

**Oxfordshire Association for the Blind**

# **OAB Newsletter**

**January 2007**

## **Countess of Macclesfield opens Bradbury Lodge**

Following a major refurbishment programme, OAB moved into Bradbury Lodge in August 2006 and the new centre was officially opened on 20<sup>th</sup> November by The Rt. Hon. the Countess of Macclesfield, patron of OAB since 1994. Present at the opening were the Sherriff of Oxford, Councillor Susanna Pressel, Mr Dennis Minns of the Bradbury Foundation who funded the building, Mr Philip Awdry our President, Mrs Frankie Cummins and Mr Toby Cummins, as well as many other guests and friends of OAB.

In his opening address, Professor Adrian Hill, chairman of the Trustees, welcomed everyone to this very special and auspicious event for OAB. "It is special", he said, "because it is a celebration of the great generosity of the Bradbury Foundation that has made it possible for us to buy Bradbury Lodge. We now have a permanent home from which to provide the growing need for services to visually impaired people in the Oxfordshire. Special thanks to Mr Dennis Minns, the UK

representative of the Bradbury Foundation, who has kept faith with us for several years while we have endeavoured to secure this property."

"The day was auspicious," Professor Hill said, "because it augers exceedingly well for helping and supporting all visually impaired people in Oxfordshire, of which current estimates suggest there are more than 10,000." But the day was also tinged with sadness because Lou Cummins, our former director, the person whose dream this was for nearly 10 years, sadly died just 5 weeks previously. It was delightful, therefore, that his wife Frankie and son Toby, were able to join us in the celebrations of the culmination of Lou's vision and hard work.

In greeting the Sherriff of Oxford, Professor Hill said how good it was to have a representative of the city present at the opening in recognition of the important role of the voluntary sector in the provision of welfare services. "It is our hope and desire," he said, "to continue to work in close

# Dates for your diary

## VIBNO

**By special  
appointment..  
.....its 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!

This social group for young, visually impaired people meets on the first Tuesday of the month. Contact Nicola and Kevin Pamphilon 01869 331778. ■■■

### Every Thursday

“Oxpots” Pottery Class for Visually Impaired People meets during school term time, at Woodstock between 1.30 pm and 4.00pm. Contact Margaret Dawes on 01865 558131. ■■■

## 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 **Adrian Hill** Vice-chairman **Nigel Parsons** Treasurer **Chris Brand**

Acting director **Tim Streatfeild** Administrator **Teresa Bennett**

Accounts **Michael Ling** Senior Fundraiser, **Libby Smith**

Home support officer **Marian Small** Community Fundraiser **Andrew Morley**

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

Volunteer Manager **Liz Hunter** (*Tuesday and Thursday*)

*Your Newsletter is edited by David Thompson*

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collaboration with the statutory services for the greater benefit of all visually impaired people in Oxfordshire.” Professor Hill also thanked everyone else who had made this event possible. “There are many anonymous donors,” he said, “whose generosity provides the essential resource for our continuance. There are all the volunteers without whose dedication we would be unable to achieve what we aim to achieve. And, there are the staff who make it all happen.” Professor Hill then reminded those present that, “we all had one aim, and that was to make a difference to those who have needed to cope with loss of sight.” To the members of OAB and all VIPs in Oxfordshire, he said, “This is *your* Association, and Bradbury Lodge is *your* home, to be used by *you* and for *you* in the furtherance of *your* needs and *your* interests. May it long continue to meet your *changing* needs, and the hopes for *your* future, and the future of *generations* to come.”

Lady Macclesfield commemorated the event by planting a tree in a small herb garden that will mark the start of the next chapter in OAB’s history and she then unveiled a commemorative plaque in the building. Guests were invited to look around the resource centre where David Thompson and Teresa Bennett demonstrated some of the equipment.

Although our resource centre is currently housed in temporary accommodation, the second phase of our building programme is to replace this with a permanent extension to Bradbury Lodge. We have now embarked upon a fundraising appeal to finance this extension. Later in the year we will arrange some special open-days for members to visit the building and see the architect’s drawings of the plans for the new extension.



