

The Thousand Families Study Newsletter

May/June 2006

WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR



Welcome to this latest edition of the Thousand Families Newsletter and very best wishes for your 59th Birthday. 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.

Dr Mark Pearce
Director, 1000 Families Study
University of Newcastle upon Tyne

A RED SPOT'S PERSPECTIVE

Angela Johnson Childhood Memories from a Red Spot



Angela and her husband

As a young girl growing up in Benwell, I always knew a few things were certain: every Friday night my father would open the "surprise box" to reveal a delicious chocolate treat for everyone. My mother always had a wholesome, hot home-cooked meal ready for my brothers and me every day when we came home from school. My grandma lived only a few streets over and I could always depend upon a welcoming smile, soft boiled eggs, and a thick feather mattress. I knew without doubt, that throughout the year a Red Spot

Nurse, as I called her, would make a visit to our home.

It wasn't too clear to me as to why I was so privileged as to have a "nurse" who would check upon my health and development and why my friends were not as fortunate. It made me feel a little special and I didn't mind telling anyone who might be interested in knowing that I was a Red Spot Baby.

When I was 15 our family moved away from the Benwell area and the visits from the "nurse" stopped. I grew up, moved to Canada in 1965, married a Canadian in 1968 and had two children who were born in 1973 and 1976. My parents remained in the Northumberland area. I was delighted when they phoned one day to tell me that they had read an advertisement in the local newspaper. It asked for Red Spots who wanted to participate in The Newcastle Thousand Families Study to contact them. Once again, that feeling of being a little special flooded back to me.

I made a trip to Newcastle for the 1997 follow-up when we all turned 50. Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend the Red Spots Reunited 2006 walk scheduled for this May, but wild horses won't keep me from being in Newcastle for the 2007 follow-up when we all turn 60.

In June of this year I will have been happily married for 38 years. I am healthy, active and have a wide range of interests. I am a very proud grandma to a beautiful little boy and I am proud to be able to contribute to medical science in my own small way.

Many thanks to the study team; you are all heroes to me.

**Angela Johnson (nee Snowdon)
Proud Red Spot**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Red Spot Walk – 27th May 2006



As we reported in our last newsletter, Mark Pearce and Susan Lee have organised a Red Spot Walk to take place on Saturday 27th May at Jesmond Dene. The event is a get-together

for nearly 100 Red Spots and their partners for a walk around the Dene as well as a picnic at Coleman's Field. Depending on when you receive this newsletter, the timing of which is based on your birthday, the walk will either be about to happen or will have happened.

We have received a donation of £500 from SAGE via the Tyne and Wear Community Fund to help fund the day. We have also been lucky enough to receive donations of sausage rolls and doughnuts from Greggs, and bottles of water and organisational support from the Children's Foundation, who organise events such as the Yellow Brick Road Walk every year to raise funds for research to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young adults in the North East of England.

With assistance from staff from both the University and the Children's Foundation, the walk is a leisurely stroll on a designated path taking in the history and natural beauty of the Dene. There will be marshals on the day throughout the walk to ensure your safety.

Photographs of the event, taken by members of the study team, will appear in the Christmas edition of the newsletter.

If you are interested in reading up about Jesmond Dene, you can log onto the website below to see photographs and read about the Dene's history. <http://www.jesmonddene.org.uk/>

For those of you taking part we hope you enjoy/enjoyed yourselves!

Red Spots @ the Discovery Museum



Another event which we are planning in May/June 2007 to coincide with your 60th birthdays, is an exhibition of archive photographs of Red Spots, various scenes of Newcastle in the 1940s, 1950's and 60's, the early days of the Thousand

Families Study and the latter years.

We will take over a small room within the Discovery Museum in Newcastle and display photographs of Red Spot babies, general housing from the late 40's and 50's; poster boards depicting individual Red Spot babies' stories of growing up.

However, for this we need your help. We are asking for photographs of you when you were a baby, growing up and as you are now. We promise to return the photographs once the exhibition is finished. If you would be willing to let us borrow some photographs, could you please complete the enclosed "Photograph usage" form and send it to us with the photographs.

