

OAB Newsletter

February 2008

Full Steam Ahead!

I'd like to wish everyone a Happy New Year, on behalf of myself and the team. We hope that you had a nice Christmas and that the year ahead is a good one for you. It's going to be a busy one for us. There are quite a few changes and we've ambitious plans for the future.

Sadly, Liz Hunter, our excellent Volunteer Manager, moved to pastures new at the end of the year. Liz will be much missed by all here. In the last six and a half years she has increased the number of dedicated volunteers who support us to over 100.

Over 60 of those people provide regular support to blind and partially sighted people in their homes, whilst others help us with a variety of tasks including fundraising, administration and staffing our Sight Advisory Desk at the John Radcliffe Hospital Eye Department. We are very grateful to all that Liz has done for us and we wish her well in the future.

We have already recruited Liz's replacement, Ana Novakovic. Ana started with us on 16th January. She brings with her a wealth of experience of working in the voluntary sector and we are delighted to welcome her.

I'd also like to welcome our new fundraiser, Ben Allcock. Ben has already placed his feet firmly under the table and made an excellent start, since arriving in early November. Ben is keen to get to know OAB members and supporters and, as part of that process, is planning to send a questionnaire to a selection of members to ask about interests, and for views and opinions about how to develop a network of supporters. If you receive the questionnaire, we'd be delighted to hear your views if you are able to respond.

I'm pleased to say that I've picked up plenty of useful thoughts from members of the clubs and groups

First things first

**By special
appointment..
.....it's you!**

In order to give you the best possible service, we need to know you are coming to see us.

Then we can ensure that the right person is here to give you the best possible help.

So please ring us on 01865 725595 and make an appointment! ■■■

**Remember you're
a member**

Yes , it's that time of year again. The days are lengthening, strangely the nights are shortening and the bits in between remain the same. All of which serves to remind me to update my OAB membership! (Which is payable on 1st January) Just fill in the form at the back of the newsletter or call us on 01865 725595 for more information. ■■■

Keeping it short and sharp

TWO abbreviations appear in every newsletter. OAB is our pet name for The Oxfordshire Association for the Blind and VIP stands for visually impaired person and its other meaning is just as relevant. ■■■

The Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

Registered Charity 273559

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Opening hours 9-5pm weekdays (24 hour message service)

Chairman **John Hewitt** Vice-chairman **Adrian Hill** Treasurer **David Warr**
Director **Colin Cure** Administrator **Teresa Bennett**
Accounts **Michael Ling** Home Support Officer **Marian Small**
Welfare Group Officer **Mary Gregory** Information worker **David Thompson**
Fundraiser **Ben Allcock** Sight Advisory Desk **Judith Wood**
Volunteer Co-ordinator **Ana Novakovic** (*Wed and Friday.*)
Your Newsletter is written, compiled and edited by David Thompson

for visually impaired people that I've visited in the year. Thank you to everyone who has made me so welcome. The groups are a great way for blind and partially sighted people to get together and share experiences and companionship, and I would recommend them to anyone who is interested.

In the coming year, the team will be continuing to support blind and partially sighted people from our base at Bradbury Lodge and the Sight Advisory Desk. I'm also delighted to report that we're going to recruit a new part-time Outreach Worker, who will be based in Banbury. This person will spend most of their time recruiting volunteers to visit visually impaired people in the local area, but for a couple of hours a week, they will run an information desk at the Age Concern Centre, in White Lion Walk. We are most grateful to our colleagues in Age Concern, who are very supportive of this project. We hope that older visitors to our information desk will take advantage of the Age Concern facilities, and that visually impaired people who visit Age Concern will find our information desk valuable.

In another attempt to reach more people we are going to make use of the kind loan of the "Action for Blind People" Mobile Resource Unit. This large mobile bus containing a wide variety of useful aids will be staffed by ourselves and our "Action" colleagues, and

driven to a range of locations around the county in the first week of March, for more information please look on page 6. We realise that we won't be able to reach everyone who is interested in the week, but if it proves successful, we will repeat the process, hopefully on a regular basis.

