

Sutton Vision
Enabling and Empowering

CONTACT

Issue 76



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Message from our Chair, Michael Parsons

Welcome to our Christmas Edition of CONTACT and what an unusual year it has been. The Board of Trustees and I want to thank our staff, volunteers and service users for their patience as we moved from lockdown back to offering a new hybrid model of working. Two years ago, I could never have imagined a time when we did an eye test over the phone, but as a result of COVID-19, this is now one of the services we offer – an indirect positive outcome of the pandemic.

The Board and I are also delighted with the increased technology support that we now offer, and with thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund, this will only continue to grow. Our project formally starts in December, and I would like to extend an invitation to all to come and see our updated 'Technology and Resource Hub' with a range of new devices we can help with.

Sadly, in October our Chief Officer, Tegan Jones, decided to leave Sutton Vision. We wish him well in his future endeavors. The Board have been working on recruiting a new 'General Operations Manager' and we hope to make an announcement in January.

As usual, comments and contributions to CONTACT magazine from the Sutton Vision community and partners are always welcome and may be sent to our Editor at editor@suttonvision.org.uk.

GO PAPERLESS, GO GREEN!

If you would like to switch to an email edition of CONTACT, please let us know by sending an email request to Vicky.Blencowe@suttonvision.org.uk.

At Sutton Vision, we rely on our volunteers to help us with our services and social groups. If you are interested in joining our strong team of volunteers, there are no qualifications needed – why not telephone Amanda, our Volunteer Co-Ordinator on 020 8409 7166 or e-mail her amandalarter@suttonvision.org.uk for a chat?

Please enjoy this 76th Edition of CONTACT and best wishes for the upcoming Christmas Season from all of us at Sutton Vision.

St Helier Hospital Update

Sight Loss Adviser, Ann Ryan, is available for St Helier Eye Unit appointments, advice and support. If you attend in person at St Helier, you will have your temperature checked on arrival and will be given a mask to wear whilst in clinic.

If you have any questions or queries, please contact Ann Ryan on 07920 650 613.

“Laughter connects you with people. It’s almost impossible to maintain any kind of distance or any sense of social hierarchy when you’re just howling with laughter. Laughter is a force for democracy.”

John Cleese

Meet (or re-meet) our Sutton Vision staff team

We have a wonderful and talented staff team and although some like Vanessa, have been with us for over 15 years, we have a number of new staff like Vicky and Terry who only joined us this year.

Vanessa Valentine, our Low Vision Clinic Coordinator has been with Sutton Vision since 2005.

“I mainly help our service users with equipment and magnification.

I work alongside our Optometrist and Rehabilitation Officer to deliver the Low Vision Clinic (for more details of our Low Vision Clinic please contact me on 020 8409 7166).

I live in Banstead with my husband, dog – Hugo and two cats. I have two grown up sons and a new baby grandson.”

Amanda Larter, our Volunteer Coordinator has been with Sutton Vision since 2015.

“My office background is in administration and secretarial but following a redundancy, and at the same time registering with sight loss (both within a month of each other), I was left wondering what I would do for the next 20 years of my working life.

Upon receiving some very good advice, I enrolled on a residential course for Complimentary Therapy at The Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford. Once qualified, I then

worked at St Raphael's Hospice and also volunteered at Sutton Mental Health Foundation.

I have experience being a volunteer and training volunteers and therefore enjoy my role. I feel I am a good ambassador for people with sight loss and also understand how valued volunteers are to an organisation like Sutton Vision.”

Ann Ryan, our Sight Adviser at St Helier Hospital. Ann has been with Sutton Vision since 2018.

“It is never easy to tell someone that we cannot offer a treatment for sight loss or discuss registration with them. However, there are many strategies that can be incorporated into the practices of the Ophthalmologist that will ensure that the people we encounter experience a smoother journey into accepting and living with low vision.

If at any time in the future, you have an appointment at St Helier Hospital Eye Unit and would like some support, please telephone me on 0792 065 0613 or 020 8296 2000 ext 8718.”

Vicky Blencowe, our Assistive Technology Coordinator has been with us since February 2021.

“Following a diagnosis of Macular Degeneration in 2001, I have learned to embrace assistive technology in my work life on computer, and later in my personal life, with iPad and now iPhone. This revolutionised my life and how I live independently. With this technology becoming fully accessible, available on all modern tablets, mobile phones and laptops, there are lots of free resources/apps to help visually impaired people carry out tasks and find information for themselves.

