



The Miscarriage Association

OF IRELAND

Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7.

Telephone: 8735702/8725550

Registered Charity Number CHY9738



NEWSLETTER

WELCOME

How time flies! I can't believe it's time to welcome you again to the Spring /Summer Newsletter. Although the days are getting longer and slightly warmer and the spring flowers are starting to show, for some the months ahead can seem as dark as winter itself. We hope this newsletter will help in some way to make anyone who has lost a baby through miscarriage to feel less isolated. Help is only a phone call away. For anyone wishing to contact us, we are based in Carmichael Centre. Our phone numbers are 01 8735702 or 01 8725550.

Mary Lawson & Maggie O'Neill

Seats in Glasnevin Cemetery

Our Memorial Stone in Glasnevin's Holy Angels' Plot has given great comfort to hundreds of parents since it was erected in November 1999 giving them somewhere to place their flowers on their baby's special days. Parents have begun hanging small sets of wind chimes on the two large trees at the beginning of the Angels' Plot.

On visiting the Memorial Stone last Autumn, we noticed how serene and peaceful this small area has become. After placing flowers ourselves at the Stone, we thought how lovely it would be to be able to stay a while and be with our thoughts. Also for those whose babies are buried in this plot, placing flowers and walking away is difficult. To be able to sit and be with their memories a little longer would be of great benefit to these parents.

At this time, we visited the Cremation Wall where Stephanie Blandford, one of our ex-Committee members had recently had her baby, Daniel's name inscribed and we noticed this lovely stone seat which could be purchased and placed anywhere in the Cemetery.

Because of this, the Miscarriage Association of Ireland have placed two seats to enable anyone wishing to stay a while to do so.

They were erected last November. Our grateful appreciation goes to John Kinahan, Robbie McGowan and all the staff in Glasnevin Cemetery who have been so helpful to us.

If you have only recently lost your baby, maybe a visit to Glasnevin's Holy Angels' Plot would offer you some consolation and peace in your heart.



Your Stories

If only.....

Hi there! My name is Stephanie Blandford and I am writing to tell you about my experience of miscarriage. My story goes back a long way.....

My first child, a son, was born in June 1983 following an uncomplicated pregnancy and delivery. My husband and I were over the moon with delight and took to our new role of parenthood with great enthusiasm. Our first child, although perfectly healthy, was a very poor sleeper and so, we were in no hurry to try for another baby until No.1 had settled down a bit. He had turned two before we felt ready to face it all again and so we were thrilled when I became pregnant in early 1986. That excitement soon turned to alarm when at 11 weeks, I noticed brown spotting and my doctor advised me to attend the hospital for a scan. This confirmed our worst fears. The pregnancy had failed some time earlier but I had not gone on to miscarry spontaneously. I was to be booked-in for an E.R.P.C. (evacuation of the retained products of conception) by D & C the following day. I shall never forget my horror at hearing this procedure being booked over the telephone, in front of the queue of people still awaiting scans. I remember feeling embarrassed and upset that someone in the queue might think that I was actually *choosing* to end my pregnancy. The term 'ERPC' seemed so crude to me at a time when I was still struggling to come to terms with my loss. To this day, I still shudder when I think

of those words. I can only hope that, 15 years on, they are used with much greater sensitivity in the maternity hospitals. I left the hospital following the D & C feeling very alone and confused about how I felt following my miscarriage. I longed to talk about my experience but nobody seemed to want to talk about it. I scoured the bookshops but the only information I could elicit, were short definitions on the different types of miscarriage. I could find no literature on other people's experience of miscarriage. That of course, thankfully, has all changed today. I had to put my worries on hold for six weeks until my check-up when I expected I would, at the very least, be given some information as to why the pregnancy had failed. I was wrong. I was dismayed to discover that my obstetrician didn't even seem interested. However he did reassure me that it was 'most unlikely' to happen again and I believed him. My husband and I resolved to 'try again' but as I had developed both orthopaedic and facial sinus complications following the pregnancy, this had to be postponed due to surgery. When we finally discovered that I was pregnant in the summer of 1987, we were absolutely thrilled. This time though we waited until the pregnancy had passed the 12-week phase before we were confidently able to share our joy. Once there, we became very optimistic and allowed ourselves to look forward to the birth early in the New Year.