That's just a flavour of some of our plans for the coming year. As ever, we'll be liaising with our excellent colleagues in Social and Community Services, the Oxford Eye Hospital and the other agencies and groups for visually impaired people in the county. May I just remind everyone that January is the time to renew membership of OAB for those of you who wish to do so? It is not however necessary if you have joined in the last 6 months. I'd like to encourage those of you who are not already members to consider becoming a member. The form is at the back of the newsletter. Our services are free to all visually impaired people and their carers, whether they are a member or not. However, the more members that we have, the more weight we carry when we are advocating on behalf of visually impaired people.

Once again, I hope that you have a good year in 2008, and I continue to look forward to meeting more of you in the coming months.

Best wishes, Colin Cure, Director.



Your friendly neighbourhood Fundraiser

Ben Allcock's first post

Charity looks at the need and not at the cause

Hello to all OAB members, friends, and newsletter readers. My name is Ben Allcock and it is with great pride (and a touch of trepidation) that I take this opportunity to introduce myself as the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind's new fundraiser; though some of you may remember me as the chap who completed the "Neverest Challenge" in the winter of 2006 – climbing the height of Everest, indoors, in one day. Editor's note: It was a very tall building.

As one would expect, my first few months as part of the team have been both interesting and enjoyable. I am a young man with a lot to learn, but it seems there are plenty of people around me able to impart advice and general guidance.

Already there have been a few exciting events which have come my way, not least of which was Michael Fountain's parachute jump last November – through which this intrepid adventurer managed to raise over £300 for the OAB – and there is much more upon the horizon.

As you will note on page 6, through a partnership with Action for Blind People, we will be bringing a mobile resource unit to six different towns around the county in early March;

while we will be working hard to whip up some razzamatazz for the launch of our new base in Banbury later this year (though our main site will of course remain here at Bradbury Lodge). Expect to hear of cycle treks, pedicab rides and general fun and frolics.

It goes without saying that I am indebted to the dedication of my predecessor, Andy Morley, in all that he did for the OAB, and I am keen to keep much of his good work going – the annual 10km "Look Who's Walking" sponsored event, for example – but new hands will inevitably bring a different touch to some aspects of the ways we try to raise money.

Ultimately, if it could be said that I have a fundraiser's dream, it is that anyone who wishes to be involved in the OAB can be: in whatever way suits us both best. Monetary donations – large and small – sending in mobile phones for us to recycle, or even throwing an OAB coffee morning, afternoon bridge drive, or an all night party, these are just some of the ways you can help support blind and partially sighted people in Oxfordshire.

I think it's nice to be part of the OAB; I hope you do too.

Judith is on the mend

Regular visitors to the Eye Hospital in the West Wing of the John Radcliffe Hospital will have noticed that our Sight Advisory Desk has been lacking the presence of our Senior Advisor, Judith Wood. Unfortunately, Judith has been “under the weather” for a while, and unable to get there. However we are pleased to report that she is making a steady recovery. At the moment she comes to Bradbury Lodge to help clients from here. She hopes that she will be moving back up to the Eye Hospital as soon as the situation allows.

Don't forget that we have a fantastic team of volunteers who are at the Eye Desk on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings and will be able to assist you. Of course you can always call us here at Bradbury Lodge on 01865 725595. ■■■

Valiant Farewell

Many of you may remember the regular article in our newsletter from Valiant, the Guide Dog of David Thompson our Information Worker. Valiant had to give up his journalistic vocation to concentrate on his day job but now has reached retirement age! So both he and his partner Zeta have moved to a very large, luxurious home in the country. David is envious and planning to join him at the earliest opportunity! ■■■

Farewell to Liz

As many of you will know Liz Hunter has left OAB. When Liz took on the role of OAB volunteer home visiting scheme co-ordinator, to say that the project was on hold would be an understatement. There were 4 volunteers on the list, 2 of whom were deceased, one retired and the other was a dog! From this humble beginning Liz built the scheme up. We now have more than 60 partnerships running in Oxford City with a view to extending this across the county in the future. Our sincere thanks to Liz and heartfelt best wishes for the future from all at OAB.



