

Out of the Blue

MERRY CHRISTMAS

&

HAPPY NEW YEAR

JR 64

October/November 2021

FROM YOUR SECRETARY. –

Members,

Slowly and surely we seem to be getting through these terrible times. We are gaining a little more confidence now we have had our injections. I hope this finds you well. Our Treasurer Ray Muspratt recently organised a day trip to York, which was well attended by members and their friends. It would have been a full coach but sadly a couple were involved in a serious car crash just before and therefore could not attend. I have wished them a speedy recovery. One thing I did learn about York is that the Romans certainly knew how to build walls with numerous steps. Ann and I walked all around the City Walls and my knees suffered somewhat. A good day was had by all. The Weather brilliant and my thanks to Ray for organising it all.

At a recent Committee meeting, it was suggested that members, perhaps those that do not want to go out on dark nights, get together for a cup of Tea/coffee and a good natter. We have therefore arranged an afternoon at **Bishop Road Police Club on Wednesday 10th November, 2021**, where we will supply a good brew and a natter and hopefully provide a little entertainment. I trust, those who do not have jobs to go to, will try and attend and anyone wishing to come and does not have transport, please let me know and I shall try and arrange a lift. Feel free to bring a friend along if you wish. Please don't be shy, *like me*, you will be made more than welcome. If this is successful and reasonably well attended we would like to offer this on a regular basis, perhaps every two months. Please let me know your thoughts **AND don't forget to turn up on the day - Wednesday, 10th November. 2pm. Onwards**

We were given a presentation at the Club by Accord Legal services recently and advice regarding Wills, Power of Attorney and Trust funds. Some 40 members, partners and friends attended and if nothing else it was a bit of an eye opener. The firm, although not looking to pick up clients have offered to do a repeat perhaps in about 6 months time. They also do presentations to new police recruits and pre-retirement courses nationally. Again let me have your thoughts.

As you may see from the above, your committee are dedicated to provide our members with some sort of help including any Welfare needs you may feel we can assist with. If we can't help, we may be able to point you in the right direction for people to assist. For those of you who are none too well or maybe need a good chat, Please do not hesitate to contact me on the below details. We have appointed a dedicated contact by a committee member, certainly for those who are over 80.

If any member does not have internet access, do you have a relative, friend, grandchild even, who could take information for you. Please ask them to contact me and I shall endeavour to keep you all informed. Unfortunately, it is the modern way of communicating. The old 'grapevine' is becoming entangled and broken.

Finally May I wish you all a safe, healthy and Happy Christmas and perhaps a better New Year.

John Russell 07774 618654 / 01695 312280

email - sthelensnarpo@gmail.com.

OBITUARY

Brian Ward, affectionately known as Yorkie

Our sympathies have been passed to his family and our drape was used and representatives of the branch attended at the service.

FROM OUR CHAIR. – Chairs Christmas Message

Christmas is fast approaching and hopefully it will be substantially different from the one we had last year! Nobody wants another "socially distanced" festive season ever again and it will be nice to get back to normality after the past 21 months. One positive thing that the virus did do, was to bring home to all of us just how much we need each other and need that social interaction for our own wellbeing. It was also comforting to know that our "Police family at NARPO" were only at the end of the phone should they be required.

We lost a number of well-loved members along the way and sadly we couldn't give them the usual NARPO send-off that they thoroughly deserved due to numbers being reduced. Those members and their families were very much in our thoughts and prayers at those very sad times.

We, as your committee had planned a number of events, but sadly they all had to be cancelled due to lockdown. When we were unlocked, some NARPO committee members along with Bishop Road Club committee and NARPO members took on two deep cleaning challenges to ensure our members safety and it was decided that a face lift should be carried out in the Broughton Lounge. Armed with ladders, masking tape, paint rollers and brushes, both committees set to and the resulting makeover was a resounding success. A special mention here should go out to one of our members, John W who replaced all the lights and fittings !

As we approach the festive season and edge closer to 2022, we can now see that better times are on the horizon and hopefully we can all look forward to getting back to normality. (Aren't jabs a brilliant invention?)

