

Talking Newspaper

Members of the Rotary Club of Thorpe Bay support a team on Southend Talking Newspaper for the Blind – a voluntary service providing recordings of articles from local newspapers. Southend is not unique – many towns provide this service.

A recording is made every Thursday, but as there are six teams in total, it's a six-weekly rota. Each listener is provided with a CD player and discs are delivered in special pouches, free of charge, by the Post Office. The team, which is usually 5 or 6 people, starts at about 5 p.m. checking the returned pouches and preparing them for the new recording, whilst the Technician sets up the recording equipment.

The recording then takes place with each reader taking it in turns to read several articles from the local newspapers from the previous seven days. Recording takes an hour – it's thirsty work, so then the kettle goes on whilst the Technician checks that the master tape has recorded properly. About 200 copies are needed and the equipment allows for about 20 to be duplicated at a time. Each disc then has to be checked individually to ensure that the recording is complete, returned to a pouch, into the post office sack and on its way back to a listener. Whilst all this is going on, the coffee flows and we all catch up with, probably, six weeks gossip. The team members know what has to be achieved, no one, except the Technician, has a set job – everyone just gets on with doing something to complete the task in the shortest possible time.

We often get little notes from listeners, saying how much they enjoy the recordings as they keep them in touch with the written news and items of local interest. There is no censorship – we read articles on all issues, the good and the bad, the funny and the sad – as much as we can get onto a 60 minute disc. Sometimes there is a book review to publicise the Talking Books that are available through the libraries service, maybe an announcement to be made and, of course, there is usually a birthday or two.

No special skills are needed, even the Technician is trained “on the job”. Each team ideally needs 6 or 7 members because, of course, people take holidays and for various other reasons may not be able to attend.

If you would like further information, then please contact Rotarian Nigel Gayner on 01702 305064.