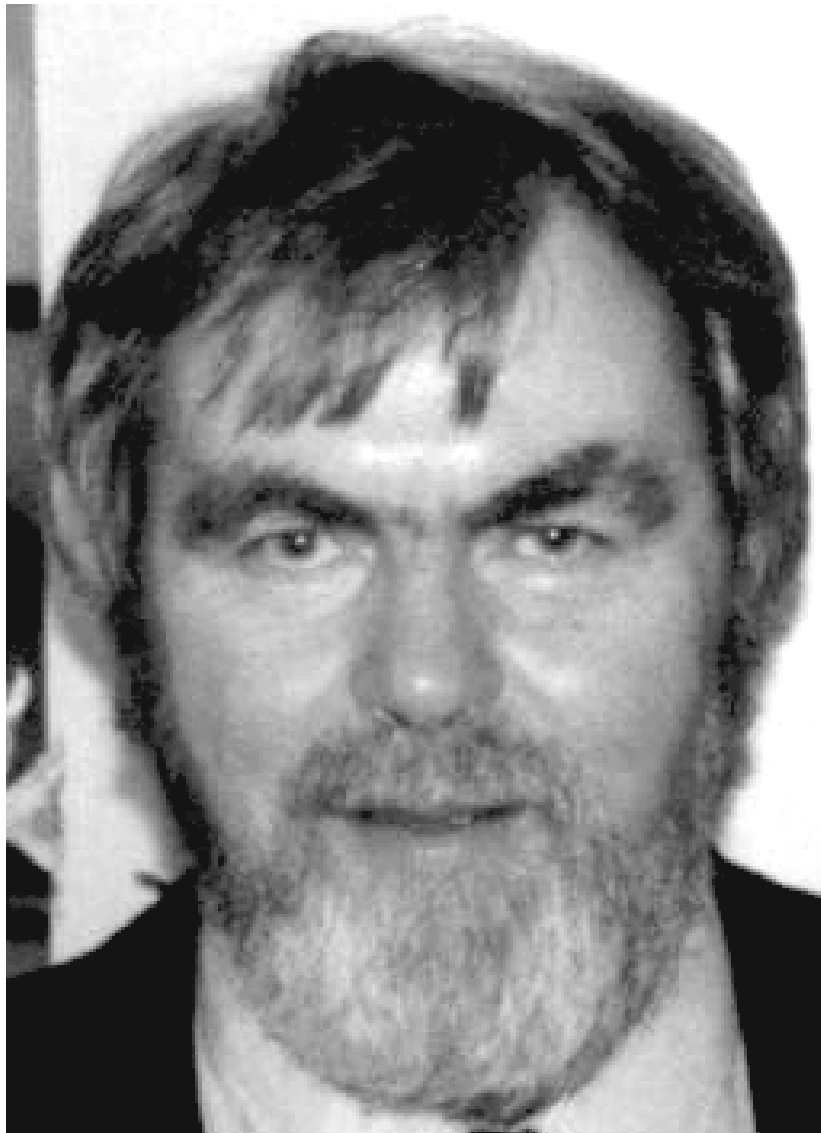
## Since the last newsletter Oxfordshire Association for the Blind has received donations in memory of

Mrs Margaret Platt  
Violet Chawle  
Miss Laura Howrigan  
Mr Albert Palmer  
Gina Thornton  
Mr L. Masters  
Mr Eric Clarke  
E. M. Stevens  
Mrs Mary Jane Stephenson  
Mr Laurence Cummins

Mr and Mrs R & L Bowles  
Mr William Murray  
A.M. Terry  
Mrs L. English  
Miss Woolford  
Mrs Pamela Jones  
R. E. May  
Mrs D. L. Cousins  
Mrs Karoline Read  
Mr Charles Richard Miles



# In praise of Lou Cummins (1946 – 2006)



When Lou Cummins took up the directorship of OAB in 1997 he was greeted by a headline in the *Oxford Times* announcing closure of the Rivermead Hospital. This meant that, despite switching his role from the editorship of a newspaper, he acquired the daunting task of finding a new home for the organisation and the money to pay for it. The culture shock was almost too much and he considered leaving on the first day.

It is to the benefit of all visually impaired people in Oxfordshire that he stayed, because he transformed OAB into a very energetic association with an open-door policy of never ignoring a cry for help, or turning away a request for information.

Lou was a man of extraordinary talents and achievements. Before joining OAB he had been in journalism for 32 years, starting at

the tender age of 18. For all that time he was a significant contributor and editor of the traditional broadsheet newspaper and many of those tutored by him are now in prominent positions in the national newspaper world, as well as television journalism.

At the age of 23 he was appointed editor of the *Brentwood Gazette* (the youngest person ever to become editor of a broadsheet newspaper) from where he moved to become editor of the *Romford Observer*. He then spent 2 years as a public relations officer for a very left-wing council in London, and it is quite easy to see why he didn't survive long in a civil service environment. He was as intolerant of mindless bureaucracy as he was of injustice. In 1978 he was appointed editor of *Newbury Weekly News* and built the reputation of that newspaper to win the award of best weekly newspaper in the country. Such was his dedication to his readership that, during the national newspaper strike of the 1970s, he even managed to keep his own newspaper running almost single handed.

While at OAB he vitalised the organisation by almost doubling the client base to nearly 3,000 and, through a wide network of contacts, he was extremely successful in securing significant donations as well as tin-shakers in Carfax on flag-days. In March 2006, to the incredulity of friends, although feeble in health, he personally raised £10,000 from a 2 mile sponsored 5

walk along the river Thames in Oxford and was fundraising until the day before he died on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2006. The breadth of his affection was evidenced by a congregation of more than 700 attending his memorial service at St Nicholas' Church in Newbury.

Lou was a person who used the word "no" very infrequently and would always go that extra mile to help a friend in need. His caring for those less fortunate than himself knew few boundaries. More than once, he took a near-destitute client home for Christmas (the kind of spontaneous generosity that demanded as much of his family as it did of him). At a strategic level Lou was a formidable campaigner for blind people and OAB has a lot to be grateful for what he achieved. In particular, the new headquarters in Bradbury Lodge is as much the result of the Bradbury Foundation's faith in Lou, as his stubborn persistence and refusal to give in against unbelievable odds from commercial pressures. He gave a priceless legacy upon which to build better services for providing an improved quality of life for all visually impaired people in Oxfordshire.

Shortly before he died he celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday at home, enjoying the company of about 40 family and close friends. Of his work at OAB he modestly said recently, "If I made a difference, however small and however fleetingly, I am glad."



# Andrew Morley's column

*OAB's very own Nelson with one eye on the future*

It's hard to believe that Christmas has been and gone again! It's a good time to reflect on what's been an eventful year for OAB in general and fundraising activity specifically.