Hello to Ana

Firstly I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce myself briefly. I've recently moved to Oxford from Macclesfield, where I managed a Volunteer Centre. Before that, I worked for a mental health charity. I'm very much looking forward to my new role and to meeting all the people Liz has been working with. My working days will usually be Wednesday and Friday. I'll be writing to all our volunteers soon but in the meantime please do get in touch if there's anything you'd like to talk about. Just call me! Ana Novakovic, Volunteer Coordinator on 01865 725595. ■■■

OAB comes to Town

Happy as we are with our home at Bradbury Lodge, we understand that it can be difficult for some people to come see us – particularly frustrating if you want to try out some of our visual aids.

This is just one of the reasons why we are very happy to announce that, during early March, the OAB will be bringing a mobile resource unit to six towns across the county.

The bus itself is owned by the helpful people at Action for the Blind, and will be driven and managed by two of their team members. They do a fantastic job

of taking the vehicle up and down the country – so we thought it would be a great idea to invite them to Oxfordshire this spring. The bus contains all kinds of visual aids and resource materials (from liquid level indicators to CCTV equipment), and we hope to get a few diaries and calendars onboard as well. There will be at least one OAB member of staff in the bus at each location and the Social Service Visual Impairment Team so are hoping to join us so this will be a great chance for a chat; besides having a look with any particular devices you may want to try!

Exact locations are yet to be confirmed, but below is our provisional timetable for the week, at the time of going to print

Tuesday March 4th	Henley,	10am – 4pm
Wednesday March 5th	Witney, (Waitrose Car Park) Thame, (Waitrose Car Park)	10am – 12am 2pm – 4pm
Thursday March 6th	Didcot (Civic Hall Car Park) Wantage (Sainsbury's)	10am – 12am 2pm – 4pm
Friday March 7th	Banbury, (Castle Quay parking area)	10pm – 12pm

If you'd like to plan your visit, and confirm where the bus will be, then please call us on: 01865 725595. Of course, if you'd like the bus to come to a town near you in the future, don't hesitate to let us know. We are keen to make this a regular event if it proves popular and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. ■■■

“U-turn” over sight-saving drugs

A controversial decision to limit drugs for a major cause of blindness has been reversed. Age Related Macular Degeneration, ARMD, is a condition which affects the central part of the retina and is the leading cause of sight loss in the UK, affecting around a quarter of a million people, with 26,000 new cases each year. Although the Wet version of this disease affects only about a fifth of ARMD cases, it is an aggressive form of the condition, but as yet, is the only type of ARMD that responds to treatment.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) reconsidered its guidance after 13,000 complaints. It is now recommending that NHS patients with wet age-related macular degeneration should be eligible for 14 injections of Lucentis per eye. This decision comes after

NICE carried out further “economic modelling” of the treatments.

Firstly NICE said the drug should be funded by the NHS only when both eyes were affected - and used only to treat the eye affected the least by the condition.

Under the latest proposals, which will undergo consultation, patients would be able to receive treatment when only one eye was affected. NICE stated a maximum of 14 Lucentis injections per eye should be available - enough to treat most patients - additional doses are available if needed.

Also, the drug will no longer be limited to those with just one form of wet-AMD, although patients will become eligible only once their sight has deteriorated by a certain extent.



This is by no means the last word as final guidance is due to be published later this year. We will keep you informed!

Stop the press? It's stationary!

We still have some of our "easier to see" large print calendars and diaries in stock.

The Calendars cost £3.50 each, the A6 pocket diaries are £4.00 and the A4 Desk Diaries are £6.50 respectively.

Remember, we don't charge you for post and packing so they are such an excellent deal that they are selling quicker than you can say "Here comes St Valentine's Day". So order yours now, before we run out and you forget to send a card to that special someone!

To order call Teresa on 01865 725595





For a number of years we have been able to demonstrate some examples of electronic magnifiers at our resource centre. Commonly called CCTVs, these electronic magnifiers enable VIPs who have enough residual vision to read text and look at pictures, drawings and photographs. These devices do cost significantly more than optical magnifiers and are definitely not a panacea or quick fix. However, they can help maintain (and in some cases regain) a persons ability to visually access correspondence and literature.

Some of you are already saying "What a boring paragraph!" However, it was boring with purpose because it was leading to this exciting one!

