

OAB Newsletter

February 2011

Nearly there!

I wonder if you can picture a fully equipped, easily accessible, spacious Resource Centre for blind and partially sighted people; a centre where people can come for advice and information about living independently with a visual impairment; where they can try out equipment to see if it is suitable for them; come to a course about how to use a computer, or how to carry on baking and cooking; or receive counselling regarding emotional concerns?

As you may know, we've had this picture in our minds for a long time. It's been our aspiration to build such a Resource Centre as an annex to Bradbury Lodge, our base in Abingdon Road in Oxford.

I'm pleased to say that it looks like our hopes are soon to become a reality. Due to the generosity of a variety of kind donors and Trust funders we have nearly enough funds to begin the building and we hope to put out a tender for the work soon.

We are very pleased about this, but we know that there is much now to be done. We still need to continue fundraising to secure the final funds and also to ensure that the centre is fully equipped. We also need to plan to continue our services

during the inevitable disruption of the building work and then to plan the delivery of the many new services that the Resource Centre will make possible. We are very grateful to everyone who has supported us in this goal and would be delighted to hear from anyone else who is interested in offering their support.

It looks like being a very significant year for OAB. As well as the Resource Centre project, we are also on track to become a Charitable Company. In summary, this will put us and our Trustees on a more secure footing. There is an article inviting you to an Extraordinary General Meeting about this on page 3.

On which note, I'd like to introduce and welcome our newest Trustee, Amanda Tilley, who is also becoming our Hon. Treasurer. As a qualified Accountant, Amanda brings a wealth of financial experience to our Executive Committee and I know that she is very keen to help the organisation move forwards successfully.

As I write, the snow and ice of December is finally melting away. I would like to wish you all a Happy, and somewhat warmer, New Year.

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First things First!

A gentle reminder!

With the New Year just starting to wear in and become comfortable I am prompted to remind our supporters that the Annual Membership subscriptions are once again due! Your support is vital and gives us a stronger mandate to work for you and membership gives you a vote at our AGM. For more information look at pages 9, 10 and 11. ■■■

Avoid disappointment, Make an appointment!

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, we would be very grateful if you could please ring us on 01865 725595 and make an appointment before you visit! ■■■

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

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

Telephone 01865 725595 ● Fax 01865 725596 ●

E-mail : information@oxeyes.org.uk ● Web site : www.oxeyes.org.uk

Opening hours 9-4pm weekdays (24 hour message service)

Chair **David Warr** Vice-chair **Adrian Hill** Treasurer **Amanda Tilley**

Director **Colin Cure** Administrator **Sarah Milrose**

Accounts **Michael Ling** Home Support Officer **Marian Small**

Welfare Group Officer **Mary Gregory** Information Worker **David Thompson**

Fund-raiser **Ben Allcock** Sight Advisory Desk **Judith Wood**

Volunteer Co-ordinator **Ana Novakovic** (*Wed and Friday.*)

Banbury Co-ordinator **Janet Payne**

Your Newsletter is written, compiled and edited by David Thompson

Thank you to all of you who have helped us along the way. We are very grateful for your help and keen to build upon that support – literally and figuratively - for the benefit of visually impaired people in the county. With good wishes,
Colin Cure. ■■■

Extraordinary General Meeting

The Trustees of OAB would like to invite all members and anyone else who is interested to an Extraordinary General Meeting. The meeting will be held from 1pm to 2pm on Wednesday 23rd March 2011 at the North Oxford Association in Summertown.

You may remember from a previous article and our AGM, that we have set in place the procedures to make OAB a Charitable Company. This does not affect the services that we provide, but puts the charity on a firmer legal footing.

An EGM is now required to ask members to vote on a resolution to complete the process, by transferring the assets of the charity to the new Charitable Company. If you have any questions about this process, please do not hesitate to call us.

We hope that as many paid up members as possible can come to the meeting. It will be good have your support for this important step forward for the charity. If you are not a paid up member, we would still be keen to see you there, though you would not be able to vote on the resolution.