We have had many successful initiatives this year despite the disruption of a move that, as many of you will know, was more protracted than we had originally hoped.

I would like to thank the volunteers whose dedication has been inspirational during this trying time. I would like to single out Michael Edwards, Carol Constable, Tammy Bond and Kath and Red Lawson in particular for special praise. On behalf of OAB's clients, I thank you.

One of the highlights of the fundraising calendar was the 'Look Who's Walking' Sponsored Walk. It was notable for ex-Director Lou Cummins' determination to complete the course despite being very ill at the time.

A very enjoyable evening was the A Cappella evening at the Town Hall. Organised by members of local group 'Out of the Blue', the performance was delightful and an extremely fun way to raise money.

The most recent big event we had

was a first for OAB. As mentioned in my previous column, it was called the 'Neverest Challenge'. See the very next item in your favourite newsletter for a full account of the event, and don't forget to log onto the website: [www.neverestclimb.org.uk](http://www.neverestclimb.org.uk) to get the full story.

On the subject of websites I would like to end my column with a look to the future. We are developing new ways to fundraise to keep pace with the 21st century and one development I am particularly excited about is the all-new OAB website which has recently gone live. Huge thanks go to BH Web Design for designing this fantastic web site. It promises to open up several new avenues of potential income.

All this talk of technology does NOT mean that we do not want you to still help us to keep the wolf from the door by more traditional methods. In the New Year we still want you to help us by organising tombolas, having raffles, fetes, joining in on Flag Days and generally helping us as much as you can – and of course, all your efforts are appreciated.

I wish you all a very happy New Year.



# Ben 'conquers Everest' for OAB!

As you will have no doubt read in my regular column, Ben Allcock, a 22-year old student from Kent has successfully completed an incredible challenge to raise money for OAB (writes Andy Morley).

He managed to beat the world record for climbing Mount Everest from Base Camp One to the summit on the climbing wall at Brookes University (3250 metres). The record for climbing Everest is 8 hours and 10 minutes. Ben managed his task in an astonishing 5 hours and 48 minutes.

This was a singular feat – we know of no similar attempt. I was lucky enough to be there on what proved to be an emotional day, standing next to Ben's dad Nigel for the climax of the record attempt. His father had diligently counted each ascent of the 300 times Ben managed to scale the wall and urged his tiring son through the pain barrier to achieve his incredible goal.

The total raised by Ben stands so far at over £1,500 and you can still donate! Please log on to [www.neverestclimb.org.uk](http://www.neverestclimb.org.uk) and donate online. You can alternatively send in a postal order or cheque with a note to say the donation is for the Neverest attempt, and, if you are a taxpayer please let us know so we can claim Gift Aid back from Mr Brown.

Once again, a huge thank you goes to BH Web Design for donating their time and creating a fabulous website for the Event – this was a first for OAB and it has been a fantastic exercise in raising the profile of OAB globally – donations have come in from as far afield as Asia! The final words must go to Ben who has been inspirational. Thank you Ben! The following was written a week after his epic exertions:

“Time has passed since the climb. My body and soul are still fatigued. The day was beyond all my expectations on all levels. I have felt increasingly frustrated at myself in the time since in my utter inability to communicate quite how everything felt to those whom have asked...it was without doubt the hardest single thing I've ever done” ■■■

## Order a calendar for 2007

Do you need an easy to see, easy to use, large print calendar? Ours is printed on A3 paper, with large print days marked in black on yellow and weekends white on black. For more information, or to order yours now call Teresa at OAB on 01865 725595. Or to have a look, visit the website on [www.thebigone.org.uk](http://www.thebigone.org.uk). ■■■

# Thoughts from a Temporary Director

The past five months have flown by (writes Tim Streatfeild). What was meant to be a three months stand-in appointment has stretched to five but OAB will be free of me shortly with the imminent appointment of a full time permanent director.

I might well be shooting myself in the foot by leaving, as I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here. Everyone has appeared appreciative (or at least to my face!). I have had great support and I believe as an organisation we have progressed, not due to me (probably in spite of me) but thanks to the helpful suggestions, hard work by the staff and the support of the Trustees.

It has certainly been an interesting time. Five months ago we had (inter alia) no telephone connections, no storage and no sewage connection. The latter was not known at the time! I am happy to report that these matters have been addressed.

We have updated our Sight Guide and launched a new web site triple AAA rated for accessibility. We have improved the facilities at Bradbury Lodge and increased parking spaces for visitors. In November we were delighted to welcome our major donors to the official Opening of the Lodge.

How has my time at OAB affected me? Certainly I can now spot a newspaper article on visual impairment at twenty paces. I have

gone from zero knowledge to some idea of the difficulties from which visually impaired people suffer and of the infrastructure of the bodies dedicated to help. I have also been amazed at the advances in technologies which improve the quality of day to day living and, most importantly, help people maintain confidence in their abilities and through that, their independence. I am delighted that with our demonstration room we can share these advances with clients.

There is still much to do, which makes the job so interesting and which make me so sad to leave but the position does require a full time director who can offer several years of devoted service. This is something I am unfortunately not in a position to do. But my heart will remain here.



## Are you an OAB member?

A great way to show your support for us is to join our membership scheme. The more members we have, stronger our voice in the county and being a member means that you have a vote at the annual general meeting! On page 23 you will find a membership form or call us on 01865 725595 for more information.