We have new electronic magnifiers at OAB! We can now demonstrate the Ezee Reader2000. This device looks a bit like a computer "mouse" (but requires no computer knowledge for the user to operate it!) You can plug it into a TV or monitor and, holding it in your hand, you run the device over the text you wish to read, which is then displayed on the screen. This is a "budget" electronic magnifier, costing £149 pounds, it does not have many "whistles and bells" and for example it only has one level of magnification. However, it does allow you to invert the image so that text appears white on a black background. We also have a "wide view" version which allows you to see twice as much of the text on the screen, and a colour version which does the same, but in colour. The big brother of the Ezee Reader is the Colour Combi which combines two cameras in one single 'scanner' enabling the user to read, write and view pictures in colour and negative on their own television. Just like the Ezee Reader range the Colour Combi is easy to use and your TV does not need to be tuned.

Videospec, the manufacturer of these devices have also lent us a couple of their pocket viewers, which are handheld electronic magnifiers consisting of a little camera with a small display screen. These are portable devices that run on internal batteries, very simple to use, basic electronic magnifiers that fit in your pocket!

We have some other examples of



new portable magnifiers that we are able to demonstrate. For example, the Compact, as described in the last newsletter, the Amigo, a larger screened device, and the newest of the bunch which is the Strix. This device can be used for reading, just place it over the text you wish to read. To write underneath it the device can tilt to allow access to the paper, it also comes with a flexible arm/stand device which can be attached to a table or a shelf to allow hands free operation and finally it can be used to look at distant objects, notice boards schedules, timetables, advertisements, shelves when out shopping etc. Just point the device and zoom in to what ever it is you need to see more clearly. It can show the image in true colour, white on black, it can invert the image and show the image in a range of false colours.

On a larger scale we already have a

Clearview plus CCTV magnifier. This device has a large, flat screen and is very easy to use. We welcome the return of the Humanware "Extend" CCTV magnifier, with a wide, flat screen display and a range of viewing options this machine is well worth a look as it cheaper than most other models of its type and can be upgraded with many extra features, from black and white to colour, to PC Compatible, etc. As a special re-introductory offer Humanware are offering a 50% discount on their Pocket CCTV viewer for anyone purchasing an Extend.

Of course don't forget that we also have a "My Reader" CCTV. Although this machine is an electronic magnifier it is really made for people who wish to read. Once you have set it up you can sit and read up to ten pages of text without having to lift a finger. The text simply flows across the screen in front of your eyes, rather reminiscent of an "autocue"!

For more information on any of the devices mentioned call Dave at OAB on 01865 725595.



Do you need a holiday?

This wonderful piece comes from an OAB client

My name is Joyce; I am partially sighted with total loss of my left eye and just central vision in my right. I am a widow and live by myself. I have two daughters and quite a few friends from church and in the village where I live. I consider myself very independent and have coped very well. That is until the past year, when everything seemed to go wrong, all at once. I lost two brothers and two sisters all within a short time. I had some very nasty falls, I broke my wrist and cracked several ribs. Then I had to go into hospital for a knee operation. I explain all this, not for sympathy, but to illustrate why I became very "down". I had lost all of my confidence. All I really wanted to do was get away from everything and everybody. I just wanted to be by myself, but I did not have the courage and I did not know how.

I eventually contacted Oxfordshire Association for the Blind who put me in touch with Mary Gregory and Marian Small. Both were very understanding and very helpful. They told me of hotels that provided holiday breaks for visually impaired and blind people and sent me some brochures. I chose to go to the Lauriston Hotel at Weston super Mare and booked myself in for a six day break. I then went to Richards travel in Witney. They were very good, and found me the cheapest rail travel, sold me my ticket and arranged for assistance on my journey. For example, for the porters

at the station to take me to my seat on the train and to help me from there to my connecting train.

When I arrived at Weston I was met by Avril from the Hotel who took me from the station to the Hotel by car. I was shown to my single room which was light and cheerful with everything I needed, for example, a kettle, tea and coffee making facilities, a television, a CD player and a very nice walk in shower. The one thing I really dreaded was dining by myself, but I need not have worried, I was put on a table with three other people who had various sight problems and I felt very comfortable in their company. The whole of the staff were very friendly and helpful and I could be on my own or mix with other people, whatever I wished and I never felt lonely. The food was excellent and I met some lovely people (and lovely guide dogs!).