On behalf of myself and your NARPO committee, we wish you hope for the future, happiness in your hearts plus good health and prosperity for you and your families in 2022. Happy Christmas to you all and those you love.

Anita Ashcroft, QPM



N.B. Dear members, due to restricted space in this quarterly edition I have been unable to use some of the photographs/posters that you have kindly sent. I will do my utmost to include some of them in the next edition. I always welcome input for the Newsletter. May I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and your families.

Ann - Assistant Secretary



Members

If you change your home address, email or contact numbers, please let the Secretary know and he will notify Headquarters, Wakefield on your behalf.

Email: sthelensnarpo@gmail.com

MESSAGE FROM OUR TREASURER

Hello everyone, I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and good spirits. Our Branch trip to York on 21st September was a resounding success. We filled all 49 seats on the coach and the weather was beautiful, with warm sun all day. I hope you will continue to support the trips that the committee arrange for you. The next one will be on Wednesday, 8th December to Chester. The cost to members is £5 and guests is £10. This beautiful city is hosting a Christmas Market which will be open for our visit. It matters not whether you wish to visit the Christmas Market, the city offers so much to see and do if Christmas Markets are not your thing. So, if you fancy a hassle free trip to Chester without the headache of driving, parking and paying more than the cost of the coach trip in parking fees, then come along and enjoy the day with your friends in the Branch.

The big topic as I write is the energy crisis. As you know, I shop around every year and have been with a small independent company for the past 5 years called Avro Energy because they were by far the cheapest. My renewal date was for October and in September received a renewal invite increasing my payments from £79 to £92 per month. An increase of nearly 17% seemed a bit steep to me and shopped around but the others all wanted £105, so I was happy to stay. I go on holiday and on my return the payment has increased to £102. I sign up because they are still the cheapest and lo and behold, they go bust. The gas and electricity they were supplying for a fixed tariff of £79 was costing them more than that to buy, there was only one way that was going to end!! Currently, I'm under the care of Ofgem who have put me with Octopus Energy on £105 per month, a rise of 33% on what I was paying. I can't remember such a huge increase. Reading Martin Lewis's last email, it seems that the price capped variable tariff will be cheaper than any current fixed rates on offer. The price cap runs until 1st April, when it will be reviewed and Martin's advice is to wait until then to see if the market stabilises. It's worth looking at if your tariff is coming to an end soon.

In my last contribution, I mentioned that the HSBC Bank in Wigan does not take cash any more. I have received messages from other members saying they are having the same problems with HSBC, so it seems, it is a national HSBC policy. One member, living in Widnes, told me that the HSBC bank in Widnes closed and he had to bank in St Helens. He then received an email saying cash was no longer being accepted in St Helens and to travel to Runcorn instead at a cost of £4 on the toll bridge. It has changed slightly at the Wigan branch, if you pay in coins, notes and cheques at the same time, you have to use 3 separate machines and do 3 separate transactions!! It will not matter for too long for our Branch. I received an email from HSBC saying that they were to charge £5 per month account fee, 40p for each cheque paid into the bank and 0.4% of any cash paid in (they don't take cash any more). I did some research on our accounts and found that between February 2019 and February 2020, the last 12 months pre-Covid, it would have cost the Branch just under £100 in fees. Our bank balance runs between £10-12,000 for which we receive no interest, so I think that is bare faced cheek. HSBC announced in August that their profits had more than doubled, making £7.8 billion in the 6 months to June and is paying their shareholders a dividend. It's a shame they didn't use some of this money to improve customer service. I have made some enquiries online and found that NatWest do Community Accounts for clubs without incurring any charges. We can also use the free Switching Service that banks use to switch accounts and where they do all the work arranging the transfer of Direct Debits etc for you. I used this service about a year ago when I became dissatisfied with the service from TSB and NatWest gave me £125 to switch. I know that Santander are currently offering £100 to switch, so if you are dissatisfied with your bank, there are choices.

