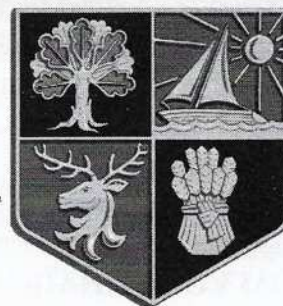


FOCUS

Monthly Newsletter for members of the
NEW MILTON RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION



NMRA

FROM YOUR EDITOR

Pre-Christmas greetings to you all and sincere wishes that you will have a very enjoyable Christmas. Let's hope the weather will be kind for those of you undertaking journeys to be with friends and family, whilst should you be comfortably at home and in a position to do so, keep a caring eye open for a lonely neighbour or maybe someone you know who is facing this first festive season without the companionship of a loved one.

A more practical reminder that you should ensure your cards carry a stamp and the correct postage. Last year I spent a few pounds on collecting cards and packets from the sorting office which were either mistakenly unstamped or carried insufficient postage. Not only does the recipient have to pay the right postage but a handling charge as well. Takes some of the pleasure out of receiving something if you have to make a trip to the sorting office and pay to accept it.

A reminder to contributors that copy for the January edition is required by the earlier date of 8th December so that it can be published before the printers close for the holiday.

It was a pleasure to see some 60 people attend our General Meeting last month to hear Peter Roberts' presentation on the New Forest. Appreciative thanks go to all those who braved the perishing cold to be there. The Forest is a constant source of historical interest and we enjoyed learning how it is managed for our appreciation and delight. Minutes of the meeting are included in this issue.

I hope you've put a note in your brand new diary that we shall be welcoming Alex Jennings to our January meeting, who always has something interesting and helpful to tell us. She will be covering the apparently difficult to understand Residential Property Nil Rate Band; also the Inheritance Tax Nil Rate Band will

NEXT MEMBERS' GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, 10th January, 2.15 p.m.

Barton Methodist Church Hall

Saturday, 11th March, 10.15 a.m. (+AGM)

New Milton Community Centre

TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council - 19th December, 6th February

Amenities - 9th January, 21st February (Tues.)

Fin. & Gen. - 5th December, 23rd January

Planning:

8th & 22nd December

5th & 19th January

All Council Meetings 6.30 p.m.

The Town Hall

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WELCOME

increase to £1,000 in certain circumstances. Time permitting she will also give an update on the care cost cap.

At last month's General Meeting I was asked if Alex could give advice on disputes with neighbours on boundaries, overgrown hedges and trees, etc. if they become serious enough to be taken to court. A problem which seems to be on the increase, seemingly due to a combination of inconsiderate behaviour and intolerance. In fact, this doesn't come under her special field of expertise but the January issue will hopefully include an article written for us by one of her colleagues which I hope will help.

You may have read about the horrific accident on Whitefield Road last month when a poor lady pedestrian was killed. An absolute case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time! Whilst not directly responsible for that particular accident, calls have been renewed for traffic lights to be installed at the notorious junction of Whitefield Road and Station

Visit our website - www.nmra.org.uk

Road, where we take our life in our hands trying to cross over. The County Council has been approached several times but the request has always been turned down for various reasons. Perhaps it will put on its "listening ears" now??

Phyllis Inglis

FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

As we move rapidly towards Christmas it's a time to reflect on what has happened over the past year and to look forward to what can be achieved in 2017 and beyond.

As your Chairman, I can honestly say that I have been concerned about the lack of support and interaction between those of us on the committee and the general membership of this leading community group in the town. We are slowly beginning to get the necessary feedback from some of you, and I would encourage you to let us know your thoughts and feelings about the direction which you want this Association to take in the future. Call or email me.

With the announcements earlier this year that New Milton may have to accommodate some 930 additional dwellings over the next 20 years, it is going to be even more important that we have an effective voice helping to embrace the concerns which thousands of residents will have on the impact that such an increase in our population will make. Powerful lobbying will be needed to ensure such development can happen in a sustainable way, and that the infrastructure needed for it is made a high priority in the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan, currently being worked on for consideration during 2017. I represent your Association on the Plan's Working Party and will make every endeavour to ensure that the Group, as a whole, works in your best interests, improving dramatically in the way it engages and communicates with the community. We cannot blame the present level of response to this matter down to apathy and must ensure that the Working Party does its utmost to market the process, communicating with you all in a professional and (more importantly) a timely manner.

On a happier and more positive note, I have been recalling the way in which your Association has continued to support our community with some of the funds raised. Funding is available as a result of our social activities and from the income which we receive, largely from the financial support of FOCUS advertisers.

Last month I was pleased to attend a reception to mark the unveiling of two Gold Benches on the recreation ground in honour of our very own Paralympic Gold Medal Winners at the Rio Games - Alice Tai and Mikey Jones. It was an honour to meet these two young inspirational, courageous athletes, and your Association is proud that our funds enabled us to provide the two beautifully designed benches in recognition of their achievements. Throughout the year we have also been able to give financial assistance to, amongst others, the New Milton Carers Support Group, New Milton Kurling Klub, Ashley Junior School and the New Milton Christmas Festival. We have also been able to provide continued financial support to the Town Council for the planting and maintenance of flowers at New Milton Station, the two flower beds alongside the War Memorial and, of course, the Christmas lighting on the large tree outside Boots (these will be switched on at 5 p.m. 3rd December, at the end of the Christmas Festival).

Whilst I am in a more positive frame of mind about the Association's future, as we move into 2017 please do not let up in sending us your thoughts on what we should be doing to better support our community and town. Please continue to register for the Ad-Hoc E-Mail Newsletters via our website at www.nmra.org.uk. We are particularly keen to hear from those of you of a working age and younger people for whom attendance at meetings may not always be possible; how best we can help meet your needs as residents of this great town.

Our Secretary has enormous difficulties in booking our programme for the year ahead - preferred times and dates of venues, trying to please as many people as possible. Next year we hope to provide a balanced programme, both in terms of locations and timings. We also have plans for a wide variety of topics to be addressed, both entertaining and some more controversial issues. Watch the website as well as FOCUS for announcements over the coming months.

Finally my wife, Jean, and I together with the Office Bearers and committee send you all our good wishes for a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Let's remember especially at this time that there are many who may not be as fortunate as others in having family and friends around to enjoy the festival season. I would urge you all to think of such people and extend your thoughtful support.

