

MERTON SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB

NEWSLETTER

March 2019

http://www.mssc.org.uk/

Merton Sports and Social Club

Guardian Centre

67 Clarendon Road

Colliers Wood

London

SW19 2DX

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### INTRODUCTION

Before I start my introduction, the Annual General Meeting is almost upon us, and this is a vital and important event for our club. None of the events, socials, walks, tandem rides, or swimming sessions would be possible without it, so I encourage you to attend, to participate in the running of the club, meet the committee and other members, and have your say. The committee and many members give their time willingly and freely to make this club a successful, active and vibrant organisation, so please show your support. That’s the housekeeping done, on with the introduction…

With the spring season comes the new shoots of growth and bright sunshine bathing the days for longer. This is the fourth edition of the newsletter, marking the end of a year of this quarterly publication. Looking back upon the year since restarting it, I see what the club has achieved, much of which is recorded in the back issues of the newsletter. If you haven’t read them, I really recommend you do. They are now posted online as part of the club website. Go to <http://www.mssc.org.uk/> and select ‘NEWS’, then ‘NEWSLETTERS’. As editor, I wouldn’t have anything much to include without the tireless efforts of those who give their time to make it all happen. I know what it takes to make the appropriate arrangements, checking details, sending out the information, taking into account matters of safety, pairing up members, not forgetting transport arrangements, food stops and other suchlike aspects which cannot be left to chance. A good analogy for the effort needed to ensure the success of an event or activity is the swimming swan: all is smooth and peaceful above the water, but below are the webbed feet working hard against the current. At this point, I give my wholehearted thanks to all who pitch in, because every tandem ride, walk, social, or any other activity, is special and always uplifting. Looking ahead, we face many challenges, the least being to exceed the year gone. Here’s to another glorious summer!

Please send your comments and articles to: info@mssc.org.uk

Dominic, Editor.

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### THE CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

May I begin with a gentle reminder that annual subs for 2019 are well overdue. The club relies heavily on membership fees to help facilitate its various activities, so please make sure, if you haven't done so already, that you pay your £15 subs at your earliest convenience. Please hand it over to any committee member or pay it direct into the MSSC bank account (details available on request).

In case you are in any doubt as to why your membership fee counts, I would like to share with you the following endorsement, sent to us by Laura, one of our newest members. It is an inspirational reminder of why MSSC exists and why the committee works so hard to run the tandem section and other club activities.

Laura writes:-

“Everything you do to run the tandem club makes a massive difference to my life and I’m sure it’s the same for the rest of the group! It’s such a positive thing. This is what I wrote about Saturday on my blog:

I had a fantastic time cycling on Saturday! I really enjoyed the ride and I think that my cycling is improving. We did a new route with more open woodland space and hills.

My pilot was great and we made a good team! He’s fairly new to being a tandem front rider but he was fab! Tandem cycling has been so beneficial to me. Not only is it good physical exercise but it’s so good for me mentally. I have struggled with accepting my visual impairment, just as many people who lose sight do. This is because of how restricted it made me feel and how it brought so many ‘cannots’ to my life. But with tandem cycling I CAN again.

It’s given me confidence in myself and my own capabilities, not only on a bike but in my life in general. I feel motivated again and I feel a new drive to really push myself towards my goals! I have also met a great friend through tandem cycling. She is older than me and so much wiser, but has helped me rebuild my confidence and challenge the perceptions I hold over my own abilities. I am starting to accept what I have and live life to the full with it."

And that brings us neatly on to the subject of swimming. Those MSSC members, who regularly attend the weekly Thursday evening session at the Canons, frequently tell us just how important it is to them. They benefit hugely, being able to swim freely, amongst a small number of friends in a large pool, accessible exclusively to MSSC members for that one hour. Transport to and from the pool, provided by our amazing volunteer drivers, is also much appreciated. This wonderful facility, however, costs the club £2,126 a year and, due to low attendance, has to be heavily subsidised.

In order to make this activity viable, we need at least fifteen participants at each session, paying the current fee of £3 each. In an attempt to attract more swimmers, we succeeded in getting the session moved to an earlier 8pm to 9pm slot, but attendance is still very low. If we cannot increase participation we will need to explore other avenues to address the financial shortfall. This might be more fundraising efforts, or cancelling the weekly swimming session altogether and moving over to a buddy scheme whereby VI swimmers are paired up with sighted buddies who arrange to attend public sessions together at a mutually convenient time.

