

West Waffle

September 2011

American Museum Claverton: Formal Garden

Issue 42

Regional Coordinators Note

Bob Maggs

New Members.

A big welcome to all those who have joined this year. We hope you are enjoying your chosen activity and the satisfaction of helping others.

We are also delighted that Vanessa Kitchen in Bristol and Jude Tomlinson in North Somerset are joining us as new Organisers, with their areas of activity yet to be decided.

Criminal Records Bureau.

Still no news on the government's plans. Local RSVP Organisers who need to get a CRB Check for a member will be empowered to check their ID details so if you need further information or training on this, please contact Julie Parry, our CRB Counter-Signatory. We believe it will be our responsibility to see that any new members who are involved with children and vulnerable adults should obtain CRB certification.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Shirley Stark

Sincere thanks to all the contributors to this issue. The next issue will be the Christmas (!) one, copy by end of November please.

Fundraising.

A very big thank-you to Vi Luton and her RSVP team for their large donation to regional funds from the last year's surplus made at the Tea Bar at Yate Magistrates Court - half goes to several local charities of their choice and half to us.

We have noted that funders (particularly local authorities) are increasingly asking for some form of 'benefit assessment' of the work we do. Whilst we will do everything possible to minimise the workload, it is inevitable that sometimes it will be necessary to ask for information about members' work and the people they



are helping – it is a small price to pay for being able to continue to fund our efforts. The good news is that the fact that we are encouraging volunteering (‘staying active’) amongst older people is usually as important a benefit as the services delivered.

Please let us know if you have any ideas about who might like to support our efforts financially, however small the contribution. Donations should be paid to our registered charity ‘Friends of RSVP West Region’.

Insurance.

There have quite a lot of queries recently about insurance for RSVP members. The third party and personal accident cover provided by our ‘parent’ organisation CSV has no upper age limit. Please let us know if you need a copy of the documentation. This is nothing to do with each individual’s motor insurance cover. We recommend you tell your insurer you are using your car for volunteering work – if the premium is increased you are with the wrong insurance company and/or broker!

Recruitment.

As you know, word-of-mouth is by far the best recruitment method, so please take a moment to consider your relatives, friends and contacts as possible candidates. We are particularly keen to find more people who might like to be Project Organisers or coordinators of groups of volunteers for schools and surgery-based work.

Surgery-Based Volunteer Support Schemes.

Thanks to the generosity of Bristol City Council, the new leaflet is now available for external and internal use, ie GP’s, surgery staff and potential volunteers. Please let us know if you have a contact at your local surgery who might like to talk to us about setting up a new scheme. Once up and running they are very successful – we have many examples in the region that we can reference if necessary.

With best wishes for the remains of Summer and a lovely Autumn!

DEMENTIA QUALITY MARK

Ken Dolbear & Jan Snook

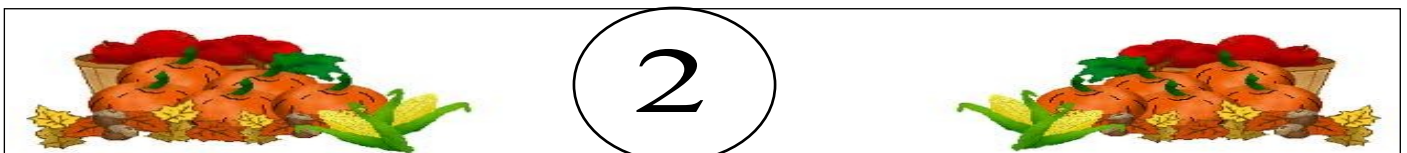
RSVP were invited to work with Bristol City Council to provide volunteers as lay assessors for the work in improving standards in care homes for people with dementia. The project assesses the quality of care provided by the care homes specialising in the care of older people with dementia and if the assessment is successful, the home will be awarded the Dementia Quality Mark (DQM) and they can use the DQM logo on their promotional material. The lay assessor will visit with the professional assessor and support their work.

The scheme has been developed by the South West Dementia Partnership which includes other local authorities, PCTs, St Monica Trust and the Alzheimers Disease Society. It will run until the end of the year as a pilot scheme.

As part of our work with care homes (Care Home Visiting Scheme) and along with two volunteers from this scheme, Jan Snook and I have offered to undertake the training provided by the Council to carry out this work and it has been agreed that we will have a particular emphasis on the quality of life for the care homes residents with dementia.

Whilst the Care Home Visiting scheme pilot is progressing well, it has not been without its challenges for the volunteers. Jan and I believe that the work with the DQM will add to our experience of lay volunteers visiting care home to give residents a say in their care arrangements and help shape the roll out of the Care Home Visiting Scheme.

