

Editor: Karen Kennedy



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Dear All

Welcome to this Christmas issue and we start with a word from John Rostill

“This has been an exceptionally difficult year, the sort we hope never to experience again. However, at last it looks as though the vaccine is going to be available to most of us before the Spring of next year. In the meantime, can I ask you all to take care, keep safe, have an enjoyable Christmas and New Year and look forward with high anticipation and enthusiasm to 2021“

Member Spotlight - Marie Dewhurst - Acting Branch Secretary - Liverpool Branch

I commenced my Nurse training way back in 1982, just to get that into perspective Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister, Japan produced the first CD and Channel 4 was launched and shoulder pads were BIG.

I started at what was South Sefton Hospitals in Liverpool, this consisted of Walton Hospital an old workhouse building and Fazakerley Hospital, previously a TB isolation unit and later to become the Regional Infectious Diseases Unit. As most will remember things were very different in those days. Ward rounds were a military operation, patients sitting in bed, covers straight and a silver tea service set up

in the office for the doctors. Bizarrely this was also a time that smoking was allowed for both patients and staff in designated areas on the ward.

It was not uncommon to see patients smoking in bed while the patient next door was puffing on oxygen. In 1987 I moved to St Paul's Eye Hospital in Liverpool City Centre a fabulous facility which later transferred to the Royal Liverpool Hospital and celebrates its 150 anniversary this year. This old building was a local landmark and as a small hospital had a great friendly atmosphere, you could telephone the kitchen in the basement and ask them to cook something specific for a patient and twenty minutes later the cook would ring the bell in the old rickety lift and up it would come, service indeed.

The old building presented many issues not least the lack of a nurse call system. Patients who we deemed needed assistance were given an old brass "Welsh Lady" hand bell to call a nurse! With some of the younger male patients we would have a bit of a laugh a favourite joke was to put an artificial eye in the bottom of their tea cup and watch from a distance as they drained it with the eye peeping up at them. I did say it was a different era.





In my Nursing career I have had many roles, Matron, Head of Infection Control, Divisional Nurse, Patient Experience Lead but I remember fondly my time at St Paul's and the fantastic people I met there many of whom are now members of the Liverpool branch of the Fellowship. In these difficult times it's our memories and friends who sustain us and the Liverpool Fellowship has kept in touch with its members through regular telephone calls, cuppa groups and Zoom catch ups. Remember this too will end and when it does, we will be back joking together over a cup of tea this time without the eye, but you never know!



Remember replays are now available on demand. Assuming you have registered for a talk you will receive a confirmation email with a link to join the talk live. After the talk has finished this same link can be used for 7 days to watch a replay of the talk on demand. Registration is easy - please just visit www.mirthy.co.uk/NHSRF and you will get an email with a link to click at the start of the talk.

The next 4 talks planned are:

15 Dec. – 10.45am Tis the Season to be Jolly- Kath Reynolds

29 Dec. – 10.45am You're Never Too Old to Rock 'N' Roll – Vince Eager

12 Jan. – 10.45am A Policeman's Lot – Neil Sadler

26 Jan. – 10.45am 50 Years in TV – Jim Whelan

Mirthy are a small team on a big mission. They have many plans for developing Mirthy's community aspect further in the New Year! You can follow them on Facebook if you would like to and shortly, they will be sending out a monthly newsletter via email. For now, they have created a Mirthy advent calendar which can be found at:

www.mirthy.co.uk/advent-calendar. Every day there is a new activity, fact or message from their team. And behind one of the doors there is even a free BONUS talk! They have also launched a writing competition for you to get involved in if you wish! As we enter the festive season, they are aware that many of us will have extremely mixed feelings about a very different Christmas and New Year period this year. But they also know that there will have been strange Christmas times before and that many of us have amusing and eye-opening festive tales of Christmases past to share. They would like to collect stories written on the topic: 'The strangest of Christmases'. They will choose the best 5 stories and offer a £10 amazon voucher for the authors of these stories. The winning entries will also be featured within the Mirthy Christmas newsletter. • Stories can be anonymous or linked to your name. • They should be no more than 150 words in length and can feature as little or as much detail as you like. • Entries should be sent to abbie@mirthy.co.uk by 18th December. Ed: The Fellowship has very much enjoyed working with Mirthy this year and is extremely grateful for the FREE live talks. We look forward to continuing to work with them in 2021.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE MANCHESTER ROYAL INFIRMARY 50 YEARS AGO