We welcome your views and suggestions as to how we best continue and protect one of MSSC's longest running and much valued activities. Sadly, the weekly swimming session may be a case of "use it or lose it".

Richard James

MSSC Chairman

Email: chair@mssc.org.uk

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### THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 16th April

We are looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at this year's AGM on Tuesday 16th April (a week later than originally advertised).  Once the formal business is over, there will be the opportunity to chat and mingle while complementary wine and cheese are served. The bar will be open as usual. For catering purposes, please tell us if you plan to attend and if you have any special dietary requirements.

Please arrive at 7.30pm for a prompt 8.00pm start, and remember only fully paid up members will be able to vote.

WHERE: The Guardian Centre, 67 Clarendon Road SW19 2DX

WHEN:  Tuesday 16th April 2019

TIME:    7.30pm for 8.00pm to 10.30pm

RSVP:     Email info@mssc.org.uk or call 07500 913 223

Please let us know in good time if you would like to be met at Colliers Wood Underground Station or a nearby bus stop.

MSSC Committee

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### FUNDRAISING

As well as membership fees, MSSC relies upon fundraising, grants and donations to run all the activities on offer. We are lucky that, in recent years, considerable amounts have been raised through sponsored events. This year, one of our members is running the London Marathon, as well as cycling the Prudential Ride London 100 and will be raising money for MSSC.

If you have any ideas regarding ways to raise money for the club, we would love to hear from you!

Donations can be made all year round via the web link below:

<https://wonderful.org/charity/mertonsportsandsocialclubfortheblind>

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### CLUB SUBSCRIPTIONS

MSSC membership runs from January to December and subscriptions for 2019 are now well overdue. The annual membership fee remains £15 and provides access to all MSSC activities plus third party insurance cover. We have a “try before you buy” facility whereby anyone can sample two or three activities before joining, and there is a discretionary discount for those joining part way through the year.

Any member of the Committee will be pleased to accept your payment the next time you attend an event or activity, or you can make a direct payment of £15 into the MSSC bank account, but please remember to give your name as a reference. The account details are available on request. Email membership@mssc.org.uk.

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### MSSC WEBSITE

Following some technical issues trying to maintain the old Website, the committee concluded it would be easier to start from scratch and build a new one! To keep costs down, we managed to find ‘Kualo’, a company who offers charities free Web hosting. We have also used Blazie Engineering, an Assistive Technology consultancy company, to complete the initial build, hopefully ensuring that the Website is designed in a way that is accessible to Screen Reader users. We plan to use the Website for cascading information about upcoming events, so please check out the club diary page regularly, then use the Contacts tab to Email the section lead to find out more about the event or simply to reserve a place. The link is still the same:

[www.mssc.org.uk](http://www.mssc.org.uk)

We appreciate the website still needs to be optimised for mobile devices and we are looking to remove the advertising by either paying a monthly WordPress subscription or changing the theme. So, if you know anybody who can assist us with these tasks or help out with general Web maintenance, please ask them to get in touch. To get in touch or for any general feedback as to how the Website can be improved, please Email Info@mssc.org.uk.

Derek Coughlan

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### TUESDAY NIGHT SOCIALS

The Guardian Centre hosts MSSCs weekly drop-in social every Tuesday evening between 7.30 and 10.00pm. The bar is always open and tea/coffee is also available. Support can be provided, on request, if you would like to be met at Colliers Wood Underground Station or at a nearby bus stop.

Once a month, we hold a social evening with a special theme.  Our January social was an Open Mike Music Night - a real departure from the norm!  Due to popular demand, February's social was a well attended quiz night, capably delivered by Quiz Master Bob, while March saw the return of MSSC's Bowls and Bulls-eye games evening.

April's social, on Tuesday 16th, will be a chance to mingle and chat over cheese and wine, following the AGM.

Coming up ... tennis knockabout, summer BBQ, another quiz ... and whatever anyone cares to suggest!

Let us know what you would like as a theme.  What would get you and your friends along to the Guardian Centre on a Tuesday evening?  What keeps you away?  Please get in touch!

