charge an annual fee for membership, but also a subscription for quarterly magazines - don't get me wrong, I am not saying we need, or want, to go down that road, but you only have to look in your local newsagents to see how much you would spend on a magazine dedicated to one theme, whether hobby or informative. Everyone has an opinion on something and everyone has the ability to be a journalist (to varying degrees) - so, let us have an article and we will print it in your magazine. The PBC Foundation does not charge for membership, or the magazine, but relies solely on donations and, I'm sure most of you will agree we are fantastic value and well worth sacrificing the price of glossy magazine/packet of cigarettes, or whatever your particular 'vice' is. Everyone is working for you, our members, from the Directors to the Regional Co-ordinators. If you want a magazine dropping on the mat every four months, give us articles to put in it. If you want 'more', then please support us when we do 'more'. It's your Foundation, so we need your feedback - its future is in your hands. *Val Harris, Wales Co-ordinator*

Three Years On and Life is Great

Most people with PBC will never need a transplant, however, for the small, select group who will eventually come to this point, I felt I should write a few lines on how my life has improved since my transplant in July 1999. Having had diagnosed PBC since January 1986, I knew I was deteriorating and when the time came for transplant I was only too glad to go into hospital as, prior to this, life had very little quality as I was sleeping large parts of every day. I was called one Sunday afternoon, had my operation on the Monday and, when I woke later that day, I immediately felt better although I was linked up to lots of machines and tubes were all over me. I actually felt lively. I started to chat and I talked and talked and talked, in fact, the staff could not shut me up! Now, those of you who know me know I can talk for England, but this was different, this was talking with a clear head, talking with plans for the future - bright eyed and bushy tailed talking. It was honestly as quick as that. I was shattered

on the Sunday and on waking up after the operation I felt wide-awake. I continued to talk throughout my hospital stay, went home talking and am still talking, three years down the road. (My friend who came to look after me was looking very tired one day and I said she was perhaps doing too much for me - she replied she was tired of me talking! We are very old friends, I just laughed and took myself off to bed telling her I would give her some peace!) The past three years have been wonderful. I have visited family and friends, have taken part in two transplant games and plan to attend again this summer at Loughborough. I have fast walked the Great North Run - thirteen point one miles in three hours and forty minutes and I ran the last one hundred metres. Needless to say, I talked the whole time and was still talking when I was dropped off at home, when I then proceeded to talk on the telephone as I told my friends of my achievement! In October, I am attending my niece's wedding in Canada.

This will be the first long haul flight I have taken for many years and my first time abroad since my transplant, but I am going with the blessing of my consultant and am even making a detour so that I spend three days in Boston before going on to Montreal. So, if you are told you are one of the 5% who will need a transplant, please remember it can be a wonderful thing. If your quality of life is so poor that you are sleeping more and more of the time and your Consultant feels this is your best option, please try not to be frightened - it may be the start of a whole new life for you.

Tilly Hale, North East Co-ordinator

London Meeting

Our lunchtime meeting is open to all members, their families and friends and will be held on Sunday 8 September between 12.30pm and 3.30pm, at the Athlone Street Hall, Athlone Street, Kentish Town, London, NW5. So, why not bring a plate of food to share, a gift for the raffle and join in the chat?! We aim to take turns in organising meetings in different areas of London and Charles will be hosting this one. If you would like to come along, or would like more information, please contact Lisa Courtney (telephone: 0208 540 1019, or Email: pbclisa@aol.com), or Sally Ashworth (telephone: 0207 274 7371, or Email: sala@sallyashworth.freemove.co.uk)

News from the South West

In the April issue of "The Bear Facts", I mentioned a meeting could be arranged in Plymouth for those members in Devon and Cornwall. Following on from that, I wrote to all those on the contact list and was very pleased to have so many replies - of thirty-one members, twenty-two replied and of those at least sixteen are hoping to come! If I have been slow in arranging this meeting, I hope you will forgive me - my only excuse is I am engaged to be married again, therefore, I have less spare time on my hands. Never fear, though, I will be in touch with everyone soon and hope to have our first meeting in September or October this year.

Peter Barnes, South West Co-ordinator

(Editor's Note: We would all like to pass on our congratulations to Peter and Judith for their forthcoming marriage - we hope you will both be very happy.)

Laughter and Fun in the Midlands!