PETER SYKES – former South Manchester branch member and Postal Member for the last 10 years says:

Hospital life has changed a great deal over the last 50 years, no more so than in the way that Christmas is celebrated. At the Manchester Royal Infirmary in the 1960s, a unique seasonal atmosphere developed during Christmas week, and for those of us who were resident as nurses or doctors, celebrating Christmas in hospital was a memorable experience. Great efforts were made by the staff to create as cheerful an atmosphere as possible for those unfortunate enough to have to spend this special time away from home. Different patients reacted in different ways to spending the Christmas period in hospital. Feeling ill, anxious about their health, perhaps facing an uncertain future and in a strange environment, most found it difficult to stay cheerful, particularly as they knew that in the world outside, people were enjoying themselves. Generally speaking, the male patients were more accepting of the situation, but the women, particularly those with children, did not find Christmas in hospital easy. At a time when they would normally be at the centre of family life, they became homesick and missing loved ones; they felt sad and lonely.

Four or five days before the big day, the porters erected a Christmas tree in the centre of the ward. Each ward had its own box of decorations, and the night staff decorated the tree, usually in the early hours of the morning when the ward was quiet. Many patients assisted by making paper chains and lanterns to hang around the ward, or by designing a crib which was placed in the centre of the ward – an impromptu form of occupational therapy! Invariably the fairy lights perhaps put away in a rush the previous year, declined to work and this was a busy time for the hospital electricians. Matron gave a prize to the ward with the most festive decorations. This induced a sense of competition which infused nurses and patients alike, lifting their spirits and distracting from other anxieties.



On Christmas Eve, a traditional carol service was held in the hospital chapel. Many patients attended. They sat in wheelchairs in the centre aisle, red hospital blankets around their knees, one of the ward nurses at their side. A Christmas tree stood at the front of the chapel, beneath whose branches were gaily wrapped presents, which would later be given to the children on the kiddies' ward. Just before the service began, the lights were dimmed, and the first verse of 'Once in Royal David's City' was heard, sung by a clear solo soprano voice, which floated in through the open chapel doors. As the second verse commenced, the nurses' choir entered. The nurses walked in pairs, wearing their formal hospital capes; the nurses in navy blue, the sisters in maroon, crisp white starched caps on their heads, each carrying a candle lit lantern held high upon a long shepherd's crook. The light from the candles cast flickering shadows on the walls of the chapel. It was a memorable and moving moment. The nurses took their places at the front of the chapel and the service began.

The Christmas story was told in readings and carols just as it was told in thousands of churches up and down the country, but this service had extra warmth to it, a certain intimacy. The congregation comprised patients, some of their friends and relations and many members of the hospital staff. This was the hospital coming together as 'family'; dedicated, caring people who shared a common ideal, who not only worked together but also worshipped together.

When the service was over, the nurses' choir embarked on a tour of the hospital wards. For the patients, it was an unforgettable experience. Without being forewarned, the lights on the ward were switched off, the sound of carols reaching their ears before the choir could be seen. As in the chapel, the nurses entered each ward two by two, lanterns ablaze. They formed a semicircle around the tree in the candlelight. Unfortunately, there was only time for the choir to sing a couple of carols before they had to move on, but it was sufficient to bring tears to the eyes of many of the patients.

There have been many advances in medical practice over the years with the development of body scanners, artificial joints and modern medicines but something has been lost over the years, and it is sad that these wonderful traditions no longer form a part of modern hospital life.