# Would you like a home visitor?

Writes Liz Hunter, OAB, Volunteer Manager

The home visiting scheme is still flourishing in the city of Oxford. Although we are still patiently waiting for funds to extend this much needed service to our clients in the county, at the moment we are looking for new volunteers and new clients for this important service in Oxford City.

So what sort of people volunteer to visit a visually impaired person? Some are working, and will call in to see the client on their way home from work, or later in the evening. They are also occasionally free at the weekend. Many are retired and are free during the day. We also have a number of young volunteers who are either in the sixth form at school or students, who give a very good impression of today's young people.

Partnerships are usually set up to meet once a week for an hour. That is how some remain; five years later client and volunteer will still be meeting for an hour once a week. Some partners decide that they will meet once a fortnight for a bit longer. Other partnerships are much more flexible, and meet by arrangement. Each partnership is different, and the beauty of the scheme is that the volunteer and client decide between themselves what they want to do.

Most meet up for a cup of tea and a chat. Some volunteers do simple

paperwork, and help out with minor chores. Others get down to more difficult paperwork, or go out together. Recent trips have included a tour around the BMW factory, shopping and going out for meals.

All our visitors are kind, honest and want to help visually impaired people. We follow up two references and do a criminal records check. Generally speaking I visit them at home, both to check their details and to get to know them better!

If you would like to find out more about the scheme, please give me a ring – Liz Hunter, Volunteer Manager  
Tel: 01865 552475 email  
volunteers@oxeyes.org.uk ■■■

## Vision Impaired Visually Active

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

You will get a friendly welcome at VIVA and keep your mind active! For further details ring Ron Sears on 01865 553063.



# Cheaper recording for VIPs

by Ed Gates from the Persula foundation

Tapesense is a scheme that supplies blind and visually impaired people with subsidised audio products and accessories. Supplying people with limited vision, cassette tapes at as low a cost as possible. We can also supply mini disks, blank audio CDs and other types of media, a limited range of batteries, as well as interconnecting cables, universal remote controls, headphones, microphones and – recently, and to incredible success – Digital (DAB) radios.

We have to verify that all of our customers are visually impaired, but this only has to be done for the first order. Once we have registered someone with the service they can order over the phone with a credit or debit card, or we can take orders by post and accept cheques and postal orders as payment, but not cash. We can take orders by e-mail, but prefer to take credit card details over the phone with each order.

To find out more please call us on 020 7357 9298 or e-mail us at [info@persula.org](mailto:info@persula.org) If you don't get through straight away just leave a message and we'll get back to you shortly.



# Home heat help

Even though we are constantly being battered over the head by the phrase “global warming”, it is recognized that every winter some people face hardship, ill-health and even death due to getting too cold because they are worried about their heating bills. The Home Heat Helpline is a free, central phone number offering practical energy advice for people concerned about paying their energy bills. There are 35 specially trained people – many of whom are ex-nurses and social workers – ready to take your call. You can call yourself or on behalf of a relative, friend or someone you may be concerned about. The Home Heat Helpline is open 9am–8pm Monday to Friday and 10am–3pm on Saturdays. To get your advice call 0800 33 66 99 and speak to one of their specially trained advisors. Or visit their website on [www.homeheathelpline.org](http://www.homeheathelpline.org) ■■■

## Did you know..?

We all know that the shortest day of the year is December the 21<sup>st</sup>, but tradition states the coldest day of the year is St Hilarys' Day which falls on 13<sup>th</sup> January. (Hence the “Hilary Term at Oxford University). St Hilary who lived from about 300 to 367 became Bishop of Poitiers and was an eminent “doctor of theology. His name comes from Greek and means happy or cheerful, hence the English “Hilarious”, which this piece hasn't been!



# **Dreaming Spires ten-pin bowling**

## **Team news from Kevin Pamphilon**

We are looking for more people to come and play ten-pin bowling. We meet at the Bowl Plex in Oxford and play against other visually impaired teams from around Britain.

In the 2006 summer league we had 3 teams entered and the Dreaming Spires C (Graham Hall and Jonathan Mitchel) reached the final in Swindon in November.

The other two teams played some great ten-pin and I would like to thank them. In the final in Swindon the Dreaming Spires C came 5th out of 12 teams and picked up the best team

average over the day. Also Graham Hall picked up the best male handicapped bowler.

Why not come along and have a go? There is no age restriction, it is not very strenuous and there is no need for any training or equipment to buy. We are a friendly group of people and a warm welcome will be given to all.

For more information about playing ten-pin bowling and to receive a fixture list please can you contact me, Kevin Pamphilon club captain. Phone 01869331778, E-mail: kp16302@aol.com ■■■

## **Inspired Dreaming Spires win national award**

On Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th of October 2006 I attended the 6th Annual Community Champions, award ceremony in York to pick up an award on behalf of the Dreaming Spires Ten-pin Bowling Team, which had been nominated from the southeast. The community champions are people who have made a difference to their community by setting up projects to help others and there were 29 area winners. The ceremony was opened on Monday by Parmit Dhanda MP for Gloucester and Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families. In the evening I attended a dinner with other winners and staff from the department for Education and Skills. The Tuesday was opened by more life

changing projects from award winners. I received my award from David Blunkett MP for Sheffield and Brightside, who set up the Community Champions scheme when he was the Minister for Education. ■■■

