

# The Neuroblastoma Society Spring Conference and AGM

Saturday, 24 April 2010

The Society held its 2010 Spring Conference and Annual General Meeting on Saturday 24 April at St. Winefride's Church Hall in Kew. Approximately 40 members and supporters of the Society attended to hear reports on some of the research supported by the Society, and to receive updates and reports on other aspects of our activities from Trustees.



Guy Blanchard, Research Trustee, (*above, with his mother Anne Blanchard*) gave an overview of the key areas for research into neuroblastoma, from understanding the basic biology of cell development in the foetus through to the development of effective and targeted therapies.

This was a highly illuminating presentation, and it was especially helpful to see where the research that we have funded is situated on the overall map, and hence to see the areas where our funding is helping to understand the cause and explore treatments for neuroblastoma. We were especially grateful to Guy given that he had only arrived back in the UK 24 hours or so previously, having been forced to spend several days stranded in Nova Scotia due to the airspace closures!



Our Guest Speakers, Dr Louis Chesler from the Institute of Cancer Research, & Professor Susan Burchill from Leeds University

Dr Louis Chesler, a current grant-holder, then spoke about the work that he and his colleagues are engaged in at the Institute of Cancer Research, which is

focused mainly on drug discovery and development, initially in pre-clinical situations before seeking to transfer into the clinic. As well as improving our understanding of the potential therapies, he explained the challenges that he and other researchers face in getting interest and support from pharmaceutical companies that see limited commercial opportunities in childhood cancer, compared to other areas – underlining, if we needed it, the significance of our support for research.

One very encouraging aspect of his talk was the degree of communication and collaboration with other research groups in the UK and beyond, including the US and Japan. This was also a key point of Professor Sue Burchill's presentation, where she explained how her team in Leeds is able to use work carried out in the rest of Europe within their work on high-risk neuroblastoma. She has been engaged in this sort of work since the early 90s, and her current project is the second to receive funding from the Society.



Our final speaker was Dolly Jones, (*centre*) who on the following day was due to run the London Marathon for the second year in a row in her quest to raise £26,000 in memory of her father (a keen runner) and her cousin Locke who died of neuroblastoma aged 18 months. She talked about her motivation and her experience both of last year's event (which she ran despite carrying an ankle injury which left her on crutches for a while afterwards) and of seeking sponsors. It was a moving and inspiring talk and we were very grateful to her for coming, especially since the 2010 marathon was the very next day! (*And she ran a 4 hour race, a magnificent effort, and comfortably exceeded her fundraising target too.*)

In the formal AGM, the Chairman spoke briefly about the year's activities, and in particular reiterated the thanks of all members and supporters to the three Trustees standing down since last year's meeting – Dennis Bignell, Dr Peppy Brock, and Sue Davies (see the Annual Report for more detail).

He welcomed formally those Trustees who joined up during the year, Guy Blanchard and Yvonne Boyd, and in particular thanked them for their work in organising the 2010 grant round, enabling the Scientific

Advisory Board to meet the following week (28 April) to consider the applications. He was pleased to say that one additional person had come forward as a potential Trustee, and invited others to consider doing the same – there is always plenty to do!

James Duberly, Hon. Treasurer, spoke briefly to his report on the financial position of the Society and on developments so far in 2010. Although fundraising had shown some signs of slipping in the early part of the year, a substantial legacy and other contributions had combined to provide a sum in the order of £550,000 for grant awards when the Trustees meet to consider the SAB's recommendations. He identified the main trends in expenditure (which remains at less than 5% of income) and income, with the decline in interest rates in particular having a significant impact. James concluded with the traditional encouragement that we all get out and carry on raising money!



Steve Smith (Chairman) with Chris Ewell, seen here receiving a welcome donation from his can recycling scheme.

It was a very good meeting and as always a great opportunity for Trustees, members and supporters to meet and talk. It was particularly good to see a few new faces, and we very much hope they will have been inspired to further fundraising and other efforts to further our shared cause.

Thanks go to Shirley and Alastair Clark for organising the venue, and to St. Winefride's for allowing us to use the facilities. Thank you as well to Tracy Davies and Lorraine Hall for organising the catering, which was much appreciated by all.

Stephen Smith, Chairman  
May 2010

## Trustees, members, guests and speakers



Dr Louis Chesler, Des Fordham (Raffle Co-ordinator), Steve Smith (Chairman), and Professor Susan Burchill drawing the raffle.

Following the formal business, Des Fordham oversaw the annual draw, with winning tickets drawn by Louis and Sue (and including, to general amusement, a ticket bearing the name of one Dennis Bignell!) – winners will be notified in due course if they haven't already heard.



The Chairman was presented with cheques from Georgie's Fund (*Lynne Christian, a Trustee of Georgie's Fund with the Chairman, above*) and from Chris Ewell's recycling efforts before the meeting concluded with a buffet lunch and informal discussions.



Honorary President Antonya Cooper and her husband, Alastair.



**David Ware, a long term supporter and member of the Society**



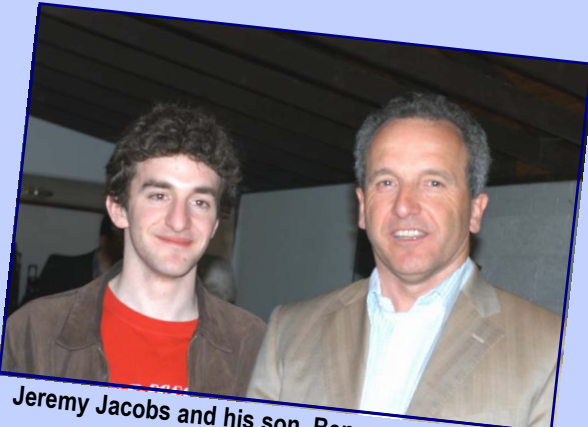
**Stuart Spokes (Trustee) who co-ordinates Sporting Events for the Society including the London Marathon, with his wife, Karen.**



**James Duberly, left, Society Treasurer and Alastair Cooper.**



**Mike Scott, a member, talking with Professor Susan Burchill.**



**Jeremy Jacobs and his son, Ben, members of the Society.**



**Joan Brown, who for many years packed the Society Newsletter, and her daughter, Debbie Beevor.**



**Dr Louis Chesler talking with Nehal Bhatt, a Society member**

**Linza Corp, a guest and a founder member of 'Families Against Neuroblastoma'.**