If you are able to come, could you please call us to let us know and also to check that the meeting has not been re-scheduled for any reason. Thank you very much. ■■■

Dr Jo Steen

We would like to pay tribute to our dear friend Dr. Jo Steen who died in November.

After success at her studies and in her chosen profession, Jo became Joint Head of Optometry at the John Radcliffe Hospital. There, with her colleague, Patsy Terry, and the very able Optometry Team they set about providing excellent services to the patients at the Eye Department.

Included in these services is the assistance that they provide to visually impaired people through the Low Vision Service which gives specialist assessment, advice and equipment on how best to use limited vision.

This work has enabled countless visually impaired people to continue to live independent, active lives.

Jo was always positive and dynamic in her work and was a great supporter of OAB. She supported our efforts in so many ways: from advocating on our behalf for facilities in the hospital and for funding and to doing a sponsored parachute jump for us.

Jo was also prominent in the Low Vision Services Committee of Oxfordshire, always pressing for improved provision countywide for blind and partially sighted people.

Quite recently, she was interviewed on BBC Radio Oxford, explaining about services for visually impaired people and raising awareness.

Above all, Jo was a very friendly and caring person and we will all miss her.

■■■

OAB around the county

We're very aware that it is often difficult for people to visit our main centre in Oxford. In the past, we've tried to get out to the various towns of the county, by linking with Action for Blind People, who have a mobile resource centre. This year, we're linking up with the library service. On four occasions, we're going to set up an information desk at a different library in the county for a day. We'll have OAB staff there and a range of special equipment for visually impaired people. The library teams are also keen to be involved and show what they have available for blind and partially sighted people and the Visual Impairment Team from Social and Community Services will be joining us to provide their expertise. If these Information Days go well, we plan to do an increased number of them in the following years.

Here are the details of the Information Days for 2011:

25th March – Bicester Library

2nd June – Thame Library

28th September – Witney Library

7th December – Wantage Library

We hope to have the space from 10am to 3pm on each occasion. We hope that you will be able to come along to one of these events. Please do let us know if you are

intending to come along and if there is anything in particular that you would like to view.

Of course, our main base in Oxford has the largest range of equipment for people to try out. We've discovered recently that the Red Cross Transport Scheme will bring people from all around the county into our centre so that might be a solution for anyone who finds it difficult to get to us. In any case, if there is any equipment that you are interested in, please do contact us and we'll do our best to help.



Mary Arnott remembered

It was with much sadness that we learned of the passing of Mary Arnott, a much loved helper of blind and partially sighted people, who died in November last year.

Mary qualified as a Nursery Nurse and lived abroad in several countries while supporting her husband, who was in the army.

She was known as a kind and generous person and in later years she helped organise the Bicester Friends of the Visually Impaired which provided a regular warm welcome to many blind and partially sighted people in Bicester over many years.



News from the North

Our OAB representative in Banbury is Janet Payne who also runs our information desk on a Wednesday afternoon (2pm to 5pm), at the Age UK Centre, White Lion Walk.

Health Walks step out again

The monthly Health Walks for visually impaired people are taking place over the summer months as usual in Banbury. They cover up to two miles or so, but are taken at a gentle pace: the health benefits are social and fun, rather than cardio-vascular, so if someone needs to rest or take stock we can do so.

Anyone of any age can come whether visually impaired or not and dogs as well as guide dogs are welcome as long as they are under control so that walkers don't fall over them or their leads.

There are qualified walk leaders and volunteers to lend an arm if you need them.

Remember that we walk in most weathers and on different surfaces including grass so bring the right gear and walking shoes, plus some money for a drink and a social get-together at the end. If you are a new walker come a few minutes earlier so that we can register you for insurance purposes and as a bonus arrange for you to have a walker's card which gives a discount at Millets!

The most popular and accessible walks seem to be from the Mill and Sainsbury's so we've focused on those for this year, with some variations in the routes around Sainsbury's.

