Dear Member,

I hope that you are all staying well and keeping safe during these difficult times. We are already missing our monthly meetings and the opportunity to meet up with our fellow members and socialise in the usual way.

Our AGM went ahead on the 16th March 2020, just before lockdown was announced by the Government. Because of the growing concerns about Coronavirus many members understandably chose not to attend but the meeting went ahead with 36 members attending. We had a lovely afternoon and the staff at Greenmeadow provided us with plates of cakes and Welsh cakes for our afternoon tea. We took the opportunity to review our Branch activity over the past year including some of the excellent speakers. In particular, Roger Foster who spoke to us about Monmouthshire churches and the Monmouthshire canals, Gill Prosser with her talk on China revisited and Deborah John, a professional story teller with her excellent presentation on Christmas Tales and Traditions.

Members enjoyed numerous trips and activities throughout the year including Theatre visits, John King’s excellent Mystery Trip which turned out to be Berkeley Castle, The Christmas Market at Gloucester Quays and more recently the Penderyn Whisky Distillery. There were also the Welsh and the UK National Conferences plus several meetings of the Lunch Club which is something we are planning to continue when the time is right.

We are very appreciative of the work of all our Committee members in helping service the running of our Branch and the planning and organising of speakers and activities. Regretably, it looks as if our meeting and activities programme will be suspended for some time to come but rest assured we will be looking to resume things in the future as soon as it is safe to do so.

We discussed the Committee membership and were pleased to welcome Vicky Williams as a new member of the Committee. It was also agreed that Ann Hyde, Improvement Manager at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board would take over as Membership Secretary which is an easier arrangement as she holds the membership database and organises the subscription renewals. Jen Martin will remain a Committee member and will have other duties.

As the social distancing measures are likely to continue for some time I would encourage everyone to try and keep in touch with each other. The Committee has already set up a ‘Keeping in Touch’ arrangement and every effort will be made to contact individual members while we are unable to meet just for a chat and to identify anyone who might
need some help. We would also like to hear how you are spending your time. Do you have any new hobbies, interests, recipes etc that others might find interesting? For example, I am not very good with technology but have just started to use ‘Zoom’ on my computer and meeting up with nine of my old school friends who I normally only see once or twice a year. It’s great to be able to see and hear them on a more regular basis than usual. Maybe this is something we could try? See the book section below perhaps we could start a virtual book club? Anyway, its just a suggestion so please let me know if you are interested. Central Office are also interested in hearing about anyone who has answered the call for volunteers. So please keep in touch and let me know or feel free to contact any of the Committee members at any time. Also, if any member would like to contact another member from our Branch but doesn’t have contact details, get in touch with us and we can check permission and then forward the contact details to you so the you can continue friendships.

Please take care and stay safe
Lynda

Branch Charity Donation 2020

A draw was held at the AGM to select the Charity to receive the Branch charity donation this year. I am pleased to report the the successful charity is The Silver Line. Barbara Davies informed us as part of her Treasurer’s report that despite not holding our cake stall in February the Branch has already raised almost £500 in charitable funds so we are able to make this donation straightaway.

Membership Subscriptions 2020/21

Central Office is currently closed and we have been advised not to collect member’s subscription renewals at the present time. Your membership of the NHSRF will continue in the interim and we will let you know when these are ready to be collected.

Publicity Campaign

You will be aware from our earlier meetings about he publicity campaign to recruit new members being organised by the NHSRF Central Office and that publicity information was due to be sent out with this years P60s to those who have retired from the NHS. This exercise has now been suspended and will take place when P60s are distributed in April 2021. Likewise the publicity campaign that we started locally as a Branch has also been suspended and our advertising is on hold until we are able to resume our meetings.

Theatre trips

Unfortunately the following theatre trips were cancelled due to closure of the theatres:-

‘We Will Rock You’ - the Wales Millennium Centre will be be providing a full refund. We will be reissuing cheques back to members in due course but this may take a while so please bear with us.

‘Dial M for Murder’: - The New Theatre play is now be rescheduled for 1st February 2021 and all tickets will be honoured.
Normal times - A Happy day out at Chavenage House

Just a reminder of one of our most memorable trips was to **Chavenage House** near Tetbury. The trip to Chavenage House was a great success and enjoyed by 45 members. The weather was kind and our first stop was in Tetbury where many of us visited the Highgrove shop for souvenirs and gifts to take back. We arrived at the wonderful Chavenage House in time for lunch and were greeted by Caroline Lowsley-Williams one of the family members who all live there. The excellent lunch was prepared by her sister Joanna who was trained at the Pru Leith School of cookery. The house has been in the same family for 500 years and we were entertained throughout the day by the sisters and their brother George with a tour of the house and many stories about the past from Cromwell to Poldark and their many experiences of the venue being used for filming.