Alan Watson, 610052
a.d.watson@btinternet.com

NEW MILTON RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
(Affiliated to New Milton & District Community Association)
Annual Subscription £3.00 per household

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* Editor's role is ex officio

Items for publication must reach the Editor no later than 15th of the preceding month (a week earlier in December for the January issue). Unless otherwise stated, comments made as part of the editorial are those of the Editor and not necessarily those of the committee or Association itself.

The Editor reserves the right to edit all information received. Publication is entirely dependent on space availability and no guarantee of inclusion can be given.

Contributions published do not necessarily represent the views or policy of the Association, whose approach is non-political and unbiased.

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MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Many thanks to all those who have elected to renew their membership by using the Standing Order form in last month's issue. It does reduce the workload on our volunteers when subscriptions are becoming due in the run-up to April. Once these Standing Orders have been set up your bank will not enable the Association to change it unless you provide new signed instructions; it is much better than a direct debit since you are in total control.

I'm sure all members would like to join with me in thanking our team of distributors, especially at this festive time, for delivering your Newsletter each month. They do sterling work in all weathers!

Volunteer street distributors who took on a route to cover for regular distributors last month were Pat Fern, and Margaret Watts. All thanks to them and especially to Ray Powell who covered the role of main distributor in addition to his normal lead distributor role.

From time to time a regular distributor is unable to continue for some reason, so thanks to Tony Grove for his past service to us. A replacement now needs to be found to deliver just 10 issues of FOCUS in the areas of St. John's Road, Bashley Common Road and New Lane. Please do give me a call for further details if you can help.

Due to the holiday season, the January issue will be around a week earlier than usual, so if a regular distributor needs cover for this earlier time will they please get in touch. If a regular distributor needs temporary cover I consult a reserve list to find someone living near that route. I then call them to see if they can deliver for that month only. If you are willing to be on the reserve list please let me know your name, address, postcode and telephone number; then, if a route needs cover I will give you a call.

Nigel King

Ed: One of our distributors has written in to say that she's been having a much-needed clear-out and now has some clip files/ring-binders/concertina files/A-Z dividers, etc. going spare. If of use to anyone please contact her before everything goes to a charity shop or the tip - jackiecoup@talktalk.net

NEWS FROM THE TOWN COUNCIL

Swimmers Alice Tai (17) and Mike Jones (22) are the Paralympic Gold Medal heroes from New Milton, who have struck gold for the second time in three months. They were guests of honour at a civic ceremony which took place on the recreation ground last month when two gold-painted benches on opposite sides of the rec. (donated by the Residents' Association) were unveiled in their honour. Proudly displaying their medals, they were mobbed by well-wishers and posed for photographs while receiving countless congratulations. Mikey, who has cerebral palsy, won gold in the 400-metre S7 freestyle event just weeks after his father, Bernard, sadly died following a long illness. Alice won gold in the women's 4x100m medley and bronze in the women's 100m backstroke, having clinched gold in the IPC Swimming World Championships last year. Born with two club feet, she underwent 14 operations between the ages of 20 weeks and 12 years but has no movement in her ankles.

Town Mayor Councillor David Hawkins said "We are so pleased to recognise these young people's achievements and proud to think it's home-grown talent being celebrated today.

Remembrance: Some 30+ people congregated at the War Memorial on Friday, 11th November, to com-memorate Armistice Day when WW1 ended. In New Milton we remembered especially the 223 local servicemen and women who lost their lives (83 from WW1 and 140 from WW2) whose names appear on the Memorial, together with 26 local residents who died in the WW2 bombings of the town.

On Sunday, 13th November, attracting a much larger crowd, after the Last Post was sounded Brigadier Paul Jepson, President of the Royal British Legion New Milton Branch recited the Exhortation followed, after Reveille, by Colonel Ron Back, Chairman of the Branch, reciting the Kohima Epitaph. Nine crosses were planted in memory of local servicemen killed 100 years ago at the Battle of Jutland and the Somme. After the laying of 40 wreaths and prayers by the Reverend Andrew Bailey, Parade Marshall Councillor Goff Beck assembled the Parade to march along Station Road to the Memorial Centre for a Service which included moving tributes from pupils from Ballard and Durlston Court Schools

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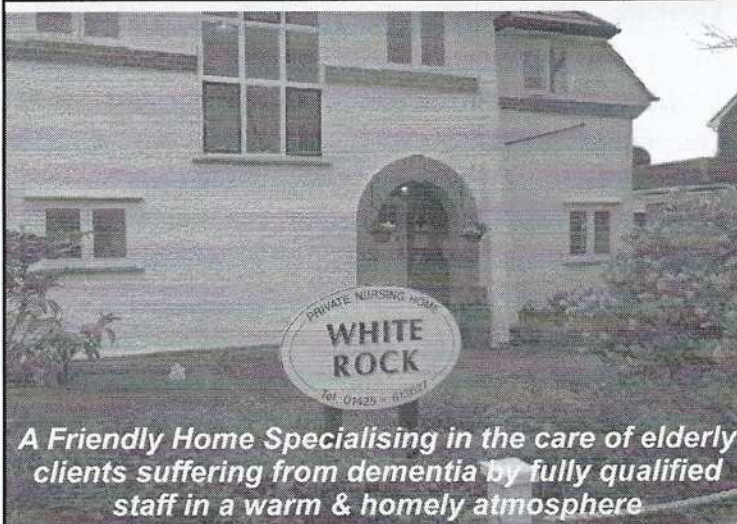


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MINUTES OF A GENERAL MEETING
held at 2.15 p.m. Tuesday, 8th November, 2016
at Barton Methodist Church Hall

In the Chair: Alan Watson

Some 65 members were welcomed to the meeting and thanked for making the effort to turnout on a particularly cold, unpleasant day.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Approved for signature.

Matters Arising:

Fly-tipping - Concern was expressed that the County Council's decision to charge for items taken to the tip would result in an appreciable increase in fly-tipping. It is understood that the Council is reviewing the matter.

Sea Road Post Office - It had been announced at the meeting that contractors would leave the site and the post office re-opened around mid-October. This didn't happen - apparently due to further remedial work found necessary. We understand that the Post Office HQ is negotiating whether the postmaster will return or someone else appointed. Other avenues are also being progressed to try and ensure continuity of a post office in Barton.

