

Editor's Letter

Welcome to the Christmas and New Year issue of Society News. I had a very relaxing holiday in Sharm el Sheikh, just chilling out, if that's the right expression considering that the temperatures were in the high 90's, by the pool or snorkelling in the lovely warm sea just watching the lovely fish. We've been to Sharm so many times now that there's really not much point in writing about it, as we don't do anything really unusual or exciting. Now I'm about to go into the James Cook Hospital in Middlesbrough for surgery on my neck, so I'll be out of action until January at least.

The New Year looks as though it's going to get off to a busy start as my job has been advertised and the sub-committee will have to work through the applications and arrange interviews. I'll be busy making sure that everything is up to date for my successor and getting ready to retire at the end of March. My husband retires in January, and I'll be 65 on 12th February, so we're looking forward to spending time together from April onwards, and making plans for how we're going to spend our time.

So I'll just finish with best wishes to all our readers and listeners for a very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year from staff and Trustees.

Viv

Local News

Coffee Morning

Just a reminder to say that there will be no coffee mornings until about March or April next year, depending on the weather, thank you very much for your continued support throughout this year.

100 Club Winners

The 100 club winners for the £10 draw in November are: 4th No 24 M. Barwell, No 80 A. Palmer, 11th No 44 E. Clarke, No 63 G. Grimshaw, 18th No 14 B. Springall, No 54 B. Heald, 25th No 32 S. Stanley, No 86 K. Braim, the £25 winner was No 6 D. Douglas and the £100 winner was No 9 L. Van der Lee.

Our lottery has been running for over ten years, all the profits go straight to the Society to help to provide the services on offer. If you'd like to join, the cost is £1 per week or each number, there are two prizes of £10 each week, with an extra £25 at the end of each month and £100 at the end of May and the end of November.

Contact Jackie at the centre on 01723 354417 for more details.

Guide Dog Owners meet at the Centre on the first Wednesday of each month except for January and August, with trainers from the Middlesbrough GDBA Centre. All guide dog owners and their dogs are welcome, as are any members thinking about applying for a guide dog. This is a very friendly and sociable group which is growing all the time. Please remember that there will not be a meeting January.

Macular Support Group meets every two months at Scarborough Library for General meetings and on the alternate months the Book Club meets there.

Whitby Talking News is full of local news and interesting items about Whitby, and is produced monthly. If you would like to receive the tape from them please contact Keith Sleightholme on 01947 810628. The Whitby Talking News do provide a tape recorder if you require one.

Local Audio Book Service

A free service of audio books is available on Pen-Drive, Normal Audio CD or tape, with a choice of more than 400 books in their library. For more details or an audio book list or to donate audio books, contact Joyce or Keith on 01723 377524.

Dates for your diary

Thursday 22nd December the Resource Centre and the charity shop will close for the Xmas period, re-opening on Tuesday 3rd January. We'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year from all the staff, volunteers and Trustees.

Second User items for Sale

Black and white 14" Telesensory Reader for sale, with sliding table, the cost is £25 o.n.o.

Merlin cctv reader 19" screen, £400 or near offer

Colour Aladdin Reader for sale at £50 o.n.o.

'Presto' by Ash Technology, a cctv reader with a screen that folds down flat on to the base, £700 o.n.o.

Max cctv reader which plugs into your television set and magnifies up to thirty times the original size, offer around £40 accepted.

We have a wide range of other smaller, second user items on display for you to browse through and find a bargain.

Unwanted Jewellery items, old stamps and coins

A reminder that we're still collecting used stamps and old coins, both British and foreign, and unwanted jewellery so please search through your cupboards and drawers to see what may be hiding. Collection points are - the Resource Centre on Dean Road or at our Charity Shop at 66 Falsgrave Road, Scarborough.

What's New

Bierley Mobile phone, priced at only £50.00.

It has large numbered keys, a radio, text magnifier, an emergency call button and is hearing aid compliant. Approximately 2" by 4" it weighs just a few ounces.