## **Striking award**

Congratulations to Kevin and the rest of the team for their achievements and their thoroughly deserved award, we have been following their fantastic progress with interest and look forward to further special things from them in the future. Well done! ■■■

# New magnifiers at OAB

**Our Sight Advisory Centre in Bradbury Lodge has a couple of additional pieces of electronic magnifying equipment which some of you may like to come and see**

One is a handheld, electronic magnifier called the PC Eye that has been adapted so that it works with a regular TV. It has two levels of magnification, it gives a colour picture, ideal for looking at pictures and photographs. It also works in black and white, which is easier for looking at greyscale pictures and reading text. For me the essential feature on this and indeed any CCTV magnifier, (even the “budget price” ones) is the the ability to invert the black on white image to white on black, therefore I tend to avoid magnifiers of this genre that lack this feature. White on black is actually a great setting for reading text, it reduces the amount of glare from the screen and allows the text to show up more effectively. This can be a very useful setting especially for people with cataract, glaucoma, keratopathy and other conditions susceptible to glare. This device would be ideal for looking at small pieces of text, such as recipes, cooking instructions and at family photographs, etc.

The other is a CCTV magnifier from Optolec called the Clearview plus. One of the new generation of digital

CCTV, it has a “flat” 19inch monitor screen, which makes it less bulky and means it takes up less room than the old style “pc monitor”. As with most of the other devices on the market this model has automatic focus, (essential for getting a clear image), manages more than 40 times magnification, gives a colour and a black and white picture, which can be inverted for reading text. I am impressed with the simplicity of this device. You can select as many or as few enhancements as required (a range of false colours and typoscopic features can be purchased if required), which means there are very few buttons to confuse the user. Although not a portable device, having a large screen means that the Clearview Plus is more suited for reading larger pictures and “bodies of text” for example correspondence, newspaper and magazine articles, though I would not recommend trying to read War and Peace with it!

If you would like to see any of our equipment just call on 01865 725595 and ask for David, who will be pleased to help you arrange an appointment. ■■■

# **Better late than never! OAB Info 2007 re-printed**

Our very own little Forth Bridge project, the information booklet has been wire brushed and given a new lease of life, at last. It is updated and re-printed! Listing support and services for Visually Impaired People, (VIPs), the Info book has been an invaluable source of information for VIPs, their families, carers and friends, since 1999. In this latest incarnation we have updated and corrected details of any local VI contacts in the county that we know of, (apologies to anyone we have missed or any inaccuracy, this is after all something of a work in progress!). Importantly we have noted the relocations of the major Visual Impairment services in the county since "Info 2003/4". The alterations to the certification/registration process and description of eye conditions and their relevant

managements have been explained by Professor Adrian Hill whose expertise and help has, once again, proven invaluable. As we strive onward and upward we have streamlined the document format slightly by reducing the amount of contact information. We did this in order to make the pages less cluttered. We have also added a section on Information Technology and look forward to including more information that may prove helpful in the future. "Info 2007" is now available in large print and will soon be accessible on audio cassette so if you require one please let us know and we will send one to you. We would also like to hear from you if you have any ideas, suggestions, information for inclusion (or indeed corrections) for the next "Info" book later in the year. ■■■

## **Help OAB ring the changes in 2007 by sending us unwanted mobile phones**

If you have any old and unwanted mobile phones lying around the house doing nothing in particular, don't let them go to waste, please pass them on to us! We can get £4 for every mobile phone we collect. At the rate handsets are being updated and become outdated, most of us know someone who

has an old phone knocking about even if we don't have one ourselves! Please send any old phones to us at Bradbury Lodge, Gordon Woodward Way, in Oxford. Watch this space, as hopefully we will soon have a separate dedicated location where people can deposit their old mobiles. ■■■

**For further information call us on 01865 725595**

# Oxford Eye Hospital is clinically deceased

As from 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007 the “Oxford Eye Hospital” will be no more. Oxfordshires’ ophthalmology services will be run from the new Eye Clinics at the John Radcliffe Hospital. The right to use the name “Oxford Eye Hospital” was given to its founder, Dr Robert Walter Doyne, by the city of Oxford in 1893 when services started from a building that was originally built as the fever block at the back of the Radcliffe Infirmary. The building had been vacant since 1881 when an act of Parliament required that all infectious disease services be transferred to a place beyond the city boundary. That resulted in a new isolation hospital at Cold Arbour which eventually became the Rivermead Rehabilitation Hospital. In a short-sighted move to offset financial debts elsewhere in Oxfordshire’s NHS, the Rivermead Hospital was closed in 2002. Linden Homes, who bought the site, agreed with the City Council to provide social housing and also re-house OAB who had been operating from The White House, formerly part of the Rivermead Hospital. After very protracted negotiations, Linden Homes finally honoured its promise in December 2006 when OAB became owners of the original hospital Lodge, now know as Bradbury Lodge. Dr Doyne, a graduate of Keeble College, had started practising as an eye doctor in Oxford in 1886. His surgery was

initially in Beaumont Street and then in St Giles, near to the original premises of OAB. Within a few years Dr Doyne had gathered together a number of influential people in the county to become trustees to fund his new Oxford Eye Hospital which was formally opened by the chairman of the Trustees, The Earl of Jersey, in 1893. The forerunner of OAB, the Oxfordshire Association for the Home Teaching of the Blind (founded in 1877 and re-named the Oxford Society for the Blind in 1896), had close links with the founder of Oxford Eye Hospital. At a meeting of the Oxford Society for the Blind Trustees on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1895, there is an entry in the minute book that the chairman of the society, Mr J.W. Spurling, reported on “a child called Barnes whose sight was restored in consequence of Mr Doyne’s treatment.” OAB also still has a link with the family of one of the original trustees of Oxford Eye Hospital, the 6<sup>th</sup> Countess of Macclesfield. The Macclesfield family’s interest in vision welfare in the county continued with the 8<sup>th</sup> Countess becoming vice president of Oxford Society for the Blind in 1962. She was followed in 1994 by the 8<sup>th</sup> Countess who became patron of OAB, jointly with the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Hugo Brunner, both of whom are stalwart supporters of our work. ■■■

