

Search on for queen and royals

THORNTON Gala Committee is preparing to elect its queen and royal retinue for 2010.

The competition to find the royal party who will hold court at Thornton Gala will take place at 2pm on Sunday January 24 at Wignall Methodist Church, Victoria Road East, Thornton.

The event is open to children aged between four and 16 who live in Thornton or Cleveleys.

Committee

The committee is looking to appoint a queen, Prince Charming, princess, ladies in waiting, page boys and flower girls.

This year the gala will be held on June 12 and volunteers prepared to help on the day are welcome.

Call Debbie on (01253) 853025 or e-mail debrafranklin1@aol.com for further details.

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Open event at college

MYERSCOUGH College's open morning is being held on February 6.

Prospective students will be able to meet the staff, tour the campus and find out more about the college and its courses.

The open morning will be held between 10am and noon.

For more information call (01995) 642222.



Town crier basks in television fame

FRESH from his national TV appearance this week, Blackpool's town crier Barry McQueen heralded in the new season of walks organised by The Gazette's resident strollers Bob Clare and John Griffiths.

Barry, who appeared on BBC2's Great British Railway Journeys, regaled the walkers with a rendition of the music hall song Mr Bradshaw's Guide, which he had performed for Michael Portillo during

part of the broadcast.

The walkers had just completed a route and were enjoying lunch at the Derby Arms, Thornley, near Longridge, when they spotted Barry, who was decaying 80th birthday greetings to a diner.

Entertain

Barry was at the popular pub to entertain a party of retired postal workers when he met the walkers.

Group member Chris McCann said: "Obviously we knew who he was instantly because almost all of us had seen him on telly the previous night."

■ DON'T miss today's circular walk in Life! on the fringes of the Fylde, a canalside stroll from Woodplumpton

FAMOUS FACE:
 Blackpool Town Crier Barry McQueen meets walkers outside The Derby Arms near Longridge

Fat-fighting team goes into action amid ballooning costs for surgery

NHS targets resort's 8,700 heavyweights

By EMMA HARRIS
 Health Writer

A FAT-FIGHTING scheme is being launched in Blackpool in a bid to combat obesity.

Health chiefs say there's around 8,700 people who are obese in Blackpool.

They claim the specialist weight management service could save the NHS in Blackpool around £413,000 a year.

It includes behaviour therapy and physical activity sessions as well as advice about nutrition.

But the criteria for patients able to have weight loss surgery is being made tougher.

Classed

Health bosses say there are ever-increasing demands for surgery for obese patients and the strain on the NHS will get worse - including costs.

People are classed as obese if they have a body mass index (BMI) of more than 35.

But managers are increasing the threshold for people to be eligible for surgery, from a BMI of 40 to 50, or 45 if they have other medical life-threatening conditions.

Patients will also have had to have been actively engaged with NHS dietetic services for at least six months, but failed to achieve and sustain weight loss of at least 10 per cent.

They should also have tried other measures, such as medication, in the last 12 months for at least six months, with no success.

Weight loss surgery is pre-



MODERN LIFESTYLE: Fast food is contributing to obesity

The time has come where we have to do something to tackle it.

- Dr Arif Rajpura

dicted, in the short term, to cost £2m more this year than last in Cumbria and Lancashire.

It is forecast the increase by 2013 would be cost an extra £8m.

Dr Arif Rajpura, director of public health for NHS Blackpool, said: "The current levels of surgery are not going to be sustainable going into the future."

"We have to think about how else we can deal with this population."

"Surgery alone is not a sustainable option for managing

severe obesity. Patients require a credible alternative service."

The new criteria was recommended by the Cumbria and Lancashire commissioning board and approved by NHS Blackpool.

Dr Amanda Doyle, of NHS Blackpool, said the move was not just about saving money.

Complex

She added: "It's not purely a financial issue, it's very complex."

"Other factors do come in, such as the potential risks associated with surgery versus the benefits of surgery."

"It's just part of actions needed to deal with the problem."

Dr Rajpura added: "It is a big and complicated issue."

"It is an issue to do with the whole of our society and

our modern lifestyles.

"We are totally dependent on our cars, the built environment is not conducive to cycling, we rely on fast food and microwave meals, which are loaded with salt and fat."

"We are also working on education and healthy eating, as well as physical activity in schools and improving breast feeding and infant nutrition - because it starts early and we are seeing a rise in the number of overweight infants."

"The time has come where we have to do something to tackle it."

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■ Don't miss Your Health - every Monday in the Gazette

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