I have no idea why I wanted to go alone, my daughters were a bit concerned but they need not have been. I came home with a lot more confidence in myself and I shall look forward to another break on my own. I am glad I went. All I can say is that if you ever feel that you need a break, either with or without a partner or relative; do contact Oxfordshire Association for the Blind for details of holidays that cater for Blind and Visually Impaired people. I am sure you will enjoy yourself as I did.

Take a break!

Although we are not organising OAB holidays at the moment we still have lots of information and ideas for that ideal getaway break. There are lots of hotels that cater specifically for visually impaired and blind people and, speaking from personal experience, I can recommend this as an option if you have not been on holiday for a while and are feeling a little nervous about how you might get on. The staff are all specially trained and experienced with helping VIPs, the buildings are either built with blindness in mind or have been adapted to make them more accessible.

For the more adventurous we have a list of hotels recommended by visually impaired and blind holidaymakers as being friendly and welcoming to VIPs.

There are also a number of "adventure" type holiday centres that are geared up to help "disabled" people try out and participate in outdoor and water sports. You can have a go at rock climbing and abseiling (essential for getting back down before the bar closes), canoeing, kayaking, white-water rafting and number of less energetic things such as country walks and horse riding.

We also have the details and brochures of travel companies that specialise in holidays abroad and

can provide support for people with specific needs. These can open up the world for VIPs and allow the traveller to see corners of the world that might otherwise be difficult to access without a little help.

For people who are fit and want to go on an outward bound trek in foreign climes and raise money for a good cause, we can put you in touch with a company that organises walking and cycling tours in exotic lands.

For more information on these and any other holiday ideas call us on 01865 725595 and we will be happy to help! ■■■

Oxtalk rocks on

During the last year Oxtalk, the talking newspaper for Oxford, have gained a new Chairperson, a new website, a new logo, and new information leaflets. What has not changed is the excellent quality of their service to blind and partially sighted people in the Oxford area providing a weekly cassette tape of local news and events. Anyone interested in joining them as a listener or a volunteer should phone 01865 766442 or 01865 453403. ■■■

Sample Big Print

We have a few spare back editions of Big Print, the weekly large print newspaper. If you would like a copy just give us a call at Oxfordshire Association for the Blind on 01865 725595 ■■■



Your used stamps are a vital resource which enables us to keep on helping the VIPs of Oxfordshire.

Every black bag full of stamps can be worth £30 to us. That is 300 bump ons, or nearly six talking watches! So a big thank you to everybody for sending them in.

You don't have to soak them off the envelope. Just tear around the stamp, save them up and send them to us at the OAB.

Of course we welcome any unwanted stamp collections as well. Rather than gathering dust and damp in the attic, we can make sure that they go to a good home. A nice album of stamps could raise the equivalent of the cost of a CCTV electronic magnifier! So if you have an unwanted collection just gathering dust, please give us a call on 01865 725595. ■■■

Give us a phone

Just as we can raise money with postage stamps, we can turn your unwanted mobile phones into much needed funds for OAB. If you don't have one spare please don't forget to ask friends and family to rummage around, they are bound to find one or two. For more information call us on 01865 725595. ■■■

We have an Easy 5

At long last we have managed to get our hands on the Easy5 mobile phone. It does not have a keypad. Just 5 buttons that are each programmed with the telephone number of your choice and to call you just press the button! To make an appointment to come and see it or for more information, give us a call on 01865 725595. ■■■

Since the last newsletter Oxfordshire Association for the Blind has received donations in memory of

Mr Bailey

Alice Carter

Mr George Bloom

Mr John Arthur Peedell

Freda Booth

Aileen Parker

Mrs Cathrine Hood

Sir James Lindsay

Ethel Fisher

Mr Albert Brice Palmer

Joseph Patrick Kelly

Mrs Mimi Lyons

Mrs BK Weedon

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Mr Robert Milsom

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Mr Robin Winter

Mr William Jones

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Mr Alan Dandridge

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Caring for carers

If you are a carer living or working in Oxford the Oxford Carers centre is here to help. Our contact details are

Oxford Carers Centre,
174a Cowley Road,
Oxford, OX4 1UE.

01865 205192

Fax 01865 242569

email info@carerscentre.co.uk ■■■

The work of the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind is assisted by funds from the Vale of the White Horse and South Oxfordshire District councils. ■■■

Vision Impaired Visually Active

VIVA is a group for visually impaired people with active minds, and meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 2.00pm in the North Oxford Association, Community Centre, Diamond Place, Summertown, Oxford. Once again we have an interesting and varied programme for the months ahead.