We are very exciting about the potential of the Care Home Visiting Scheme and have been very fortunate to have recruited a team of excellent, committed volunteers. The work with the DQM is a good opportunity to extend this work.





NEWS FROM SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

John Griffiths

I am based in Emerson Green and have been a member of RSVP since March. My first involvement with RSVP has been starting to organise surgery groups within South Gloucestershire. To that end I have given a series of presentations to Patient Groups within BANES and surgeries in Emerson Green, Chew Magna and Kingwood. At the moment it is try and try again, for results are slow in coming – but patience is a virtue!

I recently met with Dave Brown who is based in Swindon (who amongst other things is the environmental guru), and found his knowledge of the issues quite fascinating. Our paths crossed again at a Rotary lunch where Dave had been invited to talk about climate

change. People have differing opinions on the subject and it was good that they were encouraged by Dave to share them. As someone there said, the climate is changing all the time – do you remember the Ice Age! Well perhaps not, but the severe cold of winter of 1962/3 and the heat wave of 1976 are quite recent memories. Whilst talking of that cold winter, it brings to mind a photo of my wife clearing the snow from her parents’ house in Marshfield. The snow towers over her and her brother who is a good six inches taller.....

I also met Tony Comer at the last organisers meeting with whom I had, amongst other things, a conversation about an initiative whereby old medicines are recycled by a charity for onward shipment to East African countries. This led to a discussion as to whether some of these medicines could be reintroduced into the NHS. We then investigated exactly how much the NHS is losing in these redundant medicines and the outcome was staggering – in excess of £200 million per annum! We are now investigating whether there is any mileage in extending the scheme to encompass the NHS – further news will follow.

KNITTING

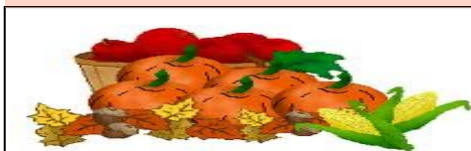
Shirley Stark

This is still a very active project. I did think that maybe production might be less during the Summer months but not the case. I am happy to say that I am sending 12 premature baby blankets to the Sands Stillbirth and neonatal death society for their memory boxes. These are not the easiest items to knit because of the weight one gets on the needle as the increasing progresses and it does prove to be a slight problem to knitters suffering with arthritis but this did not stop them!

I had a very nice letter from the Donkey Sanctuary thanking us for the donkeys we sent as shown in the last waffle but at the moment they do not need any more as they have been inundated with them and need sales to increase.

We are still sending blankets, children’s clothes, hats, gloves, teddies etc. to our regular charities – Children in Distress, Trussells Trust and the Southside project. I am currently looking into other charities that might need our help.

I had the pleasure of visiting one of our very prolific knitters recently – Rosina who lives in Winterbourne. I am amazed at her energy and vitality. Over a cup of coffee Rosina showed me all the craft projects she is doing – rag dolls, quilts, clowns teddies, blankets, ponchos, donkeys - the list is endless. She showed me her “sewing room” which was crammed full of materials, wool, ribbons – “anything that could come in useful for future projects” she told me. At 92 she is unable to get out very much but still does a small amount of gardening, planting all sorts of unusual seeds such as pips from butternut squash, Satsuma and other fruit just for the pleasure of seeing what happens! One of her current projects is very ambitious. She is knitting the figures of Prince William and Kate together with the principal guests at their wedding. Watch this space for a photograph in the next issue of Waffle!





NAILSEA AVAILABLES

Roger Turner

Nailsea Availables is a group of volunteer drivers which provides transport for residents registered with either of the two local health centres. The service is intended for those patients who find difficulty in attending appointments because of age or infirmity or because they have no other means of attending and are unable to get friends or family members to help.

The Availables had its beginnings in the early 1970's and was started by two ladies at Nailsea Methodist Church to provide help and support to local residents in need. In those early days the service provided by the small band of volunteers was extremely diverse, ranging from doing shopping for the housebound, taking them to medical appointments, gardening, taking them out for rides in the car, or simply visiting and providing companionship. Baby sitting was also undertaken.

Messages requesting help were passed through the church and, as the scheme grew, a rota of 'Duty Officers' was established and the Officer on duty would be responsible for placing a particular task with a suitable volunteer.

