

MERTON SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB

BULLETIN

April 2020

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

Merton Sports and Social Club for VI People

(Charity No. 283843)

The Guardian Centre

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**INTRODUCTION**

You hardly need us to point out that these are strange, unprecedented times and it is impossible to predict when this crisis will be over and when normality is likely to resume. What is certain, however, is that every one of us is dealing with previously unknown challenges and changes to our everyday life. There is certainly a lot of help out there and we hope everyone has adequate support, but if you are struggling with the isolation and with getting what you need, please get in touch. We have been contacted by MSSC members, offering to make friendly phone calls or to help with shopping, so please let us know if you would like to tap into either of these offers of support.

This bulletin contains nothing about MSSC events and activities coming up, for obvious reasons, but we have gathered together a few bits of information which you may find useful and relevant during the lockdown and in the absence of the club’s usual sporting and social activities. As soon as we get the go ahead and can resume our normal schedule, including cycling, walking, swimming, bowling, tennis and socials, you will be the first to know!

Till then, stay well and keep safe.

MSSC Committee

Email: committee@mssc.org.uk

**COVID-19 F.A.Q.s**

A number of sight loss sector organisations have got together to share frequently asked questions about Covid-19, which will be regularly updated. You can find them on the following website:-

[**www.sightadvicefaq.org.uk/independent-living/Covid-19**](http://www.sightadvicefaq.org.uk/independent-living/Covid-19)

### **PETITION FOR INTERNET SHOPPING**

It’s hard to believe that VI individuals are not already considered a priority, but a petition has gone live which aims to persuade government to add blind and partially sighted people within the priority group for online shopping.

If you would like to support the campaign please use the following link and share with your contacts:

<https://bit.ly/2w4SMVD>

For a summary of what the main supermarket chains are doing to help disabled customers, including dedicated shopping times, deliveries and food boxes (Morrisons) please visit

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/connect-community/connect-news-and-stories/essential-links-and-information-supermarket-opening-times?utm_source=social&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=c19&utm_content=supermarkets>

**FREE ASSISTIVE SOFTWARE FOR 90 DAYS**

in response to the Covid-19 crisis, Vispero are offering a free 90-day remote-working licence in JAWS, ZoomText or Fusion. Whether you are a current user and your licence is limited to the workplace, school or university, or perhaps you have never used any of these programs and want to give them a try, now is the time.

To obtain your free 90-day version, please visit <https://sightandsound.co.uk/90day> or contact our team by emailing info@sightandsound.co.uk.

### **MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING**

During these times of social distancing and self-isolation, when your normal routines go out the window, it can be all too easy to fall into patterns of unhealthy behaviour, which can affect your self-esteem as well as your physical state.

Routine and Sleep:

 It is recommended that we try to maintain some kind of routine and structure to our day, particularly if we have young children. If we are on our own, it might be tempting to stay in our pyjamas, but it makes us feel better to wash, get dressed and pay attention to our appearance, even if we are unlikely to see anyone. Remember you might get caught out by a Facetime or a Whatsapp video call!

Maintaining a routine with regular meal times and the same bed time will help regulate your circadian rhythms and ensure a good night’s sleep, which is so important for your health. Exposure to daylight is also helpful, so if you are not lucky enough to be able to step out into a garden, at least make sure you open windows to let in fresh air and sunlight, which is also a valuable source of Vitamin D.

If you are working from home, you may already have developed a routine. If you have no formal work to do, try punctuating chores and housework with scheduled tea breaks and spells of relaxation. Now is the perfect time to tidy that cutlery drawer or clean out that cupboard or complete those tasks which you have been far too busy to do till now. It will give you a sense of achievement and progress, and you will feel you have earned your downtime.