However, again, our joy was to be

short-lived as at 16 weeks, I developed sharp abdominal pain with fresh bleeding and was admitted immediately to hospital. An ultra-sound scan showed that the pregnancy was fine and I was shown my baby son moving around in the womb. The doctor who carried out the scan was extremely kind and caring and showed me that my baby was actually sucking his thumb in utero. It's an image that I will always treasure. However, because of the pain and bleeding I had to be admitted for observation. I spent the following week in hospital and while the bleeding eventually stopped and the baby's heartbeat appeared fine, I developed terrible pain in my back. It was a very worrying time and not helped by the fact that my 4-year old son was starting his first week at school and I wanted to be at home for him. Friends and family were wonderfully supportive and this allowed me some peace of mind. Sadly, however, I awoke one morning to find that my bed was soaking wet. My waters had leaked during the night. I was exactly 17 weeks pregnant. The hospital staff tried to be reassuring but I knew that it was not looking good. They became very concerned however when I went on to develop a high fever and rigor and rapidly became very ill indeed. The following day, I started to have mild contractions. I was desperately worried about my baby's welfare but all attention was being focused on getting my fever under control. I was told that I was very ill but that wasn't what was concerning me. When I finally lost the baby some 24 hours later I remember wanting to shout "I tried to tell you!". My baby had been miscarried into a bedpan while I was attempting to pass urine. I could not bring myself to look at the bedpan and instead called for a nurse to assist. I was told that I had lost the baby but that I had a

'retained' placenta. The cord was cut and my dead baby was taken away in the bedpan while attempts were made to deliver the placenta. While all this was going on, my husband and I were asked if we would like to see our baby. We agreed and he was brought to us on a little blue tray covered up with paper towelling. We were allowed some very special time together to examine our baby son's body. He looked perfect in every way but was too tiny to survive on his own. We stroked him gently and marvelled at all his little features. It was incredibly sad to realise that he would never breathe or move at all. His chance of life had ended. He was taken away to the mortuary and shortly afterwards I was taken to theatre for surgical removal of the retained placenta. I apparently hemorrhaged badly while under general anaesthetic and awoke some hours later to find that I was back in my bed having a blood transfusion. I was amazed to find that I felt at total peace with the world. A star was twinkling brightly at me through the gap in the curtains and I remember feeling that this was a sign to me that my little baby's soul was in safe hands. This feeling of peace stayed with me throughout the night. Perhaps it was due to medication, I don't know, but I like to think that it was a spiritual experience.

I am going to try to share with you now exactly how I felt over the coming days and weeks following my miscarriage because I feel that it is very relevant as to why the Miscarriage Association has such an important role to play.

The following morning all had changed. I was distraught with grief and just cried and cried. My husband was very supportive but we were both grieving and desperately in need of support. The hospital staff were very caring but

they were very limited in the help which they could offer. They gave me a copy of ISANDS little booklet 'A Little Lifetime' to read over and I was requested to return it to the ward sister asap as this was the only copy available for the whole ward. I cried buckets over this little book and I remember wondering how many other women had done exactly the same. It was a very tattered copy. I devoured the contents of the booklet and although many of the facts related more to stillbirths than miscarriage, I was still very much able to identify with the emotions that they described. I desperately wanted to hold onto that book. I vowed to myself that I would do something to ensure that women in future would always have the option of taking home a support leaflet/booklet following miscarriage. I remember scribbling down the list of burial arrangements that was provided in the booklet and feeling that it really shouldn't have to be like this. My emotions were all over the place. I was angry with myself for losing the baby and I also felt quite ashamed that I had miscarried my baby into a bedpan. I was very worried too that perhaps I might now never succeed in having a full-term pregnancy. The thought of having to wait six weeks to discuss my worries at a check-up, did nothing to reassure me. The kindest thing of all that happened over those few days, was a visit from the doctor who had scanned and admitted me the previous week. He and I had shared a scan that now held very special memories for me of my baby. The fact that he took the time to say how sorry he was that I had lost my baby was very touching. I'll always be grateful to him for that.

