



NEWSLETTER



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Picture shows an attractive stall where wreaths and decorations were on sale sheltering from the rain at Winchester Christmas market. 'Everything was made from fragrant natural ingredients and the stall smelled beautifully of cloves, oranges and cinnamon', said Alison Cass. Alison's account of the outing is below. Les Deakin took the photo.

From Joan Robinson, Branch Chair



We are drawing near to the end of a year of celebrations to mark the anniversaries of 70 years of the NHS and 40 years of the NHSRF. In the SW Thames region, Brighton & Hove and Crawley & District branches marked the events with excellent exhibitions. Brighton & Hove's was a timeline of healthcare from 1018 to 2018. Crawley & District's display of

local NHS memorabilia was exhibited all September in Crawley Museum. The museum even opened early one day so that John Rostill, our CEO, could visit. And we celebrated as a branch with a very successful party in Alison Cass's garden.

Again I am asking all email users to please check your spam folder for NHSRF correspondence. I am still sure that some NHSRF emails that I send are not being opened by members who may be missing out on some important information.

At our Branch AGM in May, to comply with NHSRF procedures, a new chair and secretary must be proposed, seconded and elected. I am willing to continue as chair if this is your wish, and Janet Lambley has reluctantly agreed to take on the role of secretary but we must go through the proposal procedure. Please return the proposal form sent with this newsletter as soon as possible but definitely before the end of March 2019.

I wish every member a very happy Christmas and hope that 2019 is a healthy year for you all.

Alison Cass describes the branch outing to Winchester Christmas market

Our coach trip to Salisbury Christmas market was booked for Tuesday November 27th. However when I checked details of the market online the day before, I was shocked to discover it wouldn't open until Thursday November 29th! I quickly searched online and found Winchester's Christmas market had opened on November 17th. A phone call to the coach company to re-arrange the destination and a quick check with all travelling members that they were happy with the change, and we were off.

After an uneventful journey we arrived on time and walked a short distance to the cathedral. By then the slight drizzle had turned into proper cold rain so we did the cathedral tour to keep dry. We learnt that St Swithun was buried there and the origin of the tale of 40 days' rain after a wet St Swithun's day. Outside the rain continued so we sheltered in the ice rink cafe with hot drinks and snacks. Other members had lunch in the cathedral refectory then took solace in the high street shops out of the rain. A very damp party boarded the coach to travel home in the dark and wet. Nevertheless, we all agreed we'd had a lovely, but very wet day out, making new friendships and enjoying old ones.



Deanne Beaver and Pat Thompson report a less soggy shopping expedition

On Tuesday 18th September a group of members and guests boarded a coach to Bluewater Shopping Centre near Dartford in Kent. According to Google, it's the fifth largest shopping centre in the UK, with over 300 stores including M&S, John Lewis and House of Fraser. Judging by the bulging shopping bags accompanying us home on the coach late that afternoon, the visit had been a productive start to Christmas shopping. Even for non-shoppers, it was an interesting day out to explore this huge retail centre. Thanks to Alison and Bob for organising another great day out.

Left: looking along the Rose Gallery at Bluewater Shopping Centre. Photo taken by Pat Thompson.

National Conference and AGM – from Janet Lambley, Angela Saich and Pat Thompson

After a very wet but otherwise uneventful drive on November 1st, we arrived at the Queen Hotel in Chester for the Conference and National AGM. The hotel staff made us feel welcome and we enjoyed the spacious old building with its fascinating décor. Dinner was followed by entertainment from Michelle Montouri, billed as a ‘fantastic female comedy vocalist’. She certainly encouraged John Rostill, CEO, to let his hair (what’s left of it) down so much that he started the dancing, jiving with a lady member.

Attending the conference, meeting other members from different regions and NHSRF officers and enjoying events with them was certainly a brilliant experience for us.