On 9 June, the Midlands gang met up at the "Malthouse" pub in Birmingham to have a good old chinwag, discuss all things PBC and, well, all things not PBC. With the jazz band playing in the background, Elaine Dixon, Terry Dixon's wife, revealed she had baked a fruitcake and iced it with our PBC logo, for us to raffle off. With cake in tow we approached the management to ask if we could sell tickets around the pub. Half an hour later, The PBC Foundation was £72.32 better off! All this was thanks to Elaine and her wonderful culinary skills - thank you so much, I only wish we had won the raffle because the cake looked so nice! It was lovely to see not only our old friends, but also to see new friends, Alan from Birmingham and Pat from Coventry. I also want to take this opportunity to welcome all members, their families and friends, to a Christmas get-together at the "One and Two Halves" pub, Oldbury, on Saturday 30 November at 11.30am. The pub is situated on the Wolverhampton Road, just off junction two of the M5. If anyone would like to come, please let me know to give me an idea of numbers and, if you need a map, please send a stamped addressed envelope to me at 23 Charlecote Rise, Hadley Heath, Wolverhampton, WV13 3EG. I hope to see you there!

Brenda Whitmore, West Midlands Co-ordinator

Have You Heard of Helen Whitmore?

If not, you will certainly be hearing more about her and from her, in the future! I was honoured to be in her company on Wednesday 3 July when she was presented with a cheque for £1,000 as part of the WH Smith Chief Executives Community Awards 2002 - Helen works in the WH Smith shop in Wolverhampton at the weekend. The awards are presented each year to the people who contribute most to their community, or their chosen charity. As many of you will already know, Helen works very hard for The PBC Foundation and was appointed to the Board of Directors earlier this year. Helen and I enjoyed a trip to London's Park Lane and enjoyed a wonderful lunch at the restaurant where the awards were presented - all at WH Smith's expense. On behalf of all our members, I would like to say a big thank you to Helen and good luck with your degree.

Peter Barnes, South West Co-ordinator

REGIONAL CO-ORDINATORS

North East Region

In April, we went to the University Hospital of North Tees where our speaker was Dr Jane Metcalf, a member of our Medical Advisory Board. Jane's talk was excellent and approximately forty-five people attended, some of whom had never been to a lunchtime meeting before. Jane spoke in great detail about PBC, the background, research and hopes for the future and generally gave everyone a lot to think about. She answered many questions people have, but don't get round to asking in clinic and most people felt they were much better informed than before the talk began. In June, we went to Sunderland Royal Hospital where our speaker was Dr Harriet Mitchison, a Consultant Gastroenterologist. Harriet gave another excellent talk, this time on the problems associated with PBC, such as cirrhosis, varices, osteoporosis and tumours. Again, members were given the chance to ask questions and they received detailed replies. At Sunderland, Dr David Jones came along and, after Harriet rushed off to her afternoon clinic, David took more questions. We have several more meetings booked, the details of which are as follows:

Wednesday 18 September (Please note change of date and time)

11.00 - 13.45 Newcastle Freeman Hospital

Postgraduate Function Room 137

Speaker: Dr David Jones

David will bring us up to date on the findings of research carried out between the Freeman and the Hammersmith Hospital in London.

Wednesday 23 October

12.00 - 14.30 Bishop Auckland General Hospital

Please Note: Due to rebuilding work, our meeting will take place in Room 1 of Raby Castle Ward (the old Maternity Block) at the end of Westfield Road. Parking is available at the new hospital site, but this is charged so please bring change.

Speaker: Dr David Jones

Tuesday 26 November

12.00 - 14.30 Middlesbrough General Hospital

Disability Information Centre, Room B

Speaker: Dr Jane Metcalf

Thursday 12 December

11.30 - 14.30 Newcastle Freeman Hospital

Postgraduate Function Rooms 137 & 138

Christmas Coffee Day: Free Buffet Lunch, Tombola, Raffle

Our meetings start with social time and we chat as we have lunch. Our speakers usually begin their talks around 1.00pm, so do not worry if you cannot be there prompt. The talks and question & answers usually run to 2.30pm, but we quite understand if anyone needs to leave early. As always, our meetings are open to all - PBC people, friends, family, anyone and everyone. We are very friendly and welcoming and bring our own sandwich, although tea, coffee and biscuits are provided. I can give directions to anyone who needs them, although I would appreciate one or two weeks' notice. Many people tell me coming to the meetings helps them overcome the feeling of isolation, also they feel more confident as they learn more about PBC and meeting other people with the same condition helps them to cope. Please do come along and join us - we are not at all doom and gloom and we all enjoy our get-togethers. **Tilly Hale, North East Co-ordinator, 01670 714901**

!!! STOP PRESS !!!

