



Registered Charity No.: 1174797

Honorary President: Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP

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HELLO and WELCOME to your winter edition of Viewpoint - the first of a new year and a new decade - which comes with belated good wishes for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2020.

We look forward to seeing you in the year ahead, and if you haven't been to our Tuesday meetings for a while you may like to know that these have now been extended by half an hour to give members more time to socialise, talk to our guest speakers, and enjoy an extra cup of tea!

In the next edition of Viewpoint we'll be bringing you news of what we have planned to mark our 25th anniversary year. Stay tuned! Keep well and warm this winter.

Best wishes

Susanne

Susanne Vangnoo, editor

STOP PRESS! Help us get to OUR hospital

BBSI have recently made a film showing how difficult it is to get to Finchley Memorial Hospital on foot or by public transport. Go to YouTube at https://youtu.be/O4bKqfS_z-E to [see our video](#) and to [support our petition on 38 Degrees](#). Please invite your friends and colleagues to sign as well.

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GENERAL MEETINGS REPORT

November

Peter Sartori and Sandra Turner from local Mind & Mood support group talked to us about how mental health can be improved. Sandra also spoke in her capacity as our local RNIB Connector, and about the emotional impact of sight loss. Mind & Mood offers a confidential and supportive environment for anyone with mental health issues, whatever their specific concern. Members are able to share their stories, or simply listen to others share theirs, and meetings often include a guest speaker. Echoing the words of anthropologist Margaret Mead, Peter ended by saying, "Never doubt the power of a small group." For further information email Sandra san.turner1657@gmail.com or Peter petersartori@virginmedia.com

December

The boys and girls of St Mary's Junior School came to give their annual carol concert to our group. They sang beautifully and, led by their teachers, performed many favourite carols including 'Silent Night', 'O Little Town of Bethlehem', and 'Away in a Manger', as well as popular Christmas songs 'White Christmas' and 'Jingle Bells' - to which we all enjoyed singing along.

January

Highly acclaimed [Vintage Singer Lynda Styan](#) took us back in time with a stellar performance of songs ranging from the Roaring Twenties through to the Swinging Sixties, interspersed with fascinating snippets of musical history. With her fabulous singing voice, Lynda magnificently evoked the atmosphere of long gone times and gave us a stylish show and an afternoon to remember.

BBSI CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Our Christmas lunch at the [Joiners Arms in Finchley Central](#) saw 30 BBSI-ers enjoy delicious festive fare and a convivial time in the company of friends old and new. We were all suitably attired in our Santa hats, kindly provided by the pub, and had a lovely time. Our afternoon ended with a raffle and some great prizes. 'Thank you' to Nigel for arranging a very enjoyable Christmas lunch.

Sight Village Southeast 2019 - a report by Michael Henriques

On Wednesday 6th November I travelled to [Sight Village](#) via the underground to High Street Kensington, and met my dear friend Jill who had very selflessly volunteered to go to the exhibition at the town hall with me. It was very busy there, and with Jill's help I decided to make a beeline for the various things that I had pinpointed in advance. I was interested to visit the [Sight and Sound](#) stand to find out a bit about the [Orcam MyEye 2](#) device and how this had moved on from when I originally had the device - yes, it was quite slick! It attaches magnetically to the arm of a pair of spectacles, and is able to do various things such as automatically detect the faces of people standing in front of you, or to read text, bank notes and identify products. This is all activated via gestures - by pointing your finger and tapping or swiping the touchpad. It costs £3,500 - which I know is quite a lot!

I also came across another pair of smart glasses by a company called [AngelEye](#). These were cheaper than the OrCam MyEye 2, and although you could read text with them they did not do any facial recognition, and the voice quality was definitely not as good.

I then started looking at canes, and found the [UltraCane](#) - an electronic cane that vibrates when one comes across hazards. It had a control box with two buttons fitted to the handle. Depending on the setting used, the UltraCane detects street hazards or obstacles within 2 to 4 metres, and also up to 1.5 metres ahead at chest and head height. There was another kind of cane, called [WeWalk](#), which detects obstacles above chest level, and which you could link to your mobile phone via an app to act as a GPS; it also features the Alexa Voice Assistant service and, additionally, has an LED light - which could be useful to some people when they want to alert other pedestrians to their presence.