## **A moving piece from Judith Wood**

On 18 December 2006 the OAB Sight Advisory Desk at the Radcliffe Infirmary was temporarily closed, writes Judith Wood (OAB Sight Advisor and Counsellor).

Fear not! I have not deserted my post! I will be ready 'for business', as soon as the building works have been finished at my new address, the OAB Sight Advisory Desk, The Ophthalmology Department, The West Wing, The John Radcliffe Hospital, Headley Way, Headington, Oxford, OX3 9DU. My telephone number will be 01865 231598.

The OAB Sight Advisory Service will run from a desk situated in the main waiting area of the ophthalmology dept. The services provided will include help with information on all aspects of visual impairment and related topics. I will have much more space to display information leaflets, especially the brand new OAB Info Guide for 2007, I will also have a greater range of equipment for VIPs. The counselling service will, of course, always be available. Meanwhile, I will be based at Bradbury Lodge, OAB's Main Headquarters, phone number 01865 725595. I will assist the staff and I will be available also in my counselling role. So please feel free to contact me at any time even if it's just for a chat, a cup of tea and maybe a biscuit.

## **Things that bump on the cooker**

Bump-ons are self-adhesive markers in various sizes, shapes and colours which can be stuck on to an appliance to mark the settings. For example a large one could be used to denote the OFF setting and smaller ones the intermediate points. On an oven, it could be logical to mark the temperature in increments of 50 fahrenheit, or the most commonly used settings, perhaps 180 and 220. Again on washing machines and dishwashers, just the settings that are used the most need be marked, although it may seem useful to mark every setting. It can be pretty confusing if there are too many tactile markers around. Dayglo coloured bump-ons are especially useful for people with some sight. As well as being a tactile marker, large, clear bump-ons can also be useful because they can act as mini-magnifiers on text beneath them. Although the effect is slight it might make all the difference. ■■■

## **Tomo's top tip**

Make sure any surfaces that you are going to stick the bump-ons to are clean, dry and flat. Be careful not to touch the sticky back of the bump-on once you have removed it from the backing sheet or you may find your bump-ons on the floor rather than on the cooker! ■■■

# Visually Impaired But Not Old

**VIBNO is a social group for people 18–50 in Oxfordshire**

**writes Nicola Pamphilon**

We meet on the first Tuesday of the month, alternating between a meeting at a pub and the following month we do something completely different.

Our trips and excursion have included audio described theatre trips, ten-pin bowling, playing skittles, playing Aunt Sally, greyhound racing and dining. Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed meeting up for a chat and a drink at the Fox and Hounds and the Jolly Boatman Pubs and we enjoyed a Chinese buffet at the Dancing Dragon. We have been to lots of audio described theatre performances which were all excellent and we saw Mary Poppins, Guys and Dolls, Billy Elliot and Cats.

**Future VIBNO meetings are**

**6<sup>th</sup> February: Chinese Meal,  
The Dancing Dragon**

**6<sup>th</sup> March: Fox and Hounds Pub,  
Abingdon Road, Oxford**

**27<sup>th</sup> March: The Jolly Boatman Pub,  
Kidlington**

**Wed 2<sup>nd</sup> May: Skittles at Alvescot**

We always welcome new members so if you are a VIP aged between 18 and 50 and want to socialise and have fun come and join us.

Partners, friends and family are welcome to all events.

For more information contact Nicola Pamphilon 01869 331778 or e-mail [flashnp@aol.com](mailto:flashnp@aol.com) ■■■

## Your stamps helping us

You may think that common or garden stamps are valueless and while most of them are not worth very much on their own when added up, they add up! For example, just one black, bin liner bag full is worth about £30 to us! Whether they are used stamps on a section of envelope; an

unwanted collection of mint first day covers or vintage stamps in albums (or even all three), we can put them to good use. So send us your unwanted stamps, go green and get into philatelic recycling!. ■■■

# **OXSRAD**

## **Sports and leisure for your pleasure**

Oxford has its own sports and leisure club, which caters for everyone, whether they are disabled or not. The sporting activities include air rifle shooting, archery, bowls and badminton. There is a fitness studio, where you can lose weight, strengthen up, become fitter or just achieve a healthier lifestyle. There are fully qualified fitness instructors who will introduce you to the fitness studio and help you achieve your particular goal. Other activities on offer include trampolining and keep fit for the less active, as well as keep fit gentle moves. For the even less energetic there is a jacuzzi, snooker, table tennis, line dancing, singing sessions, arts and crafts, even bingo and a licensed bar! For more detail, contact OXRAD, sports and leisure club, Court Farm Place, Marsh Lane, Marston, Oxford. 01865 741336, or give OAB a call on 01865 725595. ■■■

