



# Face It Together

The newsletter for adult members of The Birthmark Support Group

## Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of the Face It Together Newsletter. This was my first full month of being the point of contact for the FIT Group and I'm glad to say it has been a busy one. We had the Liverpool Fun Day, Jacki has written a wonderful report of her experience of the day. There was a trip to Great Ormond Street Hospital for members wishing to be involved in mentoring/buddying other members of the group, and lots of emails from new members and existing members. Thanks to everybody who said they liked February's newsletter and I hope you find this one as good!

Email [faceittogether@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:faceittogether@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk) if you wish to write an article for the next edition or post your bio to the address below.

## BSG in the Media

We have had a few requests in since the last newsletter. BBC3, Channel 4, unfortunately, the BBC3 team got their request turned down, but Channel 4 are putting together a show aimed at single men with birthmarks. We also had a request from a production company looking at life coaches and their claim to cure all phobias, including social phobias based around physical differences. If you wish to be added to the distribution list for media requests just let us know.

## FIT Trip to the Pub!

Well it has to be done and it is not just because of my Irish influence! After talking to some members it was felt that a trip to the pub is the best way for us to have a "get together". There will be no formal agenda, just as many FIT members as possible having a drink and a chat, getting to know one another. The first "Trip to the Pub" will be in London on Saturday June 10<sup>th</sup>, hopefully, followed by similar events nationwide. I will circulate an email to all FIT members in May once I find the perfect pub, don't feel for me I don't mind doing the research.

If you want to find a pub in your region and organize another "Trip to the Pub" just let me know the details and I can forward on to all FIT members.

## Volunteers & Ideas Always Needed

If you would like to help with FIT, or with Teentalk, the BSG groups for teenagers, then do let us know.

## BSG 'Fun' Days

**Sunday, May 14th in Birmingham.** This will be held at King Edward VI High School for Girls, Edgbaston Park Road from 12 noon to 5.30 pm.

**Sunday, September 17th in North London.** This will be held at Chigwell School, Chigwell, Essex from 12 noon to 5.30 pm. It will also be the BSG AGM.

**Saturday, November 18th in Glasgow** Venue to be arranged

Further details about the programme, travel directions, etc for these events will be available on the website and on request via the PO Box address.

## Join us in Birmingham on May 14<sup>th</sup>!

*A Note from Suzanne Notley*

Thank you to everyone who contacted me following the last FIT newsletter – it was fantastic to hear from you! Meeting others that have been through similar experiences gives me such an amazing, uplifting feeling – I have learned more about birthmarks in my last 2 years with the Birthmark Support Group than I had in my 28 years before joining!

I am so looking forward to the next meeting in Birmingham (see above for details), as it will be the first one I will be able to travel to with my baby daughter Olivia Grace. Olivia was also born with birthmarks, a tiny one on her scalp and a flat patchy one on the back of her neck. She is now approaching her 1st birthday and her hair has almost covered them both.

BSG Fun Days give people the chance to meet up with others of all ages that have experience of living with a birthmark, from babies to grandparents! I hope to see as many of you as possible there – the Fun Days are just as they sound, relaxing, informal and fun..... so whether you have been before, or maybe it's the first time you've come along, please join us for chats, laughs and cups of tea! If you still have any doubts about whether to come or not, please read Jacki's account of the last Fun Day in Liverpool later in this newsletter, and I hope that will persuade you to join us!

If you have any questions about the Birmingham Fun Day or any other BSG event, please do not hesitate to e-mail me – I would love to hear from you!

## Request for Volunteers

My name is Emily; please see my profile at the end of this newsletter. At the moment I am starting my dissertation research, my project focuses on responses to visible marks and scars and draws on theory of geography of the body. There is a great deal of research into different body 'problems' such as disability and obesity but surprisingly I have not found any other geographical research into birthmarks or scars and given my personal interest in this field I am hoping to create a good piece of research and also to spread awareness. I am currently looking for participants, research will be taking place over the summer vacation and is going to consist of focus groups (a few of us just having a chat together about experiences, responses and life in general!) one to one interviews and autobiographical work from myself. If anyone is interested/would like to take part, please contact me on the email below. The research will be informal, confidential and you can feel free to take part in as little or much as you want, and can opt out at any point. Any help would be fantastic!

