

MERTON SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB

BULLETIN

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

Merton Sports and Social Club for VI People

(Charity No. 283843)

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**MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

I will begin by saying another big thank you to those very kind people who have put themselves out to help some of our VI members with shopping and dog walking. Offers of support are still there, so do please get in touch if you need help or if you simply fancy a chat.

I genuinely hope everyone is well, though I’m aware that, statistically, some of you won’t be or will be recovering from being poorly. Our thoughts and best wishes are with you and with those who have tragically lost loved ones to the cruel virus.

We would love to know how you’ve been getting on. How have you been coping with life under lockdown? Do you have any survival tips to share?

While the restrictions of the lockdown have eased a little and many of us have more recently been able to meet up in small numbers with friends and family outside our household, the ongoing social distancing guidelines unfortunately still prohibit the club from running any of its usual activities. Naturally, just as soon as we are able, we will resume as many of our social and physical activities as possible.

It has, however, not been complete inertia at MSSC. Our Head of Tandem Maintenance, Richard H has continued to work on the bikes to make sure they are roadworthy and ready to be ridden, just as soon as club rides can resume. We are also hugely indebted to one of our star pilots, Charles who has worked tirelessly on repairing and smartening up all of the bikes identified as surplus to requirements. He has very astutely made the most of the lockdown and what has become a golden age for cycling, with people clamouring to avoid public transport and take advantage of the quieter roads. Consequently, Charles has managed to sell every single one of the unwanted bikes, including the novelty six-seater, raising well over £1,000 for club funds and freeing up valuable space in the two storage containers. This makes room for the six new tandems we will be acquiring over the next couple of years and means we can store and access the bikes far more safely and easily. In fact, we have ordered our next brand new tandem, with a relatively small frame to suit our more petite cyclists, and are eagerly awaiting its imminent delivery.

It has been suggested that some MSSC members might like to get together virtually on an online platform such as

Zoom or Teams. If there is sufficient interest, we can certainly look at arranging something. Let us know what you think.

For now, take care, stay well and keep safe.

Richard James

Email: info@mssc.org.uk

**MORE CANINE COMMENTARY FROM GAMBIT**

Hello to all my favourite guide dog friends. I hope you are well and enjoying the lovely weather, although, I don’t know about you, my fur coat is somewhat tiresome in this heat and it’s difficult to settle in a cool enough space. Andy and Bev keep giving me tap water. Will they never learn? I don’t drink that human treated muck. Give me rain, river or muddy water, any day.

Have you heard that we are, apparently, on the road to recovery? Really? Recovery from what exactly? Less pollution, less stress, less company, shorter walks? Bizarre! I have noticed how things have changed since my last bulletin entry, but it’s definitely not for the better. For one thing, the roads are noisier. I used to love the “four parks and a cemetery” walk, but I have gone right off it now because traffic is becoming scary again. As much as I love Andy and Bev and they are humans, I often ask myself and other dogs I meet, “Will humans learn from this experience?” Sadly, I doubt it because they love their cars too much.

Anyway, how have you been doing for treats? I have to laugh to myself because my human family don’t seem to have missed out on their ‘essential’ treats, (well apart from the first few days of this lockdown). Fortunately, I haven’t either, due to the fact that my food shop stayed open. Have you noticed how exasperating humans can be? Andy still offers me a variety of treats and I don’t wish to appear ungrateful, but when is he going to understand that pigs’ ears are the real deal and nothing else comes near?

I often like to bury my pigs’ ears in the garden. My garden has changed over the past 12 weeks. Andy and Bev spend a lot of time out there doing stuff to the lawn, the pond and the plants. I don’t know why they tidy up out there because it’s perfectly fine for me when it is naturally overgrown and, after all, it is MY garden. The muddy runway I had lovingly formed during the winter is now bone dry, although a little grass is growing back. I hope they don’t tidy that bit up and pave it over. Since the changes, I have become much more relaxed about birds coming in to my territory. This might be because the doors are always open and I can’t be bothered to chase them anymore. In fact, we’re on quite friendly terms now and, as a result, I am sure more birds are visiting. My favourites are the blue tits, sparrows, blackbirds and robins (I just ignore the pesky pigeons). We’ve had a heron visit the pond a couple of times. He only comes to fish but, to please my master, I charge at him and see him off. For some unknown reason, Andy has put a plastic heron in the pond. Can you believe the irony of it? Why do we need an artificial one when the real heron still visits? I do enjoy, though, playing chase with the larger animals, especially at night, now that the back doors are left open until quite late.