12th Feb John Payne - TBA

11th March Sister Clare
talks on Scotland

8th April Stan Hastings
Byways of Oxford

13th May Barbara Bunyon,
"My experiences as
a volunteer".

10th June Jean Collard,
Interesting Names

8th July OUTING
Wyevale Garden Centre
BICESTER

AUGUST NO MEETING

9th Sept John Adsett,
University Life

14th Oct Ann Spokes-Symons,
"Snobbery and Tradition
in North Oxford"

11th Nov Talk on Waterperry

9th December Christmas Lunch

For further details ring Ron
Sears on 01865 553063. ■■■

Mobile or off your trolley?

As a visually impaired pedestrian I am becoming increasingly aware of, and concerned by, the numbers of visually impaired people, (VIPs), who I see driving powered/mobility vehicles. Incidences of visually impaired people getting into trouble with these devices are becoming far too common. For example a lady recently ended up on a busy dual carriageway and had to be rescued by police. Here at OAB we want VIPs to be as independent and mobile as possible, but we urge those who are contemplating purchasing a power/disability scooter to consider that as well as seeing where you are going, you must be able to see and react to pedestrians and cyclists, some of whom may be VIPs themselves, and not to forget that these vehicles can travel at 8 miles an hour, making them potentially lethal weapons. Although there is no legislation at the time of writing, it is recommended that scooter users can see a car registration number at 40 feet or (12.3 metres approx). If you are thinking of buying a powered scooter or buggy, Access Officers suggest you "test-run" vehicles at Shopmobility Schemes. These free schemes provide vehicle loans and independent advice on the range of products available. Contact Shopmobility, in Oxford on 01865 248737 and in Witney on 01993 864787. For further information, please contact: The Mobility and Inclusion Unit on 020 7944 6100. Or call Oxfordshire Association for the Blind on 01865 725595. ■■■

How are your feet standing up?

Having been registered as visually impaired and living with the ravages of an arthritic body, I can fully appreciate the difficulties of looking after one's feet, especially the toenails. Luckily my long suffering wife is a dab hand with clippers, nail-file, pliers and blowtorch! However, not everybody has an amateur podiatrist as a life partner so here are a couple of ideas that could be useful.

The Sole Mates service provides a basic, accessible toenail cutting service for older people who cannot reach or see to cut their own nails safely. This service helps people to improve and maintain their mobility. It also apparently reduces the likelihood of falls and holes in ones socks.

You can contact the service by telephoning 01865 717615. There is a waiting list but the service aims to see clients within one month of self referral.

There are also a number of Chiropodists who provide a home visiting service. One of my colleagues has recommended Mrs B. Jensen Bowerman, MSSCh. MBChA. Telephone: 01993 704 131. This lady is able to travel around the county. If she is unable see you she has contacts across Oxfordshire who she can put you in touch with. For further information on domiciliary services call David at OAB on 01865 725595. ■■■

Tins and Lids

As we all know, one tin can feel and look very much like another and, even with the best storage system, it can be a bit of a lottery as to what lies beneath the can opener. For example, Valiant my Guide Dog was surprised more than once by prunes that appeared in his feeding bowl because I could not read the label on the tin.

One helpful device called a “Talking tin” comes in the form of a yellow magnetic cap that sits on the top of the can allowing you to record a voice message to tell you what the tin contains at the touch of a button. It can also be attached to other household objects such as bottles, sprays and storage containers.

Because it can record for 8 seconds you can even use it as a fridge magnet and leave messages for your family, you can say an awful lot in 8 seconds. For example “Because you have been in the pub all day, your dinner is in the dog and I have gone home to mother”. The Talking Tin gadgets come in packs of three at a cost of £10.35. Or singly for £3.45 each.

Whilst Talking Tins are big, brash chunky devices the more discerning, aesthete may appreciate the subtle elegance of the Cobolt Message Recorder Magnet. They are black or silver and can be used pretty much the same as the talking tin device.