I left the hospital as soon as I was well enough to go home, leaving behind our little baby, whom we called Daniel, in the hospital

mortuary while my husband and I decided on burial options. Family and friends were wonderfully supportive to us but we still felt very alone in our grief. Despite daily phone-calls from the hospital, we took our time in coming to the right decision for our family. We decided to have our baby's remains cremated at Glasnevin cemetery followed by the burial of his ashes in the garden of remembrance there. We only found out about the existence of this garden thanks to the information supplied in ISANDS little booklet. A funeral director made all the arrangements for us but we did not attend, as we were too distraught at the time.

My story does have a happy ending. Although I was to go through many more surgical traumas and illness before eventually succeeding in becoming pregnant again, my husband and I welcomed a baby girl into our family early in the spring of 1990. All our dreams came true that day. By that time too, I had become a joint founder member of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland (along with Hilary Frazer) and together we had formed a committee to get an active support network up and running throughout the country. I shall never forget the comforting strength that I felt when I attended the very first miscarriage support group meeting in Dublin. Here was a group of women who had all gone through similar experiences to my own and yet I had felt so alone up until that point. It wasn't long before the association achieved another important task close to my heart. Maternity hospitals throughout the country were soon handing out support leaflets and cards supplied by the Miscarriage Association, to all women who felt in need of support following a miscarriage. Hilary and I have long since retired from committee work but we are

delighted to be able to watch the association continue to go from strength to strength under the very capable leadership of its chairperson, Maggie O'Neill, and her hard-working committee. They have worked incredibly hard with fantastic results. One huge achievement has been to organise supplies of beautiful little baby wraps, for use in maternity hospitals when a miscarried baby is being presented to its parents. Daniel was shown to me lying on an injection tray. And of course, the Miscarriage Association now has its own engraved memorial stone in Glasnevin cemetery at the Holy Angels' Plot, dedicated to all babies lost at or around the time of birth. It is something that has been badly needed for years. This, along with

many other achievements, is all wonderful progress and I'm sure that it is greatly appreciated by all who seek comfort and support following a miscarriage.

My story is not finished there. Last year, while attending a cremation service at Glasnevin of a dear old family friend, my 10-year old daughter and I decided to try and find out where Daniel's ashes had been laid all those years ago. We were thrilled to find that the cemetery office had a careful record of his cremation and burial and before we knew it, we were being shown the exact spot where his ashes lie in the beautiful garden of remembrance. It was an incredible find for me after all those years of not knowing and not having the

courage to find out where his ashes had been buried. At about the same time last year, all the sadness was coming to light in the media about post-mortem practices on children and babies in year's gone by. My husband and I decided that rather than taking any action to enquire about Daniel's post-mortem, we would instead take some positive action to make sure that he is never forgotten. His name,

Daniel Blandford 5.9.87, now proudly shares a place on a headstone beside his ashes in the Garden of Remembrance. We treasure the huge part that he has played in our family.

If only...

Adele's story

On the 13th July 2000 I discovered that I was pregnant. Although I had been feeling extremely tired, it was almost a complete surprise.

We have two perfect and healthy little boys aged 3 and 5 and believed that our family was complete. Panic set in as I thought about all our reasons for agreeing not to have any more children ... our ages, the risk, the cost, the time etc., etc. However underneath the fear I felt a slight excitement at the prospect of another baby. The young locum GP seemed nervous yet cheerful – just as I was feeling, although for different reasons. The blue line on the pregnancy test came up straight away, leaving no doubt. I remember thinking this was a sign of high HCG hormone levels. This pregnancy was secure, just like my last two, I thought. "The expected delivery date is The 6th of March," said the doctor. I was six weeks gone and I half expected to be feeling very sick soon, as in my second pregnancy. But the sickness didn't come. This in itself didn't mean anything but the absence of any other pregnancy symptoms intrigued me.

Over the next day or two I mulled over my negative feelings, not least in relation to the birth – I really didn't want to go through THAT again. I also thought

about how this baby would restrict me.

