

# NEWSLETTER

## Lockdown Issue 2

### **Greetings**

Very little has changed since the last newsletter, we are still “locked in” particularly in Wales which has responded in some areas differently to those in England (this may of course have changed by the time you read this newsletter!?)

It is still difficult to envisage meetings being held in the foreseeable future.

### **Head Office News**

Letter received from John Rostill, Chief Executive on 20<sup>th</sup> May:

The Fellowship Newsletter that you recently received will be followed up on a monthly basis beginning in June.

The Board of Trustees met recently (by teleconference) which made 3 decisions that you should be aware of:

1. Annual Conference due to be held in Manchester at the end of October has been cancelled.
2. Therefore the Annual General Meeting which was due to be held as part of the Conference has been deferred when a new date will be considered at the next Board of Trustees meeting in late September.
3. Capitation Fee. Given that some of the running costs of the Fellowship continue, it was thought that a reasonable reduction of this current year would be 50%, in other words, the Capitation Fee will be reduced to £10. *ALSO*

Central Office will re-open at the beginning of June.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of May over 100 members “tuned” into the talk about VE Day online. Feedback was very positive and a second talk “Gongoozling for Beginners” (a light hearted journey around some of the 2000 miles of navigable waterways in Britain in a narrowboat) will take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. These talks are free. To register go to [www.mirthy.co.uk/NHSRF](http://www.mirthy.co.uk/NHSRF). Talks will be fortnightly during lockdown.

### **Branch News**

As outlined above, we will be forwarding our year end Accounts (audited) and Capitation Fees for 2019 / 2020 at the beginning of June.

The Annual Conference held normally in Llandrindod Wells in September, had already been cancelled. There will be instead two smaller conferences to be held in South & North Wales, venues and dates to be announced.

To date we have not paid a hire fee for St. Brigid’s Hall, all potential dates for the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month are pencilled in and will be confirmed if and when we have a date to re-convene our monthly meetings.

Capitation Fee. As outlined in the statement from head office there will be a reduction from £20 to £10 per member for 2020 / 2021. Our primary income stream is the membership fee, currently £25 single and £40 joint. In return this year, there will have been little or no benefit for your fee.

A decision will be made as to how the fee for both this year and next will be calculated and paid. If the capitation fee for this year is finally settled on £10 then our year end statement will more than likely show a loss.

However, we have been prudent over the years with our finances, which are currently healthy and we can therefore cover any loss from our existing balance.

It is of course, at an early stage of the financial year and we will hopefully have a clearer picture as the current position evolves.

Please continue to e-mail me details of how you have been *surviving* the lockdown; hopefully your contribution will make this newsletter more entertaining and informative to read.

If and when we find the “keys” and we can escape our current situation, I will do the following (listed in alphabetical order):

1. Ashton Gate - home of Bristol City FC & Bristol Bears RFC
2. Grandchildren – hopefully by mid-June travel restrictions will be lifted in time for the youngest 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday, who is somewhat confused that our *Facetime* meetings are due to an “infection”!!!!?
3. Haircut – this time at the barbers (although the sparrows found the white hair cuttings to “feather” their nest in April useful)
4. Holiday – ANYWHERE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



**Norman**

### **NHSRF Membership Cards**

NHSRF has arranged for members to get a variety of discounts / special deals with a number of organisations and firms. To qualify for these you will need to confirm your membership by showing your card (distributed in the last Fellowship Newsletter) or quoting your membership number. Previously they issued a new card each year but have decided that this year will be the last one issued automatically – so look after it. Benefits include:

- Benevolent fund open to all members.
- Personal injury legal advice via Thompson’s solicitors.
- Regular communication via newsletter and websites (National [www.nhsrf.org.uk](http://www.nhsrf.org.uk) and Branch [www.nhsrfcardiff.org](http://www.nhsrfcardiff.org) level).
- Worldwide Annual Travel Insurance specifically designed for NHSRF members.
- Special deals for car and home insurance with the Civil Service Insurance Society.
- Access to membership of the Civil Service Club accommodation in London.
- The Fellowship annual overseas holiday and special UK breaks in spring and summer.
- Discounted travel with Riviera Travel and Fred Olsen Cruise Lines.
- UK Cottage Holidays at 10% members discount.
- Regular members’ photographic competitions with cash prizes.
- Annual one day Golf competition at St Pierre Golf & Country Club.
- Health Service Discounts available to our members as well as current NHS staff.
- Free independent advice on Tax matters via volunteer staff.

