

West Shropshire Talking Newspaper

Annual Report 2017 - 18

Copies of this report can be obtained in
large print on request .

Please address all correspondence to the studio.

Established 20th January 1976. Charity registration no 504996

A member of the Talking News Federation

Studio; Roy Fletcher Centre, Cross Hill, Shrewsbury SY1 1JE
01743 364 726 (answerphone service)

Foreword

It's been a largely "business as usual" year, as we have continued to produce our familiar blend of news and features.

One innovation, however, noted elsewhere in the report, is the arrival of Alexa, sadly not a new editor, but a software programme built into small device that allows voice-activated access to wide range of functions via a home wi fi network, without recourse to a computer mouse or keyboard.

Now one can simply say, "Alexa, give me the weather forecast", "Alexa, wake me up at eight" or, most importantly, "Alexa, play me this week's WSTN".

It's capable of much more than that but it does make one feel sorry for any poor child named Alexa.

On a sadder note, I have to record the passing of Rachael Davies. A former reader and committee member, she served the WSTN for 25 years and latterly had organised our fund-raising collections.

Committee member, John Wilson, has generously taken over that fund-raising role, assisted by our Hon Treasurer, Stephen Stewart.

We also have to say farewell to Sylvia Starkey, who has stepped down as Wem correspondent. Her inimitable style will be much missed but we are delighted to welcome Emma Hickson, by far our youngest volunteer, who has stepped in to fill the gap.

Finally, may I offer my thanks to all those involved in the continuing production of our weekly newspaper and bi-monthly magazine. All told, it is a remarkably complex operation that relies on the enduring commitment of every volunteer.

Paul Pascoe
Chairman

Structure governance and management

The West Shropshire Talking Newspaper , formerly called the West Shropshire Talking Newspaper for the Blind, was established on 20th January, 1976. It operates under a constitution agreed with the Charity Commission - registration number 504996.

A revised constitution, with a revised title, agreed with the Charity Commission, was adopted at the 2015 AGM.

- All recipients of the Charity’s publications and those who work to achieve its objects are automatically members.
- A committee is elected annually at the AGM, to which all members are invited. Two members of the committee must be visually impaired.
- All committee members are trustees of the charity.
- The officers of the committee, namely Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, are elected annually at the AGM.

The Committee for 2017-8 comprised;

Edna Evans	18 Greenacre Road, Shrewsbury
*Brian France	12 Oak Tree Drive, Bayston Hill
Sheila Middle	3 Bardsley Drive, Shrewsbury
Mary Pascoe (Hon sec)	29 Preston Street, Shrewsbury.
Paul Pascoe (Chairman)	as above
*Lindsey Rowlands	20 Rad Valley, Shrewsbury
Stephen Stewart (Treasurer)	6 Richmond Drive, Shrewsbury
Peter Waller	25 Monkmoor Road, Shrewsbury
Alan Wilding (Vice Chairman)	154 Longden Road, Shrewsbury.
Susan Wilding	as above
John Wilson	9 Knolls Farm Close, Shrewsbury.

* denotes visually impaired member

A committee meeting is held every two months. The composition of the committee as far as possible represents the range of TN activities.

All committee members have a copy of their duties as described in “The Essential Trustee” and annually sign a declaration concerning their fitness to serve as a committee member. The committee is also regularly informed about guidance issued by the Charity Commission and attention drawn to relevant issues for discussion.

WSTN is also covered by Indemnity Insurance.

Objectives and activities.

- The West Shropshire Talking Newspaper's stated objects in its constitution are to "relieve visually impaired persons as defined by the Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002, and to those persons affected by some other incapacity that makes reading a strain or an impossibility, by the provision of recorded news and information."
- The WSTN offers its services free to anyone in the West Shropshire area (SY Shropshire postcodes) who satisfies the objectives stated above.
- Where requested, the WSTN provides an audio-player free of charge.
- It produces a weekly audio newspaper. News stories come from the local press which is duly credited. Other internally produced material of interest to the listeners is included, as well as public service announcements.
- A bi-monthly magazine, based on "The Shropshire Magazine" is also produced.
- A library of audio books is available.
- Listeners are offered free access to the Calibre Talking Books library- funded by The Ethel Leake Memorial Fund

VOLUNTEERS

The West Shropshire Talking Newspaper has no paid staff. It is fortunate in having a loyal and hardworking band of volunteers. It is very encouraging that new volunteers continue to join, as sadly others die or have to give up because of ill health or other commitments. In the year 2017-8 there was an average of 77 volunteers offering a range of support, some of whom have individual roles mentioned elsewhere in this report. (The current full list is appended to this report.)

New volunteers are always welcome; help is especially needed from those who would be prepared to take on the role of editor, technical operator, join the committee (including acting as an Officer) or provide IT/ computing support.

We would particularly like to hear from anyone who could help organise our charity collections and fund raising and / or take part in our store and street collections.