Speaker Peter Roberts, former Chairman of the New Forest Association, was introduced. He said that the Association is some 150 years old, taking a very active interest in the work and preservation of the Forest. In 1079 William the Conqueror designated the area as a royal forest, mainly for hunting deer. Over the years, however, it became increasingly important as a source of timber which was vital for the building of houses and ships. Pigs were introduced to eat the acorns which, if taken in excess, can be fatal to cattle and ponies. Cows were brought in by commoners who own the ponies and are responsible for managing parcels of land, but nobody really knows how or when the ponies arrived - and they are, of course, an accepted, well-loved feature of the Forest today.

Apart from being a most interesting mini history lesson, the illustrated presentation included ancient maps showing the formation of the Forest and how its boundaries have changed. Detailed lists gave the names of local people who laid claim to enclosures - several of those names being familiar to today's residents. Peter's talk covered the 11th century right up to the present time, explaining how the Forest evolved, various laws and Acts passed for its management and protection, people trying to

encroach and take over part of the land, etc. In 1877 it was designated as a "Park for the Nation", yet the Government regarded it as a wasteland, taking very little interest in what happened to it. The Forest was at one time considered for military use but, fortunately, Salisbury Plain was selected instead. The Forestry Commission was formed just after WW1 and an Act of Parliament in 1949 allowed it to plant more enclosures. In 1991 it became a National Park, managed by the National Park Authority, since when housing development on the land has been restricted. Verderers are responsible for Forest law; the Verderers Court meets on a regular basis and members were encouraged to attend the very interesting sessions at Queens House, Lyndhurst.

After taking several questions from the floor, Peter was thanked for giving us an enlightening, very informative talk.

Any Other Business:

The Chairman briefly referred to the Neighbourhood Plan, telling members there was still time to complete the questionnaire on how they view the proposed building of 930 dwellings in the immediate area over the next 20 years. He also distributed leaflets detailing all that will happen in the town for the Christmas Festival - 26th November and 3rd December.

SHED THOSE POUNDS
AT CHRISTMAS IN NEW MILTON

With the Christmas Festival in the town centre almost upon us on **Saturday, 3rd December**, organised by the New Milton Town Partnership, we have some ideas to help you shed some pounds before the main festive season. Why not lose a few by taking part in the Santa Fun Run around the town, which will start with an assembly on the rec. at 2.45 p.m. before running single or multiple laps around the town? This attraction is for families, adults and children. The Fun Run (with a Santa suit provided) is being organised by Pilgrim Bandits, our own locally-based military charity which sets challenges and supports hundreds of our fighting forces who have been injured in some of the past conflicts. You can see all the details and register for the Fun Run at <http://pilgrimbandits.org/>

Perhaps at a more leisurely pace there is still time for all to take part in the Lions Club Lantern Parade, which will take place with assembly at 3.45 p.m. before parading through and around the Festival site at 4.15 p.m. The Parade ends back in the town centre for the grand switch-on of Christmas Lights at 5 p.m. You can



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Maybe you can also shed a few pounds (though of a different sort) by wandering around the various villages of stalls and authentic French market. Over 70 stalls will be enticing you to buy their products and services. Some of these will be local community groups eager to persuade you to join them or help swell their funds for the year ahead.

Don't miss any of the great entertainment line-up for the Festival from the main stage in the town centre. Following great family entertainment from Crazy M at 12 noon, over 100 voices from local rock choirs will take to the stage at 12.40 p.m. The renowned Tribute Band "Forever Queen" will pay a return visit to New Milton for sets at 1.30 and 2.30 p.m. with an interlude when the Milton Academy of Dance will perform. After the Ringwood Pipe Band at 3.05 p.m. the New Forest Players will perform at 3.35 p.m.; Cassie Lawrence and students from Barton Court Studios will then take to the stage before switching on the lights at 5 p.m. A great day for young and old, so we look forward to seeing you, your friends, neighbours and colleagues. Spread the word - this will be an event not to be missed!

Alan Watson
Christmas Festival Organising Team

COMMUNITY CENTRE

(By The Community, For the Community)

At the Christmas Festival/Open Day on 3rd December the Community Centre will have a stall on Station Road where residents can obtain details of free membership for the month of December and pick up a free copy of the December Newsletter.

The Centre itself (opposite the water tower on Osborne Road) will be open for teas/coffees and a tour of the facilities on offer. All welcome. For further information please ring 610495 or email info@newmiltoncommunity.org.uk

LADIES!

With Christmas celebrations in mind (and perhaps a winter cruise) we have the opportunity to give all our jewellery an airing. A few tips on how bring your bling up to full sparkle!

Gold ear-rings and necklaces: Pour a little lager onto a duster and give them a good rub. Buff with a dry cloth and they come up good as new.

Diamonds/sapphires/emeralds/rubies: Put a measure of vodka (or gin) into a glass and drop rings in. Stir around and leave for five minutes. Dazzling! You can also leave your rings in a glass of fizzy water

for 30 minutes and they will come up brilliantly.

Pearls: You have to be very careful with pearls as they are porous, but they do develop a coating of grease, perfume and hairspray. Squeeze just a little shampoo into a bowl of warm water and swill to create a foam. Dip an old make-up brush into the water and gently scrub the pearls. Rinse with a soft cloth and the pearls should look shiny and creamy.

MANOR ROAD

In response to ongoing complaints received directly and at the monthly Police Surgeries, we approached the NFDC to see if anything could be done to alleviate the often chronic parking problems on this road. With vehicles allowed to park on both sides, often left there all day, every day, residents frequently find it difficult to get in and out of their driveways and believe it presents a potentially hazardous situation. We asked if at least double yellow lines could be introduced on one side of the road to ease visibility and traffic flow. We have received the following reply:-

"Introduction of the waiting restrictions which you suggest would require the making of a Traffic Order; this involves following a statutory process including public advertisement of the proposals for public comment. Unfortunately, funding to promote and implement traffic orders is limited and, consequently, it is necessary to prioritise them along with other traffic management measures. An important factor is the injury accident record of a site and whether measures would be likely to reduce casualties. The likelihood of parking transferring to another location and the level of enforcement available are also important factors in deciding whether or not to introduce further restrictions.

The Council has agreed with Hampshire County Council that a proposed programme of traffic management work for each financial year be prepared in accordance with its approved assessment process. We unfortunately have no additional budgets or available staff time which allows us to add new items to this year's agreed programme. Your request will, therefore, be assessed later in this financial year for potential inclusion in the 2017/8 Traffic Management Programme; subject to the current review of the traffic management agency agreement with HCC".

