



NEWSLETTER



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Left: Branch members enjoy a relaxing pre-Christmas lunch at the Mill House in Salfords on November 22nd

From Joan Robinson, Branch Chair



At the time of writing the future of the NHSRF is uncertain and rests in its members' hands. In the New Year, you will receive, along with your national newsletter, papers for a national ballot for you to have your say on whether the Fellowship should continue.

Since I was unable to make the journey to Birmingham for the National AGM, Janet Lambley represented our branch at the meeting when the future of the Fellowship was debated. Her reports on the AGM and on the Members' Event held at Woking on November 3rd follow. They provide the background to the situation to help you decide how to use your vote.

At present, though, it is nevertheless business as usual for our branch. As we have supported Macmillan Cancer Support for the last few years, our branch committee have decided that in 2017 we will support a charity chosen by a majority of branch members. Your ballot paper for indicating your choice is enclosed with your Christmas card.

At our Branch AGM next May, to comply with NHSRF procedures, a new treasurer, chair and secretary must be proposed, seconded and elected. Margaret Steele is resigning as treasurer. I am willing to continue as chair and secretary if this is your wish, but we will have to go through the proposal procedure. A proposal form is enclosed with your Christmas card. Please return branch proposal forms and ballot papers to me as soon as possible.

I wish every member a happy Christmas and hope that 2017 is a healthy one for you all.

Janet Lambley reports on the Members' Event in Woking and the National AGM

On November 3rd Margaret Steele and I and about 100 other members from NHSRF branches across the South attended an event in Woking to hear the top team set out their plans to resolve to Fellowship's situation.

John Rostill, CEO, explained that since the Fellowship, a charity since 1983, no longer receives a grant from NHS England, it must become financially self-sufficient or cease to exist. The Board of Trustees, responsible for managing finance and ensuring enough reserves to survive a crisis, came to the conclusions John set out in his July letter:

- To continue in its present form, the Fellowship needs an annual capitation fee of £20
- If capitation is not increased, the Fellowship must close.

Members must be involved in deciding the Fellowship's future so ballot papers for a vote will be sent out with the national newsletter in January. The closing date will be in late February or early March. John urged everyone to vote early, before mislaying the papers. He made these points about the ballot and the consequences:

- It will be run by an independent organisation
- Branches can't instruct members how to vote
- If the majority decision is to continue, capitation, the part of your subscription going to Head Office, will increase to £20 from 2018
- If the majority is in favour of closure, the Constitution sets out that there must be an Extraordinary General Meeting, with 28 days' notice and a two-thirds majority by branch ballot.

John reported an apparent groundswell of opinion at the members' events in favour of the Fellowship's continuation.

At the AGM on November 30th, there was a lively debate about the Fellowship's future, with some very vocal branches threatening to leave the Fellowship and become associations of retired NHS staff. Others wanted the Fellowship to continue, albeit with changes in how it is run and promoted to NHS staff. There were positive suggestions for how branches could cope with the increased capitation fee. I had to leave shortly before the debate ended but there can be no certainty until after members have voted in the new year. If you want to read the head office question-and-answer sheet to help you decide how to vote, please contact me. *The Fellowship's future is in your hands.*

Sandra Farrington remembers Christmas as a midwifery sister at Kingston Hospital



Above: Sandra and her colleagues in festive mood on Christmas Day 1986

I retired from midwifery in 2001 after many years at Kingston Hospital. I trained to become a midwife later than most of my colleagues because after qualifying as a State Registered Nurse aged 21, I decided to bring up my family before training to be a midwife.

Christmas on the maternity wards in the 1980s was very different from my experience as a student nurse in the 1960s. On the run up to the festive season the staff decorated the maternity wards. Each had its own Christmas tree. We received many gifts of chocolates, biscuits and food from patients and relatives. Staff brought in food on Christmas Day and the kitchen made a cake for each ward. We decorated our uniforms with tinsel and wore Christmas earrings, which cheered up everyone.