Radio controlled talking clock with remote temperature sensor

A talking clock, colour is brushed-gold with brown wood effect edges, with a large digital display (LCD) which announces the time, date, indoor and outside temperature in a pleasant, natural female English voice.

The time and date are set automatically from radio signals. It can also be set manually and this is essential

for use outside the UK. The digital display shows the time, date or temperature depending on which mode you enter. Digits measure 4cm (1.75 inches) high. All setting functions are spoken and the time is announced "it's six minutes to two pm" rather than 1.54pm. Optional snooze alarm and hourly report, which when activated announces the time on the hour every hour.

It is supplied with a remote sensor, which you can fix to a wall, for reading the outside temperature, which is fitted with two AAA batteries and indoor temperature measured by in-built sensor within clock and is priced at £56.99.

Digital talking calendar watch

Talking watch that announces the time and date in a synthetic male American voice, and is fitted with a black leather strap, large size only.

The date is announced as day, month, date and year, the LCD shows the time with digits measuring 0.8cm high. You can choose between three alarm sounds and 12/24 hour time. It also has a countdown timer. The price is £17.50

2012 Calendars and Diaries

We now have our 2012 Calendars for sale at £4.50, VIP diaries at £4.95 and A4 size desk diaries at £10 each.

For more information or to order any of the above please contact Yvonne on 01723 354417

Christmas Cards and Crafts

Handmade Christmas cards are on sale at the Resource Centre, including some with lovely photographs of the Scarborough and Whitby areas.

Why not pop in and have a look for yourself? We also have a good choice of handmade cards for all occasions at reasonable prices.

Amongst our craft items for sale we have traditional knitted tea cosies in various sizes, aprons and pinafores, knitted blankets, dressed dolls, peg bags, handicraft bags, toilet roll cover dolls, knitted dishcloths and much more, do please call in to have a look, you might just find what you need or something to buy as a present.

“The Dispensary” in Whitby

November 24th saw the launch of a new business in Whitby, called “The Dispensary”, and situated at 6 Hunter Street, just off Skinner Street. It’s a natural medicine store with clinic space and an online natural health site containing natural health information and products.

James Fearnley, Director, says “We believe that health is about more than just being able to get the right therapy or medicine. We believe that it is about being able to access those social and cultural groups which make a difference in your life. We want to promote healthy living in every sense and encourage people to get involved with something they have a passion for, whether it be something directly associated the health, such as a sports group, or something which they enjoy and promotes well-being such as cooking lessons, singing in a choir, learning new things or being part of a help or support group”. James also intends the business to include a comprehensive local directory of clubs, societies, teaching courses, self-help groups, etc, that can be accessed by everyone, on its website, free of charge.

For more information call in to “The Dispensary” or visit the website at www.thedispensary.org.uk/clubs.

An Update on Electric Mobility Scooters

Following up on an earlier report on the consultation about legislating the use such scooters.

The Secretary of State for Transport was recently asked in Parliament when she plans to announce the results of her Department's consultation on proposed changes to legislation governing powered mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs. The reply made by Norman Baker, MP was “The Department's full response to the consultation will be published as soon as possible. Following careful consideration and analysis of all the responses received, I have asked my officials to undertake further work with transport operators, the industry and user group representatives on the following issues:

options for training and incentives for vehicle users to take up training;

a possible minimum eyesight requirement and incentives for users to meet these requirements;

the case for increasing the unladen weight limit for powered wheelchairs only;

the carriage of mobility scooters on public transport;

improved guidance and information for mobility vehicle users; and

replacing the legal term “invalid carriage” with a more suitable and contemporary term, and a review of how current legislation could be better enforced.

These issues will be considered in relation to the aims of the Red Tape Challenge.

We’re particularly pleased about the possible introduction of minimum eyesight requirements, and we’ll keep you up to date with developments.

Viv’s Jottings

I haven’t done any jottings for a long time, but I was spurred to write this one as I looked out of my window in mid-September.

It’s 7 o’clock in the evening, the sun is just setting and sky is ablaze with the lovely colours of an autumn sunset as I sit at my computer looking out over a green field. A small boy runs onto the field, followed by a man with a push chair, his dad I think. They’ve got a kite, in the simple shape of a bird.