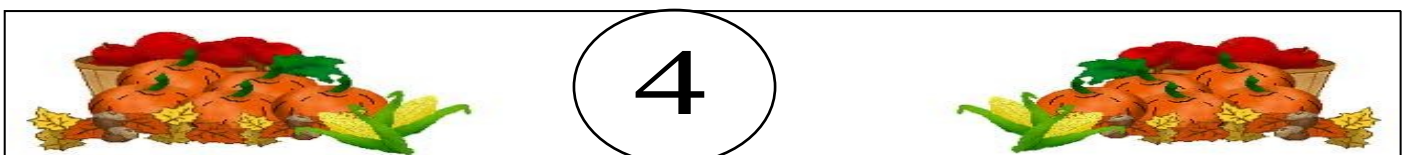
As time went by, more and more of the requests were for ferrying people to and from medical appointments and the organisation gradually evolved into what it is today - a group of volunteer drivers.

As the need for help throughout the Nailsea community grew, it became clear that the system for passing request messages through the Methodist Church was no longer the most suitable one and so a link was forged with the local medical centre. With the goodwill of the centre administrators and practitioners, it was agreed that all requests for transport by the Availables should come through the Health Centre. In suitable cases, the service is recommended to patients by their own doctor or by a member of the Health Centres' staff, and individual requests are then made by the patient, either in person, or by 'phone, to the receptionist on duty at the Centre. At least 2 working days advance notice is required in order for a request to be accommodated.

This is how it works. On receiving a request, the receptionist completes a pro forma slip with all relevant details, i.e. name, address and telephone number of patient and date, time and location of appointment. If known, the approximate length of the appointment is also recorded and any other relevant information, such as if the patient will be accompanied, whether they have a wheelchair or walking aid to be transported or any other conditions or special needs to be taken into account.

The Availables has a total of 35-40 drivers, and of these about 8 are on a weekly rota of Duty Officers. The Duty Officer of the week goes to the Health Centre towards the end of each working day in that week and collects the request slips which have been completed that day. All requests are filed, and it is up to the Duty Officer to ring around and find a driver for any lifts required in the week of his duty which have only just been notified, and for all lifts required in the following week. This will typically result in having to fix anything between 15 and 25 lifts during the week's duty.

Of the drivers available, about half are willing and able to do local trips whilst the remainder are happy to venture further afield. Fortuitously, about half the requests are for local venues and the other half for more distant places.





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Journeys are made regularly to Bristol Eye Hospital, Bristol General Hospital, St Michaels, Southmead and Frenchay Hospitals and to the Oncology Centre at the BRI, and whilst the organisation does not have the capacity to also cover the main block of the BRI these days, another RSVP organiser in Nailsea, Vic Rawlings has a small band of volunteers who are able to deal with requests for transport there.

Apart from the Bristol hospitals trips and trips to the local health centres in Nailsea, trips are also regularly undertaken in North Somerset, typically to hospitals, clinics and dentists in Clevedon, Portishead, Long Ashton and Weston Super Mare.

The Availables do not hold any funds and drivers' costs are defrayed by their making a charge to the client, the amount of which is fixed according to the destination (e.g. £10 for a return trip to one of the central Bristol hospitals). The charges are based upon the Government maximum expenses guide of 45p per mile.

For over 20 years the Availables was headed up by Alan Stacey, who only hung up his driving boots earlier this year on reaching the age of 81. At a Volunteers celebration event held in June and organised by VANS (Voluntary Action North Somerset), Alan received a certificate in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Availables. Alan's wife, Audrey, has also contributed much to the organisation over many years as a Duty Officer, and she and Alan are still involved with the Availables, as Duty Officers.



Alan Stacey, together with Certificate, and his wife, Audrey

Drivers for Nailsea Availables typify the spirit of volunteering and consist mostly of people who have retired, but wish to put something back into the community. No specific commitment is required, and even if help with this valuable service to the community can only be given for an hour or two a month, it is much appreciated. If you live in the Nailsea area and think you may be able to help, please contact Roger Turner on 01275 855369 or at Rog60night@aol.com

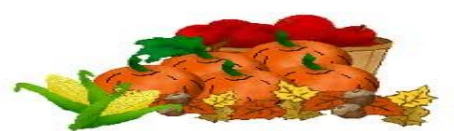
NOTE FROM OUR WEBMASTER

Michael Quinion

The RSVP West Website has a page of links to other local bodies that may provide volunteering opportunities. It could do with an update. It would be a great help if you could look at the page <http://www.rsvp-west.org.uk/links.html> and suggest additions or corrections to Michael Quinion (michael.quinion@rsvp-west.org.uk)

Volunteering opportunity

You may have heard that Bristol has a new waste and recycling contract with waste management company, May Gurney. Next year the new scheme will allow residents to recycle plastics and drinks cartons (such as Tetra Paks) from their doorstep. As part of this contract there will be a number of exciting volunteering opportunities. If you are interested in the environment and recycling, keep your eyes open for more details about volunteering in your area, in the December 2011 issue.