Another current topic is scamming and a serious attempt was made on me recently. Whilst on holiday, I received a text saying 'Dad, I've changed my number, delete my old one'. I have two daughters, so asked was it Claire or Stephanie since being a new number, it wasn't in my contacts. 'It's Stephanie'. A couple of hours later, I received a flurry of texts asking me to pay a bill for Apple products to the value of £1,980 which had been delivered but needed paying for on that day, a Sunday, otherwise she would be defaulting which would go on her credit record. She couldn't use her phone for 24 hours to pay for security reasons. I tried phoning her allegedly new number but it was switched off. Several things didn't seem right, namely receiving high value goods before payment, her phone switched off so how could she text me and the pushy texts asking me to pay online quickly, which wasn't the type of

language my daughter would use. The payment was to an individual and the name seemed Russian. I phoned Santander Fraud Department who confirmed it was fraudulent. I played Sergei along who got even more pushy and when I told him that my online account had been blocked by the bank, he asked for my credit card details to pay it. It's certainly made me even more vigilant than I was before and I felt the method he used could trick some vulnerable person. I hadn't heard of this one before. I still get emails from DVLA to pay for my VEL and several courier companies telling me that they couldn't deliver my parcel.

The Branch Christmas Party arrangements have been finalised. The party on Friday, 10th December at Bishop Road Police Club will be a cracker. We have a great band lined up called The Rockin' 60's and Jennifer will again be supplying her usual high standard buffet. It will be a fantastic opportunity to meet friends and enjoy a top class social evening in a safe environment.

Don't forget to complete the slips attached for both the Christmas Market trip to Chester and the Christmas Party. This is your Branch and your support for what the committee do, is much appreciated.

That's it from me this time, keep safe and well and don't forget, if you need help, please ask.

Ray Muspratt, Treasurer



CHAPLAINS CORNER.

Welcome to the NARPO Christmas Newsletter, and may I take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a very merry Christmas, and of course a happy and healthy new year.

Christmas is the time of year when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, although as we now know, the 25th of December was not his actual birthday. For most people the season is an opportunity to take a break and spend time with their family and loved ones, exchanging presents. Over the centuries the way that Christmas is celebrated has changed radically from being a Christian celebration to just another holiday, an excuse for many to indulge in whatever way they see fit. I recall working afternoons one Christmas Eve. We should have finished at 10pm but we had to work until 2am. However once midnight arrived, the whole of the division erupted in violence. We finally finished gone 5am, our last call being to a large-scale disturbance in New Street in Sutton. Yet there is something worthwhile to celebrate at Christmas, and it is that God loved the people of this world so much that he allowed his son Jesus to leave his place of honour and be born here on earth as a human child. He was not born into a wealthy family, but into abject poverty. Despite the challenges he faced, Jesus rose to be an enormously influential person. He was hated by the establishment, they illegally arrested and tried him and ultimately were responsible for his death. Yet his legacy continues to grow. While Christianity in the West has challenges, through much of the rest of the world it is growing massively, this despite terrible persecution. There is a promise in the bible, that anyone who believes in Jesus, they shall have eternal life. Now that is a present of immeasurable value, and it is freely available to everyone. It may not cost us anything, but Jesus gave his life for us. May I recommend a video, 'The Star of Bethlehem' available on YouTube. It explains the Christmas story and is interesting from a policing point of view because of the detective work involved. If you type the following link into your web browser, it will take you to it. <https://tinyurl.com/3dbkwshs>

Once again, if you wish to discuss anything or I can help in any way, please don't hesitate to get in touch. My email addresses are sprint1050st@hotmail.co.uk, johnr3700@gmail.com. My mobile phone number is 07761754114.

God bless you, *John Rowley*



Most members like receiving these Newsletters as a hard copy, However if you just wish to read it online then send me an email and I will remove you from the mailing list. sthelensnarpo@gmail.com

FOR ANY GARDENERS OUT THERE - Guess who would write this drivel?

I lay no claim to pulchritude ~ Yes, it's him again.