No surprises there, then! As usual it comes down to funding and probably waiting for a bad accident to occur before the matter is given serious thought.

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NEIGHBOUR CARE

On Saturday, 10th December, our AGM/Social Morning will be held in the Community Centre - culmination of a very busy year trying to meet clients' requests whilst the number of volunteers has sadly dwindled.. I understand that, on occasion, people have had difficulty making contact with the office - partly because phone lines have been busy and the two ladies on duty have struggled to cope, and partly because (a) it's not realised that the office is only open in the mornings, and (b) sufficient use isn't made of the answerphone service.

I appreciate that this isn't the time of year to be calling for volunteers, but do please bear our plight in mind and, when all the festivities are over, consider giving your help, either as a driver or manning the phones. Demand for the help we provide is, as you might imagine, increasing. We just can't provide that degree of help without more volunteers coming forward.

Phyllis Inglis, Chairman

THE USEFULNESS OF YOUR CREDIT CARD

With Christmas just around the corner a helpful hint for you to consider is the use of your credit card and take advantage of the extra protection it gives you. Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act gives additional protection for problems with goods and/or services. **This only applies to credit cards** - not debit cards, store or charge cards; it is in addition to the standard protection given by law when purchasing goods and services. It gives a right to claim for breach of contract against the credit card company as well as the supplier of such goods and services. The main points are:-

1. Each item must cost at least £100 but less than £30,000. If less than £100 you may still be able to use the chargeback service but this is voluntary and generally less effective.
2. You don't need to pay the full price on the card, only part of the price will attract the protection.
3. You don't have to reach stalemate with the supplier first. You can lodge the claim at the outset with both supplier and credit card company.
4. It applies to foreign transactions as well as goods bought online, by phone or mail order from abroad; check the terms and conditions of the card, because there can be other terms which apply including a possible surcharge for foreign transactions.
5. If the supplier goes bust you can claim against the credit card company.

6. It does NOT apply to purchases by cash withdrawn on the card and for some third party transactions, e.g. Amazon Marketplace. Paypal offers its own protection scheme and it is well worth checking this out to see if your purchase is protected. Otherwise the position is not straightforward. If the funds go directly to the seller, then as long as it has a "commercial entity agreement" with Paypal you may be able to use Section 75. The safe course is, where possible, to opt for the scheme protection and use a credit card. This will increase your protection.

Additional cardholders: Sometimes there can be problems if the additional card is used. Consequently, if there are transactions where you can identify a risk, then it's best for the primary cardholder to make the purchase. If more than two months have passed or you cannot resolve the claim, request a letter of deadlock from the card company and you can then refer the dispute to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

You can ask whoever issues the card for one with a fairly low credit limit, which will stop you getting carried away with the extra spending power. Pay off the balance every month to stop interest being charged. If you set up a direct debit, the card company will take the balance from your account, giving you one less thing to worry about.

Don't forget to always read the T&Cs applicable to your card so you know the rules. You can pay off a credit card every month so that you don't pay interest, but some suppliers apply a surcharge to use a credit card. So think about whether the extra cost gives you good value for money for the extra protection. Sometimes you will need to make a value judgement as to whether the surcharge for using the card is worth the extra protection provided.

Using a credit card is unlikely to affect a transaction with a major high street brand with a good customer service record who will always want you to be happy with your experience. However, it may be helpful if you are ordering goods for delivery well in advance (e.g. furniture) where there is a risk the supplier will go bust. It may also be helpful when dealing with a supplier whose financial track record is uncertain or if you are unsure how they will deal with problems experienced with goods after receipt.

Alex Jennings, Heppenstells



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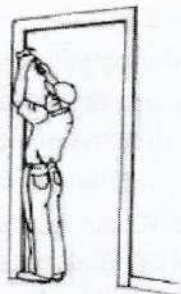
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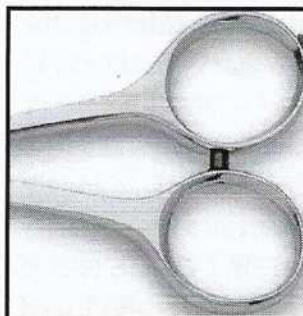
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COMPUTERADVICE & SUPPORT No.17

I wanted to write a brief article on how to get your computer upgraded to Windows 10. I know that many have spent an excessive amount of time trying to STOP Microsoft taking our happily working Windows 7/8.1 computers to Windows 10. I, too, was suspicious and know many readers moaned about it, and the truth was it probably wasn't ready! No doubt there were commercial pressures to achieving the release date and, indeed, there have been many teething problems.

The fact is that this product is now SO MUCH better and, in the run-up to the July 29th deadline I made sure all six of my PCs had Windows 10 available - mostly as a dual boot capability (see my 13th FOCUS article on how to do this). Since then I have purchased additional (second-hand) computers and wondered if it were possible to still convert them. The good news is:-

1. Download Microsoft's Media Creator Tool (literally type these words into your search engine to get it).
2. Follow the instructions to "create the installation media on this PC"; doing it for another PC may require you to input a new Windows 10 (Licence).
3. When you get to the point where the installation is going to start, you will be asked if you want to reinstall Windows 10; that's the option to choose.

I have tried on several computers and it picks up the Windows 7/8.1 licence and activates it, as it did before the July 29th deadline. I suspect this is an oversight on Microsoft's part - a loophole that may get plugged eventually, but with the anniversary update of Windows 10 the product is much better than it was when we were forced to make the jump.

Just a reminder when you are finalising the settings, switch ALL the preference switches to "off" and go for a Local Account - much simpler and lets you stay in control.

david.mason1948@gmail.com
626112; 07512 890768

RECALLING DAYS PAST

I was born and lived in Bournemouth for some 24 years. On leaving school in 1952 I joined a small local cricket club, playing in the Bournemouth & District League on Saturdays and friendly games in surrounding areas on Sundays. No football or cricket played on Sundays on Bournemouth Council grounds

at that time! However, I do remember playing Sunday cricket against New Milton on the recreation ground in the 50s. In the 60s it was Bournemouth League against Rydal at what is now the rugby ground at Ashley. By this time I was working in London, home at the weekends, little knowing that some 50 years later I would be actually living here.

