

# The Thousand Families Study Newsletter



*Season's Greetings*



## Welcome From the Director



Welcome to the latest edition of the Thousand Families Newsletter. We continue to make great progress with the Thousand Families study and as always, I hope you will find this newsletter both interesting and informative.

In particular with this issue, we include details of an exciting event we've been planning which will give you all another chance to get together and swap stories.

Finally, on behalf of the study team, I'd like to pass on our best wishes for 2006.

Dr Mark Pearce  
**Director**

## Red Spots Walk in 2006

For the last year or so, along with study member Jean Taylor, we have been plotting to find an exciting way of getting as many of you together in one place as possible. This time, we don't want to test you and you won't even have to listen to us. We hope what we've come up with is fun and that you'll all be keen to take part.

So..... on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2006 we plan to hold an event in Jesmond Dene, Newcastle (the picturesque wooded area beginning underneath the Armstrong Bridge) which will take the form of a walk through the Dene and give you a chance to catch up with other Red Spots. Two and three mile walks are available, or you can just stand around chatting, if you wish. Both walks are leisurely strolls through the Dene and it will be a great opportunity for you to get out in the fresh air, see old friends and swap stories on how you've been getting along. It will also give you a chance to meet the study team, if you wish, and have a chat about the study and find out what we're up to, now and in the future.

The event will be between 2.00-6.00pm with light refreshments available within the gazebos situated at Coleman's Field, next to Pet's Corner. You are

welcome to come for as little or as much of that time as you want.

The event is meant to be fun, leisurely and a chance for you to meet up with friends you may have lost contact with.

If you would like to take part in the walk, please complete the form within this issue and return it to us at the Sir James Spence Institute. To make it fun and enjoyable, we need your help!



## A Red Spot's Perspective by Felicity Kay

"I don't have many memories of my early Red Spot life. I knew I was a Red Spot Baby, and knew it was some sort of health survey that interested a lot of people, although I wasn't quite sure why. I can remember my mother filling in forms and the occasional visit from a health or social worker, and I can remember the yearly birthday cards I received which made me feel as if I was part of something special. But then it all seemed to come to an end without me even noticing. I grew up and forgot all about Red Spots.



### **Felicity Kay pictured during the age 50 tests**

Looking back, I realise I have been lucky with my life. I've been healthy. The bad experiences have been forgotten, I have travelled, met interesting people and done exciting things. Somehow or other I have ended up settling down in Cumbria and looking forward to a hopefully contented middle age.

Imagine my surprise when on my fiftieth birthday I received another Red Spot birthday card! I guess there were a thousand surprised fifty year olds. Along with the card came details of the new study and the request to fill in the questionnaire and attend medical tests. Suddenly I was very interested. I come from a medical family so health, and health issues, have always been regarded as important. Indeed if I can help medical research study disease in middle and old age, then I would be delighted to do so. Maybe future generations will benefit from better health because of this study.

Even then I did not realise the full importance of this particular project. Until one of the newsletters pointed out that although there are similar studies around the world, this is the only one with records of all the participants going back fifty years to their birth. The *only* cradle to the grave study. It really does seem that we, the Red Spots, have a unique opportunity to help medical science.

I was fascinated to hear about the findings of the original research, and again just recently about those of the age fifty follow-up. I have already returned my questionnaire concerning breast tissue density, and will undoubtedly be taking part in the other age sixty tests.

It was fun meeting up with some of the others at the RVI eight years ago, and I am looking forward to meeting more in three years time, or in May next year at the walk. I expect all of us feel the

same because we are the original members of the project, and no-one else will do. It's really important to take the questionnaires and medical examinations seriously."

### **Volunteers for future newsletters?**

We'd love to hear from more of you about your memories of the study during childhood and maybe how the study has impacted on your lives. If you'd like to contribute to a future newsletter, by writing something similar to the piece above, please let us know via any of the contact details at the end of this newsletter.

It's very important to us to have your involvement in this, so please don't be shy!

### **Latest Findings**

Although it's only been 6 months since the last newsletter, we've still been working hard to report our findings. Below, we outline some of the work we've not told you about before.

### **Diabetes**

As we said last time, diabetes is increasingly common and occurs when the production of insulin by the pancreas, to control the amount of sugar in blood, goes wrong. When this happens it is managed by monitoring sugar intake in the diet or by insulin injections. Our most recent research in this area looked at your insulin and sugar levels and related those measurements to the other information we have from right across your lives. For both measures we found that adult lifestyle appeared to be of the most concern. However, we also found that those men who were small at birth had higher sugar levels two hours after drinking the sugary drink. This is yet another finding that differs between the male and female Red Spots. We presented this work at a conference in Canada this November. One of the things we aim to look at in the future is whether these differences remain as you get older.



### **Adult lifestyles a key factor in 'late onset' diabetes, say experts**

Northern Echo 6 July 2005

The study again received a large amount of media attention due to these findings, with the story appearing in the local, national and international media.

### Dental Health

Those of you that had your teeth counted may remember filling in a questionnaire about how you felt about the health of your teeth. When we looked at the results, we found that in women, the number of teeth lost was directly related to the way they felt about their dental health. In men, the number of teeth they'd lost didn't appear to matter. For them their self-perception of dental health in adulthood was related to their childhood circumstances.



We're now looking at different aspects of the way you feel about your dental health from the same questionnaire and hopefully will have some more to tell you about this next year. This work is in collaboration with a group in Australia who devised the questionnaire and invited Justine Mason, a student working on the study, to visit them and tell them about her findings so far.