I then went to the Barclays bank stand where they had a device that you can use to help you when you're making a purchase at the till but don't want to mess about with credit cards or notes. With this

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device you can either have a key fob or a wristband which you connect via an app on your phone called [Pingit](#), and once you've downloaded that you can be connected to your bank and transfer funds from your account to your key fob or wristband. You don't have to be a customer of Barclays bank to use Pingit. I'm still playing with this but I think it's quite a neat idea, especially if you're going to areas of London where you feel a little nervous about getting your wallet out in front of everybody.

I also visited the [Metro Blind Sport](#) stand and mentioned to the guys that I find their newsletter extremely long. They told me that they were developing an app, or some kind of search engine, that would allow you to type in your address (or the address that you were interested in), and it would then come up with nearby events - this will be a good alternative to trawling through a long newsletter.

[Worried about your glaucoma? Do you know about the IGA's glaucoma helpline?](#)

The Sightline helpline from the [International Glaucoma Association \(IGA\)](#) is there to provide support, help, and reassurance whenever you need to talk to someone about your glaucoma-related concerns. So do give them a call if you have any questions or if there's something worrying you.

That is just what BBSI member Evelyn Greene did when she needed help and advice on her glaucoma-related eye problems. By calling the IGA's glaucoma helpline Evelyn, who has glaucoma in both eyes, received the necessary help and reassurance she so badly needed at a critical time. She not only received detailed information on her complex range of problems but, at the IGA's prompting, quickly sought emergency medical help which saved her remaining sight. You can read more about [Evelyn's story](#) at www.glaucoma-association.com

The [IGA Sightline](#) service is open weekdays from 9.30am to 5pm. To get in touch call 01233 64 81 70 or email sightline@iga.org.uk

Moorfields Eye Hospital will be moving - by Ollie Natelson

The present hospital is overcrowded, and there's not enough room for all the activities that take place there. They desperately need to move to a larger site. Yes, the move will be to a larger hospital site in about seven years' time.

Our delegation to one of their meetings pointed out that compared to 2011, government expects London's population to increase by 33%. So for every 30 people in a queue at any clinic there will soon be a queue of 40 people. There will be more elderly people in which there is a higher rate of sight loss. Just for these two reasons Moorfields must expand, and moving to a larger site will enable the staff to continue giving us a wonderful service. But it will take several years to prepare for Moorfields to undertake this big move.

The major issue among many VIPs is how to get to the new hospital site at St Pancras Hospital. This is somewhere in a maze of streets behind Euston Station. Currently, it is about half a mile to walk from Mornington Crescent or King's Cross underground stations. Well, that's fine if you're young, fit and can see fairly well. But if like me you're on the wrong side of seventy, unfit for long walks and visually impaired - then you will appreciate that a bus is needed to take VIP patients from both underground stations to the front doors of the new hospital.

Accordingly, several BBSI stalwarts (Michael Henriques, Sandra Turner and Ollie) attended a meeting with people investigating the move. Previously, Melvyn Rees had walked several different routes to reach the new site - so we had his comments too. We suggested modifying an existing bus route - which had not been considered by the planners. We'll try to keep you updated with news and views of arrangements for the new Moorfields Eye hospital.

TIME FOR A SMILE

What did one hat say to the other?

You wait here. I'll go on ahead.