Some old, some new, some different ~ hysterically, sorry, historically

In order to produce quality leather they would use urine to tan animal skins, so all the members of a family would pee in a pot and then once a day it was taken and sold to the tannery ~ If you had to do this to survive you were "Piss Poor"

Worse than that were the really poor folk who couldn't even afford to buy a pot ~ they "didn't have a pot to piss in" and were the lowest of the low.

The next time you're washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be ~ here are some alleged facts about life in the 1500s:-

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and they still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting Married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the Bath water!"

Houses had thatched roofs ~ thick straw ~ piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying "It's raining cats and dogs."

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. - Hence the saying, "Dirt poor."

The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside.

A piece of wood was placed in the entrance-way ~ hence: the door had a threshold.

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme: Pease porridge hot, pease porridge cold, pease porridge in the pot nine days old.

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could, "bring home the bacon." They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and "chew the fat".

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing death by lead poisoning. This happened more quickly with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the upper crust.

Alcohol was consumed by drinking from lead cups. As a result, those who imbibed the most would sometimes be out unconscious for a couple of days. Anyone finding the apparently dead body would prepare them for burial. They would be laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the

family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding a wake.

England is old and small and society started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and take the bones to an ossuary, charnel house or bone-house and then re-use the grave. When reopening these coffins, about one in twenty-five coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. As a result they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be, "saved by the bell" or was considered a "dead ringer".

And that's the truth... now, whoever said History was boring?



NARPO HOLIDAY - 11th to 15th April, 2022 - Cost £399 per person

At WARNERS LITTLECOTE HOUSE, BERKSHIRE.

The holiday Includes:- All Coach travel, four nights Dinner, Bed and Breakfast in a "Standard Room", inclusive entertainment each evening, plus two excursions out are included in the price! Upgrades to a Signature rooms are available on request. A "very small" limited amount of single rooms are available without supplement.

Deposit of £40pp (Non refundable) will be required ASAP and the balance will be required by 14th February, 2022.

About Littlecote Hall

This Grade one Mansion house is situated on a 113 acre estate. It was built in the mid 1500's. It includes formal gardens, parkland and a Roman mosaic. Also on the site is a World War II Museum dedicated to the military history of the house and local area.

It is one of the most historic houses in Britain Henry V111 courted Jane Seymour here! In later times, during the second world war the house was used as a regimental Headquarters for the US 101st Airborne Division and plans for the D Day landings were hatched here.

Activities on site include:- Archery, snooker, Dance workshops and a fully equipped gym. It also provides an indoor heated swimming pool, steam room, sauna, bubble pool, fitness studio and a spa which offers a wide range of treatments.

Come and join us and shake off the "covid cobwebs" at this lovely Adults only Hotel.



Name _____ Partner/spouse _____

Address _____

Contact Tel. number _____ No. of Guests _____ Total No _____

Email address: _____

More questions than the usual quiz but it is Christmas after all. Merry Christmas to everyone and best wishes for the New Year.

CELEBRITY SANTAS ...WHO ARE WE?



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11



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15

FIRST LINES OF CHRISTMAS SONGS

Name the famous Christmas songs from their first lines?

- 16 "I don't want a lot for Christmas, there's just one thing I need"
- 17 "Said the night wind to the little lamb"
- 18 "It's Christmas time there's no need to be afraid"
- 19 "When the snowman brings the snow, Well he might like to know"
- 20 "They said there'll be snow this Christmas, They said there'd be peace on earth"
- 21 "Long time ago in Bethlehem, so the Holy Bible said"
- 22 "Sleigh bells ring, are you listening?"
- 23 "The child is a King, the caroller sings"
- 24 "Welcome to my Christmas song, I'd like to thank you for the year"