MSSC Committee

Email: info@mssc.org.uk

#### Social Report: MSSC Open Mike Night, Tuesday 15th January 2019

This was the first open mike night held by MSSC, in recent years anyway, and quite the success it was too, save only for a slight glitch with one of the microphones which seemed to have an over active gain. Now, to make clear up front, performing was entirely voluntary. Just as well really, as I was definitely "audience only", there to enjoy the courage of others and to support the performers. And what performances we were treated too!

Bill opened the running with a lively rendition of "Celebration" by Kool & the Gang, to which he accompanied himself on piano. He then accompanied his wife Diona who sang "Hallelujah", a song written and performed by Leonard Cohen, and perhaps made most famous by Jeff Buckley.

Grace read us two poems of her own composition. They were poignant and profound, and I'm sure others will have been as impressed by them as I was.

Next up was a soulful performance of the well-known track "Moon River". This was originally sung by Audrey Hepburn in the 1961 film "Breakfast at Tiffany's" to a guitar accompaniment, a performance which won an Academy Award for Best Original Song. The young lady who sang it so beautifully on this night accompanied herself on the keyboard with no less effect.

The audience of around 20 were given the benefit of two vocal performances by Anita: "Salt Water Wells in my Eyes" sang a cappella style; and "Sailing" accompanied by Bill on piano. Who doesn't love a bit of Rod Stewart! Oops, sorry Sutherland Brothers.

The grand finale was given by MSSC's own Terry and Richard James, who each performed amusing comic numbers with great whit and enthusiasm.

Terry recited "Ernie", with help from Bill on piano and plenty of audience participation in the chorus. Those of a certain age will know exactly what this song is about! For the benefit of everyone else, it is a novelty song by Benny Hill about the fastest milkman in the west who was seen off by a well-aimed stale pork pie thrown by his rival, Ted, the dastardly baker. Richard then finished off the fun with a cracking rendition of the folk song "Paddy McGinty's Goat", accompanying himself on the guitar.

Performances over with, it was time to eat and chat. Wraps with numerous possible filling options were kindly organised for us by Valerie, not to mention cups of Tea and coffee. For those wanting to steady their nerves with something stronger, the bar was also open, serving alcoholic beverages.

Thanks to everyone involved, most especially the performers for their diverse and talented efforts. Let the MSSC Committee know if you would be interested in coming to another open mike evening, either to perform, or just to watch and enjoy.

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### SWIMMING SECTION

MSSC members continue to enjoy exclusive use of the swimming pool at the Canons Leisure Centre, Mitcham on Thursday evenings. The new earlier time is 8.00pm to 9.00pm.

Thanks to Mel and Terry, our wonderful, much valued volunteer drivers, members who live in the Borough of Merton can arrange to be picked up from their home and returned afterwards, as long as they notify us by noon the day before. The charge is £3 to swim and a further £3 for the transport. Members who live outside the Borough of course are welcome too.

In order to cover the cost of this session to the club, we urgently need to increase participation, so please do come and join us in the water and make the most of this unique facility.

For more information and to book transport, please email swimming@mssc.org.uk

Simon.

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### WALKING SECTION

Our third walk of the year will be a foray into the Surrey countryside in April. Please join us on this lovely spring stroll.

April walk details:

**Date**: Sunday 14th April 2019

**Time**: 10.30am

**Walk title**: Ranmore Common and Polesden Lacey

**Duration**: approx 4 hours including a 1 hour lunch stop. (If you are a National Trust member and you wish to use this hour to go onto the estate, please feel free.)

**Length**: 6 miles circular route.

**Meeting place**: the National Trust Ranmore Common car park (nearest postcode RH5 6SY) just off the Ranmore Common Road near Dorking.

Nearest Station: Dorking (anyone coming by public transport may request a lift from the station to the meeting point).

**Walk organiser**: Beverley Williamson

**Email**: walking@mssc.org.uk

**Mob**. 07593452149

**Walk Description:**

This walk is one of several I use from the Fancy Free Walks website, which I can recommend for serious walkers. It is described as an easy walk on the site, but compared with the walks we have done to date, I would describe it as more challenging, as there are slopes and one steep incline; also a patch of the footpath is quite lumpy with large stones. If you are up for a bit of a challenge, it is a delightful walk, starting on the North Downs way and going across a variety of terrains, including farmland and the Polesden Lacey estate. We may be able to walk through part of the estate, so if you are a National Trust member, please bring your card but, in any case, there is a café and toilet stop there (there are no other toilets on any part of the walk including the car park at the start). All paths are clear and wide, but walking boots are necessary in case of muddy conditions. With only one seasonal sheep pasture, one minor road and no stiles, this walk is ideal for dogs too.