Please note Peter Barnes' telephone number will be 01929 427649 from 30 October.

News from Yorkshire

On 23 April, a party of us joined "The Pride of Hull" to go to the Dutch 'Floriarde'. This trip really is impossible to describe, as you have to experience it for yourself and see flower growers from all over the world compete in a gigantic flower show. We have also had two meetings in the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield. The one in April was a social get-together where Elaine McFarlane gave an impromptu talk on transplants. The June meeting was hosted by Dermot Gleeson who held a question and answer session, which received very good feedback and I think we all learned something. Over thirty people attended at both meetings, keep it up folks, Gwen and I really appreciate your support. We intend having a Christmas get-together with Dermot Gleeson on 29 November in the Royal Hallamshire Seminar Room between 1.00pm and 4.00pm with a buffet, raffle, tombola and 'goody' stall. All contributions will be very gratefully received! On 6 June, we held a cake stall and treasure hunt at our village school and we would like to thank the headmaster, Mr Lawn, his staff and pupils for their hospitality. Special thanks must go to Margaret, Geoff, Dot and Elsie who all rallied round at the last minute to help. We have sent £80.00 to Maureen to swell the PBC coffers. We wondered if members in Leeds and York would like to try again and have a meeting at the old venue, but during the daytime instead? Please ring us with your views - it works well in Sheffield and we would like it to work in Leeds and York too. At the time of writing, two of our members have had successful transplants, Anna Donno and Marcia Vall. We would all like to wish them both a very speedy recovery. **Stewart & Gwen Webb, Yorkshire Co-ordinators**

Fundraising Fun

Our members in the London area have been raising funds. After holding a Saturday afternoon meeting, we decided to hold another fundraising event at a restaurant, the idea being everyone would donate £5.00 to The PBC Foundation and invite their family and friends. If you would like to do the same, this is how we did it ...

1. Talk to the manager of a restaurant you like to discuss a fixed price menu suitable for vegetarians and meat eaters. Special features make the evening more attractive, eg live music. Make sure you agree all details in writing and the Manager has a copy.
2. Write letters of invitation, giving as many details as possible of the evening, where the restaurant is and how to get there.
3. Donations were sent in advance and people brought cash to the restaurant, therefore, ask a good friend to act as Treasurer on the night.

The restaurant we went to was Tas, in London and out of the forty invitations we sent, twenty people came along. Donations reached £140.00 and we all had a good time. Lisa and I want to organise another London members group meeting in September, so please get in touch with either Lisa or me to find out what's going on and when.

Sally Ashworth sala@sallyashworth.freeserve.co.uk
Lisa Courtney pbclisa@aol.com

Essex, Kent & Sussex

The next group meetings will take place at the Sevenoaks Masonic Hall, between 2.00pm and 6.00pm on Sunday 1 September and Sunday 17 November. Please bring a plate of food and I will supply tea and coffee. Although I appreciate it is quite a journey for our Esses members, we would love to see any of you who feel able to make the trip. Please remember anyone and everyone is very welcome.

Chrissie Burchill, Essex, Kent & Sussex Co-ordinator



Spotlight

Catherine Gildea



North & West Scotland Co-ordinator

I was born in a very beautiful part of the west coast of Ireland. I still holiday there, in the family cottage in Donegal, close to a deserted sandy beach, which is coming closer with every high tide - there was seaweed on the doorstep when I was last there! My family moved to Glasgow when I was nine years old and I have lived in the west end of the city ever since. Not so long ago, I joined the ranks of the 'golden girls' - I'm not in a sit-com, so work it out for yourselves! When I left school, I went to college and became a primary school teacher - over thirty years ago - and I've been a Head Teacher for the past fifteen years. In my spare (?) time, I play bridge, enjoy walking, eating out (especially Italian) and holidaying in warm places. My path to being diagnosed was unlike many PBC sufferers, who tell of being dismissed and misdiagnosed for many years. In 1988, I had blood tests following a viral infection and was found to be severely anaemic. From the outset, my GP identified a problem with my liver function results and suggested PBC as a likely cause even though I had absolutely no symptoms. Subsequent blood tests confirmed his diagnosis and I was referred to a liver specialist at Gartnavel General Hospital in December that year. Although many doctors told me of the existence of a 'support group', I never made any enquiries - I imagined we would all sit around in a circle and say "My name is and I have PBC", which I didn't fancy very much! However, when a doctor eventually handed me a leaflet, I thought I'd better fill in the reply slip and send it off. The response, as we all know, was amazing - the welcome pack full of wonderful information, which was not available elsewhere - there was no website in those days! It was then I realised The PBC Foundation was very much an action group as well as a support group. When Lynne Raeside stepped down - or, more accurately, stepped up to being a Director - and asked for volunteers to take on the west and north of Scotland, I joined the ranks of Regional Co-ordinators in 1999.

