

Meet The Locals

Highlighting local people...

New Milton
Talking Newspaper

We usually feature individuals in this column but after a recent visit to meet the wonderful team that put together the New Milton Talking Newspaper I thought you might like to meet them this month.

Getting ready for Recording



I received an invitation to visit the group from Margaret Barnes one of the Talking Newspapers editors and was happy to accept. Colin Bower who lives just around the corner from me, met and took me to the office in the grounds of Durlston Court School.

Founded in 1999 by Joan Mulhern (the current Chairman who is partially sighted herself and Chairs Opensight locally), in which their Geoffrey Briddon and Valerie Raymond, the talking newspaper provides a weekly audio recording of local news to around 170 visually impaired listeners.

The Founders firstly consulted other Talking Newspapers in the area as to their methods of working and subsequently the first recording took place in June 1999 in a small studio in the Memorial Hall in New Milton.

After some years the Newspaper was offered free accommodation in a small building within the grounds of Durlston Court School, Barton-on-Sea courtesy of the Headmaster Mr David Wansey and the board of Governors. It remains at this venue to this day.

I met Joan at their small office and was immediately impressed by the air of ordered efficiency within. The operation is much more logistically involved than you would imagine!

There are 32 members of the team in all - Editors, Newsreaders, Paper Collectors, Sound Technicians, Studio Directors, Registrars and 'Bagmen' who deliver

the sacks of wallets filled with the audio recordings to the Post Office for onward delivery. They are both collected and delivered free of charge to listeners, by courtesy of the Royal Mail.

Production takes place every Friday morning between 8.30am and 12 noon, when the Newspaper is recorded ready to be sent to the listeners. The recordings are now fully digital thanks to equipment bought with a lottery grant.

Prior to this, editors scour the local newspapers for interesting items which are then pasted onto boards for the Newsreaders to read and record onto either cassette, CD or digital memory sticks.

No subscription charge is made for the service to listeners. All they are required to do is to reverse the address label on the wallet in which their paper is delivered in and post it back to the studio.

I stayed to watch as that day's 3 newsreaders did their sound test and left as the recordings were about to be made.

I can only imagine how grateful the listeners must be to receive their weekly newspaper and it is a testament to the dedication of the team that production has only been cancelled on one occasion - and that was due to last winter's exceptional weather conditions.

Mission Control!



If you know of a blind or partially sighted person who would like to receive a weekly recording of the local news or if you would like to help with the newspaper, please contact Joan Mulhern (Chairman) 01425 622401 or Pauline Newenham (Secretary) 01425 628007.

Gary Prince