Through the creation of groups such as BSG and more awareness I hope more people, especially the bullies and those who make negative comments towards people who don't fit into the social 'normal', or 'ideal' body can begin to see that all differences should be celebrated. It is individuality that makes people beautiful.

## Introduction to Mentoring/Buddying at GOSH

On 25<sup>th</sup> March 2006, members from across the Birthmark Support Group attended a training session at Great Ormond Street Hospital (thanks to Jane Linward for organizing the room and some nibbles).

The idea behind the event was to get some people together who are currently offering mentoring/buddying services to other members of the group. Jane Ward, who is a trained Samaritan and was also School Counselor for a number of years, was kind enough to give some pointers on how to be helpful and constructive. If you would like to attend one of these events in the future please let us know.

Of course I then managed to drag everybody who attended to the pub for a quick "beer". It also gave us the opportunity to watch the rain from inside until we realized it just wasn't going away. We only had one umbrella between two, so we twinned up and away we all went, towards our respective Tube stations. It definitely brought us all closer together!

## Website

Ian Clover is currently giving the group website a make-over. You will notice already that there are mug shots of all the contacts with a brief profile so you know a bit more about the people you are contacting.

## Group Newsletters

TeenTalk and The Birthmark Support Group Newsletters are available on the website, so log on and see what else we are up to!

[www.birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](http://www.birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk)

### Face It Together Contacts

Orla Morris:  
[faceittogether@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:faceittogether@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk)

Suzanne Notley:  
[events.fit@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:events.fit@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk)

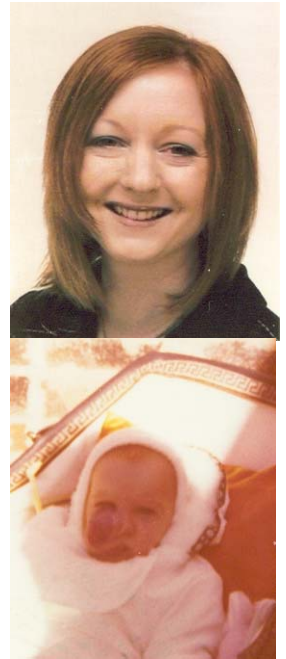
Bev Fulker:  
[support.fit@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:support.fit@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk)

Julia Higley:  
[faceittogether@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:faceittogether@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk)

## Meet Some FIT Members:

### Bridget Crawshaw – FIT Member.

Hi - I'm Bridget. I am 30 years old and live in Sheffield. When I was a few weeks old my parents noticed a small red mark under my right eye – this mark continued to grow into a Strawberry Haemangioma, I also developed three further marks, 1 on my back and one on each side, these shrank of their own accord as I grew. As a child I had several operations to reduce the size of the mark on my face and then when I was 19 I had laser treatment to reduce the redness. Before the laser treatment I wore camouflage makeup but nowadays I can get away with normal foundation but I'm rarely brave enough to go bare! About a year ago I had counseling as I felt my lack of confidence due to the mark was holding me back. This year I have completed a counseling course at college which is something I thought I would never achieve. I have joined the BSG as I want to be there for anyone else who needs that bit of support from a person who's been in a similar situation and has had similar experiences. My parents had to make difficult decisions on my behalf with no support or information, no parent should have to go through that alone and that's why I think groups such as this are so beneficial, bringing people together to support each other and share.