The Health Walk Schedule for Banbury in 2011 is as follows:

Tuesday 5th April 11am at The Mill
(benches in front)

Thursday 5th May 11am at Sainburys
(under front portico)

Sunday 5th June 11am at The Mill

Thursday 7th July 11am at Sainsbury's

Thursday August 4th 11am at The Mill

Tuesday September 6th 11am at Sainsbury's

See you there! ■■■

Help Desk

I am still at Age UK, White Lion Walk in Banbury every Wednesday afternoon at 2pm for a chat. (If I'm away, my able assistants are Brian and Lorna). Recently I seem to have been helping older people to think about applying for more benefits, as well as troubleshooting gadgets – usually with David's telephone assistance - and demonstrating them. Can I remind people that I also have a demonstration package which means that you can use your television as a magnifying screen for text?

Janet Payne
banburycoordinator@oxeyes.co.uk
Telephone 07528688619 ■■■

Touching Art, Touching You, Hitting Banbury!

At Banbury Museum, in collaboration
with

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind
Feeling ready for something different?
We hope you'll come along to an
exciting exhibition at the museum,
designed with Visually Impaired people
in mind.

The art world's ultimate taboo is
banished! You are actually encouraged
to explore art through touch! In this fresh
concept in the visual arts, both young
and older visitors can happily use touch
and other senses to experience the
paintings and sculptures, partly made
by visually impaired artists.

This fun and family-friendly exhibition
opens up art in a new and special way
to visually impaired and sighted visitors
alike.

Visitor comments include:

'Overthrows years of not being allowed
to touch art. Quite mind bending" -

Exhibition visitor

"Fabulous when I saw it in Cornwall" –
Ben Allcock, OAB.

We expect that visitors will be attracted
from all over the region because of its
unique appeal.

BlindArt is an innovative, all-inclusive
charity, founded in 2004, that promotes
contemporary works of art that can be
explored through all five senses,
especially touch. The BlindArt

Permanent Collection in Hereford is the
world's first permanent showcase of
visual art accessible to visually impaired
people and includes paintings,
sculpture, installations and other works
of art. It promotes artistic excellence
regardless of visual ability.

Banbury Museum is at Spiceball Park
Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire
01295 753752, [www.cherwell.gov.uk/
banburymuseum](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/banburymuseum)

It is located just next to the new precinct
and several car parks and is very easy
for disabled people to access. The
exhibition is on the first floor just by the
lift.

The exhibition runs from 5th February
to Thursday 31 March 2011, Monday to
Saturday, 10am – 5pm and admission
is free!

If you have any queries contact Janet
Payne on
banburycoordinator@oxeyes.org.uk or
Ben Allcock on 01865 725595 at OAB.



Living Paintings!

On 25th Feb from 2 to 4 pm there will
be a demonstration and workshop
in Banbury museum by Living Paint-
ings, the free lending library for visu-
ally impaired people. Living Paint-
ings specialises in making artistic
works accessible. Children and
adults are both welcome. You will be
able to pick up leaflets and newslet-
ters, talk to staff members and even
join the library. For more information
call Janet on 07528688619 or David
on 01865 725595. ■■■■

Bowlers Strike out in Banbury

As the Banbury Blind Ten Pin Bowlers Group enter their second year, I thought we would see how they are doing.

It was the inspiration of Marisol Clack that got the "Blind Bowling ball rolling". The group has an organizing committee of 5 people and some of the 11 or so regular members participate in national competitions run by British Blind Sport! In fact congratulations are already in order to Brian Baker and Chris French who came 2nd in the National Pairs competition at the British Finals in Swindon on 20th November 2010. Well done to you!

Although this enthusiastic group is thriving largely due to drive and initiative of its members it is also being ably supported by the staff of the Lakeside Super Bowl in Banbury. This includes reduced tariffs, advice on the most appropriate equipment and helping bowlers with their technique with a bit of coaching.

Marisol the chairman of the Group says. 'We all really enjoy it,' 'We meet on Thursdays at 1pm and have a couple of games each. The Lakeside SuperBowl has given us a good deal and we now have a group of regular players who are gaining experience and confidence every week.'