Dad hands the kite string to the little boy and walks away from him until he's gone far enough to launch the kite into the air. And away it goes, just sufficient wind to hold it up there, with the little boy controlling it. Dad walks over to the pushchair and unfastens a little tot of a girl, she toddles over to the boy and he gets down on his knees to let her hold the kite string. Both of them are entranced by the flying kite until it takes a sudden nosedive to the ground. Dad runs to set the kite off into the air again.

Fifteen minutes later and they are still enjoying themselves flying the kite, then someone lets go of the string and the kite makes a dash for freedom, frantically followed by dad who manages to catch up with it as son launches himself into a rugby attack to land on it.

The sky darkens, they pick up the kite and saunter happily off the field, the little one running along and followed by dad with the pushchair.

It's the simple things in life that are so good, a dad takes time to take his children out to play with a kite, they all enjoy each other's company, the children go home to get ready for bed after enjoying the fresh air and exercise.

The scene could be set anywhere, it could even be being replayed on another playing field in another town. Where, I wonder, will families be able to play like this in the future, as our green spaces rapidly disappear under bricks and mortar? And it's served to reinforce to me just why we're fighting so hard to keep our much-loved playing field for the purpose it was intended for all those years ago by the Whitby Urban District Council.

If you haven't guessed by now, I'm referring to Helredale Playing Field, we haven't given up the fight, we're just getting ready for the next stage of the battle. And to the unknown Dad who took his family out onto the field that evening, I salute you, you're a shining example of parenthood, and I wish many more would follow your example.

“Annie” the musical

Action for Blind People and the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds are delighted to present an audio-described matinee performance of the musical “Annie”, including the songs “It's the Hard Knock Life, Easy Street and Tomorrow”, on Thursday 12th January 2012.

Set at Christmas in 1933, Annie escapes the clutches of Miss Hannigan with the help of her friends at the orphanage and sets off to find her parents. She soon finds herself a new, best friend, an offer of adoption from billionaire Mr Warbucks, and even a meeting with President FD Roosevelt. But once Annie hits the news Miss Hannigan and her scheming brother Rooster are soon back on her trail!

There is a small charge of £5 per adult towards the cost of the day (usual price per ticket £21). Visually impaired children and one sibling will be free of charge, though there will be a charge of £5 each for any additional brothers or sisters. As before, there will be a chance for children to meet the cast and touch the costumes and props and a free light lunch will be provided at the theatre. The performance starts at 1.30pm.

Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis, so if you'd like to book please contact the Resource Centre for an application form which must be completed and sent with full payment to Action for Blind People, full details on the form.

Winter Fuel Payments

Winter Fuel Payments are yearly, tax-free sums given each winter to help people cover their fuel bills. You don't have to be getting any benefits to qualify for the payments. However, you do need to have reached the qualifying age in the qualifying week (19-25 September) and to be ordinarily resident in the UK.

Winter Fuel Payments are different to Cold Weather Payments and you may be eligible for both.

To receive the Winter Fuel Payment in 2011-12, you must have been born on or before January 5 1951.

If you're 80 or over on or before 25 September 2011, you'll receive a larger payment than younger claimants.

If you were born after January 5 1951, you'll become eligible for Winter Fuel Payment in future when you reach the qualifying age. Between now and 2020, the qualifying age will gradually move from 60 to 65. This is the same as your qualifying age for Pension Credit, which you can check by using the pension age calculator on the Directgov website.

In 2011-12, Winter Fuel Payment is a tax-free payment of £300 for each household if you were born on or before September 25 1931, or £200 for people born between September 26 1931 and January 5 1951 inclusive.

You must be ordinarily resident in the UK and you won't receive payment if you've been a hospital inpatient for more than a year, you're serving a prison sentence or you're living in a care home and receiving Pension Credit or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. You won't be paid if you're subject to immigration control in the qualifying week.

Payment should be automatic. However, the Department for Work and Pensions may not identify you as being eligible if you're not already getting benefits (particularly if you're a man aged 60-65). In this case, you may need to claim. You'll only need to claim once, and payments will be automatic after this.