Helen Whitmore



Director

As most of you are aware, I am Brenda & Eric Whitmore's daughter, their only child - I can't think what I did to put them off having any more! I am twenty-one and am just about to start my fourth and final year (thank goodness!) studying for an MEng in Mathematical Engineering at Birmingham University. My boyfriend's name is Neil and we have been together for nearly three years - he's great and I always seem to involve him in different fundraisers - he's running the New York Marathon later this year so please sponsor him! I have worked for my local WH Smiths for the last four and a half years, which means I'm probably one of the oldest Saturday girls around - well, that's not completely true, as for the last year I have been Sunday store manager, which is great work experience and I really do enjoy it. I also tutor mathematics and my summer job is working for the West Midlands Pension Fund. In my spare time (!!) I enjoy reading and socialising with friends who always help with any PBC venture, so I'd like to thank them. Mum was diagnosed with PBC in 1996 and until she contacted the PBC Foundation she knew next to nothing about the condition - a feeling of isolation and despair which I'm sure the majority of PBC sufferers and their families have experienced. It was The PBC Foundation which pulled us all, especially my Mum, out of that black hole of confusion. We owe them so much. Consequently, when the Board of Directors asked me to become a Director, I accepted immediately. I feel so privileged to have met so many new friends through The PBC Foundation - a Co-ordinator, who is not million miles away from me, says, "People who have PBC seem to be the nicest people." and I certainly agree. I have a lot to learn, but I'm prepared for the challenge and I know I'm going to love my new role in our charity.

Jackie & Patrick Storey



Northern Ireland Co-ordinators

We are a husband and wife team who hope to keep Northern Ireland working for The PBC Foundation. I am a fifty-one year old bookkeeper and Patrick is a fifty-four year old office manager. We met in 1970, married in 1972 and have two sons, Mark who is twenty-eight and Gavin who is twenty-six. I was diagnosed with PBC in September 1988 after going to my GP with extreme exhaustion. I had cared for my Mother who died in May 1987 and for my Father who was given months to live following treatment for cancer and thought it was just tiredness from stress and looking after my parents. Luckily, my GP took some blood tests and, a couple of days later, called at my home to ask me to have more blood tests taken as he thought there was a problem with my liver. After the second tests, he sent me to see a consultant who confirmed I had PBC and said I should have my blood checked every six months. In 1998, the blood tests showed my condition was deteriorating. I spent most of that year either at hospital, or with my GP and was given Destolit tablets, which helped the situation. I found out about The PBC Foundation in "Take A Break" magazine. I didn't waste any time in contacting Collette, as I really knew very little about PBC. It was a great comfort to know there was help out there, as I felt quite a freak when telling people I had PBC, as they would always ask what it was. We were given Margaret Knipe's telephone number and we joined the Northern Ireland group at Whiteabbey Hospital - what a relief to find other people with the same problem. I keep reasonably well and work three days a week. The tiredness is the hardest thing to cope with, but my family are a great help. Patrick takes a great interest in the group and supports me and the group so well, that when Margaret Knipe retired and I decided to take on being the Regional Co-ordinator, I felt it only right that Patrick should also take on the position. Thanks to all members of the Whiteabbey group for supporting Patrick and me.

SNODDY'S LAND

Today (and every day) Snoddy has his share of domestic drudgery, which brings to mind a hoary old joke. A Scotswoman was asked how she and her husband divided their domestic chores. "Well," she said "I take care of the wee things and he takes care of the big things." What wee things did she mean? "Oh, the vacuuming, the washing, the shopping, the mowing, the ironing, the pets, the cooking and looking after the kids." So, what were the big things? "Nuclear disarmament, Third World debt, global warming, . . ."