These days, people drive from New Milton to Burley either by a short section of the A35 or via Wooton Bridge, the old railway line to Holmsley, on to Burley and the A31. Back in the days before Dr. Beeching, neither of these routes existed, so how did people travel from New Milton and Sway etc. from east to west across the A35? I know of a road via two fords and the railwayman's cottage but this wasn't a likely route. I believe there was a road at Wilverly Plain and that, at its crossroad with the A35 although visibility was good it became an accident Black Spot. So, when the railway through Holmsley closed the opportunity was taken to turn this into a roadway, probably in the late 60s or early 70s. Whoever proposed this improvement to remove the accident area deserves a medal, particularly as the population and, therefore, traffic flow continues to increase.

The Editor recently mentioned the changes in Bournemouth. Well, at least the IMAX has gone! But change happens everywhere. Recently my wife and I visited Brighton for the first time in several years. Our first port of call was Preston Park and the nearby Rockery, and what a let-down! As a gardener/groundsman I struggle to give it even a "pass". After a worthwhile visit to the Royal Pavilion, we had time to walk along the seafront where there seemed to be eating places every few yards and the new pavements stained with discarded food, etc. We were quite happy to return to our more peaceful area and to enjoy time with our grandchildren both here and the beaches at good old (or should it be young?) Bournemouth.

Barrie Legg, New Milton

READERS' COMMENTS

"Referring to last month's article **regarding litter**. I, too, am appalled at the amount left all around our area. We have too many fast food shops, and even supermarkets provide drinks machines/sandwiches, etc. which seem to encourage eating and drinking on-the-go. However, there is no excuse for just throwing coffee cups, wrappers and even food down on the ground. I don't think more bins will solve the problem although it might help a little. Two weeks ago I walked through the rec. and passed a seat where there were pizza boxes and drink cans thrown around, yet

there was a bin right next to the seat. I do pick up litter from outside my property but I really shouldn't have to do so. Likewise, I have to clear up dog poo from the pavement outside. Why do some people think that others should clear up after them. I was always brought up to put litter in a bin or take it home; my children and grandchildren have been taught to do the same".

"Regarding the FOCUS notice about the **Police Surgery** not being well attended yet people complain they have no contact with the police - people need to be able to contact them **at the time of an incident** or problem. Incidents don't just happen around the last Wednesday of the month. I know we have the yellow phone outside the Town Hall but, as has been brought up in the past, it's not possible to hear what is being said due to the traffic noise. There was some talk of a hood being installed but whether this will ever materialise remains to be seen. Hopefully the Surgeries will continue; they are better than nothing!"

"I take issue with the Editor's comment last month about **motorcyclists causing rowdy nuisance in the past and continuing now**. I am a member of five motorcycling groups and our main intent is to raise money for charity. Last month some 5,000 motorcyclists took to the M25 to ride in a procession wearing something in red; from the air this looked like a giant poppy. Charities to receive funding from this ride include Hounds for Heroes (providing assistance dogs to veterans) and Care After Combat which runs a number of schemes helping ex-servicemen and women cope with a range of problems. Early this month two of my groups will do a "toy run" with all of us dressed as Santa to deliver toys, clothes and funds to Dr. Barnardo's schools".

Roger Harding

"Regarding last month's article from the Barton **bomber**, what a brave and lucky man! I was a teleprinter operator at HQ Bomber Command. Depending on which shift I was on, I used to send instructions to operational stations from "Bomber" Harris Target For Tonight. I know that many did not return safely".

Joyce Cronin, New Milton

A CHRISTMAS MEMORY

Over 60 years ago in Babies Castle (yes, really!) - a home for children up to five years old - the staff stayed up late on Christmas Eve to decorate the nurseries and put presents at the foot of each bed and

cot. Early on Christmas morning, with lanterns held high, they walked through the nurseries singing carols. One little boy, with eyes as large as saucers, stared and gasped "Look at the decor-Hations!" I hope all those children have had many more magical Christmases with homes and families of their own. I shall never forget that moment.

Cynthia Matthews, New Milton

CHRISTMAS IN THE DESERT

Christmas 1950 saw me in the Army in Egypt. A desert garrison, it was a vast camp left over from the war and our section was a violent place. Like me, the soldiers were mostly young conscripts, many from London and Scotland. They liked fighting each other and there was a continuous "war" between them. On Christmas morning, fuelled by drink, there was a pitched battle between the two sides. At 19 I was a corporal in charge of a hut of about twenty soldiers - not involved in the brawling - and we decided to have a party. I collected money each week from everyone to buy beer, oranges and cake. We had just got started and heard Petula Clark singing "The Longest Mile is the Last Mile Home" on Forces Radio so we were all feeling a bit homesick, when the door crashed open and in came three large slightly drunk lads. They were well known fighters! Everyone froze and, in my innocence, I said "Hello, come in and have a beer". I filled my mug and handed it over, as did two others. The lads looked absolutely stunned, took the beer, sat and had a chat and left. It was not until later that I learned they had intended to start a fight, smash up the place and steal whatever they could. My offer of peace and goodwill had surprised everyone (including me!) and it worked!!

Brian Wiseman

LIFE UPON THE WICKED STAGE - AT CHRISTMAS!

As the title might suggest, the time I'm referring to is before and during WW2 when almost every city and large town boasted a variety theatre. The highlight of a working-class week was to visit it on a Friday or Saturday night.

In her younger days my grandmother ran a theatrical boarding house near the famous Collins Music Hall in North London, and probably saw the seamier side of life "on the boards" - hard-drinking comedians, dancers "no better than they should be" in her austere opinion, and performers who slunk away in the dead of night without paying their shot. There-fore, when my mother (who apparently had a flair for singing and dancing) asked to go on the stage Nan refused point-blank, instead sending her to work in a distillery making gin; the pay was good and temptation nil (well, almost!).

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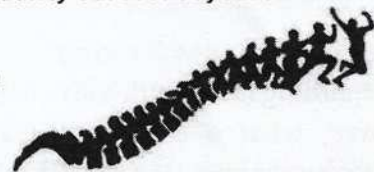
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I think it was this frustrated ambition which made Mother push me into a hectic routine of dancing, music and singing lessons from a very early age, hoping I might achieve what she never did. I can very vaguely remember my first professional appearance at the grand old age of three when I made my debut as a dancer. However, over the next few years it became apparent that I was no Tiller Girl in the making and showed more promise with my music studies. I began with the piano but didn't do all that well and my tutor suggested I try the piano accordion or violin. Father put his foot down and said he couldn't face hours of my scraping away on a fiddle, so the accordion it had to be - not regarded as an up-market instrument but popular and effective when played properly. I floundered between the tutors my parents could afford, always well aware that I was expected to get out there and earn money to help the family budget.