Sundry Tomatoes and other Gastronomic Delights

Peter Coleman

I have the great pleasure and privilege of belonging to a very superior luncheon club comprising RSVP friends, who enjoy occasional gutsy, boozy, chatty meals together.

We recently assembled to enjoy a tantalising menu with a range of mouth-watering choices. A couple of them afforded me great pleasure both gastronomically and linguistically.

As a starter course I chose a salad said to consist of baby spinach leaves and sundry tomatoes. I imagined the colourful range that might light up my plate when it arrived. I know from the gardening pursuits of her indoors (or perhaps outdoors in this instance) that tomatoes come in a vast range, well beyond your common or garden, year-round, beautiful but tasteless and instantly forgettable supermarket variety. She grew yellow ones, tiger-striped ones, green ones (later in the season these, as the meagre rays of the northern sun failed to trigger the normal tempting blush); and of course there are cherry, plum, cherry-plum, vine, beef and heaven knows what else. Any of these would contrast artistically with the luscious greens.

However, my plate, when it arrived was rich in nicely dressed (or napped perhaps) baby spinach leaves, but as far as I could see, bereft of any tomatoes at all, let alone the range promised in the mysterious and evocative “sundry” of the menu. Stoic as I am, I swallowed both my disappointment and the pleasantly clean, crisp, sweet-tasting spinach, and was then more than agreeably surprised when I found my mouth filled, almost overwhelmed with the sharp, smoky taste of sun-dried tomatoes, setting off to perfection the freshness of the spinach.

The penny began to roll to the edge of the table and teetered on the brink just before dropping. Ah yes! I was enjoying sun-dried tomatoes - *sundry* tomatoes..... The penny dropped with a loud and embarrassing clunk. On this evidence, I may not be the brightest tomato on the vine, but I did enjoy my salad.

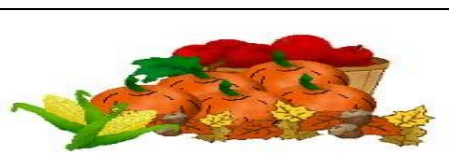
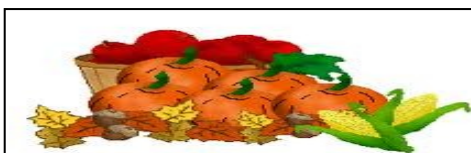
Mind you, I might have enjoyed equally the smoked fish platter, which was also on offer. Was smooking a refined system of angling, akin to tickling trout, I wondered? Or was it a fishy version of being spooked. I didn't fancy a fish that had been scared to death, hence, in part, my opting for the sundry tomatoes, which I would recommend to anyone.

Well into my pint of Peroni, I pondered various gastro-linguistic oddities. Such as the many near-racist, gallo-centric attitudes demonstrated in menu French.

For example, how very refined and chic are potatoes *à la parisienne* – served with a white wine and shallot sauce. Almost equally interesting, but rather peasant-like in comparison are potatoes *à la grecque* – cooked in oil and lemon. But how boring and plebeian seem potatoes *à l'anglaise* – boiled spuds. Anti-British propaganda, nothing less. Presenting us as the soulless nation of shopkeepers that Napoleon reckoned us to be,

On the other hand, our Gallic cousins are not above dressing something up a bit on the menu, even something English. Who'd have thought that *crème anglaise* was our own humble custard? And an *assiette anglaise* is a platter, a cornucopia even, of cold meats of all appetite-whetting varieties – sundry cold meats perhaps.

But then, they're a funny lot over the Channel. *Crème fraîche* surprisingly, very surprisingly when you come to try it expecting something else, is





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soured cream; and if you want *fresh* cream you must search out *crème liquide*. I mean, would you expect cream to be anything other than liquid? Except maybe clotted cream, which I must admit I've never come across in France.

Militaristic as well they are. A harmless pomegranate is a *grenade*, and a moulded ice-cream is a *bombe*. It must have to do with assassination I think – a favourite French pastime at one era. If your victim doesn't fancy the pomegranate, you'll get him with the ice-cream.

There are traces of French menu writing everywhere of course. Even in Germany, not noted for its

Francophilia, chips are *pommes frites*. A pity really when you contemplate what the Germans could have made of the term if left to their very practical teutonic devices. A language that can deliver a sonorous *Ochsenschwanzsuppe* for ox-tail soup has to be admired. Equally, the resounding *Kartoffelknödelsuppe*, or *Leberknödelsuppe*, seem so much more impressive than potato dumpling or liver dumpling soup, appetising as they may be.