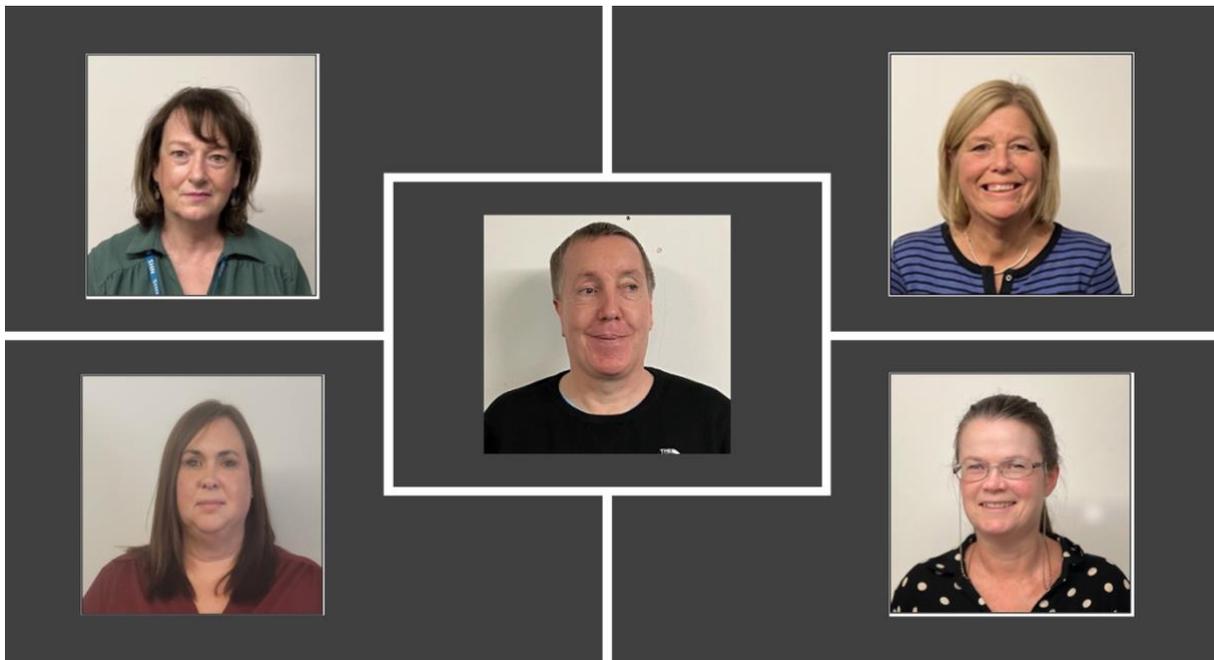
This means exciting advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI), increasing use of voice control on devices and audio

description on TV is only going to make the digital and virtual world more accessible to blind and partially sighted people.”

Terry Rocks, our new Outreach Officer. Terry started working for Sutton Vision in September 2021.

“I live in Kingston and my loves include football, technology and movies. I've worked in social care for 34 years including as a residential home manager, supported living manager and as a positive behavior support practitioner before taking up my role here.

This role although it has existed in the past, is relatively new and involves me attending community events, outreach to service users in their homes, helping with form filling and obtaining blue badges and working with local charities such as Age UK, Sensory Impairment Team at Sutton Council among others.”



In memory of Frank Smith, our volunteer of 40 years



Volunteers are the salt of the earth
You can't put a price on what they are worth
They give their time and effort for free
Never thinking "What's in it for me"?
Whether for a charity or on a personal basis
They are as welcome as a desert oasis
Making a cup of tea or a slice of toast
The volunteer is happy to become the host

Poem by Frank Smith written in 2014

Access update: Wallington Green by Michael Parsons

Some CONTACT readers may be aware that throughout the time I've been on the Board of Trustees at Sutton Vision, I have been an Access Champion. This has involved campaigning and working on behalf of Sutton Vision service users, plus other people with disabilities, trying to ensure our Borough is as accessible as practically possible.

One of our successes was to ensure the reinstatement of zebra and controlled crossings in the Heart of Hackbridge and Felnax estate during the regeneration.