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FUNDRAISING & DONATIONS

- Please support BBSI by selecting us as your [Co-op](https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/35200) local cause - <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/35200>. Then, as a Co-op member, every time you buy selected Co-op branded goods and services you'll earn a 5% reward for yourself and 1% for BBSI. The Co-op outlets linked to our cause are in Woodhouse Road N12, Friern Barnet Road N11 and Falloden Way NW11 but members of the Co-op can select us as their chosen charity irrespective of where they are in the UK - so do let family and friends know! [If you're not already a Co-op member, it's easy to sign up and membership costs only £1.](#)
- A big thank you to Waitrose & Partners in Temple Fortune for their kind donation of £350 from the Community Matters fund.
- Many thanks to Simon Vandyk for donating his collection of loose change, totalling £90.
- Our annual quiz supper in November raised £1,606. We are grateful to everyone who joined us on the evening and to the following businesses and individuals who donated raffle prizes: [Adeptex Technology](#), [Alfresco](#), [B Green](#), [Beckett's](#), [Boots \(N20\)](#), [Cootes \(N3\)](#), [Finchley Nurseries](#), [Fresh Clean Carpets](#), [Haven Bistro](#), Irene Peel, [Jewellery by Jack Conner Designs](#), [Jacqui Grant, artist](#), Melvyn Rees, [Moi 2](#), [NISA \(Woodside Park\)](#), Paul Ashby, Patric James Menswear, [Sadler's Wells](#), [Serenity Beauty](#), Simon Vandyk, [Tots 2 Teens \(Ruth Childrenswear\)](#), [Vero Café](#), [Whetstone Café](#). We are also most grateful to the Cecil Rosen Foundation for their generous donation, and to our many other friends for their kind contributions. Special thanks also to our quizmaster Simon Smith who, together with his colleagues, volunteered his services for the evening.
- Our collection at Brent Cross on Saturday 7th December raised £664, and we thank all the shoppers who supported us for their kind generosity. We are very grateful to the centre for hosting us and for making this event possible. As always, our two furry friends, Beaubelle and Curtis, the guide dogs of Sunethra and Bill, were a huge hit with everyone and loved being the centre of attention!

In this edition of Viewpoint we've included a short film review for those of you who enjoy the movies - do let us know if you think this is a good idea and if you'd like more of these in the future. This is followed by an article on audio described screenings.

Review of 'Knives Out' (2019) - by Dexter Hanoomansingh

'The name is Blanc ... Benoit Blanc' - not exactly Lieutenant Columbo but Daniel Craig's character has the same vocation. There are no special effects or death defying stunts for him in this role; that happens in the 25th Bond film '**No Time to Die**' - due out on 2nd April in the UK.

Blanc is hired to investigate the apparent suicide of 85 year old Harlan Thrombey (played by Christopher Plummer), with very few clues to go on.

This classic 'whodunnit' revolves around a stellar cast of 'has beens' (Jamie Lee Curtis, Don Johnson and Michael Shannon), all siblings dying to kill old man Thrombey for his fortune. Central to the plot is Ana de Armas (incidentally, she's starring in the next Bond flick too, and also appeared alongside Clive Owen in the 2019 film '**The Informer**'), who plays a Brazilian nurse to Plummer's Harlan Thrombey - a butter wouldn't melt in his mouth type of character. Chris Evans, of Captain America fame, stars in the role of Harlan's disagreeable grandson.

'**Knives Out**' is slow but then speeds up, when Blanc solves the crime in classic twists and turns, and gains momentum - stay awake or you will miss it!

TIME FOR A SMILE

What English word has three consecutive double letters?

Answer: Bookkeeper

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Audio Described Films - by Michael Henriques

As part of our critique and review of films we thought it might be useful to give a little explanation of how audio described features work in the cinema and what you need to do in order to have a satisfactory experience. One thing you do need to do is to make sure that the film that you're going to view carries the audio description designation. This is often indicated by the letters AD. You can also email ad@yourlocalcinema.com to subscribe to a free weekly newsletter with regular updates and information on all the films that include audio description, including the latest audio described DVD & Blu-Ray releases. The excellent listings site Accessible Screenings UK at <http://accessiblescreeningsuk.co.uk> from the UK Cinema Association (UKCA) is another resource that you can use to find up to date information on AD screenings. Incidentally, the [UKCA also runs a national card scheme](#) which enables a disabled cinema guest to receive a complimentary ticket for a helper at participating cinemas.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the term 'audio description', it refers to part of the extra narration that comes along with the film (in addition to the actual dialogue). For example, in a scene in a public bar or restaurant where a server might be pulling down a beer tap and then handing the beer over to the customer, the audio described information would be something along the lines of "Betty is pouring the pint from the pump at the bar". This obviously wouldn't be covered in the dialogue. The other thing that audio description does is to tell you the names of the characters, which we don't always know when watching the film ordinarily. It also tells you a character's expression, the clothes they're wearing, the surrounding scenery and other things that you wouldn't normally pick up from just hearing the dialogue in the film.