The opportunity came when I was 16 years old. At 14 I'd been brought back to London from wartime evacuation in North Devon (where I'd enjoyed a too-easy life according to my strict Mother) and put to a punishing schedule of lessons and practising. Shortly after I turned 16 Mum saw an advert for musicians to join a newly-formed small band preparing to tour the variety theatres. She marched me off to the audition and although the bandleader was somewhat reluctant to take on one so young he agreed - promising he'd take special care of me and saying his niece aged 18 (a violinist in the band) would soon become my friend. After six weeks' rehearsal we began our first tour. Within a very short time I realised that the bandleader wasn't going to be at all protective, he and his "niece" were, in fact, an item, so my presence was not welcome and I was left to fend for myself. The band boys were friendly enough and when he realised just how green I was the base fiddle player/tenor (a real Pavarotti look-alike!) took me under his fortunately avuncular wing.

The following year or so was difficult and a real learning curve, but I didn't mention any of it to my parents for fear of being brought home. Fortunately, our travel arrangements were usually made en bloc but I learned to find my own digs, handle finances and fight my own battles when occasion demanded. It was always a problem, therefore, when our bookings brought us to London where I then lived at home and Mother took charge of my life again.

I can remember the band having to keep the show going during air raids, being stranded for two whole days on Crewe Station when bombs stopped the trains; the camaraderie amongst theatrical groups meeting up at railway stations at ungodly hours..... "Where are

you playing?"..... "Got no digs?"..... "Try Mrs. B, good food, clean beds"..... "Watch it if you go to Mrs. C, her husband's always on the prowl so lock your door", etc., etc.

I recall being ill on only one occasion and that was at Christmas time. We had finished playing at the Kings Theatre, Southsea, on a Saturday evening and (for some reason which I can't now remember) I took the overnight train to Aberdeen on my own, arriving in the early hours of Sunday morning, by which time I was feeling decidedly unwell and thankful that I'd booked my digs in advance. The taxi driver dumped my large suitcase and accordion on the pavement and sped off - too late to call him back when the landlady informed me she had double-booked the room and let it go to someone else. There was no transport in sight so I trudged to the theatre in the hope of meeting up with other artists who might be rehearsing there but it was closed! By that time I was suffering all the symptoms of flu and my hands were sore from carrying the cases. Coming across a recreation ground where people were watching a football match, I tottered over and flopped down on a bench feeling very sorry for myself and wondering what to do next. By now it was mid-afternoon, I'd eaten nothing since a snack on the train, I was sick in a strange city and almost cried for my Mother! As the match ended, a couple with two little girls came over from the next bench; they'd seen me sitting there for a long time looking forlorn, so could they help? I poured out my tale of woe and, without further ado, my cases were picked up and I was transported to their nearby tenement flat. After a hot meal I was put to bed with aspirin and a hot water bottle, and I stayed with them throughout the Christmas/New Year, treated as part of the family, well-fed and cosseted.

The top-of-the-bill at the theatre was Jack Warner, a big star in those days, as some of the more "mature" among you may remember. At the Monday morning rehearsal he noticed that I was unwell. My bandleader wasn't the least bit concerned so long as I could still perform, and the bass player was nursing a heavy cold of his own, but Jack took me in hand, plying me with medication (and whiskey!) and driving me back to my kind family's home every night. He even made their day on one occasion by coming in, staying for supper and entertaining them as if he'd known them for years. I never saw Jack again but kept in touch with that lovely family for a very long time. To this day I can recall their cramped little flat (and the outside privy!), their great kindness, and the true spirit of the season which made my "working Christmas" so comfortably special.

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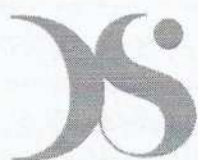
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Thinking back to all those years ago, it never occurred to me to be at all wary or suspicious of the "care" afforded me by Jack and my bass player pal. At the same time, I remained sufficiently "with it" to know that if the star of a show invited me to his dressing room (as did happen!) it wouldn't be for just a cup of cocoa! Even in those innocent days my Dad's concerned warnings always rang in my ears!

Phyllis Inglis

MEMORIES OF MAX BYGRAVES

(1922-2012)

In October a friend and I went to the Conservative Club for a Ploughman's Supper and talk by Max's son, Anthony. A thoroughly enjoyable evening!

Max was christened Walter William Bygraves and his father had been a professional flyweight boxer known as Battling Tom Smith. He was brought up as a Catholic and, whilst being schooled in Rotherhithe, sang with his school choir at Westminster Cathedral. He lived in a two-roomed flat along with five siblings, parents and a grandparent. Leaving school at 14 and initially working at the Savoy Hotel as a pageboy, he joined the RAF as a fitter. After entertaining the troops in his spare time he was awarded a Silver Cup for his services; his CO was none other than Rex Harrison! It was during that time he changed his name to Max because he performed Max Miller impressions and used some of his jokes. Thanks to a chance meeting in civilian life with Rex Harrison, he auditioned for a radio show called Educating Archie and the rest is history.

Anthony gave several anecdotes of his father's life, having accompanied him on stage singing and dancing. Of course, Max went on to make several films and other TV shows. The reason he moved to Australia was concern for his wife's health. He always referred to her as Blossom and they were married for 69 years. She died in 2011, suffering from Alzheimer's Disease, as did Max himself just a year later. At the age of 85 he was "interviewed" by Anthony who published a CD capturing those moments, and money raised from it goes to the Alzheimer's Society.

Bess Thurgood, New Milton

BRITISH LEGION NEW MILTON BRANCH

Our Poppy Appeal (sponsored this year by Double H Nurseries) resulted in a record donation of £19,908! Special thanks go to our 47 street collectors and the 80 stores, schools and businesses who took part - and, of course, to YOURSELVES for your wonderful generosity.

Ron Back, Chairman

NEW MILTON DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY

In seasonal spirit, our December lecture "Father Frost & Old New Year: Russia" will introduce us to the festive customs observed in times past and present in a country where mid-winter traditions are likely to be unfamiliar. Does Father Frost have anything in common with Father Christmas? What are his origins? Is he always a jolly sort of chap or does he have a sinister side? What is meant by the old New Year and is it still celebrated? Dr. Rosamund Bartlett, a cultural historian with expertise in Russian literature, music and art, will provide answers to these and any other questions you may have.