Diet and Nutrition:

It may be tempting to self-comfort with fast food takeaways and unhealthy snacks, such as crisps, biscuits and chocolate, while binge watching TV box sets, and to treat yourself to yet another drink as, after all, you won’t be meeting up with mates in the pub. However, healthy, balanced meals are more important than ever just now, to maintain your immune system and keep you well, mentally as well as physically. The occasional indulgent treat is fine, alongside your daily quota of vital nutrients, including at least five portions of fresh fruit or veg a day – if you can get hold of them, of course! Why not get creative with the contents of your store cupboard and freezer, invent some new recipes and be resourceful by using up those leftovers from the fridge. You can make a surprisingly tasty soup or pasta sauce from tired vegetables a little past their best, with the addition of seasoning, a stock cube and some dried herbs and spices.

Exercising:

It is well documented that physical activity relieves stress, improves mental health and boosts the immune system, which is even more important at the moment. However, with social distancing and without the usual activities on offer, it is not so easy to stay physically active. Even if you are able to go for a walk, it can be tricky, if you can’t see people approaching, to stay at least 2 metres away from others.

Even if you are stuck indoors, you can still find ways to exercise. A bit of vigorous vacuuming and spring-cleaning not only has the benefit of sanitising your home, but also provides a workout and burns off surplus calories!

Moving to music is a great mood lifter as well as valuable exercise. You’ve probably heard the expression, “Dance like there’s nobody watching.” Well, this is more likely to be true than at any other time, so now’s your chance! Put on your favourite upbeat CD, or switch your radio to a music station, or ask your smart speaker to play dance tracks or find one of the many podcasts which do the same, then let your hair down, shake your booty and have a good, old bop. There really is nobody watching you!

If a more formal exercise programme is your thing, the Metro Blind Sport website has details of a variety of online sources. Visit https/www.metroblindsport.org for details. Below are just a few suggestions:-

<https://www.metroblindsport.org/audio-exercise-programs/>

<https://www.youthsporttrust.org/free-home-learning-resources>

<https://www.sportengland.org/news/how-stay-active-while-youre-home>

Humour

They say laughter is the best medicine but, at the moment, the best medicine would be a Covid-19 vaccine. Seriously though, there is nothing like a seriously good laugh to cheer you up, alleviate stress and take your mind off the woes of the world, albeit temporarily. The very act of smiling uses muscles which release endorphins in the brain, immediately improving your mood. Radio 4 and Radio 4 Extra are a great source of comedy, and there are some brilliant podcasts available on BBC Sounds to make you smile.

Gratitude

This is undoubtedly a worrying time and anxiety will be running high for many, but there is always something we can find to be thankful for. Counting your blessings and making a gratitude list can really help lift your spirits.

Stay Connected

When your mood is low, you may not feel like having a conversation with anyone, but keeping in touch with friends and family by phone, email or social media will help you feel less isolated – and they will probably appreciate the contact too. As mentioned in the introduction, some MSSC members have offered to make phone calls to anyone who would like a friendly chat, so please email with your phone number if you would like a call.

Finally, maybe you have your own tips for staying fit and keeping your spirits up. Perhaps you can recommend a particular exercise routine, or a good book or podcast, or an audio described TV drama you have enjoyed, or a new hobby or pastime which has really helped to keep you occupied and entertained. Personally, I have enjoyed catching up on some sewing and mending while listening to the radio. I thoroughly recommend the serialisation of Hilary Mantel’s latest novel, “The Mirror and the Light”, read brilliantly by Anton Lesser, and all seven episodes of an enthralling drama series, “This Thing of Darkness.” Both can be found on the BBC Sounds app, and for something to make you laugh, try the new series of “The Now Show”, broadcast on Radio 4 each Friday evening at 6.30 and repeated each Saturday at 12.30pm; it is also on the BBC Sounds app, along with a back catalogue of previous series. Let us have your recommendations and we will spread the word.

Terry James

Email: info@mssc.org.uk

**MSSC FACEBOOK GROUP**

While all MSSC activities are on hold and you are stuck indoors, self-isolating or avoiding non-essential contact, a great way of keeping in touch with fellow MSSC members is via the Facebook group.

Even if you are not currently on Facebook, all you need to do is log on to the platform, click on groups, search for MSSC, and then request to join the group once you have found it. It really is very straightforward.