Further information about any of these can be obtained from:

NHSRF Head Office, Weymouth Community Hospital, 3 Melcombe Avenue, Weymouth DT4 7TB  
T/p 01305 361617

**Bob Holbrook**



### **Gaining Appetite** from *the Goodalls*

We have been trying to do our regular walk each day, usually around Cardiff Bay, avoiding joggers, cyclists and other walkers. We have also been brushing up our culinary skills producing meals from scratch including some good soups with hand picked local wild garlic and nettles. We are however missing our swimming, Tai Chi, holidays and meeting all our friends at our monthly NHS Fellowship meetings! Look forward to seeing you all again when this lockdown is over!

*Julie, in control. Ian is chief leaf-chopper, peeler and grater.*

## Lockdown bike riding from *Andy Mardell*

I am not one to blow my own trumpet, not least because I do not possess one. But I do think that I was ahead of my time in becoming a regular cyclist in the mid-eighties. Back then I was unusual and regarded as a bit of a freak no doubt. There was very little by way of road infrastructure for cyclists and UHW lacked any decent places to leave a bike. I have to admit that I took up cycling as an economic necessity as my significant other decided to become a community nurse and would not entertain visiting patients in their own homes using a bike. Being impoverished nurses, we could not justify a second car for me to drive the one and a half miles from our house to UHW. So, a second-hand bike was the order of the day for my short commute and for generally getting around. In more recent years it has been so good to see more people taking to two wheels no doubt inspired by the success of professional British cyclists in the Tour de France and other grand tour races. I am no longer regarded as the weirdo! While the current pandemic is beyond awful in general for those of us on two wheels the decrease in traffic on the roads has been something we might only have once dreamed about. I have also seen so many families with small children out and about now that there are fewer vehicles on the roads. Locally around Cardiff there are moves to make further provision for cyclists, which I wholeheartedly support.



On a whim, and a reasonable day weather wise, I made my way up past Roath Park Lake and via Llanishen to the Ty Mawr pub near Lisvane. I took my binoculars with me essentially to have a look at the view over the Bristol Channel, although it was a rather hazy and I could not make out the English coastline. Either that or it had been moved for the day under current Coronavirus legislation. I sat at one of the tables outside the closed pub with my water bottle and took in the fresh air.



As I gazed up, I could see a buzzard circling quite high up. It disappeared and then seemed to reappear with its mate even higher up, almost in the cloud, and then they disappeared from sight. Then, in the other direction I saw a sparrowhawk hovering quite close by. Clearly it spotted that I was reaching for my phone to get a photo as it then, as quick as flash, flew towards Cardiff swung right around and came back close to the same spot again, and then away. It was a rare moment of engagement with nature which frankly would have been all the more tranquil had it not been for the rumble of essential vehicles on the nearby M4. I was just packing up to go when I heard an almighty kerfuffle (which might have even been a brouhaha) of a corvidian nature emanating from a nearby tree. The crows were agitated and I saw why as a magpie was lurking around what was almost certainly their nest area. It all settled quite quickly and I made my way back down the hill.



Inspired by this wonderful brush with nature I ventured back a few days later and was not disappointed; I was greeted with the sight of a red kite circling as I cycled up Graig Road towards the pub. I got to the seating area and the kite seemed to follow me there and gave me a beautiful aerial display at one point swooping down close to the ground but not returning with a catch. I watched for a little longer and saw the kite being mobbed by a crow, presumably as the kite was perceived by the crow as getting just a little too close to its nesting area. I am aware that red kites are now common in many parts of southern England, but this was the first time I had seen one in south Wales.

On another fine day and I thought I'd make the same trip but this time no raptors were observed and even the crows failed to put in an appearance. I did see a few sparrows and possibly a couple of swallows or maybe they

were swifts, I don't think they were house martins. So that was a slight disappointment but one that I feel I will get over in time. My experience with the fellowship's ornithology 'wing' has stood me in good stead to at least recognise a few birds.



## A Study in Water from Janet Carder

I discovered a small patch of water on the Study desk, when I was cleaning in the study on Monday March 30th. Derek and I could not account for it and thought no more until the following Monday when Derek came downstairs and found a picture had come down from the wall and landed on the printer on his desk. At that point he noticed bubbles on the wallpaper where the picture had been hanging. He then looked up to the ceiling and saw a pencil size hole, with a small amount of water dripping from the ceiling. We were both aghast when I joined him to view the drip and realised that's where the pool of water on the desk had come from.