Come and join us on Thursday, **8th December**, at the Memorial Centre, Whitefield Road. Visitors welcome at a charge of £6. The lecture begins at 10.30 a.m.; tea, coffee and Christmas nibbles (on the house!) from 10 o'clock.

For further details contact Ann Clegg on 01590 643046, email newmilton@dfas.org.uk or visit <http://newmilton.dfas.org.uk>.

CONCHORD SINGERS

Preparations are well under way for our Christmas Concert to be held, as usual, at the Conservative Club, on Sunday, 18th December. It commences at 8 p.m. and there is no entrance fee. We would, however, appreciate a donation to our charity, the New Milton Stroke Group. Our singing usually has a great impact on the audience, getting them into the festive mood, so why not come along and join us. You will be made very welcome.

Before our final concert we will be paying a visit to the Stroke Group as well as Gore Grange and Barton Golf Club, entertaining everyone with carols and seasonal music.

We shall re-commence at 2.30 p.m. on 10th January so if you feel you'd like to sing with us, do come along then or on any Tuesday, when we will kick off with a fresh programme. Juanita Woods on 629102 can be contacted for details.

**Sylvia Camp
PR Lady to the Singers.**

NEW MILTON BOWLING CLUB

Many members are now settling in to the season and playing in regular roll-up sessions, friendly matches and, of course, the various competitions for singles, pairs and triples. As these competitions develop we hope to bring you news of members nearing the final stages.

So far, our record in the friendly matches is of mixed fortunes, with both wins and losses. Many opponents are from clubs in the area who only have facilities to play outdoors during the summer. We are, indeed, very



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fortunate to have the Indoor Club and are pleased to welcome teams who invariably give us some stiff competition.

The majority of our members are simply enthusiastic amateurs who are happy to meet regularly and enjoy a little light exercise. We are very pleased to report that a significant number of new players have joined us this season, some of them developing into competent bowlers.

We have a friendly team of ladies and gentlemen who will be pleased to welcome new members and show you how to get started. Games typically last a couple of hours, and our facilities include a small kitchen/dining area where we often take a mid-session break for tea, coffee and a biscuit. We also have separate facilities for ladies and gentlemen. If you'd like to come along and meet us at the Club we are adjacent to the Memorial Centre off Whitefield Road in the centre of New Milton. Call us on 622572 or visit our website www.newmiltonibc.co.uk.

NEW MILTON FRIENDS GROUP

Many, many thanks if any of you FOCUS readers made it to our fantastic Cabaret Evening in October at the Hoburne Holiday Park, with the fabulous Joel Coombes as Elton John. Great evening, crowned by our £500 cheque presentation to the Macmillan Cancer Support. Only to be followed by our friendly, enjoyable Quiz Night at the Highcliffe Golf Club last month. New winners this time in "the Fernhill Mob". So what's next? Well, you can support us at our fundraising Children's Tombola Stall at the Christmas Fair on 3rd December. In fact, if you have any children's toys, cuddly toys, children's books or DVDs that you would like to contribute, we would be more than willing come and collect them. Please call me, Rocky, on 610916

CAMEO - LADIES GROUP

At our November meeting we were entertained by the Sway Bell Ringers with classical and Christmas music. Some of our members had the opportunity to make music themselves with the help of the Ringers. A most enjoyable morning.

Our meeting on 7th December is our AGM - a Christmas Social with music and a quiz.

Sarah Howden of New Forest Nightstop will speak at our 4th January meeting, and on 1st February we have Andrew Negus on Travels in China, Part 2.

Why not join us at 10 a.m. on the first Wednesday of the month (except August) at the Community Centre? We are always pleased to welcome new members and visitors. Contact Margaret on 628675 for further information.

NEW MILTON CARERS'

SUPPORT GROUP

Our friendly, informal group meets every second Monday of the month from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Quaker Meeting House, Whitefield Road. On 12th December we shall be holding our Christmas Party Extravaganza, so do come along to enjoy the seasonal fun and delicious buffet. All in the supportive company of fellow carers and at no charge. Looking forward to seeing you there. For further information about our various activities please contact Maggie on 614714.

EWE 2 CLUB

We enjoy spinning, weaving, knitting and crocheting while having coffee or tea in a relaxed atmosphere. Meetings take place in New Milton, Sway and Lymington. The next meeting in New Milton is at 1.30 p.m. Wednesday, 7th December, at the Community Centre. Why not join us to find out what we are up to? All welcome whether beginners or experienced. For further information email ewe2club@yahoo.co.uk or visit ewe2club.org.uk.

JUBILEE SINGERS

In October a small section of the choir sang at a successful evening at Danestream House, Milford. Another group joined in the Remembrance Day Service at the Memorial Service last month, adding our voices to the hymns and popular songs from the two World Wars. Between our concert and Christmas we are also booked to sing at four local venues including the Alzheimers Society in Everton.

The last couple of months have flown by and our Christmas Concert is almost upon us. It takes place from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m. Sunday, **4th December**, at the Memorial Centre. Tickets are on sale at the Community Centre Reception Desk, £5 for adults £2 for children, including a raffle and refreshments. We are very grateful to them for this help.

Finally, we take this opportunity to wish all readers a happy Christmas peaceful New Year.

Liz Northcote, 621519

MEN'S GET TOGETHER

At our November meeting we welcomed local historian Nick Saunders who told us about the history of New Milton with his wonderful collection of photos of the town over the years, and maps going back to the 1700s. He also updated us on "The Milton Heritage Collection", due to be opened early in the New Year. Look out for the advertising in the local press and

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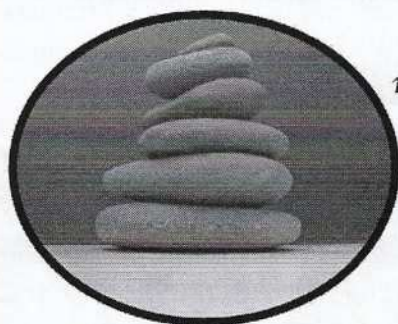
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websites. You can see samples of his work in the Community Centre at the moment.

Following the meeting many members went on to Bournemouth for the funeral of our Chairman's wife, Eileen, who lost her long battle with cancer. Our thoughts are with Ted and his family, and we look forward to his being with us again soon.

On **1st December** we are fortunate to have Simon Hayes, ex Police & Crime Commissioner for Hampshire talking about his role.