Jules Griffin

MSSC Facebook Group Founder

**MERTON VISION WORKING AGE WHATSAPP GROUP**

I am pleased to inform you that the MertonVision working age Whatsapp group is finally here. The purpose of this group is to give you a place to chat, meet new people and to stay in touch with all future working age events, either at the Guardian Centre or elsewhere.

If you would like to join, please click on this link:

https://chat.whatsapp.com/KQYxoJR4Uz2Fquw9bjLgh3

Alternatively, you can ask me to add you if that is easier.

You can do this by texting or calling me on 07562 011 046.

I look forward to chatting with some of you soon.

Chloe Smith

Merton Vision Working Age Outreach Worker

**NEWS FROM VOCALEYES**

VocalEyes is the UK Charity providing opportunities for blind and partially sighted people to enjoy arts and heritage through audio description. This involves producing live audio described commentaries for theatre shows ranging from major West End hits, such as We Will Rock You, Hamilton to smaller theatre productions such as the Yorkshire tour of a new musical, No Horizon. For museums, Galleries and Heritage sites, VocalEyes runs live audio-described tours such as the recent Troy exhibition at The British Museum. They also provide visual awareness training for museum and gallery staff to be able to host their own audio-described tours.

In January this year, Jess Beal became the charity’s Marketing and Audience Manager. Her role is to promote all these opportunities to the blind and partially sighted community as well as to professionals working in the sector. This is through producing a quarterly What’s On guide, available in print, audio, Braille and email, letting you know what’s coming up at the theatre and museums in the next few months. There’s also a monthly E-newsletter with several theatre and museum highlights to choose from. It contains active Twitter and Facebook pages which in normal times promotes the upcoming shows and links to recorded audio introductory notes for theatre shows when they are available. You can also find listings for the year on the VocalEyes website with options to search by performance type, region or date. You can even go back into the archives to find details of previous events.

With the current coronavirus situation, there are sadly no theatre shows or museum tours to highlight. Depending on the progression of COVID-19, this may affect production of the next What’s On guide scheduled for publication in May to cover June-August 2020.

In the meantime, each week the VocalEyes team will be sharing an assortment of links to both material from their own archive and some of the best content being streamed and shared by arts and heritage organisations across the UK and the world. They are also looking forward to the day when they can begin to share news of venues re-opening their doors.

You can sign up to the mailing list to receive email or printed information at [www.vocaleyes.co.uk](http://www.vocaleyes.co.uk) and please do continue to check the VocalEyes website to keep up with their weekly news of arts and heritage highlights and their sharing of audio recordings. Below are some ideas to keep you entertained:-

Theatre and Dance

If you are missing your trips to the theatre for an audio-described show, then why not relive some of your favourites from the last few years? Visit the VocalEyes [What’s On archives](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=d8572c88ad&e=4ea7785af0) where you can find the recorded Audio Introductions (in both Word and audio format) from previous performances, going back to 2016, when the current website was launched.

If you’re a fan of musicals, then listen to your favourite [soundtrack on YouTube](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=55f5f9945b&e=4ea7785af0), or if you’re missing the ballet why not go to BBC iPlayer and watch the audio-described programme of [Darcey](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=1b1e705711&e=4ea7785af0" \t "_blank) Bussell’s Ballet Heroes. The former ballerina celebrates some of the great male dancers with archive footage, interviews and backstage rehearsals.

