



MEN'S HEALTH HIGHLAND
ANNUAL REPORT
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Dr Trevor Escott, Men's Health Highland Convenor discusses the activities of the group during the period April 2006 to March 2006, and other associated items relating to this charitable voluntary group, founded 18 years ago .

This was another interesting, active and, I hope, worthwhile year for *Men's Health Highland*.

We were pleased to welcome a number of new faces during the year which helped to make the life of the group even more interesting, but also to welcome some of the old faces who've helped in the past with the achievements of the group.

We continued to have group meetings throughout the year and were addressed by a variety of excellent speakers. In our first meeting in June 2005, Annabel Mowatt from *Reach Out Highland*, supported by John Sarnes and Ian Bonner-Evans, spoke about the work of their group.

Our next group business meeting was held in August 2005. This followed the AGM at which we had had talks from Jim Holden on the *Health of Male Gypsy Travellers* and from Garry Coutts, Chairman of the Health Board, two diverse speech's with a common theme... health.

At the AGM, I had, for my sins, been re-elected Convenor. Sandy Hamilton agreed to continue as Vice-Convenor, and Rev Derek Brown as Treasurer. Graham Marsden was elected as Secretary.

Other Group Committee members elected or re-elected were: Rev John Chambers, Robin Stewart, Jean MacLeod, Ivor Souter, Colin Wilson, Jimmy Mac Ewan, Annabel Mowatt, George Hobson (who sadly moved away to Bath, later in the year), Cathy Steer and Sheila MacLaughlan.

Dr Finlay Kerr agreed to continue as Patron. Dr Waheed Khan became a Co-opted member. I want to thank them all for their continued help and support!

At our meeting in October, our Patron, Dr Finlay Kerr spoke on *Men and Heart Disease* and at our group meeting on 29th January, we had three talks - Cathy Steer on her work as a *Health Promotion Manager*, Dr Ian MacNamara on *Erectile Dysfunction* and Pat Wells on *Men and First Aid*.

Finally, on 29th March, we had short talks on different aspects of *Fathering* from John Chambers, Alan Richards and Colin Wilson, though unfortunately, a talk by Dr Neill Gillies on *Men in General Practice* could not be given due to a cable fault.

We did not abandon our more public role, continuing to hold regular monthly Saturday stands, usually in the Eastgate Centre, but also at other locations. The stands are staffed by normally between 2 and 3 MHH group volunteers, with a nurse (provided by NHS Highland) testing blood pressures of passing members of the general public.

I'm pleased to report that we are averaging more than 100 having their blood pressure tested during each 6 hour session as well as significant numbers of health-related leaflets dispensed by our volunteer staff. Any people with 'abnormal' blood pressure are referred to their GPs (anonymously), although in a few more worrying instances, these people have been referred to the local A & E.

Numbers having the BP tested inevitably fluctuated, for various reasons including the World Cup, Caley Thistle playing away etc, but in our April stand 142 blood pressures were taken and in the Highland Games in July 2005 there were 188. At the Highland Games, we have two nurses, as demand can be more immediate. There were also small stands in Inverness College and the Police Headquarters.

I'm extremely grateful to all the MHH members who voluntarily came along to help staff these stands, as well as the nurses, supplied by NHS Highland, who demonstrate their professionalism by fitting in within a less formal setting than they are perhaps used to.

I've been particularly grateful for the help of Jimmy MacEwan and Graham Marsden, who have regularly assisted with both the staffing and setting up and dismantling of the stall. We have also been assisted on the stalls by Robin Stewart, John Sarnes, Ronnie Wilson, Finlay Kerr, Ivor Souter and John Chambers. Jean MacLeod as well as help with the stall, organised the supply of nurses, I hope they will accept my and the groups gratitude.

In this connection I was saddened by the fact that Malcolm MacLeod, an enthusiastic supporter of the group for some years, was forced to leave the group, this year for reasons of health, we wish him a speedy recovery.