In August 2020 I was approached by Sutton's Wallington North Councilor's for their assistance. The local Councilor's had been contacted by a member of their Constituency who was visually impaired and also had mobility issues. The VIP needed to get to the nearest 151 bus stop to travel into Wallington, albeit only a few stops but it was too great a distance for them to walk, especially up hill.

I met the Councilor's and VIP at the Wallington Green crossroads. The VIP, and I, could not cross the road safely, independently or without sighted assistance. Both Councilor's, even though sighted, had severe concerns crossing the junction even with their sight!



At the junction, there is blister paving on all four approaches at the crossroads, but there is only controlled crossing points, with rotating cones, on two crossing points:

- a) on the South side travelling East / West: and
- b) on the East side travelling North / South.

It is impossible for any VIP to cross Acre Lane or Manor Road North safely, therefore this part of the community has become a 'no-go' area!

I wrote to Transport for London (TfL) on behalf of Sutton Vision, its service users and people with disabilities in the locality. After a lengthy time, I eventually received a response. Their answer in summary was, "Sorry, can't help, we have no money!"

TfL's response, is unsatisfactory. I believe it's contrary to the 'protected characteristics' of the Equality Act 2010, as disabled people are being discriminated against by reason of not being able to access services in the community. As Chair of Sutton Vision & Access Champion, along with the Board of Trustees, we will continue fighting this case until a reasonable resolution is reached.

Volunteer vacancies

The Sutton Vision website has been updated with a number of new volunteer roles. They include volunteer drivers, gardeners, tech support for social media/podcast content and community awareness champions.



We are always interested in new activities and would like to hear from you if you have a skill that you can offer our VI members, as a social activity or peer support group.

Sutton Vision office Christmas closure

We will be closing on Thursday 23rd December 3pm and reopening on Tuesday 4th January 2022 at 10am.



Low Vision Clinic

We are offering face-to-face assessments at our centre in Robin Hood Lane or an assessment by telephone if you prefer.

Please telephone Sutton Vision on 020 8409 7166 for an appointment or for more information.

If you need to speak to our optometrist or need a replacement magnifier, please call and leave a message on our answer phone.

Telephone Befriending Service



If you are feeling lonely, isolated or just want someone to call you for a friendly chat, we can match you with a volunteer who will be happy to call you.

A big thank you to our team of telephone befrienders who are doing a great job of contacting our VI members who have requested this service on a weekly basis during the pandemic.

Welcome to Sutton Talking Newspaper

Sutton Talking Newspaper (STN) is a local charity which records news from the Sutton Guardian for visually impaired residents of the London Borough of Sutton. The organisation is run entirely by volunteers, and there is no charge for the service.



We record half an hour of local news from the Sutton Guardian every week, together with our own magazine type recording called the Clarion. These two items can be copied to CDs and sent out to local Visually Impaired people free of charge. Our recordings can also be accessed via the link on our website, and more recently using the Talking Newspapers app on smartphones, which enables people to listen to recordings from Talking Newspapers all over the country.

We have permission to access audio versions of many popular national magazines. This means that listeners who sign up for our weekly recordings on memory stick can also receive about 12 national magazines each week, which adds up to about 22 hours in total. This aspect has proved very popular with listeners.

We are able to offer a memory stick player free of charge to anybody who doesn't already have access to one, or have a television, daisy player, computer or tablet with USB socket.

Once the visually impaired person has finished listening to that week's recording, they simply post it back to us. We make three address labels for each person, so they don't have to worry if they are not immediately able to send the recording back.

We understand that a lot of visually impaired people have been lonely and isolated in lockdown, and we are keen to sign up more listeners. We are inviting the Sutton Vision community to register for our service.

Our application forms can be downloaded from our website <http://www.suttonn.org.uk>. A supply of printed forms are also held at Sutton Vision for anybody unable to access the internet.

Completed application forms can be posted to our studio at: 1 Grove Cottage, Grove Park, High Street, Carshalton, SM5 3BB.

A person does not have to be registered as blind or partially sighted to be entitled to this service. An inability to read newsprint through visual impairment is enough to qualify. However, to comply with Post Office regulations for free postage, if you are not registered as blind or partially sighted, please ask a doctor, ophthalmologist, social worker or ophthalmic optician to sign the final part of the form confirming that your close-up vision with spectacles is N12 or less (unable to read newsprint).

We require name and address details in order to provide you with this service. We will not pass this information on to third parties without your prior consent unless lawfully compelled to do so.