For a more detailed PDF, use the following link:

<http://www.fancyfreewalks.org/Surrey/Polesden.pdf?version=1710>

Bev Williamson

#### Walk Report: Epsom Common, 27th January 2019

We had a splendid turn out for the walk from Horton Country Park to Epsom and Ashtead Commons, stopping for lunch at the Woodman Inn in Lower Ashtead. There were 21 of us who enjoyed the lunch:-

Eilish, Karen, Laura, Jack, Christine, Madhur, Barry, Nicole, Russell, Susie, Harry, Bev, Andy, Chris, Valerie, Richard, Terry, Len, Heather, Audrey and Dave, along with 4 very happy and well behaved dogs.

It was a mostly dry day with some sunshine in the morning and a rain shower while we had lunch. The afternoon stretch across the commons and back to Horton Country Park was a bit boggy in places, but we managed to work our way through it, allowing time for a few of us to have a peek at the site of a Roman Villa. The walkers got back to the car park around 3.30pm, a bit muddy and ready for the journey home.

Dave Bull

#### Walk Report: Hogsmill Valley - Saturday 9th March 2019

Around 9.00am on Saturday 9th March, a merry band of sixteen walkers plus four dogs congregated at Ewell West Railway Station, to walk Section 8 of the London Loop. The final destination was the Thames at Kingston, with stop off points along the way for anyone wishing to cut the 8-mile walk short.

The London Loop, officially known as the London Outer Orbital Path, is a 150-mile signed walk along public footpaths, through parks, woods and fields around the edge of Outer London. The walk is divided into 24 sections and has been designed in such a way that all start and finish points are accessible by public transport, mostly by train or tube.

Our route on 9th March closely followed the course of the Hogsmill River, via Ewell, Old and New Malden, Surbiton and Kingston. The mostly flat walk took us through parkland, across meadows and nature reserves, through woodland, across muddy quagmires and along residential roads. We stopped halfway for refreshments at the Capital Cafe at Malden Manor, before setting off on the second half, one man and one dog down. We lost two further members of the group and a guide dog, who bowed out at Berrylands Station, but the rest of us made it all the way to the end - the point where the Hogsmill River joins the Thames, just beyond the Clatten Bridge in Kingston (the oldest bridge in London).

A few headed straight home, while the rest of us paused at Woody's Bar next to the river, to enjoy a well-earned drink.

One section of the London Loop down, 23 to go!

Terry James

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### TANDEM SECTION

2019 got off to an excellent start.  The first long ride of the year on 6th January was a modest twenty-five miles or so to a cafe in Kingswood.  Richard Holden graciously led the ride, involving just four tandems.

The next ride on 19th January saw a total of seven tandems weave their way to Richmond Park, one of our favourite short haul destinations.

Due to icy conditions, the long February ride was cancelled, but the short ride on 16th February was a pleasant jaunt to Nonsuch Park.

On 3rd March, in spite of strong winds and drizzle, a party of six tandems and one solo bike made it to the North Downs, where refuge was gratefully taken in the Headley Tea Rooms, before the group cycled the fifteen miles back, fortuitously aided by a strenuous tail wind.

The short ride on 16th March was hampered by powerful, gusty winds and a series of mechanical issues. As a result, the planned route to Ashtead was curtailed by several miles, with the six tandems and two solo cyclists ending up in Beddington Park, taking shelter (and cake) in the congenial surroundings of the Pavilion Cafe.

We endeavour to keep our bikes well maintained and in good condition, in order to have enough suitable tandems available for each ride.  Inevitably, however, some of our bikes incur mechanical difficulties every so often, which we aim to rectify in time for the next ride.  This can be demanding in terms of time, energy and money, so we would be hugely grateful for any help from anyone with bike maintenance know-how and a bit of time to spare.