Having said all that, though some members of this group are participating in competitions on a regular basis, the group is actually a really good opportunity to get out and meet people. As Chris French the Club Secretary says "We are a friendly

bunch and any visually impaired person who wants to join will receive a very warm welcome from all of us" Of course Sighted partners are welcome too, not least because they can assist the VI players and keep the scores!

If you want to know more about the Banbury Blind Ten Pin Bowlers Group, contact Club Chairman Marisol Clack on 01295 269206, email: marisolclack@hotmail.com or the Club Secretary Brian Baker on 07971588994 or the Deputy Secretary Chris French on 07760112292. ■■■

Banbury MD Group

MD is Macular Degeneration

This group meets on a monthly basis at the Methodist Church meeting room, Marlborough Road in Banbury on the second Thursday in the month at 2pm-4pm. Everyone with an interest in MD is welcome whether as a person who has MD, or a friend or relative. A small charge of £2 is made to cover costs.

The next talk will be by Paul and Alison from the Customer Service Department of Cherwell District Council covering Accessibility. For more information contact John on 01608 685293. ■■■

Banbury Blind Club

Meets alternate Tuesdays 10.30am - 2.00pm at the WRVS Centre. Helpers are always welcome. For more information call Enid Smith on 01295 269568. ■■■

Tribute to Margaret Potter

We would like to pay tribute to a dear friend of OAB, Margaret Potter, who sadly passed away in November.

Margaret became visually impaired in later life but overcame the challenges that having low vision brought with her characteristic determination and resolve.

Margaret was born in 1922 and trained as a physiotherapist at Kings College Hospital. After qualification, she quickly became superintendent physiotherapist at RAF Chessington, and moved to the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre in Oxford as Superintendent in the early 1950's, a position that she retained and developed for 35 years. Margaret was held in very high regard in the world of Physiotherapy.

Amongst many accomplishments she wrote a chapter on polio in an early edition of the standard text Cash's Neurology, assisted in setting up a physiotherapy school in Brazil and also treated the daughter of the Head of State, President Kubitschek. She and her husband Paul, a Harwell scientist, travelled widely.

Margaret's kindness and organisational skill shone through and upon retirement. As well as much else, she volunteered for Dialability for a while, and at the Michael Sobell House charity shop. Margaret was a keen advocate of the work of OAB and we will miss her support. ■■■

Leaving your legacy

Everything we do to help local visually impaired people is made possible by supporters like you.

Different people choose to help us in different ways, by setting up a direct debit to OAB or by volunteering to help, for example. One of the least mentioned methods of helping, but one of the most important, is by making a gift to OAB in your Will; by leaving your legacy to the charity.

Legacies have already played a big part in helping us to set up a number of new services over the last few years. Indeed, there are a number of services that we may not have been able to provide, like our telephone counselling scheme, for example, without the gifts that some supporters have left to us in their Wills. We are very grateful to each of those people for doing so, some of whom we have played tribute to in earlier editions of this newsletter. We work hard to honour their gift every day.

As you may know, we plan to send a small booklet to a number of supporters soon about leaving a legacy to OAB, and we hope that this will help you to consider the merits of doing so. Indeed, if any of you reading this would like to speak with someone about leaving a gift to OAB in your Will, then please feel free to contact Colin or Ben on 01865 725595. Thank you.



Giving more easily and effectively

by Michael Ling, *OAB Accounting Officer*

Gift Aid

Gift Aid is a scheme to enable tax-effective giving by individuals to charities in the United Kingdom.

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 Revenue and Customs.

So if you are a taxpayer please complete the gift aid form on the next page and let us claim a further 28% 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.

Support OAB become a member!

You can show your support for Oxfordshire's best loved Visually Impaired charity by becoming a member. Your membership gives you mandate to vote at our Annual

General Meeting and gives us a greater voice in the county. Just fill in the form on the next page and help us to help you! Or telephone 01865 725595 for more information. ■■■

Our sincere thanks to all donors

We are very grateful for all donations, whether given in support of the day to day running of the Association or toward a specific project, or in memory of a loved one

Every donation very much appreciated. ■■■

Membership and donation

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/es

Member

(£5.00 annually)

Friend

(£20.00 annually)

Life Member

(£250.00)

Donation

 £5 £10 £20 £50 £100

Other 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**

1877-2011

*Helping blind people
for 134 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 of20.....