If you have any questions, you can leave a message on the STN answer phone and we will return your call as soon as possible: 0203 759 6679

VI Leisure Group (VILG)

The VILG organises its own programme and acts as the point of contact for participants. Although Sutton Vision supports and encourages the VILG and their activities, those partaking should be aware that any events organised directly by the VILG are independent of Sutton Vision and are the responsibility of the VILG only.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Sue Christie on 07891 783291 or e-mail susanchristie48@outlook.com.

Event	Date	Venue
VI Leisure Group Coffee Morning Waterstones	1 st Friday of each month from 10.30 a.m.	Waterstones Book Shop, High Street, Sutton
VI Leisure Group Book Club	4 th Monday of each month from 10.30 a.m.	Waterstones Book Shop, High Street, Sutton
VI Leisure Group Lunch Prince of Wales Pub	3 rd Tuesday of each month from 12.00 noon	The Prince of Wales, 28 Malden Road, Cheam,
VI Leisure Group Eve. The Hope Pub	1 st Monday of each month from 7.00 p.m.	The Hope Pub, 48 West Street, Carshalton
VI Leisure Group Wallington	2 nd Wednesday of each month from 10.30 a.m.	Garden Café, Wallington Library

Social Groups & Activities: December, January, February & March

Here are the dates and times of Sutton Vision's upcoming activities. If you would like more information or to book a place, please call Amanda on 020 8409 7166.

LUNCHTIME QUIZ

Monday 20th December 12.00 - 3.00pm (Christmas quiz)

Monday 17th January 12.00 – 2.00pm

Monday 21st February 12.00 – 2.00pm

Monday 21st March 12.00 – 2.00pm



ART & CRAFT

Thursday 16th December 1.00 - 3.00pm

Thursday 27th January 1.00 – 3.00pm

Thursday 24th February 1.00 – 3.00pm

Thursday 24th March 1.00 – 3.00pm



TECH SOCIAL

Thursday 16th December 1.00 - 3.00pm

Thursday 20th January 1.00 – 3.00pm

Thursday 17th February 1.00 – 3.00pm

Thursday 17th March 1.00 – 3.00pm



COFFEE MORNING

Monday 6th December 10.00am - 12.00pm

Monday 3rd January - closed

Monday 7th February 10.00am – 12.00pm

Monday 7th March 10.00am – 12.00pm



SOCIAL EYES

Thursday 16th December 10.00am - 2.00pm

Thursday 20th January 10.00am – 12.00pm

Thursday 17th February 10.00am – 12.00pm

Thursday 17th March 10.00am – 12.00pm



VI SCRABBLE GROUP

Monday 13th December 1.00 - 3.00pm

Monday 10th & 24th Jan 1.00 – 3.00pm

Monday 14th & 28th Feb 1.00 – 3.00pm

Monday 14th & 28th Mar 1.00 – 3.00pm



TECH TALK

Thursday 9th December 1.00 - 3.00pm

Thursday 6th January 1.00 - 3.00pm

Thursday 3rd February 1.00 - 3.00pm

Thursday 3rd March 1.00 – 3.00pm



YOUNG VI GROUP: VI_ABLE

Wednesday 26th January 12.00-2.00pm

Wednesday 23rd February 12.00-2.00pm

Wednesday 30th March 12.00-2.00pm



peer support

All the Sutton Vision Groups listed are held at our premises at 3 Robin Hood Lane, Sutton.

The activities and events are free of charge, though donations are welcome.

COVID-19 guidelines are in place throughout the Sutton Vision premises. Please make sure you sanitise your hands on arrival and wear a mask until seated.

Blind Veterans UK



Blind Veterans UK (formerly known as St Dunstan's) was formed in 1915 to support soldiers returning from the battle fields of The Great War with sight loss or impairment. Over the years, it has expanded its remit and the Charity now supports any person who has served in our Armed Forces and develops or has some level of Visual Impairment (VI), whatever its cause.

Most of Blind Veterans UK's work is conducted in the community but it has two residential Rehabilitation and Training Centres. These are located at Brighton and Llandudno and normally provide extensive tailor-made courses designed to help members rebuild and develop their lives after sight loss.

Members of Blind Veterans UK are helped to adapt their lives, learn new skills and hobbies, meet up with or make new friends and relax. This happens wherever the member lives but also at our centres. Blind Veterans UK training is provided free of charge to members, but the centres may also be used by members and their families/carers for holidays.