As well as the usual weekend rides, we hope that more adventurous all day excursions will be a feature during the summer months.  We have also been looking into the possibility of a weekend ride, starting on Saturday, stopping overnight at a hostel or B and B, then cycling back on the Sunday.  Please let us know if this is something you would be interested in.

We also hope to manage some gentle midweek cycles on light, summer evenings, as soon as the days grow long enough towards the middle of the year.  If you fancy a pleasant pedal out to a pub as the sun goes down, we would be happy to hear from you, especially if you know of any good, well appointed pubs and are willing to lead a ride.

This year, we have already welcomed a few more tandem cyclists to MSSC.  On 2nd March, we ran a mini "have a go" workshop for four new front riders, three of whom rode with the club the very next day. The fourth piloted a tandem on the next short ride and all four appear to be promising additions to our band of regular front riders.

If you are a pilot or a stoker who is keen to improve your cycling technique and get the most from your pedalling, you may be interested in the "pedal power" workshops we are planning to run in the near future.  Watch this space for further news.

The tradition of two MSSC rides a month is set to continue.  All you need to remember is that, as a general rule, the long ride is around thirty to forty miles and is on the first Sunday, while the short ride is around fifteen to twenty-five miles on the third Saturday.  Unless otherwise stated, all rides start at 8.30am from the Guardian Centre and include a refreshment stop.  Please endeavour to arrive promptly, so that the bikes can be prepared in good time for a 9.00am departure.  We make it a priority to see that the long ride returns by 3.00pm and the short ride by 1.00pm, so waiting for latecomers to arrive can mean the ride has to be cut short.

Below are ride dates for the next few months of 2019 (S stands for short and L for long).

April:

Sunday 7th (L)

Saturday 20th (S)

May:

Sunday 5th (all day ride)

Saturday 18th (S)

June:

Sunday 2nd (all day ride)

Saturday 15th (S)

July:

Sunday 7th (all day ride)

Saturday 20th (S)

August:

Sunday 4th (L)

Saturday 17th (S)

September:

Sunday 1st (L)

Saturday 21st (S)

October:

Sunday 6th (L)

Saturday 19th (S)

If you are a stoker, please email cycling@mssc.org.uk to book on to a ride as soon as possible, preferably with at least a fortnight's notice.  Securing sufficient pilots tends to be a demanding task, and places on a ride will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

If you are a pilot, letting us know your availability well in advance is hugely helpful.  The ride organiser will confirm whether or not sufficient pilots are available by the Thursday before the ride; if you have not heard by then, please contact us to check your name is definitely on the list.

  If you are willing to lead a ride or recommend a particular destination, please let us know, as we are keen to broaden our base of ride leaders and expand our repertoire of routes.

Happy pedalling!

Richard and Terry James

Email: cycling@mssc.org.uk

#### Tandem Ride Report: Nonsuch Park, 16th February 2019

The conditions were still and slightly chilly for the start from the Guardian Centre, but stony grey skies weren’t so dark to suggest rain. Heading along Merantun Way, under which the last remains of Merton Priory lie, the five tandems threaded their way to the Wandle trail. This sleepy chalk stream is becoming popular and now forms part of the ‘Avenue Verte’, an off road route to Paris, via the south coast port of Newhaven. We headed out through Morden, freewheeling down Hillcross Avenue, onto Lower Morden Lane and ascending Green Lane, which is flanked either side by two cemeteries. The route remained relatively traffic free until Worcester Park.

Notable landmarks included ‘The Hamptons’, a new development of housing with green, open space and shiplap cladding, giving the impression of an American style of architecture. We passed the Worcester Park Athletics Club track and entered the busy section of Malden Road. Once clear of the queues, we were quite close to our destination. All that remained was a short spell on the A24, previously known as Stane Street (the word ‘Stane’ means stone) clearly showing its Roman origins, retaining the straightness for which the Roman engineers were famous. Here, the connection between our destination and from our start is strong: in historical terms, the stones from Merton Priory were taken by Henry the Eighth to build his palace, with the ambition of having hunting grounds stretching all the way to Brighton. Abbeys were the repository of knowledge, so when Merton Priory was dissolved, this knowledge was moved to Oxford, and Merton College took its name from the doomed abbey.

 From entering the park, we followed the path to the café, busy with runners slowly walking back to the car park after completing the regular Saturday park run. Passing the clouds of snowdrops blossoming under the copse by the café, we then found a place to sit outside and in (some are hardier than others!).