The Iron Lady Returns to Sea

Twenty years on from Margaret Thatcher's magnificent naval campaign to recapture the Falklands, the trouble & strife and I embarked on the final cruise of the SS Arcadia which, in fact, replaced the Canberra in the P&O fleet after it had gone to the South Antarctic. After checking our quarters and the heads (navy speak for toilets), my good lady instructed the Captain to weigh anchor. Down through calm seas to Gibraltar where Snoddy managed to photograph some dolphins although, every year, ten thousand photographs are taken of a blank sea. Then, over to Ajaccio in Corsica (no sign of Napoleon) and on to Livorno, the port for Florence and Pisa. Florence was magnificent, but whoever wants to buy the Leaning Tower of Pisa has no chance of obtaining a mortgage! Along the Italian and French Rivas to the lovely city of Barcelona where we visited the Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Familia (the Expiatory Temple of the Holy Family). This magnificent edifice was started in the 1870s, the architect died (run over by a tram in 1926) and they hope to finish it in another twenty-five years. Rather like Snoddy's University education! A final port of call at leafy Palma in Majorca, then three days of calm sailing until Collette and the Harbour Pilot navigated us safely up the Solent roads into Southampton. An idyllic holiday, apart from one incident when her indoors behaved like a bad tempered granny attending a teenage rave because Snoddy, allegedly, nearly missed the boat at Palma.

-:- -:- -:-

In "The Times", I was interested to learn that Mick Jagger 'A fifty-eight year old with seven kids by four women,' was given a Knighthood. Would that be some proprietary brand of condom?

Snoddy's Land . . .

With apologies to the good burgers (not MacDonalds) of Hartlepool who already know this, the folk there are often referred to as 'Monkey Hangers'. The reason for this is that during the Napoleonic wars, a French ship was wrecked on the rocks off the coast and the only survivor was a pet monkey. The people of Hartlepool had never met, or seen, a Frenchman and assumed that French people looked and spoke as did the monkey. The poor wretched animal was put on trial, found guilty and duly hanged as a French spy.

-:- -:- -:-

The Hunchback of Notre Dame has finally fallen prey to the politically correct brigade. A theatre company has renamed their touring production of Victor Hugo's classic 'The Bell Ringer of Notre Dame'. Whatever next - 'Snow White and the Seven Vertically Challenged Diamond Miners!?

-:- -:- -:-

Semantics, or the meaning of words, can sometimes be confusing. For example, several newspaper headlines:

- 'Prostitutes Appeal to Pope'
- 'Red Tape Holds Up Bridge Repairs'
- 'President Clinton Wins Budget Approval, More Lies Ahead'

and, of course, the classic headline in "The Times" during World War One: 'French Thrust Bottles Up German Rear'

-:- -:- -:-

The other day, her indoors strongly suggested I should stop supporting the drinks industry, at least for that day, as I was speaking at a dinner that



evening. I was reminded of the time when the late Queen Mother once made the point to her daughter when the Queen had a second glass of wine at lunch. "Is that wise, dear?" she is supposed to have said "You have to reign all afternoon."

-:- -:- -:-

To cheer those of you who are sad, may I leave you with the poignant and uplifting words from the last verse of the poem written by Richard Lovelace, unlawfully imprisoned in his solitary cell, entitled 'To Althea, From Prison' :

*Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take,
That for an hermitage;
If I have freedom in my love
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that sore above,
Enjoy such liberty.*

-:- -:- -:-

Anyhow, my dear chaps and chapesses, as the late George Formby used to sing, 'I'm sticking with you cause I'm made out of glue.'. May the bird of paradise fly up your nose.

Thank you to everyone who has sent recipes for this page - please keep up the good work! Yet again, I have taken the following (which I hope you enjoy) from various sources. If you have any recipes, hints, or tips, you would like to see on this page, please send them to me: Lisa Courtney, 4 Albany Road, Wimbledon, London, SW19 8JD.