**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 **■■■**

Have you remembered GiftAid?

An appeal with a difference

Most appeals are for money but this time our appeal is different.

Our appeal on this occasion is for your help.

We are sure that every one of you has occasion to go shopping and many of you will potentially know your shopkeepers quite well, indeed some of you may even be owners or managers of outlets.

Here is how we believe you can help OAB,

You can help by simply asking whether any of them would be willing to have one of our collection boxes. All we ask you to do is get the name, address, telephone number and if possible the name of a contact. Then our regular volunteer collectors will do the rest, i.e. They will take the box and make all future arrangements.

Best sources are pubs and clubs, fish and chip/take-away shops, stationers, corner shops and some opticians. Indeed there may be other outlets but these are usually the best and give the most returns.

**If you know of or discover a place that would be willing to have one of our collection boxes please contact Ben on 01865 725595. Many thanks.
Red Lawson, OAB Volunteer**

Keep Well Keep Warm

The recent cold spell focused our attention on the importance of keeping warm at home and just how much it costs to do so. For some people this expense is a constant worry throughout the winter.

For free and impartial advice on how to help make your home more affordable to heat, please call the Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Helpline on 0800 107 00 44. They can give you information on

- Grants/loans for home improvements
- Loft and cavity wall insulation
- Switching to a cheaper energy supplier
- Social tariffs
(special rates for vulnerable residents)
- How to deal with unpaid fuel bills
- Claiming benefits you are entitled to
- Support organisations in our area
- Energy efficiency to keep bills down

The first step to reducing heating bills is to stop warmth escaping. Insulation helps keep the heat you pay for where you want it - in your home. If you are aged 70 or over or receive means tested benefits cavity wall insulation is very likely to be free. Loft insulation is also free if you have less than 60mm of loft insulation already in place. For everyone else, discounts are available.

Call the Helpline on 0800 107 00 44. Lines are open 9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday. ■■■

Expect a Great Day!

There will be an audio described performance of Great Expectations at the Oxford Playhouse on Saturday 30th April. It starts at 2pm and there's a (free) touch tour at 1pm – an opportunity to visit the set and get a close-up, hands-on impression of the scenery and props. If you explain that you want to use the audio description service when you book, you'll get discounted tickets for yourself and a companion, and an excellent seat. Guide dogs can be taken into the auditorium and on the touch tour. If you'd like to receive an audio brochure from the Oxford Playhouse, contact Hester Bond on 01865 305334. If you'd like more information about how audio description works, phone us here at OAB on 01865 725595. ■■■

Videos with Audio Description including children's films

This is a brief notice to all readers that we have a small collection of videos, including some which are for children and families, with Audio Description. This means that the film has a special type of commentary, which explains what is happening visually in the film, for the benefit of anyone who cannot see the action. If you are interested in finding out what videos we have, please do give us a call. ■■■

Sonic Boom Box Revolution

For many years sound recordings were only available on vinyl records, then came audiotape on reels, which were all very fragile and cumbersome. Then along came cassettes, which were better in many ways. However tapes degrade, wear out, tangle and snap. Ways of recording sounds digitally now mean that we can “compress” the sound information into a format called MP3 (to find out what MP3 stands for please call Sarah on 01865 725595) that is better quality and instead of taking up a lot of cassettes, can be accessed from one compact disk, these days called a CD. For some years we have been able to transfer information from one computer to another using little data sticks, which plug into a socket called a Universal Serial Bus or USB. These “Sticks” can also hold MP3 files, music or speech and because of their durability, ease of use and memory capacity, many talking newspapers are using them. In fact Calibre Talking Books Library are now using them in conjunction with audio cassettes and CDs. The data sticks can be plugged into PCs but can also be played on stand alone USB players some of which are called Boom Boxes. They are very compact, simple to use devices that will remember where you are in your book even when they are switched off and are a very reliable and relatively cheap alternative to the traditional players. For more information or to make an appointment to have a look at a USB Boom Box call David or Sarah on 01865 725595. ■■■