 After much talk, and hot beverages drunk, with some delectable cake too, it was time to return to Colliers Wood. Skirting eastwards around the south end of Sutton avoided the busy traffic of Saturday shoppers. Our route then turned north back to the Wandle Trail at Hackbridge. The way back through Morden Hall park was busy; the dry weather had tempted many outside, with dog walkers, families, cyclists and runners enjoying the fresh air and the exercise as we all had on tandems. A good turnout of five tandems, with Shaun and Laura, myself and Madhur, Jude and Terry, Alasdair and Richard J riding tandems solo, and Richard H helping out marshalling on his solo.

Dominic

#### Tandem Ride Report: Headley Village Stores and Tea Room, Surrey, 3rd March 2019

If there was ever a ride which was going to be a challenge, this one would certainly qualify. Storm Freya was determined to unleash her worst, yet the indomitable spirit of the MSSC tandemists proved to be a match. Thirty miles doesn’t sound arduous to a regular cyclist, but three new pilots were taking the helm for the first time. All gave it their best efforts and successfully completed the circuit.

We left the Guardian centre through raindrops and relatively still conditions, which then gave way to full blown headwinds as we battled our way over the Epsom Downs under steel grey skies, without any chink of sunshine. At least the adverse gradients of Surrey’s hills kept us warm as we toiled up them. The tea rooms were warm, welcoming, and most importantly heated!

The quiet calm was broken by conversation, shuffling chairs, menu readings (now only if we could invite Sir Ian McKellan along for a ride), orders, and the front door being blown open by gusts of wind!

Sandwiches, cake, coffee and tea refuelled the hungry and wet party, and soon we were leaving. By now, there was a break in the weather, though crossing Walton Heath reminded us of the exposed nature of open uplands. Chipstead Valley Road let us follow the downward change in altitude with a little more speed.

The final mountainous nemesis reared up before us in the form of Rectory Lane. Well done to all for making it up this hill. Rolling with ease through Carshalton Beeches led onto the ponds at Carshalton, over the Wandle and up through Mitcham and home.

There were some doubts over the conditions, whether it be suitable for riding. All were glad that it went ahead, and our spirits weren’t dampened, even if our feet were!

Dominic

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### MSSC BOWLS SECTION

This has been a year of some transition for MSSC’s Bowls Section. Following several meetings with Merton Bowling Club (MBC- not to be confused with MSSC) a partnership was set up in early spring last year. This partnership offers us use of their bowls green which is located in Joseph Hood Memorial Park, Martin Way. MBC has good club house facilities, including changing rooms, a small bar and a kitchen.

Several MSSC members have made use of MBC’s weekly roll up session on offer. Last season, we had several friendly matches with MBC, one of which was followed by a barbeque and quiz. An enjoyable fun day was held in July, which a high number of MSSC members attended. We resurrected contact with Southey Bowls Club in Raynes Park and had a pleasant, friendly game with them, followed by a fish and chips supper.

I would like to thank Richard Frewin and Mike Adams for their help with organising games and also all those members who attended matches.

On a sad note, I wish to pay tribute to Dave Gould who passed away last September. Dave helped MSSC for many years with several aspects of the club, but in particular the Bowling Section. He will be hugely missed.

To register an interest in bowling, please email me at bowling@mssc.org.uk.

Chris Durban

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### MSSC TENNIS

Great news for MSSC tennis players/would be tennis players!! MSSC has received a grant from The Dan Maskell Trust which includes funds to buy our own tennis equipment i.e. net, balls, rackets etc as well as funding to hire indoor tennis courts where we can perhaps arrange some matches and competitions throughout the coming year. Although details need to be sorted out, it is yet another sporting addition to our club and will cater for both sighted and visually impaired players alike.

We have also been tipped off that a tennis club in Wimbledon (no less!) would be interested for MSSC members to consider joining their club and again, details need to be refined but, all round, the future looks great for tennis at MSSC – so watch this space!

Jan Reynolds

### CANOEING

Spring is in the air and thoughts are turning to longer, milder days, ideal for getting out for a paddle on the water.