Joining Blind Veterans UK is very straightforward. The only criteria needed are details of military service and medical evidence of your registration of visual impairment. If your service was a long time ago and you have no written proof, the Charity will assist in seeking confirmation of service.

Several members of Sutton Vision are also members of Blind Veterans UK. Four of us recently met up in person for the first time since the pandemic. Sutton Vision were kind enough to allow us to use their rooms to meet; this was particularly appreciated as it was a safe location, known to us all. Our Community Support Worker (CSW) from Blind Veterans UK, Noreen Deen, organised the get together for us and was also

able to attend and, as always, we are very grateful to her for that.

If you are a member of SV and have had service with any of the Armed Forces and you would be interested in joining BVUK or learning more about the Charity, please contact their membership team on 0800 389 7979 or email membership@blindveterans.org.uk

Jules Lee, Sutton Vision and Blind Veterans UK member

Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS) – Esme's Friends Support Group

Do you, or anyone you know, have sight loss and experience vivid, silent visual hallucinations? This can be a common side effect after sight loss and is called Charles Bonnet Syndrome.



The visual hallucinations caused by CBS can vary and can range from simple shapes and dots of colours, simple patterns, straight lines or a network of branches, to detailed pictures of people, animals, insects, landscapes and buildings.

Currently there is no medical cure for CBS. When you experience CBS, the most effective form of treatment can come from knowing that the condition is not a mental health problem or a symptom of another disease but is due to sight loss.

Esme's Umbrella Support Group in Sutton

In the New Year, Sutton Vision would like to establish a support group for those effected by Charles Bonnet Syndrome, family members and carers.

This is an opportunity to meet with others in a similar position and hear about the strategies employed by group members to manage their visual hallucinations caused by living with sight loss.

If you would like further information or to register your interest, please telephone us on 020 8409 7166 or e-mail

annryan@suttonvision.org.uk

The 2021 Christmas Quiz



1. In the Dr Who Christmas special in 2017, which actress made her first official appearance as the 13th Doctor
2. Alphabetically, which of Santa's reindeer comes first?
3. Who is generally recognised as writing the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (also known as "'Twas the Night Before Christmas")?
4. Snowflakes are often portrayed as being 6 sided but studies suggest that less than what percentage of snowflakes exhibit the ideal six-fold symmetric shape?
a) 0.1% b) 1% c) 10%
5. A Bellini is flavoured with which fruit?
6. From the Morecambe and Wise Christmas Special of 1971 can you complete this quote - *'I'm playing all the right notes but ...'*?
7. In 'The Gingerbread Man' fairytale, who or what devours the gingerbread man in the end?
8. What stick would you put into a mulled wine?
9. In the 1947 version of Miracle on 34th Street, who plays the little girl Susan Walker?
10. Who wrote the Band Aid song 'Do They Know It's Christmas'?
11. The Australian external territory of Christmas Island is in which ocean?
12. Modern Christmas trees originated in the 16th century in an area now known as which country?
13. In the novel A Christmas Carol, which is the first ghost to visit Scrooge?
14. Driving Home for Christmas, was written during a car journey back to which town?
15. In the Christmas song 'Let it Snow' what has happened to the lights?
16. In the film Scrooged starring Bill Murray, which actress plays the Ghost of Christmas Present?

Den's Fabulous Family Christmas Cake Recipe



Den has kindly shared his family recipe for us all to enjoy. This was originally prepared by his late wife's mother while she was cooking at the "Big House" in the 1920's. One of his own Christmas cakes will be part of the Christmas raffle at the Lunchtime Quiz on Monday 20 December, so make sure you are there!

Ingredients for an 8-inch cake

8 oz or 225g butter

8 oz or 225g dark brown sugar

8 oz or 225g self raising flour

6 oz or 170g currants and sultanas

1 tablespoon black treacle

2 oz or 55g mix peel

2 oz or 55g glace cherries

2 oz or 55g ground almonds

2 oz or 55g flaked almonds

1 teaspoon mixed spice, rum essence and almond essence

3 large eggs

1/4 pint or 140ml dark rum or brandy or whisky

The way I do it

1. Pre-heat oven to Gas Mark 4 - 160c fan/180c electric.
2. Soften the butter so that it's creamy
3. Add the sugar and give it a good beating
4. Add the treacle then add the eggs. Again, give this a good brisk stir
5. Add the essences then the fruit then the almonds mixed peel and cherries

Den's Tip - I always crunch the flaked almonds and I cut the cherries up small

6. Add the mixed spice to the flour and sieve it into the mixture and give it another good stir
7. Add the rum and a final good stir
8. Place into the greased and lined 8 inch cake tin.