Whilst less visually obtrusive than their yellow relative they can be harder to locate. On the plus side they have a whopping two second advantage over Talking Tins as you can record a

ten second message on them. Thus enabling your message to include the request for a divorce. Costing £3.45 they really are an excellent buy!

Some of my most annoying moments in the kitchen have involved wrestling with a jar or a can which simply refuses to be opened. The hours I have spent twisting pulling, dousing under the hot tap, threatening with a tea towel and poking with a screwdriver. If only I had known about the Jar Key and the Ring Pull Lever!

The Jar Key is a very effective, little gadget that simply breaks the vacuum of the jar and releases the lid effortlessly. You just place the circular end on the top of the jar and lift, the Jar Key does the rest and it only costs £2.90.

The “Ring Pull Lever” is a similar idea; it really does work, making it much easier to open those cans that have ring pulls on them. You just place the “hooked” end of the Lever under the ring and gently pull back the lever, rather reminiscent of Annie Walker pulling pints in the Rovers Return and Hey Presto the can opens! The Ring Pull Lever is great value at only £3.40.

Armed with these two gadgets you need never have wrist strain again! They are made from bright yellow plastic and so are very easy to see and simple to keep clean. For more information on these or any daily living equipment call Teresa or David at Oxfordshire Association for the Blind on 01865 725595 and we will get them to you as quickly as the post allows!



VIBNO

A social group for people 18–50 which meets on the first Tuesday of the month. It alternates between meetings at a pub and doing something else the next month.

If you are a VIP aged between 18 and 50 and want to socialise and have fun come and join us. Contact Nicola Pamphilon 01869 331778 or e-mail flashnp@aol.com ■■■

The Banbury Society for the Visually Impaired

Meet every other Tuesday at the People's Church, Horsefair. Please contact Enid Smith, Group Organiser on 01295 269568. ■■■

The Carterton Social Club

Meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month from 2 – 4 pm, at the Town Hall, in Carterton. Please contact Rosemary Gibbens, Group Organiser on 01993 842998. ■■■

Dreaming Spires Ten-pin bowling

Are you interested in playing Ten-pin bowling? We play at the Bowl Plex in Oxford, we are a friendly group of people and a warm welcome will be given to you from the team.

For more information contact Kevin Pamphilon on 01869 331778. ■■■

Hands on Art

Artists Sue Benenson and Jo Gilmour will lead a tactile tour of their exhibition; *Contours and Cavities* in the garden of the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock on May 7th. Visitors with visual impairment and their friends will be able to explore the works through touch. Please contact Sue on 01844238245 or email s.benenson@tiscali.co.uk if you would like to come. ■■■

“Oxpots”

Pottery Class for Visually Impaired People meets every Thursday during school term from 1.30pm to 4.00pm. We have a tutor to help us, as most of us are complete beginners learning a new skill. To find out more ring Margaret Dawes on 01865 558131. ■■■

Blind dog wins top prize

A blind bull Mastiff has been voted the nation's RSPCA Dog of the Year. Oliver, now 2 years old lives with owner Julie Harkness, in Houghton-le-Spring, near Sunderland (which is somewhere north of Banbury). Oliver will receive a host of prizes, including a year's supply of dog food. If you have any interesting stories of animals and pets coping with visual impairment please let us know and they could be stars in future newsletters! ■■■

Giving more effectively and more easily!

by Michael Ling, *OAB Accounting Officer and Guru*

Gift Aid

Gift Aid is a scheme to enable tax-effective giving by individuals to charities in the United Kingdom. It was originally introduced in 1990, and substantially revised in April 2000.

Gift Aid allows individuals who are subject to UK income tax to complete a simple, short declaration that they are a UK taxpayer.

Any cash donations that the taxpayer makes to their favourite charity, (OAB of course), after making a declaration, are treated as being made after deduction of income tax at the basic rate, and the charity can reclaim the basic rate income tax paid on the gift from HMRC.

If you pay Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax, then by signing a gift-aid form we can claim money from the Customs and Revenue based on any donations or membership fees that you send to us – so long as the amount you pay in tax is at least equal to the amount we claim.

For every £ that you give us, we can currently claim an extra 28p.

So when you pay your membership of £5 it would be worth £6.40 to us.

Even with the change in the basic rate of tax next April, a £5 member payment would still make a very worthwhile £6.25 for us.