We have been busy investigating ways to resurrect MSSC's canoeing activities, including a fact-finding mission to Wimbledon Park Lake. It seems that, while MSSC's canoes have been languishing for years on the top of a storage container in the Guardian Centre car park, legislation and health and safety regulations have moved on to an alarming degree! As a result, getting our canoes back on the water is proving to be far more complicated and costly than anticipated and it may take a little more time to achieve progress.

In the meantime, we need to gauge the level of interest in canoeing, so please let us know if you would like to get involved. Also, if you know of any canoeing instructors with up-to-date qualifications, who would be willing to help, we would love to hear from you.

Richard

Email: cycling@mssc.org.uk

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### RUNNING - FIND A GUIDE

Running has been growing in popularity, including with some MSSC members, and many parks offer free 5 kilometre and 10 kilometre runs to promote fitness.

British Blind Sport and England Athletics have created the Find a Guide database to help you start, get back to or stay running. With several guide running courses delivered last year, there are more trained guides available in new locations. If you are 18 or older and want to start training for a park run, simply search for guide runners near you, using your postcode, on the link below:

<https://www.englandathletics.org/findaguide>

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### MSSC THEATRE BUDDIES

The aim of MSSC's Theatre Buddies is to facilitate group excursions of a cultural nature, to be enjoyed by both sighted and vision impaired members.

On 8th March, five of us made our way to The Albany in Deptford to attend a touch tour and performance of Extant's innovative production, Flight Paths. On 4th May, we have a visit planned to see an audio described performance of Caryl Churchill's Top Girls at the National Theatre, preceded by a touch tour.

Like MSSC's other activities, our sighted members willingly guide and support their VI companions, taking advantage of the concessions generally available to disabled patrons: most performance venues offer a free carer's ticket, which essentially halves the cost to both VI customer and their sighted companion, while many venues offer a reduced access rate to both.

If you are interested in being part of this group, either as a VI member or sighted companion, please get in touch, especially if you have any ideas for excursions or are willing to help organise and coordinate from time to time.

If you would like to know about the audio described performances on in London, the Spring 2019 edition of Access London Theatre Guide is now available. The Guide lists all performances taking place in London Theatres and includes venue accessibility information. For details, visit their website at <https://officiallondontheatre.com/access/>

To request a brochure, email enquiries@soltukt.co.uk or telephone 020 7557 6700.

To contact MSSC Theatre Buddies, please email info@mssc.org.uk.

Terry James

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###  SCULPTURE TOUR WITH AUDIO DESCRIPTION

A free sculpture tour for blind and partially sighted people is being held at St. George’s Hospital on Wednesday 10th April at 2pm. This tour has been made possible with the support of Art UK’s Sculpture Around You initiative.

WHERE: St. George’s Hospital, Blackshaw Road, SW17 0QT.

The nearest tube to the venue is Tooting Broadway – the tour starts at the Hospital’s main entrance, the reception area in Grosvenor Wing.

WHEN: Wednesday 10th April 2019. Time: 2-3.30 pm

To book contact:

Joanna.Wakefield@stgeorges.nhs.uk or call 0208725 0765.

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### THE ACTIVITY TRAP - BENEFITS UNDER THREAT?

Is a fear of losing benefits preventing disabled people from being more active?

The Activity Alliance have just published a new piece of research, commissioned by DSAUK, which examines disability benefits and people's fear of losing their benefits if seen to be too active: 'The Activity Trap - Benefits or Being Fit?'

Over half of the participants involved in this study said that they were likely to be more active if benefits weren't at risk of being taken away. Additionally, over a third of those questioned have had, or known someone who has had benefits sanctioned or removed because of being physically active. This means that disabled people, who make up a fifth of the UK population and currently the least active group in society, are missing out on the positive social, economic and health outcomes of being active, out of fear of losing the financial support that they are entitled to.

A fear of losing benefits is preventing disabled people from being more active. More than half (55%) of people said they were likely to be more active if benefits weren't at risk of being taken away.

Logan Gray, British Blind Sport National Partnerships Manager said:

"British Blind Sport welcomes the publication of 'The Activity Trap: Benefits or Being Fit?' commissioned by Dwarf Sports Association UK and published by Activity Alliance. This report addresses an important barrier faced by many disabled people when considering physical activities as an option and provides much needed evidence to create positive change. Sport and physical activity has been proven as a powerful tool in improving people's lives. People shouldn't have to choose between receiving their benefits and taking part in activities. Removing this obstacle could be a huge step towards encouraging healthier and happier lives."