We had a really weird evening a few weeks back. This has never happened before, but Andy, Bev and Grace sat out in the front garden, merrily eating and drinking. It was busy with people passing by, offering food and drink. They were even joined by a couple of friends later on, and I kept a close eye on them to make sure they kept their distance. A couple of elderly neighbours stopped and chatted about V.E. day and how they remembered having jelly. Very odd.

I am missing all you guys. Keep up the great work you do. As you know, I hate being near cars, but you guide dogs have to walk amongst the crowds and the noise all of the time. Respect!

Gambit Williamson

(translated into English by Bev)

**MSSC FACEBOOK GROUP**

While all MSSC activities are on hold, a great way of keeping in touch with fellow MSSC members is via the Facebook group. Why not join the group and let us know how you’ve been coping with lockdown and all the restrictions.

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

**POP-UP CYCLE WAYS AND E-SCOOTERS: RNIB CONCERNS**

The Government has announced £250m for changes to street design to encourage more walking and cycling while social distancing measures are in place.

The changes announced include the accelerated roll-out of e-scooters, pop up cycle ways and widened pavements.

While it’s great news that more people will be walking and cycling to work, and there will be less pollution in the air, the RNIB is highlighting how important it is that these changes are made in a way that keeps streets accessible for blind and partially sighted people.

[Take their survey](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/travel-transport)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/travel-transport>

**NOTES FROM AN AVID TANDEM PILOT**

*Richard Holden, regular pilot and Head of MSSC tandem maintenance, describes how he discovered MSSC and was bitten by the tandem cycling bug.*

A couple of years ago, I saw a post on my local chat group from MSSC, looking for front riders to pilot tandems with blind and partially sighted back riders (stokers). I was recently retired and looking for something useful to do with my time. As a lifelong cyclist and a recently qualified bike mechanic, it seemed perfect. I called the number and agreed to go along to the next ride on my solo.

It was a cold November day, but despite the conditions, everyone was very friendly and upbeat. The main organisers were Richard and Terry, who gave me a brief rundown on how to be a useful companion for someone with a visual impairment, before we set off to Kent and our refreshment stop near Biggin Hill. The route was hilly, the lunch was good, and I went home thinking this could be fun.

Before the next ride, I had my first go on a Tandem. The flashpoints were starting, stopping and managing the traffic. I was also aware of my responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the person on the back. Still, I must have done okay, as Terry, who had courageously agreed to ride with me, proclaimed I was good to go.

That first ride was quite an intense experience. I had to concentrate to ensure I co-ordinated with my stoker, managed the traffic and didn’t fall over when we stopped! When we got to our refreshment stop, I had to consider my stoker’s needs, guide her to a table, ensure she knew what was available, that her order was taken, and that when it arrived, she knew what was in front of her and where. This was all made easy by my stoker who was fun to be with and had a wicked sense of humour.

I have learnt that those with visual impairments have a range of experiences: some are blind from birth, others lose sight later in life, while some have limited sight which varies in different circumstances; they are parents, working professionals, artists, funny, serious – just like the sighted members of the club.

I have now done dozens of rides and have become a lot more confident piloting tandems. I particularly love the longer rides, such as the ride we had last summer with an overnight stay in Sussex. The longer rides allow us to escape to rolling countryside and quiet lanes. It also means we have the opportunity to enjoy a bit of racing and the joshing that goes along with that.

In addition, I am involved in repairing and maintaining our tandems, some of which are quite elderly. We have a very small budget, but with the support of the bike shop where I work, we manage to keep the tandems on the road.