Den's Top Tip - Before cooking, I fold brown/greaseproof/baking paper to wrap around the outside of the tin, as it stops the cake cooking too much round the sides.

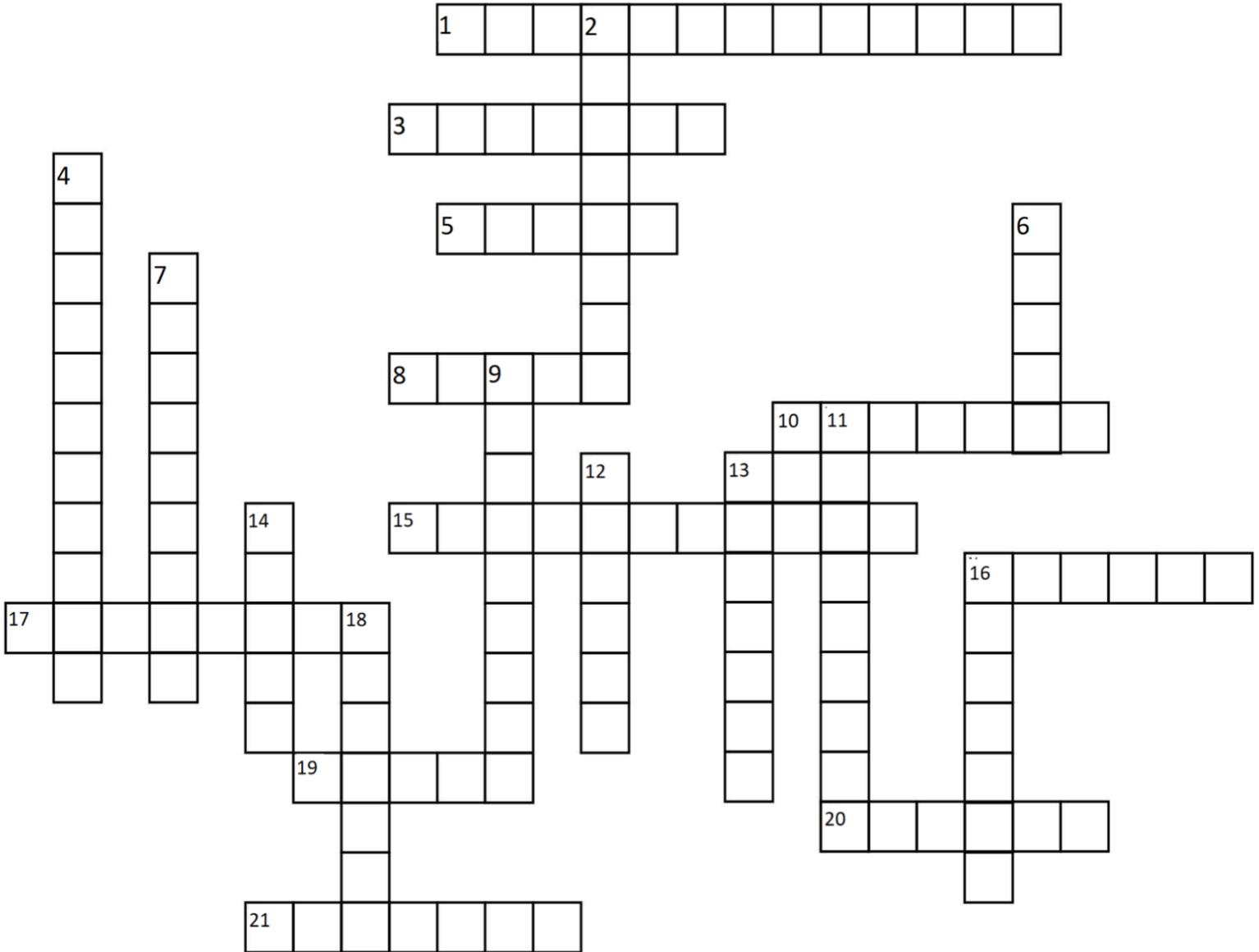
9. Cook in the preheated oven for 30 minutes, then reduce the heat to Gas Mark 2 (130c fan/150c electric).