Raising a lot of interest at Sport England and within parliamentary circles, this research has been suggested to have the potential to positively change the landscape of sport and activity, remove barriers to participation and benefit those living with a disability.

Written by Tomas Allum, C Vision UK, October 2018.

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### ­­­­­­­­­­NEW WEBSITE FOR BRITISH BLIND SPORT

The new and improved BBS website introduces tools making activity more accessible for VI people. On World Sight Day, British Blind Sport officially launched their new website. The BBS website offers greater interactivity and comes with the addition of many new and improved features to help VI people access opportunities in sport and recreation and get more active.

 The new revamped website now enables people to manage and renew their BBS membership online. The user-friendly membership portal has a simple interface which makes managing accounts and updating your preferences easier than ever before.

In just a matter of clicks, you can now buy British Blind Sport merchandise including running tethers, guide running bibs and swimming caps online with the peace of mind of secure payments and home delivery.

Visitors can also purchase the latest e-learning module - Coaching People with a Visual Impairment - and access educational and training resources to help coaches develop the skills to create inclusive and accessible sporting environments for people with sight loss.

For more information on any of British Blind Sport's activities, call 01926 424247 or email info@britishblindsport.org.uk.

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### FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY FOR MSSC CYCLISTS!

Traveleyes Goes Tandem Riding in Thailand

Every year, Traveleyes takes thousands of blind and sighted travellers on adventures all over the world.  On each trip, half the group are blind and half are fully sighted. Each day, we pair a different sighted traveller with a different blind traveller, and in return for doing some guiding and audio description, our sighted travellers receive up to 50% off the cost of their holiday, subsidised entirely by Traveleyes.

Later this year, we are running a tandem cycling trip from Bangkok to Phuket in Thailand, we will visit coffee plantations, Poonyaban Waterfalls and the Tsunami Memorial at Ban Nam Khem, amongst other amazing sites, and we would love to offer an exclusive discount to all sighted members of Merton Sports and Social Club for the Blind! I know that many of your members will already take part in rides with blind and visually impaired riders as sighted pilots, so we know you’d all make great guides! We have seen first-hand how experiences such as travel and exercise can change lives and we just want to open the world to as many people as possible, whether they’re blind or sighted.

We’re delighted to offer a further 10% discount to all of the members of The Tandem Club! To take advantage of this offer, just give our office a call on 0113 834 6094, and quote the code TTC1019.

If you would like to see an article by a sighted pilot from a tandem cycling trip across Holland, you can read that here:

<https://traveleyes-international.com/blog/principally-i-went-cycling-sighted-guide-gave-memorable-moments-david-healey-sighted-traveller/>

More information on the holiday can be seen here:-

<https://www.traveleyes-international.com/holidays/thailand-tandem-cycling/>

Please don’t hesitate to get in contact with me if there are any questions!

Andrew Milburn, The Traveleyes Team

Email: andrew@traveleyes-international.com

<http://traveleyes-international.com/>

Traveleyes is a member of ATOL (ATOL number 6600).

Please note: MSSC has no connection with Traveleyes and cannot be held responsible for any MSSC members who choose to participate.

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## MEMBER BENEFITS

If you know of any business who can offer our members a discount, please let us know and they can be added to this section.

### WALLINGTON CYCLES – 10% Discount

Wallington Cycles are delighted to offer a 10% discount to members of Merton Sports and Social club for the blind. Simply mention this offer in store.

We stock a range of clothing and accessories, plus our fully equipped workshop is able to deal with almost any servicing needs your cycles have, regardless of whether they are solo bicycles or tandems.

Address:

Wallington Cycles

3, Stafford Road

Wallington

SM6 9AQ

Email: info@wallingtoncycles.com

Telephone: 0208 288 9909

Opening Times: Monday - Friday 09:00 – 18:00, Saturday 09:00 – 17:30, Sunday 10.00 – 16:00.

 [Wallington Cycles logo – a red cog with the shop name emblazoned across it]

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### FREE ICE CREAM!

That got your attention! If you are a business or know of any businesses which would like to advertise here in exchange for offering discounts to our members, then contact info@mssc.org.uk

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March 2019