Please contact any committee member if you would like to help. Or use the contact details on the front page of this report.

Duties

The duties undertaken by volunteers to produce and support the WSTN include

- acting as editor
- providing weekly or monthly features
- operating the recording equipment for the weekly and bi-monthly recordings and providing technical support
- presenting
- reading
- involvement in copying and distribution
- helping with store and street collections
- helping to staff the annual St Mary's Charity Card Shop.

Apart from the elected committee, (listed in the Governance section of this report,) many of whom carry out a number of roles mentioned elsewhere, the following also provide invaluable support for the WSTN's activities

- charity collection organiser – Rachael Davies (sadly died in August 2017) Her role is currently undertaken by John Wilson and Stephen Stewart.
- readers / presenters roster co-ordinator - Sandra Kelly
- charity Christmas cards organiser - Mary Pascoe
- office support, listener records and general administration - Edna Evans and Linda Croot

Long Service Awards

The WSTN is very grateful for the many years of loyal service given by its volunteers, and this year we especially thank the following:

Celia Forrest– 40 years

John Wilson - 20 years

Kathryn Heraghty, Jennifer Roberts and Janet Miller – 10 years.

Achievements and performance

Where possible, we try to respond positively to requests to give talks to local groups and organisations. These occasions offer an opportunity publicise the WSTN, to distribute more leaflets and information , and have also resulted in some new recipients of the service as well as donations.

The WSTN continues to be actively involved in the annual Charity Christmas Card Shop held in St Mary's church Shrewsbury, both in its administration and in supplying volunteer helpers. The cards sold there provide a useful source of income, as well as a "show case" for our service, as the card shop has a very high footfall and won the Mayor's Community Shield for 2017. Our information leaflets are also displayed in the shop.

Our profile is also raised by the opportunity for collections at various local supermarkets throughout the year, as well as raising valuable funds.

The WSTN had a stand at the See Hear Exhibition in May 2017. Members of the Committee who staffed it were able to meet a number of existing listeners as well as making some useful contacts.

We are amongst the most accessible of Talking Newspapers.

Until this year the WSTN offered four ways of listening:

- by memory stick delivered through the post, played back via the audio player we provide free of charge
- by Sonata internet radio from the British Wireless for the Blind Fund
- independently via our website through various internet devices
- via a local telephone listening service.

We have now added an exciting new technological development – the use of Amazon's ALEXA, the voice operated internet system.

It is becoming increasing difficult to know exactly how many listeners the WSTN has; there are about 250 listeners on our postal mailing list . Data concerning hits on our website gives us some insight . The telephone service offers some redacted data as does Sonata radio. We would welcome some feedback from anyone who listens in this way.

We also have anecdotal evidence that the memory sticks are listened to by more than one person, particularly if the recipient is in a care or nursing home. We have circulated nursing homes advising them of our service.

Membership forms are always available to download from our website as well as being available in printed form.

The Committee receives regular feedback on any technical or other quality problems at the regular committee meetings. We monitor and respond to reports from listeners on the players and memory sticks we provide, and we try to resolve any difficulties as quickly as possible. New deliveries of the players are checked before issue and returned to the supplier for replacement if found to be faulty.

We continue to monitor our output carefully and we are constantly trying to make our systems as robust as possible.

The quality of the weekly newspaper depends on the skill and hard work of the team of editors and thanks must go to Lalage Bown, Steve Bristow, Bill Curnow, Ian Musty, Averil Newell, Paul Pascoe and Alan Wilding. A comprehensive set of guidance notes supports this work and a meeting of the editorial team has been held to discuss issues of quality etc..

The studio hardware, which was renewed in November 2011, has generally performed well. Apart from enabling us to record the TN and the magazine, it also used to stockpile and edit pre-recorded features from contributors . Additionally it manages our membership mailings. There is an on –going need for renewal, maintenance and technical updates and support.

Regular high quality recorded programmes depend on our small group of technical operators as well as on the studio hardware and associated recording software. The WSTN has been very well served by our volunteer technical team throughout the year and thanks are due to Steve Bristow, Alan Copplestone, Chris Lemon, Paul Pascoe, Mark Salmon and Alan Wilding.

Whilst the basic format of the weekly newspaper has remained the same since the introduction of digital recording and distribution, the capacity of the memory stick means that we can vary the length according to the quantity of news on a particular week, and offer expanded coverage of key local stories. On average each issue runs to about ninety minutes of news and features. We continue to try to develop our use of original material, such as live recordings and interviews. We have also continued to include an “Out of district” track . We welcome any feedback on content and /or quality.

We continue to produce a bi-monthly magazine based on “The Shropshire Magazine”.

Our website has been reviewed and revised.

Financial Review

Accounts

Appended are the accounts for the year ending Dec 2017, together with the Independent Examiner’s Report.