Large Print Puzzles

It is recognised that exercising your brain with puzzles can help to keep the “Old Grey Matter” trim and in shape and for many years I used to infuriate my father by completing the crossword in his newspaper before he could get to it. As my sight deteriorated my father was able to regain his crossword sessions and give his brain cell a workout as I could no longer see the text! In the past this was the case for many of our clients. However you can carry on doing such puzzles as Crosswords, Word Searches and Soduku by using large print versions. We have a number of Large print, easy to see Crossword/Su Doku books available for your amusement. Test your logic, wordpower and twizzle your brain to get round those mind bending problems and feel that sense of satisfaction that you have outwitted the puzzle makers! For more information call Sarah on 01865 725595. ■■■

Our QR code



QR stands for Quick Response. The code, when scanned using a camera on a mobile phone will enable you to access the OAB newsletter. If you have any problems or for more information call David on 01865 725595. ■■■

Large Print Address Book

Partly because I am a visually impaired person but mostly because I am a completely disorganised male of the species, my efforts at keeping track of family, friends and other contacts is a bit of a lottery.

For example I did not know that the Nephew with the interesting hair style, tattoos and face jewellery has left University and lives in Bristol with his wife.

Well now I have no excuse for not knowing who is where, doing what and with whom as now at OAB we have a large print A4 Desktop Address book to add to our range of large print stationery. Designed to be easy to use for visually impaired people, with large easy to see text and plenty of room to write in. I find mine ideal whilst not being too large to fit on the telephone table. They are not too expensive either, priced at £7.00 and I find mine a real boon!

Don't forget we still have our “hardy annuals” the ever popular large print calendars, desk diaries and pocket diaries for 2011 available! Like the address book these have been designed specifically for visually impaired people and gain in popularity every year.

For more information contact Sarah on 01865 725595. ■■■

Microchip sight trials begin

You may remember that in the last newsletter we had an item about a microchip that was helping people with no sight to regain some vision.

The microchip was first tested on three patients in Germany earlier this year and yielded dramatic results. One man saw his girlfriend's smile while another was able to read his name.

The implant is three millimetres square and is packed with 1,500 light sensors designed to replace those in the retina lost to one of the most common form of eye disease, retinitis pigmentosa, an inherited condition which gradually destroys the light sensitive retina at the back of the eye, causing blindness. The sensors trigger an electronic pulse which stimulates nerves leading to the brain enabling patients to see a rough black and white image. It is hoped it will become widely available within five years.

So-called "Bionic" eyes have been piloted before. But this battery-powered implant is the first not requiring cumbersome accessories such as a camera mounted on dark glasses.

Doctors hope it could also be developed to treat blindness caused by dry age-related macular degeneration, the most common cause of blindness which has no cure but affects about 500,000 Britons.

About six patients have been chosen for a trial at the Oxford Eye Hospital. We will keep you up to date with developments. ■■■

Bin collection disruptions

A piece from South Oxfordshire District Council

Occasionally bad weather, such as heavy snow or rain, may disrupt collections. If that is the case we will put regular updates on our website www.southoxon.gov.uk so please check this or call 03000 610610 if you are not sure whether to put your bins out. Alternatively, sign up to free texts to let you know when to put your bins out if there are any changes.

Just send a message with the word "waste" and your collection day to 07797 870370 and you will receive a free text the day before your collection. For example if your collection day is a Monday, send a text saying 'waste Monday'. ■■■

A little light relief

As you may know we have a small selection of lamps on display at our resource centre for people to try out and evaluate. A welcome addition to our range is the compact Naturalight Table Magnifying Lamp. The light is from an energy saving 12 watt daylight type tube and is said to reduce eye strain. The 3.5" diameter lens gives 1.75 times magnification and has a little insert lens which give 4 times magnification. For more information or to book an appointment to see the lamp please call Sarah or David on 01865 725595. ■■■

The flexible Acrobat at OAB

No not David!