On Christmas Eve we put red crepe paper shades around the patients' lights to set the festive mood. Carol singers made their way around all the wards carrying lanterns and wearing their hospital cloaks inside out showing the bright red lining. Patients, relatives and staff joined in the carol singing. It was very moving and many a tear was shed. The great excitement on the labour ward was to see which mother would give birth to the 'Christmas Baby.' A special crib with white drapes was kept for this baby who was a star for the day. The local paper sent a photographer to record the event for their next issue.

On Christmas morning as many mums and babies as possible were discharged home to be with their loved ones. Those remaining were allowed visitors all day - a special treat in those times of restricted visiting. Relatives of staff also came on Christmas Day to celebrate but would go early to put on the Christmas dinner. The Mayor of Kingston visited during the morning, and at the end of the shift we went home to our families to enjoy what was left of Christmas Day.

Autumn outings to the Foundling Museum and Windsor Castle with thanks to organisers Deanne and Bob

A talk in 2015 by Jane Wise from the Foundling Museum whetted members' appetites to see the Museum and learn about the Foundling Hospital. Consequently, 17 members travelled to the Museum, close to Russell Square in London, where Jane met us for a conducted tour. Jane explained that the Hospital itself, the first UK children's charity to be incorporated by royal charter, was demolished in the 1930s, but some of its magnificent features, including the staircase and the Court Room with its splendid ceiling and plasterwork, were saved and installed in the Museum. The site of the hospital chapel, scene of many performances of Handel's music, is now a playing field, saved in perpetuity for London's children. Adults may not go through the gates unless accompanied by at least one child.

Jane showed us the splendid paintings donated to the hospital by artists including Hogarth, Gainsborough and Reynolds. The hospital housed the first public art gallery in England. The gallery and concerts attracted the wealthy donors on whom the hospital depended for its work of caring for abandoned children. Donors could also visit the hospital to see the children eating their Sunday dinners. Children were not allowed to talk at meal times and were expected to eat all their food. A temporary exhibition gave us an insight into the children's diet, the plates and cutlery they used and how boys helped to grow vegetables.



After the guided tour, members enjoyed a delicious lunch in the Museum café before travelling back to Redhill, where the hospital was temporarily based from 1926 to 1937 when a new school was opened in Berkhamstead.

Left: Margaret Steele displays a girl's uniform dress from the 18th century

A bus-load of members enjoyed an autumn day out when the highlight was visiting the State Apartments at Windsor Castle. Besides the attractions of the magnificent Waterloo Chamber and St George's Hall, the Apartments currently included an exhibition of the Queen's outfits from the 1950s to the present. Our visit enabled us to get close up to the details glimpsed in photographs, newsreels and on TV and we marvelled at the wonderful beadwork and embroidery on ball gowns designed by Norman Hartnell and Hardy Amies. All the outfits had been made for specific occasions; some of them had particularly significant decorations for reasons of diplomacy. For example, the bodice of the white gown Her Majesty wore during the state visit to the Irish Republic in 2014 was covered with white shamrocks and had a diamante Irish harp brooch on one shoulder. The exhibition even included the orange straw hat the Queen wore on the third day of Ascot this year.



Right: Changing the Guard at Windsor Castle

Although the Queen's outfits were the climax of the tour of the State Apartments, the first part was just as fascinating for detail but in a very different way. Queen Mary's Dolls' House, a perfect replica of an aristocratic home built in the 1920s by the architect Sir Edward Lutyens, is a breath-taking introduction to the tour. All the details of a great house from the days of Downton Abbey from the kitchen and wine cellar in the basements to the day nursery on the top floor and the lawnmower in the garden were created in miniature. It doesn't matter whether Queen Mary actually played with it, visitors from around the world can now enjoy the exquisite craftsmanship that went into making it.

Gertrude Titheridge 1928 -2016

Sadly, Gertrude passed away on 27th October following a short illness. Gertrude had a varied career, starting her training at the old Charing Cross Hospital. She then moved to the St John Hospital before qualifying as a midwife. Gertrude worked for a while in Bombay before coming to live in Redhill where she worked at Redhill General Hospital.



Reminder: New Year's Lunch at 12:30 on January 10th 2017 at the Reigate Manor Hotel.

Branch meetings open at 10:00 on the second Tuesday each month at Reigate Baptist Church
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