Email: [Faceittogether@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:Faceittogether@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk) (Orla will forward emails on to Bridget)



### Emily Johnson – FIT Member

Hello, I'm Emily. I'm 21 and a student at Liverpool University studying Cultural Geography. I have a facial Port Wine Stain; I tried out laser treatment when I was 16, which my Dad helped to sort out for me. I thought it would be a miracle cure and believed it was what I wanted. However, I decided not to continue treatment as I found it very painful and just didn't feel right for me. I have worn make up to cover since I was about 11, and I think I always will. My parents were amazing when I was growing up and I don't remember ever being made to feel different, they treated it as though it was run of the mill and this helped me to feel alright about my appearance, but I feel very self conscious without make up. I joined the group last year and am so glad I did! It has really helped me to meet others with

the same experiences and problems. I just wish that I'd had this opportunity when I was younger. I never experienced any bullying, only the odd stupid remark - which I'm sure everybody has and comments from friends when they see with without make up for the first time. The things I have gained the most from joining the group are realising others have the same worries etc as myself and a bit of perspective, as my mark is much smaller than most. My friends and family often say "oh it's only small" and "you don't see it" and it is hard to try to get them to imagine how it feels, even though it is small it is still visible and always on my mind. I find it kind of funny that the same people who say those things, make such a fuss about having a tiny spot – and this is the way I explain to them – to imagine how it would be to have that but permanent!

Email: [ilooklikeabadger@hotmail.com](mailto:ilooklikeabadger@hotmail.com)

### Jacki Lovelidge – FIT Member

Hi, I'm Jacki. I'm only 19 so one of the younger members of the FIT group. I got married last October to my wonderful husband Mike. It was shortly before this that I decided it was the time to let go of quite a hurtful past. I wanted to enter my new, married life with a fresh slate. This decision led me to join the BSG group. I knew I couldn't join and offer support to others until I was happy with my own life and this is where I now am. We have just bought our first house and have now moved from Bucks to Cambridgeshire. A few years ago I would never have dreamt I'd be here – I thought I'd be single forever. Now, I wouldn't change it for the world!



Email: [wickedgenius@hotmail.com](mailto:wickedgenius@hotmail.com)

## BSG Fun Day – Liverpool 18<sup>th</sup> March 2006

“Beep beep, beep beep. Beep beep, beep beep”. Turning over in a state of dazed confusion I could see the blurred numbers on the mobile. 6.00am, time to get up. What day is it again? Ahh... Saturday, THE day.

“THE day” for any of you that haven’t worked it out, meant my first journey to meet other people with birthmarks. This was something very new for me. I had only ever seen someone with a birthmark when I was in hospital for general anaesthetic and too young to really remember. I boarded the train at 8.22 from Watford Junction, turned the MP3 player on, shut my eyes, and 3 hours later I was in Liverpool.

I was met from the station by Emily, a fellow BSG member who I had been in contact with for a few weeks through TeenTalk. Those that have met us will realise why we immediately had a common interest and hit it off! After a coffee and a chat we headed off for the Bridge Chapel Centre which was not the easiest place in the world to find.

After being met by the beaming smile of Jodie, we were shown through and introduced to a few of the people who were already there. After a quick chat with Chairman Nick and 5 minutes talking to Orla, I think we were quite relaxed and I knew I had made the right decision in going. I was no longer the only person in the world with a birthmark!

A great lunch was provided with the soup being a big hit when the weather was bitterly cold outside. The food was certainly needed to keep the energy levels up with all the people interaction. When you meet people you’ve never met before there’s too much to talk about and I think we could have kept going all night!



From Left to Right: Orla Morris, Jacki Lovelidge, Emily Johnson, Ella Davis

The danger of course of 4 women (we were joined by Ella) sitting chatting together, all of similar ages, is the amount of time we spent “aww-ing” over the little ones that were there. Poor Alex, I think he was in awe of how broody girls can get! They were certainly in for a treat thanks to Jodie’s hard work. Games with the Liverpool coaches and Easter egg hunts – what more could they, or the Dads (!) want?

I know I felt one of the biggest benefits of the funday from an adult point of view (and yes, I know I barely count as an adult!) was the chance to talk to others with a birthmark and hear others stories. It’s such a relief and weight off the mind to realise you’re not alone. Everyone has a different story to tell, but there are always similarities.

I would recommend going to anyone that wants to find out more, or just a day to enjoy. It’s made me want to get involved with the group even more, especially TeenTalk. I plan to take the husband to the next fun day in Birmingham so he can see what I am getting involved in and why. Look forward to meeting some more of you there!



Playing Footie with the Liverpool Football Club Coaches

Article by Jacki Lovelidge