FOOD for THOUGHT

Vic's Super Quick Tomato Sauce for Pasta

(Vicky Nicolson, Edinburgh)

- 1 large Tin of Tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 1 Medium Onion, finely chopped
- 1 Green Pepper, finely chopped
- 1/2 Red Pepper, finely chopped
- 1tsp Dried Marjoram
- 1tsp Dried Oregano
- 3-4 Cloves of Garlic, crushed
- 1 Red Chilli, finely chopped (optional)
- 1 desertspoon Olive Oil
- 1tsp Caster Sugar
- Freshly Ground Sea Salt
- Freshly Ground Black Pepper
- 1tbsp Tomato Puree
- Any other vegetables you have (carrots, celery, etc ... use your imagination!)
- Any fresh herbs, eg oregano, basil (my favourite!), thyme, coriander

Fry the onion in the oil for a couple of minutes, add the rest of the vegetables, garlic and chilli, then sweat for a few minutes with the dried herbs. Add the tomatoes when the vegetables are tender. Season to taste, then add the sugar and leave to simmer for as long as possible, twenty minutes is long enough, but the longer the better! When you're ready to eat, stir in the tomato puree, add the fresh herbs (roughly chopped) and adjust the seasoning. All you need to do then is pour over steaming hot pasta and there you have Pasta Alla Pomodoro (especially good with freshly grated parmesan). My four year old daughter likes it pureed (without the chilli!) with spaghetti, which is nice and messy. I sometimes add wine, more chilli, mince (to make bolognese), chicken, tuna, sardines, courgettes, aubergines, or anything else which is close to hand. This probably makes enough for four very hungry people, or six not so hungry people, but any left over will freeze beautifully!

Warm Peach Trifle

(Jacqueline Lycett, Warwickshire)

- 1 Jam Swiss Roll
- 1 Tin of Peaches
- 1pt Thick Custard
- 3 Egg Whites
- 6oz Castor Sugar
- 2oz Almonds
- 1 Small Glass of Sherry (optional)
- 1/2pt Fresh Single Cream
- Slice the Swiss roll and lay in the bottom of an ovenproof dish. Slice the peaches,

place over the Swiss roll, then pour over the juice. Make up one pint of thick custard, mix in the sherry and allow to cool before pouring over the peaches. Whip the egg whites until just stiff, then gradually add the sugar, whisking all the time, until the egg whites are very stiff, then spread over the custard. Sprinkle with almonds. Bake in the oven at about 150°C/300°F/ Gas Mark 2 (135° for a fan oven) until the meringue is light golden brown. Allow to stand for ten to fifteen minutes before serving with cream.

Meat Loaf

(Sheila Band, Crieff)

- 1lb Steak Mince
- 1/2 lb Smoked Back Bacon
- 1 Onion, chopped
- 2oz Breadcrumbs
- 1 Egg
- 2tbsp Parsley, chopped
- 1tbsp Lemon Juice
- 1oz Butter
- 3 Cloves of Garlic, crushed (optional)
- 1 Red Chilli, finely chopped (optional)

Mince the bacon, then combine with the rest of the ingredients, except the butter. Place the mixture in a loaf tin, then pour over melted butter and bake for one hour at 150°C.

Stuffed Cabbage

(Beryl Billett, Midlothian)

- 1 Cabbage (weighing approx. 2lb)
- 1lb Mince
- 1 Onion, finely chopped
- 4oz Breadcrumbs
- 1 Egg
- 1oz Lard
- Salt & Pepper

Remove outer leaves of cabbage and discard. Pour boiling water over cabbage, then turn back eight to ten outer leaves and cut out the heart. Chop the cabbage heart and fry gently in the lard with the onion. Cover and simmer for ten to fifteen minutes, then mix together with mince, breadcrumbs, egg and seasoning. Place the mixture in the cabbage centre, then fold the leaves back into place. Wrap in cooking foil and bake in a moderate oven (Gas Mark 4) for about one hour.

Lemon Pasta

(Lisa Courtney, London)

- 450g Linguine Pasta
- Juice & Zest of Three Lemons
- 6 tbsp Olive Oil
- 125g Parmesan Cheese, grated
- Salt & Black Pepper
- 2 Handfuls of Fresh Basil, finely chopped
- 100g Bag of Rocket

Cook the pasta as per instructions on the pack, drain & return to the pan. Meanwhile, beat the lemon juice and zest with the olive oil, then stir in the parmesan until thick. Add seasoning to your taste and add more lemon juice, if required. Add the sauce to

the pasta, then shake the pan to coat the pasta with the sauce. To serve, add the chopped basil and rocket, then enjoy! You may also like to try this recipe with oranges instead of lemons. This is low in fat, high in iron and vitamin C and quick to make!