## **Flabberghastly quote**

Scientists are working on a chewing gum that may help obese people lose weight. A researcher said "We hit on the idea of a chewing gum because obese people like chewing". I wonder how long it took to think of that. ■■■

# **Beer cheer for the Blind?**

writes David Thompson

The world's first so-called "beer for blind people" has been released in Germany. Duesseldorf's "Uerige" beer, considered one of the world's best "Alt" beers by experts, is now releasing new 0.33 litre bottles with a Braille label. I suppose it is a step in the right direction, however, without getting into jokes about being "blind drunk", I wonder what the real benefit of such labelling is to visually impaired people. For example how do you locate the items with braille labels when you have a Superstore full with row after row of shelves, brimming with anonymous tins, jars and bottles? I suppose the answer is that, if every supplier did it then everything would be identifiable by braille users and, as with every new idea, you have got to start somewhere. Anyway if they start producing braille beer in England (and we spot it) we will let you know! Meanwhile, My wife and I shall carry on sampling the Real Ales in the Turf Tavern in Oxford! The staff are very helpful and provide free sample "tasters" of each of the ten beers on tap, so you can choose a drink you like and don't have to rely on "blind tasting" a pint! ■■■

## Obesity 'doubles sight-loss risk'

Most of our readers have personal experience of visual impairment. Here David Thompson provides a warning for our friends and families concerning the risk to sight from obesity.

Even before the excesses of Christmas I was aware of the fact that my waistline is expanding and the talking bathroom scales are starting to shout "Get off you whale! However I am not alone, the latest government estimates predict that 13m adults and children could be obese by 2010. The general health implications are worrying in themselves, but obesity is actually linked to a risk of developing four main conditions linked to sight loss. People classed as obese, have double the risk of Dry Age related Macular Degeneration. Obesity also increases the rate of progression of wet AMD. It doubles the risk of cataracts and significantly increases the risk of type two diabetes, linked to diabetic retinopathy. Being severely overweight also increases the risk of glaucoma, raised pressure within the eye. For the majority of us obesity need not be a problem, we can make choices about how we manage our weight, however we should take advice on the best way to maintain a healthy body weight. A good start would be to consulting your GP. Watch those calories to maintain a healthy weight. Even better, eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables!

## Spinach 'may ward off blindness'

Spinach, noted for making cartoon sailor Popeye strong, may also help to ward off a common cause of blindness. Scientists believe eating the vegetable may protect the eyes from age-related macular degeneration. Spinach, and other vegetables, such as sweetcorn, kale and broccoli to name but a few, contain lutein, a chemical which, together with another related chemical called zeaxanthin, forms an oily yellow substance in the eye, called macular pigment, which is thought to protect the macula from AMD. There is already strong evidence to suggest that macular pigment provides some protection against AMD. Since macular pigment is wholly derived from our diet, eating foods containing high levels of these compounds should increase macular pigment and help slow the degenerative process



## Exerce-eyes!

Regular exercise could reduce the risk of age-related eye disease. A 15 year study found those with an active lifestyle were 70% less likely to develop age related macular degeneration (ARMD) than those who did little exercise. It also showed regular walkers were 30% less likely to get the disease. This appears to confirm that the benefits of a healthy lifestyle extend to the eyes.



## **Charles Bonnet Syndrome**

It will be of no surprise to a number of VIPs to hear that many people with substantial sight loss have experience of “seeing things that aren’t there”. I have jumped at shadows, and seen silent figures moving around on and off for years. Like a lot of other VIPs I’ve said nothing in case I was taken off to the Funny Farm! There some common themes such as weblike structures or ladders, birds or little animals, even other people, (sometimes these people are grotesque, gargoyle-like beings). Sometimes people see complete landscapes which have very little to do with their present surroundings. The hallucinations can last for seconds, minutes or even several hours. If you are “seeing things”, and diagnosed with Charles Bonnet Syndrome don’t worry - the thing to remember is that if you are not mad and certainly not alone in this experience, which is a harmless symptom of visual impairment. The “visions” will not harm you, they may surprise you or catch you out occasionally. With time they will become familiar. They may even delight you! They will become less frequent and will usually fade away completely. Don’t worry if this takes some years to happen. I have lived with symptoms, for more than ten years. All, I might add, with no lasting physical or psychological ill effects, although some of my Bradbury Lodge colleagues might disagree!

■■■ David Thompson

## **Are you potty about ceramics?**

You can learn about and handle a selection of ceramics from the Ashmolean’s Western Art collection. With Dinah Reynolds. A guided session for blind and visually impaired people will be held on Wednesday 31st January 11.00-12.30 at the Ashmolean Headley Lecture Theatre. We will be looking at ceramics, there will be a talk and a number of objects to handle from the Western Art collection and participants will be handling ceramic objects comparing different glazes, shapes and types of ceramic objects. The session is free, but people do need to ring and book. Contact the Ashmolean Education Service 01865 278015, 288078, or e-mail: [education.service@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:education.service@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)



## **Mad driver?**

A blind man was convicted of dangerous driving, after police spotted his car on the wrong side of the road. Omed Aziz, 31, was given 12 weeks in prison suspended for a year. He has to pay court costs of £363, has also been banned from driving for three years and ordered to take an extended driving test! Pc Stuart Edge told magistrates “I asked him if he could see me. He removed the dark-coloured sunglasses he was wearing and I could clearly see he was blind as he had no eyes.”