## [London Beyond Sight](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=1b1e705711&e=4ea7785af0)

[Imagine you are visiting the sights of London. Working with VocalEyes audio describers, 40 prominent Londoners were invited to talk about their favourite landmarks or hidden gems in the capital. Here’s a few to get you started.](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=1b1e705711&e=4ea7785af0)

[[Journalist Alistair Stewart on The Cenotaph](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=947382c5ca&e=4ea7785af0)
[Trumpet soloist Alison Balsam on Shakespeare’s Globe](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=d4d8ab4d81&e=4ea7785af0)
[Actress Alison Steadman on the Pelicans in St James’ Park](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=a95ab6e0d6&e=4ea7785af0)](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=1b1e705711&e=4ea7785af0)

[Please note that because this series was recorded in 2012, some details may not be accurate today.](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=a95ab6e0d6&e=4ea7785af0)

Fun for Kids

[While your children are not at school here’s a great way to keep them busy while getting creative and having fun. [Rainbow colouring pages](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=c6c6b351fe&e=4ea7785af0) has a selection of designs to print and colour. Then put their finished artwork in your window to brighten up your neighbours’ day.](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=5d67463237&e=4ea7785af0)

Elevenses with the World of David Walliams

[Take a break every day at 11am. For the next few weeks, there’s a free audio story from David Walliam’s[World’s Worst Children](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=a1cde27ba5&e=4ea7785af0).](https://vocaleyes.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=909237df20438895b80cc2b0d&id=c6c6b351fe&e=4ea7785af0)

During the lockdown, all VocalEyes staff are working at home, but you can get in touch by emailing Jessica@vocaleyes.co.uk or enquiries@vocaleyes.co.uk.

### **TANDEM SECTION NEWS**

It seems that Covid-19 has proved to be the proverbial spoke in the wheel of the Tandem Section, halting all cycling activities for the foreseeable future. We had hoped that we would have the all clear in time for our cycling weekend in July, but the Youth Hostel Association has closed all its venues and has cancelled all bookings. Hopefully, we will be able to reschedule a weekend trip later in the year.

Up until our last cycle rides on 1st March, members of the Tandem sub group had been extremely busy, working hard to recruit and train new pilots and increase the number and range of rides so as to meet the varied needs of our growing membership. Since the beginning of the year, we have run three Have a Go workshops and have trained thirty-two prospective Pilots, more than a handful of whom we hope will become regulars on our long, short and intermediate rides. Since January, we have also welcomed eight new stokers. The Have a Go workshop we had scheduled for April, specifically for novice stokers, has obviously had to be postponed for the time being.

We are aiming to refresh and renovate our fleet of tandems, so that we have a good variety of versatile, well-maintained bikes to suit all shapes and sizes, including some particularly petite female cyclists. As a result of two successful grant applications, we will be acquiring a total of seven brand new tandems over a three-year period and will be upgrading some of our existing tandems. To make space for the new machines, we have removed a number of bikes we no longer use: some have been loaned out, some have been sold and, thanks to Charles, some of the more tatty specimens have been smartened up and flogged on Ebay.

A substantial grant from Ground Work London will allow us to buy three brand new tandems over three years. We took delivery of the first of these in February, an Orbit from JD Tandems in Yorkshire, just in time for it to be ridden on the last long ride on Sunday 1st March, before the lockdown. Both pilot and stoker were impressed with the bike and gave it a glowing review! The other grant, from British Cycling, will eventually translate into four new tandems.

We are ultimately looking to keep a fleet of

twenty well-maintained, easy to ride tandems and, with a healthy pool of pilots, we hope to continue to run at least four rides a month once the lockdown is over. These will be the usual long ride on the first Sunday of each month, plus the option of a short ride for beginners, and the usual short ride or a slightly longer, intermediate ride on the third Saturday.

The monthly maintenance sessions at the Guardian Centre, led by Richard H, will also resume once the current restrictions are over.

Until then, if you can’t get out on a bike for your daily quota of exercise, we hope you have a static bike to use at home or at least manage to keep cycling fit in other ways.

MSSC Tandem Section

Email: cycling@mssc.org.uk

### **WALLINGTON CYCLES – 10% Discount**

Wallington Cycles are still open for business, though we are observing the physical distancing guidelines and restricting the number of customers in the shop at any one time.

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.

We are still delighted to offer a 10% discount to members of Merton Sports and Social club. Simply mention this offer in store.

Our address is 3, Stafford Road,

Wallington SM6 9AQ.

Email: info@wallingtoncycles.com

Telephone: 020 8288 9909