Gradually over the next 11 days we adjusted to the situation. John said he loved the baby even at this early stage. I started to wonder who the baby would look like. I searched for our old baby clothes. I wondered if the pram would be suitable. I even bought a book of baby names. I thought it was a little boy and I wanted to call him Keane. Yes I was now looking forward to the new arrival. I asked Allister, our eldest, if he would like a little sister or brother. He replied "yes, if it is a boy, but no if it is one of those girl ones!"

Meanwhile, the original tiredness had completely diminished and I noted that I didn't "feel" pregnant at all. I knew deep down that that was not a good sign. Then on the 11th day after the pregnancy test I had some slight bleeding and some more spotting the next afternoon. I rang the maternity hospital but they didn't seem too concerned.

They said I should come in for a check up. So we did just that. It was now Wednesday morning – the 3rd day of slight bleeding. A nice doctor reassured us that many women have bleeding in pregnancy and go on to have normal children. Eventually we were seen by the

radiologist who was to carry out a scan. As if in slow motion I watched as she adjusted the monitor. She said to lie back and not to look at the screen. So I concentrated on her face, for any hints as to what was going on. I think I'll always remember those moments. Time seemed to be moving in slow motion.

She stared at the screen for what seemed like a very long time.

Then she faced me and said "I can see the foetal sac and the foetal pole and a small foetus but its not an eight week foetus like you expect ... more like a six week foetus". I immediately said, "Could it be dead? – Is that why it hasn't grown?" "It could be", she said. She continued "I cannot see a foetal heart beat ... But at this early stage that is not unusual".

Then she asked me if I was sure of my dates, and I said I was.

She said "Sorry I cannot be more positive".

The doctor arrived soon afterwards and repeated that they could not be certain what was going on. On the way home John was more optimistic than I was. I felt very confused – was this a viable pregnancy or not? We were told to come back in a week when they could be more certain. But we didn't have to wait a week.

The next afternoon in work I had one sharp pain like a contraction and a lot more bleeding. I rang the hospital that night and they said to come in the next day"To conclude it". When I was examined by the doctor she said my cervix was fully closed and that there is usually more pain with a miscarriage. There was still hope!!! Our heart strings were being pulled in bipolar directions.

And so we returned to the foetal assessment unit for the final analysis. But the radiographer must have expected the worst and brought us into a darkened room for this scan-"the bad news room", I called it, never thinking I would use it myself.

The foetal sac had moved downwards – I was definitely miscarrying. She said there was no movement of the chest and the baby had probably deceased two weeks earlier. The word "deceased" rang in my ears. I asked for a scan picture since it's all we'll ever have. When I could bear to look at it I saw a tiny little shape but arm buds were clearly visible.

The scan picture is important to me since it makes the whole thing more tangible. We waited for ages to be seen by the doctor. A kind nurse or midwife noticed and came to say sorry for our loss and we tried to make sense of the whole thing. Eventually the doctor

came and gave the standard speech and booked me in for a D & C the following Monday. The next night I passed something which I thought was the sac but it turned out to be a large clot. A scan on Monday revealed the sac was still inside but this time I couldn't see a Foetus. After the D & C I cried a bit less and the nurses said the only way was up.

A couple of days later I phoned the Miscarriage Association. I arranged to have the baby entered in their Remembrance Book. The entry will include a little verse ... "Although you were tiny, our loss is so great. Your brothers are healthy, Why could you not be? We'll miss you until we call it a day." I bought an oak tree which I'll plant in the garden to acknowledge the baby. The timeless quality of the oak seemed appropriate since I don't want No.3 to be forgotten.

In retrospect, I was really gutted for two months after the miscarriage. It's a bit easier now, but I still think about it everyday. It made me realise how little control we have over our bodies. For that two months I was preoccupied with possible reasons and explanations. Initially I was convinced that the baby had some chromosomal defect as I had been told this from so many sources. Then at my 6 week check up I was told that this was unlikely and that everything found during the D&C constituted the "normal products of conception". It's a shame to have lost someone who was probably perfect.

They could not give me the answers I sought. I drew the conclusion that a drop in my progesterone levels at a crucial moment must have been responsible. Soon after an article was published in the Sunday Independent which referred to a doctor in the south who specialises in fertility problems and miscarriage. Interestingly, his research highlights a drop in progesterone levels at the 6-8 week stage as a factor in early miscarriage.