As our regular reader will know, at OAB we are constantly striving to make available equipment for demonstration to our clients, so we are happy to report that we have acquired a brand new electronic magnifier to add to our range of demonstration equipment. The Acrobat LCD is a compact desktop magnifier designed for use anywhere with limited space. It has automatic focus and can be used just like a conventional CCTV magnifier for looking at newspapers, magazines, keeping up with correspondence, bills, etc. Of course it has as standard full colour, black and white and can invert the image to lessen glare so you get white text on a black background. You can turn the camera around to face you and use the screen as a mirror, for example when applying make up, shaving, plucking facial hair and other personal grooming tasks. This is made easy as the Acrobat can give you a mirror image of yourself that you can zoom in and get really up close! You can also use the Acrobat to look at things a bit further away and again get a close up view, for example having a look down the garden. For more information or to book an appointment to come and have a look at one, please call David on 01865 725595. ■■■

Dreaming Spires Tenpin Bowling

In December we arranged a tournament for the Dreaming Spires club in memory of Jonathan Mitchell, who passed away this time last year and who was a founder member of the club. Chris and Les, Jonathan's parents, paid and presented a trophy to the winning bowler.

In 3rd place was Ella Syme, in 2nd place was Nicola Pamphilon and the winner was Laura Finnis. It was very close between all the bowlers.

We have 2 teams in the winter league which started in December and we are looking to qualify for the finals in Sheffield in May.

We play at the Bowl Plex in Oxford near the Kassam Stadium. All levels of bowlers are welcome. You can just play a couple of games or you can join us in playing in the BBS leagues.

For more information about playing ten pin bowling, please can you contact Kevin Pamphilon, Club Captain. Phone 01869331778. ■■■

Talking Theatre

You may remember that last year we told you about some audio described musical performances. Well now our good friend Gwen Cruden has told us that there are more audio described musicals coming up this year. In particular she mentioned Phantom of the Opera on Wednesday 16th March, Billy Elliott on Saturday 11th June and Ghost on Thursday 10th November. For further information call 01865 725595. ■■■

Vision Impaired Visually Active

VIVA is a group for visually impaired people with active minds which meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 2.00pm in the North Oxford Association, Community Centre,

Diamond Place, Summertown, Oxford. We have an interesting and varied programme for the months ahead. Please note that there is no VIVA meeting in August.

VIVA Programme 2011

March 8th

Talk on "Assisted reading for children in Oxfordshire"

April 12th

Talk by Helen Peacock

May 10th

John Chipperfield

My life as a journalist

June 14th

Outing – To be announced

July 12th

Martin Way

Cotswold Wool Trade and

Shepherding

August No meeting this month

September 6th

Ann Spokes-Symonds

Lessons from life

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

Carers groups in Oxfordshire

Carers, of any age, living or working in Oxfordshire, can find support, advice and information from their local carers group

North and West Carers Centre

27 Horse Fair

Banbury

OX16 0AE

01295 264545

cc.nwoxon@dsl.pipex.com

Oxford Carers Centre

174a Cowley Road,

Oxford, OX4 1UE

01865 205192

info@carerscentre.co.uk

Website:

www.carerscentre.co.uk

South and Vale Carers' Centre

5 Lydalls Road,

Didcot, OX11 7HX

01235 510212

carers@svcarers.org.uk

Website:

www.svcarers.org.uk

The work of the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind is assisted by funds from



LOOK, Oxfordshire meeting 23rd March

LOOK Oxfordshire, the parent's group, who support and involve parents who have visually impaired children, are holding a Parent's Get-together at OAB's office on 23rd March starting at 8pm. They are a very welcoming group. If you are a parent of a visually impaired child and are interested in attending, please phone Julie Hinton on 01189 722322. ■■■

Wantage Blind Club

A social club for partially sighted and blind people living locally. Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month from February to December at the Wantage Day Centre from 3-5pm where members can socialise over afternoon tea. A raffle is held and there is often entertainment. There is also an annual outing. Transport is available by Special Transport Ambulance or in volunteers' cars. For more information call Hazel Aldred on 01235 765849. ■■■

Thank you

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and give thanks for donations made to Oxfordshire Association for the Blind received in memory of loved ones

VIBNO

VIBNO is a group visually impaired in the 18–50 age group in Oxfordshire to meet socially and have fun.