We have our New Year party on **5th January**, when wives and partners will join us - a "members only" event.

At our **2nd February** meeting we look forward to inviting new members and visits, so more about that next month. Until then, we wish current and future members a very pleasant Christmas and a Happy New Year.

We meet at 10 a.m. on the first Thursday of the month at the Community Centre, always happy to welcome new members and visitors. Details from Secretary Derek Sheldrake on 628675

PHOENIX HOLIDAY GROUP

Thirty two members, including eight new ones, recently enjoyed a five-day break in Somerset. In October a very good lunch was provided for 33 members at the Amberwood Inn, Walkford.

At the Community Centre Open Day on **3rd December** we will have a small display and be pleased to see anyone interested in our holidays and day outings which we hope to start organising shortly.

Our next meeting at Greystones Hall, Waterford Road, Highcliffe, will take place at 2.30 p.m. Friday, **9th December**.

Please note that, commencing January, our meetings will be on the first Friday of the month instead of the second.

Looking ahead.....

17th/19th March - There are still spaces available for this weekend in London which will include tours of Chelsea Hospital, Houses of Parliament, RAF Museum, also a seat at the Albert Hall for the Classical Spectacular. Itineraries available.

22nd/26th May - We are currently taking bookings for our next Avalon Tours holiday exploring part of the Heart of England. It includes a day's visit to Birmingham with a local guide, Warwick Castle and town, Bletchley Park (Enigma and all that), etc. Itineraries available.

For details please contact Pat McKean on 278669 or phoenixholshighcliffe@aol.com.

DANCING HOLIDAY IN BOURNEMOUTH

A 4-day break (18th to 22nd April) at the Mayfair Hotel, noted for its excellent cuisine and service. It is a return visit for many, and we have exclusive use of the ballroom each evening. The theme is ballroom, Latin, popular sequence and fun dances with a very social atmosphere. Full details from Dave and Dee on 627922.

"BEYOND BOUNDARIES" EXHIBITION

An exhibition of sculpture, textiles and paintings by two contrasting artists - Wendy Clayton and Jon Robins. This began last month and will continue until 21st December at the Forest Arts Centre. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. Saturdays.

MUSIC FOR A WINTER'S EVENING

New Forest Big Band & Encore Choir,

Lymington, 8 p.m. Thursday, 15th December

Start off your Christmas celebrations with a concert of big band classics, songs from the shows, and some good old-fashioned carols. There will be a retiring collection for Pilgrim Bandits, the Town Mayor's chosen charity. Tickets available at £5 (£4 conc.) from the Forest Arts Centre, Old Milton Road, New Milton, BH25 6DS. Box Office 612393 or online from www.forest-arts.co.uk.

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QUOTES FROM "YES MINISTER!"

Hacker: What's an official reply, Bernard?

Bernard: It just says "The Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter", and we might say something like "the matter is under consideration", or even "the matter is under **active** consideration".

Hacker: What's the difference?

Bernard: Well, "under consideration" means we've lost the file; "under active consideration" means we are actually trying to find it.

Hacker: The Home Secretary has been arrested for drink-driving and causing a nuclear waste lorry to crash. He'll have to resign, won't he?

Sir Humphrey: Well, of course!

Hacker: What on earth will happen to him?

Sir Humphrey: Well, I gather he was as drunk as a lord, so after a discreet interval they'll probably make him one!

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THE NATIVITY PLAY

Round about this season when leaves begin to fall
Teachers in Sunday School all hear an urgent call
A few weeks now to Christmas
We must really make a start
To teach some carols and help the children
Learn their Christmas parts
Just one thing to remember
When casting for the play
Will Mary and Joseph be here
Or with grandma on the day?
The older children, so important,
Have their parts to speak
While Mum, already busy,
Has to hear their lines for weeks
The younger children, excited,
Want to join the scene
So choirs of angels and shepherds
Make up the happy team

While planning all the costumes
We feverishly search for things
That will turn boys into shepherds
And make pretty angels' wings
The scene is set, the church is full
The bells begin to ring
Three generations fill the pews
The choir starts to sing
The children in the vestry
Getting noisy in the crush
Are silenced by the Rector
With a softly spoken "Hush!"
Then they move towards the stable
Where the little babe was born
And we fondly watch them take us
To a happy Christmas Morn

I HATE CHRISTMAS!

Christmas is just around the corner
For most people that's a good thing
But I'm here to speak for others
Who loathe what it will bring
We hate the weeks approaching it
We're filled with nought but dread
It's true, for the whole festive season
I just want to hide in bed
I hate Brussels sprouts with a vengeance
The sound of crackers is too much
I hate to be wished Merry Christmas
Don't like tinsel, holly and such

I find at the start of December
The country begins to go mad
When everyone's spirits are soaring

My mood starts to get pretty bad
Forgive me if, just before Christmas,
I can't bring myself to be perky
I'd just like to get to the New Year
But it's unlikely - because I'm a turkey!!

CHRISTMAS CARDS

You have probably seen the following in FOCUS before, but I've been specially asked to repeat it because it really says it all....

There is a list of folks we know, written in a book
And every year at Xmas time we like to take a look
Then it's when we realise these names are just a part
Not of the book itself but of our very heart
For each name stands for someone who has
Touched our life sometime
And in that meeting they've become
The "Rhythm in the Rhyme"
We really feel that we're composed
Of each remembered name
Our lives are so much better
Than they were before you came
So never think our Christmas cards
Are just a mere routine
Of names upon a list and forgotten in between
For when we send that card, addressed to only you
It is because you're on a list of folks we're indebted to
And whether we've known you for many years or few
In some way you had a part in shaping things we do
So every year when Christmas comes
We realise anew
The biggest gift the Lord can give
Is knowing folks like you!

FOR YOUR DIARY

Brendon Care Get Together Club

(1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 2 to 4 p.m. St. Mary Magdalene Church Hall)

7th December: Entertainment with Music and Song from Ruth and Tom Kent.

21st December: Outing to Stewarts Garden Centre and an Afternoon Tea.

Contact Evelyn on 839885 or Bernie on 638540.

Sunday, 11th December: Salvation Army Carol Service 2.30 p.m. United Reformed Church, Lymington High Street. Special Guests New Forest Dixieland Band. Refreshments.

Monday, 12th December: New Milton Macular Support Group. 2 p.m. at the Community Centre. Christmas Party with Meryl Jones and her "Diamond Divas". Contact Malcolm Swan, on 618925.

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