Den's Top Tip - At this time, cover the top of the cake tin with a sheet of baking paper as this will stop the top of the cake from cooking too much.

10. Leave in the low oven for a further 2 1/2 – 3 hours depending on your oven.
11. Leave in tin to cool.
12. Cover with apricot jam, marzipan and royal icing or ready to roll white fondant.
13. Decorate as you wish!

Enjoy!
Den Dyer

Crossword



Crossword Clues

ACROSS

1. Heavy material used to conceal gifts
3. Writer of A Christmas Carol
5. Winged tree topper
8. Items that help Santa know if you've been naughty or nice
10. Sweet treats
15. Adornments
16. Stuffed bird
17. Holiday warbling
19. Small helpers
20. Santa's transportation
21. Red-nosed reindeer

DOWN

2. Packages under the tree
4. Biscuit used in edible houses
6. Cooked bird
7. Sprig that prompts a kiss
9. They're hung by the chimney
11. Decorative Christmas balls
12. Circular band of foliage
13. Three kings of the Orient
14. Cake embellishment
16. Timothy Crachit's nickname
18. Strung popcorn

Quiz answers

1. In the Dr Who Christmas special in 2017, which actress made her first official appearance as the 13th Doctor?
Jodie Whittaker
2. Alphabetically, which of Santa's reindeer comes first?
Blitzen (Blitzer)
3. Who is generally recognised as writing the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (also known as "'Twas the Night Before Christmas")?
Clement C. Moore
4. Snowflakes are often portrayed as being 6 sided but studies suggest that less than what percentage of snowflakes exhibit the ideal six-fold symmetric shape?
a) 0.1% b) 1% c) 10%
a) 0.1%
5. A Bellini is flavoured with which fruit?
Peach
6. From the Morecambe and Wise Christmas Special of 1971 can you complete this quote - 'No. I'm playing all the *right* notes. But' ...?
'not *necessarily* in the right order.'
7. In 'The Gingerbread Man' fairytale, who or what devours the gingerbread man in the end?
A fox
8. What stick would you put into a mulled wine?
Cinnamon
9. In the 1947 version of Miracle on 34th Street, who plays the little girl Susan Walker?
Natalie Wood
10. Who wrote the Band Aid song 'Do They Know It's Christmas'?
Bob Geldof and Midge Ure
11. The Australian external territory of Christmas Island is in which ocean?
Indian Ocean

12. Modern Christmas trees originated in the 16th century in an area now known as which country?
Germany
13. In the novel A Christmas Carol, which is the first ghost to visit Scrooge?
Jacob Marley
14. Driving Home for Christmas, was written during a car journey back to which town?
Middlesborough
15. In the Christmas song 'Let it Snow' what has happened to the lights?
They've been 'turned down low'
16. In the film Scrooged starring Bill Murray, which actress plays the Ghost of Christmas Present?
Carol Kane

Crossword Answers

ACROSS

1. Wrapping Paper
3. Dickens
5. Angel
8. Lists
10. Cookies
15. Decorations
16. Turkey
17. Caroling
19. Elves
20. Sleigh
21. Rudolph

DOWN

2. Present
4. Gingerbread
6. Goose
7. Mistletoe
9. Stockings
11. Decorative Christmas balls
12. Wreath
13. Wiseman
14. Icing
16. Tiny Tim
18. Garland

Useful Telephone Numbers

The following list of useful numbers includes an emergency number for the London Borough of Sutton and St Helier Hospital Eye Unit.

Advice Link Partnership Sutton (ALPS)	020 8254 2616
Age UK (Sutton)	020 8770 4090
Friendly Club	020 8669 4106
London Borough of Sutton	020 8770 5000
LB Sutton Referral Point	020 8770 4565
Macular Society (National)	01264 350 551
Macular Society (Sutton)	07970 525 143
Merton Sports & Social Club	020 8540 5446
RNIB Helpline	0303 123 9999
St Helier Hospital Eye Unit	020 8296 3800
St Helier Hospital Eye Unit EMERGENCY	020 8296 3817
Sight Loss Adviser, Ann Ryan	07920 650 613
Sutton Carers' Centre	020 8296 5611
Sutton Talking Newspaper	020 3759 6679
Sutton South Hello	07790 031 764