25. "Oh the weather outside is frightful"
26. Which comedian revealed in his autobiography that his favourite joke of all time was "*My mother-in-law has come round to our house at Christmas seven years running. This year we're having a change. We're going to let her in.*"
27. Which famous Christmas pantomime features a crocodile?
28. If you were playing musical chairs and there were 6 chairs left how many people would be left in?
29. The Christmas tree that's erected every year in Trafalgar Square is a present from which country?
30. What was the Dickens character Scrooge's first name?
31. Will you find a Toffee Penny in a box of Quality Street or Roses?
32. "*Some people are worth melting for*" is a line from which film?
33. What did Aladdin rub for the Genie to emerge?
34. Where will Christmas be celebrated first St Helens or New York?
35. Who sang with David Bowie on the Christmas hit *Little Drummer Boy*?
36. In what game are marbles placed into a container and then straws removed to allow them to drop?
37. True or false. Before the birth of Jesus the feast of Christmas used to be celebrated in July?
38. In which pantomime does Buttons appear?
39. If you text someone on Christmas Day and used the acronym **HAND** what would you be saying?
40. Name the 3 Wise Men?
41. How many windows should there be on a traditional Advent Calendar?
42. In which country is the region of Lapland?
43. How many Chance squares are there on a Monopoly Board?
44. On what date does the Pogues hit the Fairytale of New York take place
45. Which family own a dog called Santa's Little Helper?
46. According to Dr Suess which character stole Christmas?
47. In the song 12 Days of Christmas which gift is the first one that does not include a bird?
48. What is the first line in Slade's *Merry Christmas Everyone*?
49. The capital of the American state New Mexico has a connection to Father Christmas, what is it?
50. Family Fortunes question. Name a popular Christmas Carol. Top 5 answers needed.

QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1. David Beckham, 2. Jurgen Klopp, 3. Miranda Hart, 4. Kym Marsh, 5. Andrew Marr, 6. Boris Johnson
- 7. Paul McCartney, 8. Elvis Presley, 9. Declan Donnelly, 10. Prince Charles, 11. Keith Lemon (Leigh Francis), 12. Taylor Swift, 13. Bradley Walsh, 14. Homer Simpson, 15. Beyoncé, 16. All I want for Christmas is you. , 17. Do you hear what I hear? , 18. Do they know it's Christmas? , 19. I wish it could be Christmas every day. , 20. I believe in Father Christmas, 21. Mary's boy child. , 22. Winter Wonderland. , 23. Mistletoe and wine. , 24. Step into Christmas. , 25. Let it snow! , 26. Les Dawson, 27. Peter Pan, 28. 7, 29. Norway, 30. Ebenezer, 31. Quality Street, 32. Frozen, 33. Lamp, 34. St Helens, 35. Bing Crosby, 36. Ker Plunk, 37. False, 38. Cinderella, 39. Have a Nice Day, 40. Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, 41. 24, 42. Finland, 43. 3, 44. December 24th 45. The Simpsons, 46. The Grinch, 47. 5 Gold Rings, 48. Are You Hanging Up the Stocking on your Wall?, 49. Santa Fe, 50. Silent Night, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, O Come All Ye Faithful, Away in a Manger, O Little Town of Bethlehem

Remember: *Santa has it great. I buy all the toys, he gets all the credit*
This is that exciting time of the year when I find out what I'm getting my wife for Christmas.

What kind of motorbike does Santa ride? A Holly Davidson!

And finally *Not saying I live in a rough area but just bought an advent calendar and half the windows are boarded up!*

**NARPO DAY TRIP – Chester Christmas Market –
 Wednesday 8th December 2021**

The cost is £5.00 for members and £10.00 for guests

To book please contact Ray Muspratt

01942 212217 – r.muspratt@btinternet.com



Name Partner/spouse

Address

Contact number No. of Guests..... Total No.....

Payment may be made electronically to Narpo St Helens Acc. No 92047497 sort code 40 46 32

ST HELENS AND DISTRICT BRANCH - CHRISTMAS PARTY

FRIDAY 10th December 2021



Name Partner/spouse

Address please.

Contact number No. of Guests..... Total No.....

Payment may be made electronically to Narpo St Helens Acc. No 92047497 sort code 40 46 32

Cheques made out to Narpo, St Helens. And post to NARPO , c/o Maureen Hamer, 147 Liverpool Rd, Haydock St Helens WA11 9RX mobile 07900 258408

The committee will need to know by Sunday, 28th November 2021 (for catering purposes). –
 (do it now) £6 for members and wives/husbands/partners - £10.00 for each guest.