The club is about cycling, but it is more than that for many members. For example, one of the visually impaired stokers told me how she felt the club had given her confidence in her own abilities, not only on a bike but in her life in general. She said she had started to accept her sight loss and strive to live life to the full nevertheless. It is not all one way though. I have gained so much personally from becoming a member of MSSC: not only have I made some new and really interesting friends, both sighted and visually impaired, but I have also gained an insight into living with a visual impairment, and learnt about tandems.

Riding a tandem is a very sociable and rewarding experience for both visually impaired stokers and sighted pilots alike. The stokers clearly appreciate the freedom of being able to ride a bike, but we all benefit from the physical exercise and enormously enjoy the camaraderie of tandem cycling.

Richard Holden

## Theatre and Music

Below are some ideas for getting your arts and culture fix.

Stage shows, musicals and opera you can watch online for free:

<https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/stage-shows-musicals-opera-free-stream-online_51198.html>

Royal Albert Home brings exclusive sessions from artists’ homes to yours whilst the Hall is shut.  These shows are all available for free

<https://www.royalalberthall.com/tickets/series/royal-albert-home>

**KEEPING ACTIVE AT HOME**

You may well have adopted a daily exercise routine which works for you, but you can find a list of home workouts on British Blind Sport’s website at <https://britishblindsport.org.uk/stay-in-work-out/>

Alternatively, tandem stoker and Sound Tennis player, Odette Batterel has devised her own “Baked Bean Workout” which you can easily do in a small space at home. All you need is 2 tin cans to hand. To give it a go, here is the link: <https://youtu.be/1ZNmaS3I_U0>

The Metro Blind Sport website is a great source of useful material for keeping occupied during lockdown. Take a look at https/www.metroblindsport.org for details.

**A BIT OF A GIGGLE**

The Washington Post has recently published the winning submissions to its yearly neologism contest, in which readers are asked to supply alternative meanings for common words. A selection of the winning entries are below:-

1. Coffee - the person upon whom one coughs.

2. Flabbergasted - appalled at how much weight you have gained.

3. Abdicate - to give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach.

4. Esplanade - to attempt an explanation while drunk.

5. Negligent - describes a condition in which you absentmindedly answer the door in your nightgown.

6. Lymph -, to walk with a lisp.

7. Gargoyle - olive-flavoured mouthwash.

8. Flatulence - emergency vehicle that picks you up after you are run over by a steamroller.

9. Balderdash - a rapidly receding hairline.

10. Testicle - a humorous question on an exam.

**RNIB UPDATES, SUPPORT AND ADVICE**

You can stay up to date with the latest advice by visiting the coronavirus news page on the RNIB website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/coronavirus>”

You can also get dedicated advice and support by calling RNIB’s Helpline on 0303 123 9999 or email helpline@rnib.org.uk.

**MSSC MEMBER SEEKS HELP WITH RESEARCH PROJECT**

One of our members is an MSc Occupational and Business Psychology student at Kingston University. She is looking for people to participate in qualitative research into the experiences of visually impaired people seeking work. The research is for a dissertation supervised by Dr Lilith Whiley in the Department of Management at Kingston Business School, and has received ethical approval from the university’s ethics committee.

Approximately only a quarter of blind and partially sighted people of working age in the UK are in employment and the employment gap between those with a visual impairment and the general working age population is widening. If the participation of visually impaired people in the workforce is to be increased, a better understanding is needed of the specific challenges which visually impaired people experience in securing and remaining in work.

The researcher is looking for 6 to 8 blind or partially sighted people to participate in this study. They must either be currently seeking work or have recently started work after a substantial period of job seeking.

What will participants be asked to do?

 After giving their consent to take part in this study, each participant will participate in an interview with the researcher. The interview will take place in June or July 2020 and will last approximately 90 minutes. The interviews will be semi-structured, with several open questions about the experience of looking for work and, if they are now in work or have worked in the past, their experience of starting a new job.

Where and when will interviews take place?

 Interviews will take place during June and early July 2020 via phone or videoconference (e.g. Zoom). The researcher can be fairly flexible about the dates and times of interviews to fit in with participants’ other commitments.