In order to access audio description you need to make sure that the cinema concerned has a pair of headsets available. It's worth checking in advance. Quite a few times I've been to a cinema and despite having been told audio description was available - it didn't

work! This could simply have been because the battery needed recharging but, as you'll know, when you go to a cinema you first experience all the advertisements followed by trailers - all of these are not audio described. It is only the main feature film that has the audio description, and so you could be sitting in your seat for at least half an hour before the main feature starts - and it's only then that you can test whether the headset works. The last time this happened to me I was fortunate to have a helper with me who dived out to see the management to say that my headset wasn't working, but by the time it had been sorted out we'd missed part of the film. I ended up with some complimentary tickets on that occasion.

Don't let snags like this put you off. Be persistent. If you want to have a chat with me, please feel free to get in touch. I'd be happy to talk to you. Call 020 8200 5462 and leave a message for me or email me at barnetbsi@yahoo.co.uk. I'll get back to you as soon as possible.

PROPOSED EUROPEAN CITY BREAK THIS AUTUMN

Have you ever wanted to do a bit of travelling but then let second thoughts get the better of you - maybe because of your sight impairment or perhaps organising it all just seemed too overwhelming? Well, if you'd like to join a small group of BBSI members we can take care of all your concerns and let you get on with having a great time!

To register your interest, please leave a message for our Vice Chair Michael Henriques on 020 8200 5462 or email him at barnetbsi@yahoo.co.uk by 15th March, so that we can get an idea of numbers and obtain some quotes for a 2/3 day European city break around October time - possibly to Amsterdam or Paris, but we'll see what's available and let you know. How does that sound?

TIME FOR A SMILE

My friend asked me where I see myself in the new year.
How would I know? I don't have 2020 vision.

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HERE ARE DETAILS OF OUR NEXT MEETINGS

- **Tuesday 4th February | The Care Quality Commission (CQC)**
[Jennifer Pearl](#), an Expert by Experience for the CQC, will be talking to us about the work of the Commission.
- **Tuesday 3rd March | BBSI AGM**
Our guest Chair & speaker will be [The Worshipful the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Caroline Stock](#). Light refreshments will be served after the AGM, which starts at 2pm. For catering purposes RSVP by 28th February. The [MAB mobile unit](#) will be on-site from 1.30pm with a display of low vision aids and assistive technology.
- **Tuesday 7th April | Poetry Workshop**
Join us for a specially-curated poetry workshop led by Lis Vandyk, our Secretary, and fellow poetry enthusiast, and BBSI supporter, Helen Roberts.

Our general meetings take place on the first Tuesday of the month at **St Mary's Church Hall, Hendon Lane, Finchley N3 1TR**, from **1.30pm to 4pm**, and include an audio described exercise class (or a discussion group for those who prefer not to take part), a guest speaker or entertainment, delicious refreshments and a raffle.

NOTE: The August meeting is replaced with an outing, and in January we meet on the second Tuesday of the month.

GETTING THERE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Buses 125, 143, 326, 13 and 460 all stop nearby. Buses 125 & 326 stop outside the church next to our venue when coming **from** Colindale/Brent Cross; going **towards** Colindale/Brent Cross, the nearest stop is on Gravel Hill. The closest underground station is Finchley Central. **Please contact our Secretary on 020 8349 4705 if you need any further help or details of any of our meetings.**

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of BBSI.

Items for inclusion in the spring newsletter should be sent to the editor susanne.vangnoo@outlook.com by **15th March 2020**.