Right: Michelle Montouri entertains John Rostill, CEO at the pre-Conference dinner



Conference keynote speaker

Rachel Power, recently appointed CEO of the Patients’ Association was the keynote speaker. Founded in 1963 in the wake of the thalidomide scandal by a teacher who felt patients were too often treated without their informed consent, the Patients’ Association is not disease or condition-specific so can cover all aspects of care. Rachel explained that her organisation works directly with patients to investigate concerns and monitor satisfaction, thereby promoting good practice by health professionals. By speaking to the Government and NHS about patients’ priorities, the Association aims to ensure patient voices are heard and acted upon.

‘We want to be accessible to everyone’ said Rachel ‘so membership of the Association is free. We want thousands of members and volunteers to be our grassroots. We have 22,000 social media followers. Our helpline takes thousands of calls each year, mostly from people seeking signposting to services or advice, but many about complaints. We recently set up live online chat with advisers during office hours.’

‘Question Time’

After an excellent lunch, members took part in a ‘Question Time’ style debate, chaired by Ken Jarrold, Fellowship Patron. On the panel with Ken were John Rostill, Margaret Moffatt, Chairman, David Patterson, a trustee from Scotland and Ros Lobo, our South West Thames Regional Representative.

Discussion relating to questions about falling membership and branch closures led to a promise to issue exact figures. Reasons for branches closing included their difficulty in persuading people to stand as branch officers and failure to attract new members. New retirees see old people in charge of branches and are not attracted to join. So far there is no clear evidence that increased capitation was the main reason.

Changing the Fellowship’s name in a bid to boost recruitment did not receive much support from panel or floor. John Rostill reassured members that no proposal has been put to the trustees and no decision would be made without a ballot of all members.

Rachel invited NHSRF members to join the Patients’ Association and to spread the word about the national helpline number 0208 423 8999 and the website www.patients-association.org.uk

AGM and John Rostill’s conference address

After the swiftly concluded AGM, John began his address by referring to being ‘assaulted the previous evening by a lady in half a red dress who called him *petit*’!

He noted that the coincidence of the two anniversaries in 2018 had resulted in lots of media exposure, more NHS trusts becoming aware of the Fellowship and consequently more joint discussions between the Fellowship and trusts. The Fellowship’s trustees are aware of the need to capitalise on this situation and are working on a new communications strategy. ‘I’d like more branch members to be members of NHS trusts and apply to become governors,’ John said. ‘And I’d like to see more links between branches and hospital Leagues of Friends Prepare for more national events, for example on July 5th, the NHS birthday, in 2019’.



Above: in honour of the anniversary, delicious vanilla pannacottas were decorated with red fruit coulis at the conference gala dinner



Ten-pin bowling at Crawley - Betty Austin writes:

Fifteen members went to Hollywood Bowl at Crawley on October 18th. Although many who tried their hand at bowling hadn’t played for several years, all certainly improved in the second game! Chris Deakin gained the top score of 114 points and Mary Thornton was a close runner up with 102. We enjoyed snacks and drinks between the games and everyone agreed we’d had a great time. For those of you not yet familiar with ten-pin bowling I would certainly recommend it for next year.

Left: happy bowlers after their games at Crawley Hollywood Bowl

Forthcoming outings

Thursday February 21st: afternoon tea at Denbies
Thursday April 18th: Leonardslee Gardens; cost £9.50
At Dorking Halls, **either** Friday May 17th ‘That’ll be the Day’; cost £27.50
or Thursday June 27th ‘Lipstick on your collar’; cost £17.
Tuesday July 9th, Walpole Bay Hotel and museum, Margate for lunch, cost tbc.

Branch meetings February - May 2019

January 8th	12:30 for 13:00 New Year lunch, Bridge House Hotel, Reigate
February 12th	The Palace of Westminster
March 12th	Foot care
April 9th	Healthy eating
May 14th	Annual General Meeting

Branch meetings open at 10:00 on the second Tuesday each month at Reigate Baptist Church, Sycamore Walk, Reigate RH2 7LR

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