AND FINALLY . . .

Please Be Patient

Although we realise how much you look forward to receiving "The Bear Facts", if it doesn't arrive when you think it should . . . please be patient! As explained in Issue 18, a lot of hard work, time and effort goes into each magazine and with the best will in the world, there are inevitable delays. This could be for many reasons including you, our members, not sending in enough articles, Snoddy snoozing when he should be scribbling, or problems with the printers. In addition, please remember, there are only one and a bit (sorry Vicky!) members of staff and there is more office work to be done than the magazine, so, please 'bear' this in mind and please give us at least four weeks grace after you think your magazine should have arrived before contacting the office if you are worried we might have forgotten about you.

Gillian's Gibberings

Here we go again - once more and once less! Where do I start this time? Well, I suppose my week off at the beginning of June is as good a place as any! As planned, Mum, Sheila and I went to Gardening Scotland and, as is usual for Mum and me, we looked and acted like kids in a sweetie shop. We wanted to buy at least one plant from every stall but, for once in our lives, we managed to exercise some restraint. I think I came home with seven plants and, although Mum came home with slightly more, we did leave a few for visitors on the Saturday and Sunday to buy. On Sunday 2 June, I went to Bradford with two friends for "The Gods of Rock" - a fourteen hour rock concert featuring nine bands. We left Edinburgh at 5.00 in the morning and arrived in Bradford about six hours later. Unfortunately, we weren't allowed into our hotel rooms until 2.00pm and, as we all felt in need of a shower to freshen up after the long journey, we missed the first three bands. However, all the other bands were absolutely fantastic, especially one I've wanted to see for around ten years (Harem Scarem, on the off-chance anyone's heard of them!) and who were playing their first ever gig in the UK. As we didn't get back to the hotel until three the following morning and were up again five hours later for breakfast and the drive home, I certainly needed the rest of that week off to recover!

The next thing worth mentioning is my other holiday - you may have noticed my life revolves around holidays, music, books and cars! Mum, Graeme and I headed up to Feshiebridge for two weeks of peace, quiet and tranquillity at the beginning of August. Accompanying us was not only Kassi, Mum's fourteen year old toy poodle, but two new additions to our family ... Judd, a Bedlington Terrier who belongs to Graeme (at the time of writing, she's eighteen weeks old) and Jodie, a toy poodle who belongs to Mum (again, at the time of writing, she's twelve weeks old). Both pups are full of mischief (or should that be sheer devilment?) and the three of us were kept busy chasing after escapees, refereeing games and mopping up accidents. Kassi managed quite successfully to remain completely oblivious and aloof to the pups and slept most of the time, although she did occasionally join in with the games. Graeme and I were out nearly every day on his mountain bikes (he gave me a loan of his 'old' one as it's far better than mine and he has a new one) and other than cycling, we spent our time going for gentle walks, reading, eating, drinking and sleeping. Although there was a television and video in the cottage, we like to have a break from it, so we listened to the radio and played scrabble, or dominoes. And guess where we've booked for next year . . . ?!

Thank You!

I really am sorely tempted to put the same thank you note in each magazine, just to see how many of you are paying attention! However, this is yet another original to thank anyone and everyone who has sent in a donation over the past few months - whether it be a straight donation, sponsoring someone in an event, or buying our videos, pens, etc. Without your help and the help of your families, friends and colleagues, we really would not be able to continue our work. *Thank you.*

Article Alert

There seems to have been a dearth of articles, letters and recipes for this edition of "The Bear Facts" which, of course, could be due to the holiday season - but surely you've not all been on holiday since April?! If, however, this is the case, could one of you please find me a job where you work as, unless articles start to come in for the next issue, I could be out of a job! Please send me your articles by Friday 22 November, at the latest, for inclusion in the December issue.

!!! Stop Press !!!

At the time of going to print, the amount raised for the London Marathon was £8404.48, the Caledonian State Street Challenge, £1202.00 and the Annual Raffle, £3552.50. Well done and our thanks to all of you who made this possible.

We would like to express our gratitude to the company (who wishes to remain anonymous) which very kindly supports our magazine.

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For further information please contact:
Collette Thain, Chairman,

The PBC Foundation, 54 Queen Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3NS, Scotland, UK
Telephone: 0131 225 8586 Fax: 0131 225 7579
Website: www.pbcfoundation.org.uk Email: info@pbcfoundation.org.uk