Menus place before us a treasure trove of delights, and demonstrate endless creativity. Sundry pleasures in fact, as well as tomatoes.



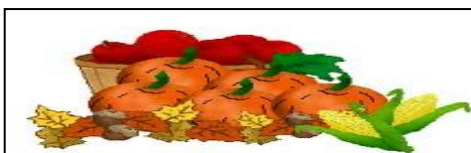
AND FOR MY NEXT
TRICK!

ON OUR WAY TO THE FORUM

Dave Brown

Way back in March this year, I was invited to a meeting in Taunton organised by the South West Seniors Network, the South West Forum on Ageing and Age UK. I confess that the main attraction was that the venue was at the County Cricket Ground but the theme was enticing “From Grassroots to Government How to get your voice heard”, albeit that this is not something that I have any trouble with!! The meeting was well attended and very lively with the main input coming from attendees from older peoples forums across the South West. While I had heard of such groups, I had not witnessed them at work firsthand.

As well as myself, other people from Swindon attended, but none of us was aware that the others had been invited. Mingling over the refreshment and lunch breaks, we talked about exploring the interest in setting up a Swindon Older People's Forum (SOPF) and as a result, views and ideas that emerged from a meeting we organised in Swindon in June





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have been supplemented by discussions on the experiences of Older People's forums elsewhere and advice and guidance from organisations such as Age UK. The next step is to present proposals for how a SOPF could operate to a Borough wide open meeting being held on the afternoon of **Tuesday 1 November 2011.**

So what do Older Peoples Forums aim to do? While they all operate slightly differently, they are all fiercely independent of outside influences and seek to promote the welfare and interests of older people. If they are effective they help this age group have a louder voice on matters which impact on their everyday lives, and facilitate discussion and debate on their issues and concerns.

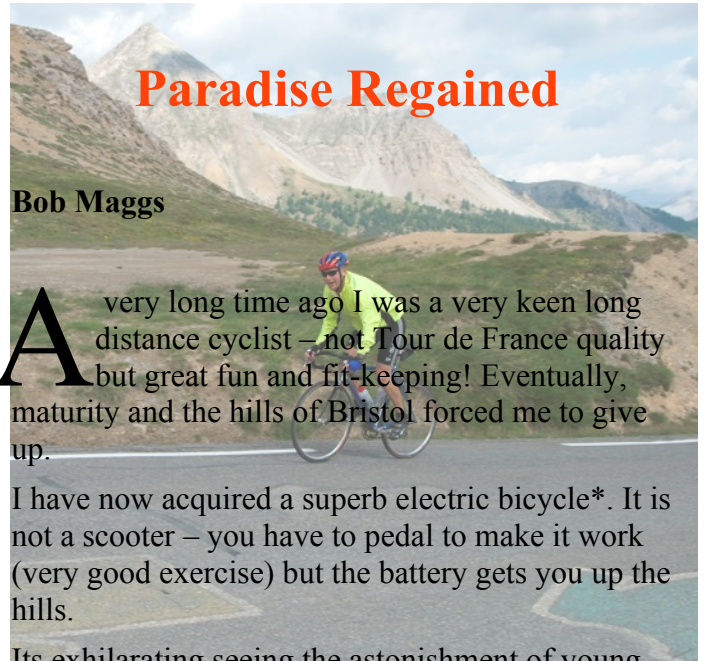
It appears that we have stirred some latent interest and enthusiasm in Swindon to establish an Older Peoples Forum. Whether, or how, this will develop we need to wait and see. Whatever the outcome, it is good that RSVP is at the heart of this new local initiative. Nothing ventured nothing gained!!

An elderly gentleman...

Had serious hearing problems for a number of years.. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the gentleman to hear 100%.

The elderly gentleman went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, 'Your hearing is perfect... Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again.'

The gentleman replied, 'Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!'



Paradise Regained

Bob Maggs

A very long time ago I was a very keen long distance cyclist – not Tour de France quality but great fun and fit-keeping! Eventually, maturity and the hills of Bristol forced me to give up.

I have now acquired a superb electric bicycle*. It is not a scooter – you have to pedal to make it work (very good exercise) but the battery gets you up the hills.

Its exhilarating seeing the astonishment of young cyclists I keep passing. The battery is so small that most of them don't know I'm 'assisted'! Its a folder

so we can take it on holiday.

Its true they are not cheap but they save money spent on the car, save the planet and keep me nearly fit again.



*Technical details:
Urban Mover U Terrain
Folding Electric Bike,
Panasonic Li-ion
Battery/Charger, Alloy
Frame, 5-Speed
Sturmey Archer Gears,
Total Weight with
Battery 20KG



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