What will happen to the information participants provide?

All information provided by participants will be handled confidentially. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed onto a computer by the researcher. The audio-recordings and transcripts will be kept securely. The researcher will analyse the data from the interviews and this analysis will form the basis of the dissertation. Some quotations from participants and examples they have given during their interviews will be included in the final report to support the analysis, but to protect participants’ privacy and respect confidentiality, participants’ names will not be used and nor will any information which could easily identify the participant.

If you are interested in participating or want to find out more about the study, please contact Victoria Harrison at K1745879@kingston.ac.uk.

**STUDY OF YOUNG VI PEOPLE’S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Are you visually impaired between 18 and 30 years old? Do you do physical activity or play sports? University of Southampton PhD student Geane Fontinele wants to hear from you all, regardless if you are active or not. If you are active she would like to hear about your experience with physical activity, sports and technologies. If you are not active, she would be interested to know why. To participate in this study, please fill in this online survey <https://isurvey.soton.ac.uk/33270>. If you have any questions, contact Geane Fontinele directly on G.De-Almeida-Fontinele-Zadra@soton.ac.uk

**BOB’S LOCKDOWN QUIZ**

# Virtual quiz nights during lockdown continue to be a favourite form of entertainment for all sorts of groups, friends and families, but there are other ways to get a quiz fix.

# For instance, you might enjoy the new general knowledge quiz called My Generation on Radio 4 each Monday at 3.00pm, or why not tune into the Ken Bruce Show on Radio 2, and test your knowledge of popular music on the Pop Master quiz, broadcast at 10.30 each week day morning. See how well you do against the two contestants, or try phoning in yourself to have a go live on air.

# Once again, MSSC’s resident Quiz Master, Bob has very kindly provided a couple of rounds for you to try in the comfort of your own home. It is entirely up to you how seriously you take it: if you can resist the urge to google the answers, you are welcome to submit your answers by email and we will let you know how many you got right and just how naturally brainy you are – or not! Sorry, you will have to provide your own prize!

# Round 1: Alphabetical Quiz

(All answers begin with the same letter (surname if it’s a person))

1. Studio City is a suburb of which city?
2. What type of drink did Elvis Costello’s father advertise?
3. Which is Britain’s most successful team in UEFA competitions?
4. What is the name of the process of transformation from a person to a werewolf?
5. Which 1971 motor racing movie starred Steve McQueen?
6. Which song from 42nd Street includes the lyric ‘Goodnight, milkman’s on his way’?
7. Which 1986 movie, directed by Jim Henson, starred David Bowie as Jareth?
8. Who composed 19 Hungarian rhapsodies?
9. Which football club features in the movie ‘The Damned United’?
10. Monrovia is the capital of which country?

# Round 2: Not As Expected

1. What colour are aircraft Black Boxes?
2. What nationality was Cleopatra, queen of Egypt?
3. What is a camel-hair brush made from?
4. In which country did kiwi fruit originally grow?
5. What type of animal is a horned lizard?
6. From which animal is catgut usually made?
7. What is misleading about the name of the smallest state in the USA?
8. What type of fruit is a Blenheim Orange?
9. From which country do French Fries originate?
10. In which country are Panama hats made?

# Email your answers to info@mssc.org.uk and we will mark them, then let you know how well you did. How big a prize you deserve will be solely down to your own discretion!



Smashing Records, a weekly radio show where you get to choose the tunes and the topics, every Wednesday 3.30pm on Resonance 104.4FM, Digital DAB radio and online www.resonancefm.com.

Blind Cricketer Hassan Khan talks about what helped him survive Corona Virus:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/Resonance/smashing-records-29th-april-2020-hussan-khan/>

Hassan then chats to Terry James from Merton Sports and Social Club about how to keep your spirits up in lockdown:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/Resonance/smashing-records-13-may-2020-mental-health-with-hassan-and-terry/>

Smashing Records would like more VI people and their friends and family on the show so please get in touch with your tunes and your topics.

Abs Tripp

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