### What We're Doing Now

#### Breast tissue density

This study is going really well. You've returned a large number of the questionnaires that we sent out (if there are any more, it's still not too late) and we are busy going through the mammography films. This was given a great boost when the Evening Chronicle picked up on the story.



## Red Spots to the Rescue!

Evening Chronicle Wednesday 4 May 2005

We even had a questionnaire returned from Canada complete with the actual films! We hope to report some findings next year, so your help with this research is much appreciated.

### Other areas of research

We continue to look at the information we collected at the age 50 follow-up. You gave us so much that we could probably continue to look at this data for the next 20 years and still come up with important results for understanding influences on adult health.

We are also busy planning for the future and hope to have some more news on this in future newsletters.

### Steering Group Vacancy

We have a Steering Group that meets a few times a year, for about 2 hours, to discuss progress and the direction of the study. This is really important in deciding on the future of the study. We currently have one study member on the Steering Group (Jean Taylor) and it would be great to have at least one more. Jean would be happy to talk to anyone who's interested and would like to hear more from a fellow study member, rather than one of the research team. You can contact Jean via our email address [Thousand.Families@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Thousand.Families@ncl.ac.uk) and all correspondence will be passed on.

Alternatively, please let us know if you are interested in joining. We are happy to pay for your transport costs and may even stretch to tea and biscuits for the worthy volunteer!

### Other Ways in Which You Can Help

#### Have I got news for you...

As well as publishing scientific papers, we try to give our findings to the media to ensure that our work is distributed to the widest audience possible. This means that we are occasionally contacted by television, radio and most often newspapers asking if they can speak to and take pictures of a study member to add their own experiences to what we're saying about the study. This helps them put the story in more human terms than just us saying what we've found and it can be the key to a story being featured. If any of you would be happy to speak to the media in this way (we'd organise it all) then please let us know through

any of the contact details. We'll try and share this out amongst those interested.

### Red Spots Reunited

Did you attend Edgefield Primary and/or Heaton Grammar School?

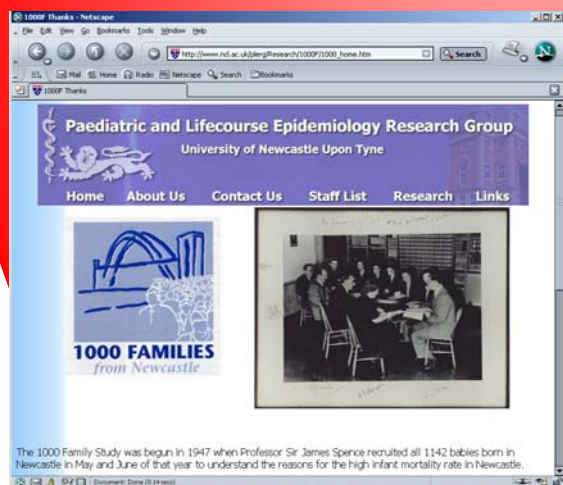
If you did, John Wilson who attended both Edgefield Primary and Heaton Grammar School is eager to get in touch with other Red Spots who went to one or both schools. John's email address is [J.S.Wilson@mgs.org](mailto:J.S.Wilson@mgs.org) so please feel free to contact John; he's looking forward to getting reacquainted with you all again!

If you don't have an email address, don't despair. You can contact John via our address here at the Sir James Spence Institute. We'll pass on any correspondence we receive.

If anyone else would like to use this newsletter in this way, please let us know. We're very happy to be able to put Red Spots back in touch.

### Website

[www.ncl.ac.uk/plerg/Research/1000F/1000home.htm](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/plerg/Research/1000F/1000home.htm)



We would be delighted to hear your thoughts about the website and in particular things that you, as study members, would like to see on it. Please feel free to let us know what you think - good or bad!

### How to Contact Us

We hope to contact as many Red Spots as possible with this newsletter, but it is inevitable that we no longer have contact details for everyone. We would like to thank those of you who have been in touch over the last six months. We would be grateful if you could check that any other Red

Spots that you know have received this newsletter, or have notified us of any change in their details. If not, please do encourage them to let us know. It is particularly important with the next full follow-up of you all, planned for 2007, that we trace as many of the study members that we no longer have the right address for.

Our contact details are as follows:  
The Newcastle Thousand Families Study  
Sir James Spence Institute  
University of Newcastle upon Tyne  
Royal Victoria Infirmary  
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4LP

Tel: (Susan Lee) 0191 202 3048  
Fax: 0191 202 3060  
Email: [Thousand.Families@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Thousand.Families@ncl.ac.uk)

We look forward to hearing from you.

### Publications

We have listed below details of all papers accepted for publication by scientific journals since the last newsletter. If you would like copies of any of these papers, please let us know.

Pearce MS, et al. Life course determinants of insulin secretion and sensitivity at age 50 years: The Newcastle Thousand Families Study. *Diabetes / Metabolism Research and Reviews* [in press]

Pearce MS. et al. Lifecourse determinants of fasting and post-challenge glucose at age 49-51 years: The Newcastle Thousand Families Study. *European Journal of Epidemiology* 2005; **20**:915-923.

Pearce MS, et al. Does increased duration of exclusive breast feeding protect against *Helicobacter pylori* infection? The Newcastle thousand families cohort study at 50 years. *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition* [in press]

Mason J, et al. How do factors at different stages of the lifecourse contribute to Oral Health Related Quality of Life in middle age for men and women. *Journal of Dental Research* [in press]

McIntyre EA, et al. Birth weight does not predict cardiovascular risk estimated by soluble markers of endothelial cell activation/damage in middle life. *Heart* [in press]

Hayes L, et al Why are some overweight individuals 'metabolically normal'. *International Journal of Obesity* [in press]