As well as photographs, we'll be asking a few of you to get involved further and write a short piece about your life as a Red Spot child and growing up. We'd also like to know what you're doing now through a brief description of how your lives have panned out.

These individual "portraits" will be mounted onto poster boards and displayed at the exhibition.

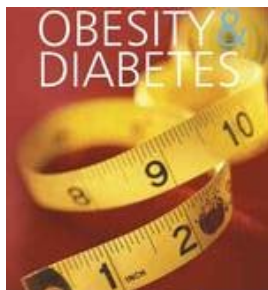
No doubt we'll be telling you more about this in future newsletters to keep you up to date with developments.

LATEST FINDINGS

It's only 5 or 6 months since the last newsletter and we've spent much of our time putting together some plans for the future. However, we have still been putting the existing information you have given us to good use.

Diabetes

Our work related to diabetes is continuing and our latest findings are about to be published in the *International Journal of Obesity*. Being overweight is a known risk factor for developing diabetes, which happens when the production of insulin by the pancreas to control the amount of sugar circulating in the blood, goes wrong. However, this doesn't appear to be the case for all overweight people and we used your data to try to find out why.



For both men and women we found that it was actually how much overweight a person was that influenced their risk of metabolic abnormalities. For men, we also found that even

those who were overweight, reduce their risk if they didn't smoke and took part in regular exercise.

From these findings we are suggesting that policies should be implemented to continue to encourage weight loss among overweight people and physical activity and stopping smoking among all people to ensure a healthier nation.

Breast Tissue Density

We are still working on this study, but now have all the information we need - so a huge THANK YOU to all those women who took the time to respond. The more people that take part in our studies, the more accurate our

results are, and the more chance there is of making a difference. We had over 200 questionnaires back, containing so much information that we're only now getting near to being able to analyse it. We hope to have some results from this study later this year.



SCHOOL FRIEND ALERT!!!!

A study member, Barbara Flaxton [maiden name: **Barbara Elizabeth Smith**], contacted us about getting in touch with other Red Spots who went to **Firfield Secondary School and Montagu Estate School, Newcastle**. If anyone else went to either or both of these schools and would like to contact Barbara, give us your details and we'll pass them on.

If any of you are interested in getting in touch with old friends who are also Red Spots, then please tell us and let us know which details you'd be happy about sending to other study members (or if you'd like contact to be made through us). As well as your name, things like where you lived, the school you went to or people you'd like to contact would be useful.

If you have an email address it would help you get reacquainted quicker. Please tell us and we'll pass it on.

Oops!

In our Christmas Newsletter we asked if any other Red Spots went to Edgefield Primary and/or Heaton Grammar. We gave the email address as j.s.wilson@mgs.org. It should have been j.s.willson@mgs.org.

Apologies to those of you who tried to contact John Willson through this email address and did not get through. Please feel free to contact John on the amended email address above.

Grant applications for the Year 60 follow-up

We have written a number of grant applications seeking funding for a follow-up to coincide with your 60th birthdays and are waiting to hear the results.

If successful, we will be in touch soon with further details of what we are proposing to do. If we are not successful, we will just keep on trying, and will also consider some smaller parts of the study to make sure the Thousand Families study continues long into the future.

WEBSITE

We now have a Red Spot building a much better website than we currently offer you. This is very much work in progress and we hope to tell you more about this next time. In the meantime, our website, aimed at both Red Spots and other researchers is still available at www.ncl.ac.uk/plerg/Research/1000F/1000home.htm

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 contact over the past year. 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 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

We look forward to hearing from you.

PUBLICATIONS

Hayes L, Pearce MS, Unwin NC. Why are some overweight individuals 'metabolically normal'? Predictors of metabolic parameters in overweight and obese adults from the Newcastle Thousand Families Study. *International Journal of Obesity*.

Mason J, Pearce MS, Walls AWG, Parker L, Steele JG. 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*. 2006; **85(3)**: 257-261

Pearce MS, Unwin NC, Parker L, Alberti KGMM. Lifecourse determinants of insulin secretion and sensitivity at age 50 years: The Newcastle Thousand Families Study. *Diabetes/ Metabolism Research and Reviews*. 2006; **22**: 118-125

If you would like copies of any publications, please let us know and we'll send them to you.