I wasn't too eager to get pregnant again since we had already decided our family was complete. Nevertheless since I did conceive this child, it would have been really nice to see it through. Another thing that hurt was the fact that I felt I had to justify my grief ... as if the loss of this baby didn't warrant any sadness – at least that's the attitude some people portrayed. However its important not to dwell too much on what other people say. I really hope that reading this is in some small way helpful to others.

I'm not going to try and replace that baby because I know that's not possible, but one thing is for sure ... that baby will always have a special place in our family as "Baby Kelly no.3"

Poetry Corner

Our Gift – Emmanuelle

You changed our lives forever
Emmanuelle it all seemed so right
The happiness between us all
Our lives lit up so bright.

You gave so much in your short life
To Dorothy the role of mother
To Geoff the title of your Dad
A Greater Gift than any other.

Rest now our tiny little one
Wrapped up in hope and dreams
Our Love grows stronger every day
Although pain and sadness we both feel.

We never will forget you, Emmanuelle
In our hearts your gifts are there
A sister or a brother we hope this day
will come

Though nothing will replace your loss
The Gift of Life begun.

Dorothy Daniels

Kieran – My Shining Star

24/12/99 – 13/ 3/00 (My
Millenium Bud)

They say there was a reason, to which
I'll never know,

Why God had given you to me, and
then suddenly called you home.

Oh how I so wanted to hold you and
hear your little cry,

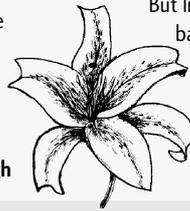
If only to tell you how much I love you,
my special little boy.

The years will pass as they always do,
but in my heart is home for you.

The only thing that keeps me sane,
is knowing that one day we will
be joined again, this time
forever.

Love Always,
Mam xxxx

Sinead McHugh



When we promised ourselves to each other and became husband
and wife

We knew the future would hold many wonders and we would take
it all in our stride

But nothing could have prepared us for the pain we were to
endure

On losing our first three children in just one short year
At times we feel very angry and sit there wondering why?

But answers are not very forthcoming so all we can do is cry
Together we have faced each test, we've shared both smiles and

tears and we'll still share so very much throughout the
coming years

Not a single day goes by, that we don't feel the pain, the love in
our hearts, we never can explain

But life goes on without you and we know you're never coming
back

You will never be forgotten, our three precious darlings,
Stephen, Nicole and Jack

Fiona & Martin Jackson – April 2001

Sad Farewells

Adele Molloy and John Kelly's 3rd baby
lost on 27th July 2000. Very sadly
missed by Mammy, Daddy, big
brothers Allister and Robert.

Three Little Angels lost 8th November,
1996, 9th January, 1998 and 7th
January 2000

Remembered by parents Mary & Pat
McGill and their brother Sean.

Welcome Babies

Baby Eoghan to Monica & Pat Dunne, a
treasured brother for Cathal.

Baby Sophie to Karen Gilligan & Frank
McQuade

Baby Megan to Noeleen and Sean
Osborne, a sister for Anita

Baby Aoife to Irene and Gerry Roche, a
welcome sister for Stephen, Colm, Lisa
and Niamh.

Baby Conan Alexander to Hayley & Martin
McLucas, born on 9th January 2001.

Committee

Maggie O'Neill
Chairperson

June O'Toole
Joint Secretary

Karen Gilligan
Joint Secretary

Mary Lawson
Treasurer

Monica Dunne
Cathy Lynch

FUNDRAISING NEWS

Dorothy Daniels Disco

A huge thank you to Dorothy Daniels from Leixlip who
organised a fundraising disco and raised a whooping
£700 for the Miscarriage Association.

Pub Quiz

Thank you for all who participated in our Fun Night, to
those who generously donated spot prizes and those
who helped out on the night. The Pub Quiz raised
IR£371.89.

General Information

For anyone submitting article, poetry etc. for inclusion in
our newsletters, we wish to inform you that our newsletters
are distributed countrywide to members, hospitals and
interested parties. It is also on the Internet, courtesy of the
Coombe Women's Hospital (www.coombe.ie).