Peter's latest book, 'All in a Doctor's Day' (proceeds to his local Hospice) is a collection of short light-hearted tales, all of which have a medical theme. It is available from Amazon. The photograph accompanying this article is reproduced by courtesy of Guardian Newspapers.

The Fellowship is delighted to have launched a new Book Club which has already attracted more than 40 members - thanks to everyone who has joined so far!



Lucia Hiden, Head of Communications for the Fellowship said: "We asked you for your recommendations for the first round and we were blown away by the variety of recommendations you gave. From these, we've selected three books for you. We decided on three because with Christmas coming up and the subsequent closure of the Central Office, it would give people plenty of time to read some or all the books and to collect your thoughts to share. We also received some feedback that some of you thought our suggested six-week window was a good amount of time for those of you who find you can't read a lot in one go too."

The chosen books are:

- "The Thursday Murder Club" by Richard Osman
- "The Threads of Life" by Clare Hunter
- "The Yorkshire Shepherdess" by Amanda Owens.

All three books are available via Amazon in either paperback or Kindle version as well as national bookshops and should be available through local bookshops too.

Some questions to consider for the Richard Osman book are:

- Who was your favourite character and why?
- What was the funniest bit of the story and why?
- What was the most poignant bit of the story and why?
- Were there any surprises in the book?

For our two non-fiction books, questions to consider are:

- Which bit of the book most surprised you?
- Did your opinion on the writer change from the start of the book to the end?
- What have you taken away from the book?

You can email your thoughts to sherry.smith2@nhs.net or debbie.arnold4@nhs.net or write in to the Central Office. You can also contact the team to join the book club too. You can comment on our Facebook thread, but we don't want any spoiler alerts or influencing views.

Reviews will be shared in the first week of January.

This is a new venture for the Fellowship, and we may not get it quite right just yet. If you have had success with another virtual book club and can share your thoughts and experiences, we are always open to your ideas and suggestions. Please get in touch.

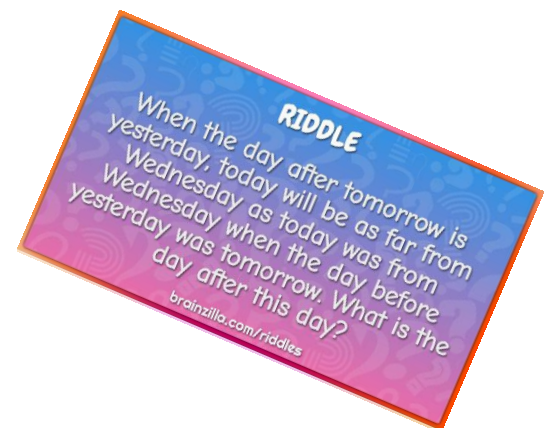
Mind Games - Answers from November issue

Riddle answers 1) A Kiwi 2) The Earth



TV QUIZ

1. What is Postman Pat's surname?
2. In what year did Channel 5 launch in the UK?
3. Of what is the sci-fi show Torchwood an anagram?
4. Which show is Frasier a spin-off from?
5. What was the name of the tower block where Del Boy and Rodney Trotter lived in Only Fools and Horses?
6. Gillian Anderson plays a therapist in which hit Netflix show?
7. What is the name of the fictional borough of Melbourne where Australian soap Neighbours is set?
8. EastEnders began broadcasting on BBC One in which year?
9. Who is the longest serving presenter of the BBC children's show Blue Peter?
10. What is the name of Mackenzie Crook's character in sitcom The Office?



Finally, just to say hope you enjoyed our Newsletter and thanks to Peter Sykes and Marie Dewhurst for their contributions – would you like to appear in our January issue? If you do have a contribution but haven't got anything typed up just give me a ring and I can type this up with you over the telephone - call 07967 489162 or email northwest.english@nhs.uk - Karen North West Development Officer. This leaves me to say have a Lovely Christmas and a much better 2021!