We put a bowl on the desk to catch the drips and then Derek enlarged the hole slightly to see if he could find the source of the problem. He knew the central heating pipes were there but was unable to find a leaking pipe. He then decided to contact SSE our Heating Services Company. It was at that point we realised that our landline phone was not working. We first thought it was a flat battery on that handset then discovered not one of our phones was working. We could not believe our misfortune; here in the middle of lockdown, in a pandemic, with water coming through our study ceiling and we cannot use our phone to get help. There was a major fault in one of the BT roadside branch boxes. Due to lockdown it was difficult for them to trace the fault and, to add Insult to injury, we were without our home telephone system for nearly two weeks. For once I was thankful for mobile phones.

Derek got through to SSE Services, but as well as being in Lockdown, being April 6<sup>th</sup>, it was also Easter Monday so only minimal engineers on duty. They were unable to give a time but would send an engineer - who eventually arrived around 5pm. After some discussion and looking at the floor in the bedroom above, it was decided to try and locate the leak by removing part of the study ceiling. Derek broke the news, while I listened with bated breath!

The engineer was quick to inform us that while he could repair the leak he was not able, or authorised, to remove the ceiling. So in the event that task had to fall to Derek. I wondered what would have happened if I had been in the house on my own as I could never have done that!

Derek then had to use the stepladder to reach the sodden ceiling, and try to cut it away with a saw. He managed to get half way across and as he did so the water flow increased and then, you've guessed it, the WHOLE LOT; CEILING, PLASTER, and WATER, all came crashing down!

I was mortified by the mess. But at least now we could see where the water was coming from - a radiator pipe above, under the bedroom window, five feet away from where it had leaked onto the desk. The water probably had been leaking for a long time and quietly accumulating in the ceiling above. A horrible, frightening thought!



We then realised what a mammoth task we had in front of us in that we would need to completely empty the study in order for the repair work to take place! We looked at each other in despair. I couldn't bear the thought of it. After a couple of days of avoiding the room altogether we decided we would have to make a start.

What I am about to list and describe is just a fraction of the contents that we came across - I am not joking. As Derek opened the drawers and started pulling out the files, we carried them into the dining room and then set about destroying the paperwork. It was far too much for a paper shredder so we set about tearing it up by hand. My hands were aching from repeated ripping of paper!

After a stint of two and a half hours we both had to retreat for a lunch break. I thought of my nursing colleagues presently working on Covid wards, and how they must feel wearing that PPE uniform for hours at a time!

As we waded through the stuff in the study these are some of the things we came across: Printing paper and two printers, Packs of paper, pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, paintbrushes, paperclips, polypockets, paper envelopes, plastic envelopes, pictures, picture postcards, photographs and photo albums, and those are just the items beginning with letter 'P'. The only thing I had beginning with 'P' was my 'patience', and that was rapidly running out. I always knew that Derek was a hoarder but this was ridiculous!

We continued to do two hour stints over the next two weeks. As the green bags filled with paper rubbish we carried them outside where they stood like trophies on the patio.

No need to ask what we have been doing during the lockdown. At last I can say we have finally finished, as all the items of books, files, CDs, DVDs, pictures, etc., sit in boxes in the dining room waiting until we move them all back in again. I am not volunteering for that! Another reason why I will never forget this Coronavirus lockdown!

Today, May 26<sup>th</sup>, we are still looking at the large hole in our ceiling. The study is empty and all the boxes of files and folders still piled up on our dining room table. A rep from the building company is coming to make an assessment next week, and a carpet inspection is programmed for early June. Again I am waiting with bated breath for them to tell us when we can have our study repaired and redecorated.



## Bay Walking Group from *Bob Holbrook*

Usually the group meet regularly on Tuesday morning for a chat and a walk around the Cardiff Bay. At the beginning of lockdown it was decided to try starting a *WhatsApp* group so that we could all remain in touch. Every Tuesday morning we message each other and send pictures about what walks we have done and anything interesting seen.

Bob and Sheila (Bradley) phone everyone including Christine (Lewis) who is not in the *WhatsApp* group as she does not have a Smartphone. Hilary (Fairney) and Sharon (Roth) sent pictures of the homemade facemasks they had made.

Carole (Harse) has been sending pictures and video of the Canada Geese and Goslings seen on her daily exercise in Roath Park. I cycled to the Bay to check activity in the wetland area, as we often call in on our walks to see the Swans and Coots.



Communication is not confined to Tuesdays as texts about decorating, re-upholstering etc. and jokes are often exchanged. We are fortunate that, apart from the first week, Cardiff have kept all our local parks open except that, due to social distancing pressure, they recently closed the bridge over the Blackweir which I use to get to Pontcanna and Llandaff Fields.