If you wish to use anything from this newsletter, please
contact Maggie O'Neill at 01-4531934 so that we can seek
permission for you to do so.

Public Meetings 2001

DUBLIN

Support Group Meetings will be held in Whitefriar Street Community Centre, Whitefriar Street on:

- Thursday, 5th April, 2001
- Thursday, 3rd May, 2001
- Thursday, 7th June, 2001
- Thursday, 6th September, 2001
- Thursday, 4th October, 2001
- Thursday, 1st November, 2001
- Thursday, 6th December, 2001

Please note that our Book of Remembrance will be available at our March, June, September and December meetings.

Meetings don't take place in the months of July and August but telephone support is always available.

CORK

Monthly meeting in Bon Secours Hospital, College Road, Cork. Second Monday of each month – Bank holidays included 8.00 – 9.30 p.m.

LIMERICK

First Wednesday of each month at Social Services Centre, Henry Street at 8 p.m.

SLIGO

2nd Wednesday of every month in St. Michael's Family Life Centre Churchill, Sligo. (Phone 071-70329)

NEWS ROUND-UP

Our Service of Remembrance

Last year's Service of Remembrance was held on 5th November 2000. This Service, as always, gave parents and other family members the opportunity to remember their lost babies and openly acknowledge their grief with others who have suffered a similar loss.

Although there was torrential rain and storms on this day, the church was full and we would like to thank all those who helped to make the day so successful.

Remembrance Blessings

Our Remembrance Blessings are available by post or at our monthly support group meetings in Dublin. Relatives or friends often wish to give the bereaved parents a gift following the loss of their baby. These little Blessings will be treasured always. We are requesting a donation of £1 per Blessing to cover printing costs etc.

Renewal of Membership

If your membership is due for renewal, please fill in the enclosed membership form and return it to us. If you would consider becoming a member, we would be very grateful, as we are a totally voluntary organisation. Our annual subscription is IR£10.

Our AGM

All paid up members are welcome to our AGM which takes place on Saturday, 28th April, 2001 in Whitefriar Street Community Centre at 12 noon.

Ladies' Mini-Marathon

The Ladies' Mini-Marathon takes place on Monday, June 4th. If you are able to participate or obtain sponsorship for this event, please contact us at Carmichael Centre.

Opinions & Contact

We hope to set up an opinion page for our Autumn/Winter newsletter. Please send us in anything you may have a strong opinion on regarding miscarriage e.g. treatment in hospital, after care, future pregnancy, infertility etc.

If you would like to contact someone with a similar problem, this column would give you the opportunity to do so.

Please mark your envelope "Opinion/ Contact Page MAI".

Fancing losing a few pounds while helping the Miscarriage Association gain some?

We'd be thrilled if you would consider running, walking or simply crawling on your hands and knees across the finish line of this year's Ladies' Mini-Marathon for the Miscarriage Association of Ireland.

The event takes place on Bank Holiday Monday June 4th and all sponsorship material will magically appear if you just contact any Committee Member.

DIARY DATES

Saturday 28th April

AGM at 12 noon

Monday 4th June

Ladies' Mini-Marathon

Sunday 11th November

Service of Remembrance at 3.00 p.m. in St. Teresa's Church, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8.

Saturday 17th November 2001

Street collection in Grafton Street from 10am to 2pm.

Closing Date for next Newsletter **30th September 2001**. Please mark all envelopes "NEWSLETTER".

Please include name, address and a contact phone number. Your name does not have to be included in the article in you wish to remain anonymous.

Maybe you would consider helping our organisation by giving of your time to help us on occasions such as fundraising and other events?

Or maybe you may feel ready for a bigger commitment and would consider coming on board as a committee member?

Although our work deals with such sensitive issues all committee members, past and present, find the work very rewarding. Our monthly support meetings are only the tip of the iceberg as regards the work that we do. If you would like to talk further on this matter please feel free to contact us.

**REMEMBER THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER AND WE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE ANY POEMS, ARTICLES, EVENTS etc. YOU WISH TO CONTRIBUTE FOR INCLUSION. THE MISCARRIAGE ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND CAN BE CONTACTED AT:
The Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. Telephone: 8735702/8725550/8722914. Fax: 8735737**