Payment is normally made in November but could be as late as Christmas. If you haven't been paid by the end of December, contact the Pension Service in January. You can call the Pension Service on 08456 060 265 (textphone 0800 731 7339). It is possible to claim for some (but not all) previous winters. You can find more details by calling the Winter Fuel Payments helpline on 08459 151 515 (textphone 08456 015 613).

You count as living in a care home if you've been in the care home for the 13 weeks up to and including the qualifying week. If so, you'll only receive half the Winter Fuel Payment. However, if you get Pension Credit or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, you won't get any payment.

A Puppy's Christmas

It's the day before Christmas, and all through the house, the puppies are squeaking an old rubber mouse.

The wreath which had merrily hung on the door, is scattered in pieces, all over the floor.

The stockings that hung, in a neat little row, now boast a hole in each one of the toes.

The tree was subjected to bright-eyed whims, and now, although splendid, it's missing some limbs.

I catch them and hold them, "Be good" I insist, they lick me, then run off, to see what they've missed.

And now as I watch them, the thought comes to me, that their's is the spirit, that Christmas should be.

Should children and puppies yet show us the way, and teach us the joy, that should come with this day?

Could they bring the message, that's written above, and tell us that, most of all, Christmas is love.

Recipe

Scottish Highland Shortbread.

Shortbread is often made at Christmas time, wrapped in greaseproof paper, placed in a nice festive tin and given away as presents. This shortbread is made in one piece in a tin and then cut into wedges. The optional addition of fine semolina gives it a crunchier texture.

You will need:

Six ounces, 175 g, butter at room temperature,
three ounces, 75 g, caster sugar,
six ounces, 175 g, plain flour sifted,
three ounces, 75 g, three level tablespoons of fine
semolina (optional),
icing sugar for dusting.
A little extra butter to grease your tin.
Extra flour for dredging.

Pre-heat the oven to gas mark 2, 300 f, 150 c, 130 fan.
grease an eight inch, 20 cm, fluted loose bottomed
flan tin, or, alternatively, you can use an oblong tin
measuring 11 by 7 inches, 28 by 18 cm, usually known
as a Swiss roll tin or shallow baking tray.

First of all, beat the butter in a bowl to soften it, then beat in the caster sugar, followed by the sifted flour and the semolina.

Mix the ingredients together with the spoon, pressing it against the sides of the bowl. Finish bringing it together into a ball with your hands until you have a soft dough that doesn't leave any bits behind in the bowl.

Next, transfer the dough to a floured work surface and roll it out very gently with a floured rolling pin into a circle or an oblong, giving it a quarter turn as you roll, to help keep its shape. The dough will need to be the same size as the flan tin or Swiss roll tin when you put it the wrong side up on top of the dough.

Transfer it into the tin, Lightly pressing it right into the base and sides. Making sure that it is pressed right into the fluted edges of the flan tin which will give the shortbread an even shape and an attractive appearance when it's cooked.

Prick the shortbread all over with a fork, this is to prevent the dough from rising up in the tin while its cooking. Bake for one to one and a quarter hours on the centre shelf of your oven. Don't worry as the shortbread will still be pale in colour and soft to the

touch when the time is up and its ready to come out. Remove the tin from the oven and put it on a firm, heatproof surface, because you are now going to use a round bladed knife to mark out the shortbread into twelve wedges or fingers while its still warm.

Leave it to cool in the tin, then turn it out onto a large plate, cut or break the wedges apart, dust with icing sugar and store in an airtight tin. If you're anything like me and love shortbread, it won't be stored for very long, if at all, smile.

If you want to turn it into a dessert and make a strawberry shortcake, make a round of shortbread as above, leaving it in one piece after it has been cooked, Spread it with whipped double cream or fromage frais and top with halved fresh strawberries, just before serving.

Happy cooking,
Sue.

Thanks to Sue's kitchen for this seasonal recipe.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information in this newsletter. However, Scarborough Blind Society can accept no liability whatsoever for any matters arising from or connected with the use of this information. No recommendation is implied by the insertion of such information.