We meet once a month on the first Wednesday of the month. We alternate between a meeting at a pub and then on the other month we do something completely different including dining, playing skittles and Aunt Sally and going Greyhound racing.

So if you are a VIP aged between 18 and 50 and want to socialise and have fun with people alike come and join us. Partners, friends and family are welcome to all events.

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed a drink and a catch up at the pub in Kidlington. We played skittles at Tackley and we enjoyed an Indian meal at Botley.

For more information and details of our programme please contact Nicola Pamphilon 01869 331778 or e-mail flashnp@aol.com ■■■

Henley VIP Group

The very welcoming Henley Group for visually impaired people is starting a "membership drive". If any blind or partially sighted person living in Henley is interested in coming along to join in the fun, we would strongly recommend it. Why not try it out and see if you enjoy it? The person to telephone is Michael Pooley on 01491 628284. ■■■

My experience of St Dunstan's

St Dunstons is a charity that provides support for ex-service men and women who are blind or have a severe sight impairment. Here Judith Wood tells us of her experience of them.

I first became a St Dunstaner in 1996 when I was invited to visit their centre at Ovingdean near Brighton. I was collected at my front door by a very cheerful driver in a comfortable car (and brought home the same way!).

When I arrived at the Centre I was booked in, shown to my room and then given a guided tour of the building. I was immediately impressed by the kindness of all the staff, their knowledge of my situation and the amazing attention to detail shown by all who work there.

The accommodation is excellent and the rooms are as comfortable as a 4 star hotel. The catering is done by an external company, but this is also very good and the choice of food for each meal is superb.

There are many courses that one may participate in, following the introductory course. These range from IT and advanced computer training to craftwork ie; training in woodwork, artistry and sculpting

You would also be able to enjoy the many and varied recreational facilities. How do you fancy learning how to shoot, become an expert archer or play bowls?

There is also a large swimming pool at Ovingdean.

In the evening, after all the daily excursions, walks by the sea or (dare I say it, work) you are able to relax in the bar after dinner, with your favourite tittle and enjoy a game of dominoes, bingo or, if these games are not your "cup of tea", on other evenings you may well be entertained by a marvellous "swing" band and have a waltz or jive around the ballroom.

I would urge anyone who fits the St Dunstan's criteria and is eligible to become a St Dunstaner to apply. There is absolutely nothing that I could say about St Dunstan's that is not 100per cent positive. From the moment you are collected in the chauffeur driven car to the moment you return home, you will have been taught a skill or improved on one you already had, cared for, pampered and will have met so many wonderful people, who are also suffering from a severe visual impairment

The introductory week and subsequent training weeks are all free of any charge, but if you become a St Dunstaner and want to spend a week or two there for a holiday, with or without your spouse, there is a charge for this.

Everyone's in the same boat and,
LONG MAY SHE SAIL!!!!!!

Judith Wood
Senior Sight Adviser and Counsellor.
OAB. ■■■

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

Carterton Social Club

Rosemary Gibbens 01993 846825

Chipping Norton Friends of the Blind

Mary Gregory 01608 810899

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 Macular Group

Daphne Dorman 01993 811084

Oxford Visually Impaired Club

Mary Gregory 01608 810899

'Oxpots' Pottery Class

Christopher Barry 01608 730407

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 Mary Greenfield 01235 764646
Secretary Hazel Aldred 01235 765849

Witney Area Visually Impaired Group

Mandy Bishop 01993 706824

Don't forget we're here to help!
Oxfordshire Association for the Blind
01865 725595

Oxfordshire Social Services Sensory Impairment Team

A county-wide 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 01865 894935

VI Team

Beverley Downs
Kate Laybourne
Elizabeth Jones
Meg Jones
Serena Glister
Sue Miles

Senior

Elizabeth Agar
Manager
John Fearn-Webster

Out of hours social services, emergency freephone 0800 833408.