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**Book review section**

Most of you will know Pam (E) Jones who looks after the book stall at our meetings and has suggested that we ask members what they have been reading now that we have more time. We have therefore decided to try a book review section of the newsletter and would love to have your contributions. This is one from Pam:-

“This book is one of my favourites I can't resist a book about books!

**The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafon.**

A thriller set in Barcelona in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.

*On his 10th birthday Daniel Sempere is taken by his father to a vast library labyrinth called 'The Cemetery of Forgotten Books'. He choses The Shadow of the Wind by Julian Carax.*

The story follows Daniel as he grows up and searches to uncover the truth about the mysterious author.

The book is full of suspense with a plot that twists and turns and a cursed love affair.

Atmospheric and beautifully written. Highly recommended”.
The following message has been received from Head Office and hopefully this will be something that we can all enjoy in the absence of our Branch meetings:-

**New - UK-wide live branch meetings for Fellowship members**

I am pleased to be able to invite you to take part in our new Fellowship-wide live branch meetings commencing shortly. These will be available to all members who have access to an internet enabled device, e.g. laptop, PC, tablet, or phone, with a broadband connection? To take part all you need to do is go onto the Mirthy Talks site [www.mirthy.co.uk](http://www.mirthy.co.uk) and follow the simple instructions below. The meetings will consist of a talk that is being delivered solely to NHSRF members across England, Scotland and Wales with an opportunity to interact before the talk and ask questions of the speaker at the end. It will not be quite the same as an actual branch meeting, you will have to provide your own tea and biscuits, but promises to be enjoyable, nonetheless.

The talks are being generously provided fortnightly free of charge for NHSRF members during the Covid-19 shutdown by Mirthy, a new dynamic organisation whose mission is to help those in later life remain active, social and connected in their community. In the words of their CEO, Alex. ‘This is our way to give back to those who have given so much.’ Mirthy is currently contracted to deliver talks around the country to other organisations such as U3A and McCarthy & Stone residents.

The first session will be delivered on:

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<th>Speaker</th>
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<td>Wednesday, 20 May</td>
<td>11am</td>
<td>Meet Harry Kay, a veteran of WW1, now a civilian and living at home with his family. He is dealing with the privations of a different sort of war, the air raids and rationing. Listen how he and his family experienced V-E Day. There are period newspapers, ration books and identity cards to show you.</td>
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**Do you enjoy sewing or knitting?**

**Aneurin Bevan University Health Board** is asking for **small draw string property bags** (see small sizes below- in purple if possible) if the group would be kind enough to make those? The measurements are:-

- 10 x 10 cms
- 15 x 15 cms
- 25 x 35 cm

They can’t accept scrubs or homemade face masks as the HB has enough PPE supplies

They would also like **knitted or crocheted hearts in purple if possible** around 3.5 inches long. As they are coordinating at a central point they can collect when ready

The contacts are:- Tanya.Strange@wales.nhs.uk or tel: 01633 623684
Your Committee

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<tr>
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<td>Lynda Evans</td>
<td>01633 420668 <a href="mailto:lyndaevs@hotmail.co.uk">lyndaevs@hotmail.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Marilyn Beardmore</td>
<td>01633 661954 <a href="mailto:mabeardmore@yahoo.co.uk">mabeardmore@yahoo.co.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Barbara Davies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Lilwyn Griffiths</td>
<td>Cynthia Matthews</td>
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<td>Speaker Secretary</td>
<td>Joanne Butler</td>
<td>Carol Cunnell</td>
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<td>Membership Secretary</td>
<td>Ann Hyde</td>
<td>Martin Sage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Books and sales</td>
<td>Pam E Jones</td>
<td>Delyn Hunt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trips and outings</td>
<td>John King Kay Lusk and Jean Nutt</td>
<td>Jen Martin</td>
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<td>Welfare Officer/Payment</td>
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<td>Kay Lusk Jean Nutt John King</td>
<td>01291 673566 <a href="mailto:kylusk@hotmail.co.uk">kylusk@hotmail.co.uk</a></td>
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NHS Retirement Fellowship Benevolent Fund Sherry Smith, Admin Officer, Central Office. Tel 01305 361317, www.nhsrf.org.uk