As ever we are grateful to Jonathan Rimmer, and to Messrs James, Holyoak and Parker, Chartered Accountants, for their examination of our accounts and financial records, and for waiving their professional fees.

Commentary on the accounts

Income and expenditure

The WSTN depends entirely on donations, small grants and fund raising.

Our reserves stand at a healthy £68,780.14. However, we are operating at a loss and our accounts for 2017 show a deficit of £4130.49, an increase from the previous year's deficit of £3071.07. The main reason for the deficit is the fall in income received from donations, legacies and gifts in memory which fell from £3515.56 to £1743.55. The loss of income was offset to some extent by an expenditure reduction of £17611.81 from the previous year. Fundraising also provides an important source of revenue and raised £1394.42. Many thanks must go to the late Rachael Davies and her team of helpers. Thanks must also go to Mary Pascoe and all who helped sell our Christmas cards, raising £656.32.

In accordance with the most recent (2016) Charity Commission guidelines on Reserves, the Committee takes the view that reserves should cover approximately three years running costs. This secures the WSTN in the medium term against any unforeseen drop in income, or unexpected costs. The current reserves meet this requirement.

The accounts show monies reserved for technical development, and service development, also in accordance with Charity Commission Guidelines.

At the request of the donors, the Ethel Leake Memorial Fund (ELMF) is money designed for use in special projects, as and when they arise. The Committee has agreed to top up this fund annually, as and when necessary, subject to funds being available.

The WSTN is very grateful to our generous donors and to those who gave gifts in memory of family and friends .

A list of donors is at the end of this report.

Office costs

Our major item of expenditure was as usual our rent and service charge. Nevertheless, the Roy Fletcher Centre continues to offer very competitive rents for our office and recording studio.

The BT contract for phone and internet services is kept under review.

Financial Risk Management

All cheques and disbursements are subject to a double signature from the designated list of signatories, namely Secretary, Treasurer, Chairman and Vice-Chairman (excluding the payee). Receipts are required.

A debit card is held, and a protocol for its use agreed by the committee. The two card holders are the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman. Expenditure is authorised by the Treasurer.

Bank statements are inspected by a non - cheque signatory member of the committee at each bi-monthly committee meeting. The Income and Expenditure Account is presented and discussed at each bi-monthly committee meeting.

The placement of the reserves and our banking arrangements have been reviewed in the financial year, and the Committee takes the view that they are secure and appropriate.

List of Donors 2017

In memory of Audrey Ashwell

Mr W E Blackmore

Dr Julia Brown

Copthorne Ladies Club

Culmington Parish Council

Mr Mike Edwards

Miss Pam Evans

Hadnall Women's Club

Mrs R Harris

Mr D Hatfield

Mrs C Hughes

Mrs C M Hughes

Mr R L Jarman

In memory of Mrs Harriet May Jones

Jacki Jones 95th birthday

In memory of Mrs Anne Lewis

Ludlow Quaker Meeting

Meole Brace Senior Citizens

Morris Care Limited

Mrs G M Morris

Mrs M Morris

Mrs B Parker

Mr D Roberts

Mrs I R Roberts

Mr A D M Slamo

Mr C Stewart

Mr G Stewart

Mt S R Stewart

In memory of Mrs Sybil Woolf

Current list of volunteers

Judith Al-Nasri
Emma Bentley
Harriet Bisson
Lalage Bown
Kath Bristow
Steve Bristow
Rosemary Brooks
Dirk Commerford
Jenny Commerford
Lucille Connolly
Alan Copplestone
Linda Croot
Bill Curnow
Angie Davies
Gordon Douglas
Vicky Dwyer
Geraint Dyfnallt
Robert Elliott
Edna Evans
Marianne Fifield
Celia Forrest
Brian France
Sue France
Eleanor Gillogaley
George Gunn
Gareth Hardcastle
David Harris
Kathryn Heraghty
Emma Hickson
Sue Hollings
Sandra Hunter
Rob Hutchings
Ron Iremonger
David Jenkins
Sandra Kelly
Diane Kelsall
Chris Lemon
Aiden MacGinley
Beryl MacGinley
Stephen Meyer
Liz Merrifield
Sheila Middle
Janet Miller
Kathy Moselhi

Jim Mould
Kirsten Mould
Ian Musty
Averil Newell
Dilwyn Owen
Robert Parsons
Paul Pascoe
Mary Pascoe
Cynthia Phillips
Allan Price
John Richardson
Pam Richardson
Jennifer Roberts
Gwyneth Rollins
Linsey Rowlands
Helen Salmon
Mark salmon
John Siviter
Malcolm Soutar
Stephen Stewart
Barbara Stubbs
Margot Sutton
Julia Taylor
Margaret Thrower
Genevieve Tudor
Norman Wallace
Peter Waller
Margaret Watkins
Val Watson
Alan Wilding
Susan Wilding
John Wilson