I personally feel that these monthly stands, with their informality, anonymity and the lack of need to make an appointment, are a particularly effective way of reaching many of the general public, who might not otherwise have contact with any medical services. I and the other group members are very keen to continue with this activity, but this obviously depends on availability of funding for the services of the nurses.

On Sat 18th June, I and Ivor went to Sabhal Mor Ostaig in Skye, where *Youth Voice* were holding a residential weekend, organised by James Sutherland, Highland Councils Youth Development Officer. We gave a combined presentation, using overheads, to about 50 young folk on Men's Health, our talk was well received.

During the past 12 months, on behalf of MHH, I also gave talks to staff and residents of Huntly House - Salvation Army Hostel for the Homeless in Inverness, two different Rotary Groups and the Police at their Headquarters in Inshes.

Talks about aspects of Mens Health continued to prisoners at Porterfield Prison, Inverness. Dr Caroline Dobson (Consultant Psychologist) speaking on *Men and Stress*, Sam Smith (Alcohol Counselling, Inverness) talking on *Men and Alcohol*, and Margaret Somerville (Chest, Heart and Stroke Assoc.) on *Men and Smoking*. Colin Wilson spoke on *Fathering* followed by workshops held by Ivor and himself .

On 8th April, Jean, Sheila and I attended a very interesting meeting of the *Men's Health Forum Scotland* held in the Town House in Inverness. Another interesting meeting I attended was in "Janny's Hoose" in Merkinch, to discuss *Health Talks* to men in the Merkinch area and a possible stand at The Clach Club. This has not so far taken place due to difficulty getting nurses for the available dates.

During the year, after a number of lengthy sub-group meetings, and initial rejection by the Inland Revenue, our amended Constitution was finally *recognised* by them and adopted at our AGM on 19th August 2005.

We purchased our own display screens and stand in April, due to difficulty in getting these on loan from the Health Promotion, as we had to compete for these with other NHS departments.

We also continued to work on producing *Policies and Procedures* which reflected the nature and scope of our activities. These included Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, Disability Discrimination, Complaints, Recruitment and Volunteer Policies. These are important as we obtain funding from bodies which expect us to reflect best practice, even if we are a wholly volunteer group. We hope the NHS Board Treasurer will advise us of their suitability in the coming months.

During the year, as group convenor assisted by the Rev Derek Brown, our Treasurer, I had to complete the first Annual Return Form from the Office of the Charity Regulators. I also attended a meeting in Inverness of the Charities Regulator on 17th January this year.

We continued to have useful advice both on our Constitution and on the subject of Employee Insurance from Mr David Hewitson, Solicitor, of Munro and Noble, Inverness.

We remain interested in involvement in Education, but following the move of Lindsay Graham, the Highland Councils ????? who had encouraged this, we have not so far been able to make progress.

During the year, we were sorry to lose Eileen FitzPatrick as secretary, I do thank her for her excellent and meticulously produced reports of our meetings. Graham Marsden, a long-time MHH group member took over this job.

We have been very fortunate to have the continued services of Rev Derek Brown as our Treasurer, who has kept us safely in the black, and the continuing services of Sandy Hamilton as Vice-Convenor.

Apart from the previously mentioned speakers, others who have come to our meetings this year or participated in our activities include Alan Richards, Katie MacDonald, Pat Wells, Nikki Fraser, Mr Allan Sellar, Mr William Fraser, Dr Cameron Stark, Fiona Cormack, Colm Black, John Sarnes, Betty Thomson, Ronnie Wilson, Ian Smith, Dr Neill Gillies, Graham Noble and Ian Bonner-Evans.

One further departure from the group, this year was Willie Weatherspoon, a founder MHH member who for many years had been the Group Secretary. He was a sad loss to the group but had intimated that he might be willing to help if we needed his skills in the future, which I'm confident we will!

Finally, I just want to thank everyone, whether mentioned or not, who has helped to make the group's activities possible in any way. MHH's effectiveness in representing and promoting the health of men in the Highlands, in some small way, is only possible because of those efforts.

Trevor Escott
MHH Convenor