So if you are a taxpayer please complete the gift aid form on the next page and let us claim a further 28% (25% from next April) on top of each contribution we receive.

Standing Order

If you want to make regular payments to us, why not take advantage of a standing order with your bank?

This can be used to make regular payments whether weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually.

Not only does it save you having to remember when you last sent anything to us, it also saves you the hassle and cost of writing cheques and posting them to us.

If you do wish to pay by standing order, please complete the standing order on the following page, but please remember to send this to OAB and *NOT* to your bank. ■■■

Membership and donation

Important

If you are **eligible**, please Gift Aid your payment by signing the declaration below. In **all cases**, please complete your name and address details. If you wish to pay by standing order, please also complete the separate form overleaf and return to us at:

**The Oxfordshire Association for the Blind,
Bradbury Lodge, Gordon Woodward Way,
Oxford, OX1 4XL.**

Membership

Please tick the appropriate box

Member

(£5.00 annually)

Friend

(£20.00 annually)

Life Member

(£250.00)

Donation

£..... please show amount

Gift Aid

Please tick the appropriate box

Please treat this payment as a Gift Aid donation

Please treat all membership/donations that I make from the date of this declaration, until otherwise notified, as Gift Aid donations

I pay Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that the OAB reclaims on membership/donations in the appropriate tax year. I will inform the OAB when this is no longer the case.

Signed

Date

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

OAB Oxfordshire Association for the **Blind**

1877-2007

*Helping blind people
for 130 years*

Registered Charity 273559

Bradbury Lodge, Gordon Woodward Way, Abingdon Road,
Oxford, OX1 4XL.

Phone : 01865 725595 Fax : 01865 725596

Standing order instruction

To the Manager:.....Bank plc

at:

.....

.....**Post Code**

**Please pay to CAF Bank plc,
25 Kings Hill Avenue,
Kings Hill, West Malling,
Kent, ME19 4JQ**

Sort Code 40-52-40

For the credit of Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

Account number is 00015471

The sum of £..... (in words).....

on theday of200.....

**and the same sum on the same day in each succeeding
month / quarter / year (*delete as appropriate*) until further
notice and debit my account number**

Signed **Date**

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone



Clubs and groups for VIPs in Oxfordshire

Abingdon & District Macular Group

Daphne Baker 01491 835157

Banbury Society for the Visually Impaired

Enid Smith 01295 269568

Bicester Friends of the Visually Impaired

Mrs Peggy Clarke 01869 242290

Carterton Social Club

Rosemary Gibbens 01993 824998

Chipping Norton Friends of the Blind

Mary Gregory 01865 725595

Didcot/Wallingford OAB affiliated

Pam Organ 01235 813391

Dorothy Drummond 01235 812614

Faringdon representative

Jean Young 01367 241467

Henley VIP Group

Mike Pooley 01491 628284

Look Oxfordshire Support for families of VI children

Alison Baker 01235 868262

Kidlington Macular Group

Tom Wright 01865 376482

Marita Ferrett 01865 373104

Oxford Visually Impaired Club

O A B 01865 725595

'Oxpots' Pottery Class

Margaret Dawes 01865 558131

Thame and District Society for the Visually Handicapped

Norman Lilley 01844 261041

Visually Impaired But Not Old!

Nicola & Kevin Pamphilon 01869 331778

VIVA, North Oxford

Liaison Officer, Ron Sears 01865 553063

Wantage Blind Social Club

Mrs Joy Ripley 01235 763112

Secretary Hazel Aldred 01235 765849

Witney Area Visually Impaired Group

Mary Sitch 01993 811687

Oxfordshire Social Services Sensory Impairment Team

A countywide team of specially trained staff who can assess, advise, support, teach and inform people of all ages with sight problems:

Sensory Impairment Teams,

**Oxfordshire Social
& Community Services,
Foxcombe Court,
Wyndyke Furlong,
Abingdon Business Park,
Abingdon,
OX14 1DZ**

Telephone 01235 549395

VI Team

Beverley Downs
Kate Laybourne
Nigel Lewis
Elizabeth Jones
Meg Jones
Dorothy Hazell
Helen Fallaize
Serena Glister
Sue Miles

Manager

John Fearn-Webster

Out of hours social services, emergency freephone 0800 833408.