**Marian Small, OAB's Home Support Officer, writes about two organisations which may prove helpful and interesting to OAB clients**

## **St Dunstan's**

Based at Ovingdean, near Brighton in East Sussex, St Dunstan's is an organization that helps visually impaired ex-Service personnel, founded in 1919 to provide care and rehabilitation to those blinded in action. Over ninety years later, its role has evolved to provide help for all blind and partially sighted ex-service men and women whether visually impaired in action or through accident, disease or due to old age. St Dunstan's has also extended its work to help men and women in the Emergency Services (police, fire and ambulance) who have suffered loss of vision whilst on duty. Wherever possible, St Dunstan's aims to help the blind and visually impaired live independently in their own community. One to one rehabilitation and training programmes are provided by a dedicated team of training officers teaching skills such as mobility, computer handling and Braille as well as independent living and vocational skills. St Dunstan's also provides holiday and respite care for older ex-service people who can no longer cope without regular support and they may also assist with housing and financial grants. If you know of anyone who you think may qualify for help from St Dunstan's call Admissions on 0800 389 7979 or, for more information about the Centre, call 01980 592935.

## **World War 2 and you**

My neighbour, who is a naval ex-Serviceman, has recently given me details about the Journal of the Second World War Experience Centre The Centre is committed to rescuing all forms of evidence of personal experience of the 1939-45 war years, documenting, preserving, exhibiting and encouraging access to the surviving material evidence and associated information of the men and women who participated in the war in whatever capacity, whether military, civilian or conscientious objector. Almost 8,000 men and women are documented in the Centre by wartime materials and/or recollected testimony. The Centre has trained interviewers nationwide, experienced in dealing with sensitive tape-recordings made by those wishing to contribute their testimony. The Centre also publishes a quarterly journal titled 'Everyone's War'. If OAB clients would like their '39-45' war experiences recorded, contact the Director Dr Liddell, at The Second World War Experience Centre, 3, Feast Field, Horsforth, Leeds, LS18 4TJ or e-mail : [peter.liddle@war-experience.org](mailto:peter.liddle@war-experience.org), or telephone the centre on Tel : 0113 2584993 and the staff will be happy to help you.



# London calling

Here we have a request for people who were visually impaired and living in London during the second world war to tell their stories

Can you help us – were you visually impaired and living in London during WWII – if so, where were you living? What were you doing – attending school or working? How did you cope? What are your memories of education, evacuation or employment – do you have an interesting story to tell? Action Trust for the Blind is doing an exciting new oral history project called Blindness and the Blitz – The Unseen War, which is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This oral history will focus on the stories of visually impaired people who lived, worked or went to school in London at any time during WWII. We are also interested to hear the stories of people who knew visually impaired people at that time. What are your memories of their ability to adjust to war torn London? This oral history will capture the emotion and actual voices in the people who lived through this time, to discover this little documented part of our national heritage before it is lost forever.

If you have any information, please contact:

Action Trust for the Blind  
Telephone: 020 8563 2922

Email: [info@actiontrustfortheblind.org](mailto:info@actiontrustfortheblind.org)



# Are you looking after somebody?

If you are a carer living or working in Oxford city, Oxford Carers Centre is here to help you.

It may sound obvious but carers are people caring for people and people are all different, so we try to be as flexible as possible and offer support in the ways which suit each person best. We offer free and confidential advice and information, with practical tasks (such as filling in benefit forms), support at difficult times, contact with other carers and advocacy. We also offer regular groups where carers can meet, days out and courses for carers. Incidentally Oxford Carers Centre Winter 2007 Newsletter is now available!

We are located on the corner of Cowley Road and Bullingdon Road, near the Cowley Road Tesco, and opposite the Hobgoblin pub. There is one disabled parking space in front of the centre. There is also a pay and display car park behind Tesco. You can get a bus (1 or 5) from Oxford City Centre or Templar's Square, Cowley. Our contact details are,

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

01865 205192

Fax 01865 242569

[info@carerscentre.co.uk](mailto:info@carerscentre.co.uk)



# Blindness no handicap for golfers

Blind people are known to have played golf since the 1920s in the USA. It is also on record that a match between two blind Englishmen and two Americans took place before the Second World War. The United States Blind Golf Association was established in 1947 and organised events have taken place in America since then. In Britain there were individual visually impaired people playing golf in isolation. There was also a small group based around St Dunstan's, who received professional tuition. In 1982 the English Blind Golf Association (as it is now known) was founded - it was then called the Visually Handicapped Golfers

Association. The EBGA developed gradually becoming a registered charity in 1989 and a company limited by guarantee in 1997. The EBGA provides visually impaired people with the facility to train and compete in the game of golf. Training is provided by giving new members support to receive lessons from professional golfers. In addition, each year the organisation invites all members to attend a training weekend at which PGA professionals teach the various aspects of the game. For more information contact EBGA chairman Barry Ritchie on telephone number 02476 414166 or to the website [www.blindgolf.co.uk](http://www.blindgolf.co.uk) ■■■

## When Tiger met Wonder

Stevie Wonder and Tiger Woods meet in a restaurant. Woods says to Wonder, "How's the singing career going?" Stevie replies, "Not too bad. How's the golf?" Woods replies, "Not too bad, I've had some problems lately with my swing, but I think I've got that going right now." Stevie says, "I find that when my golf swing goes wrong, I need to stop playing for a while and not think about it. Then, the next time I play, it seems to be all right." Tiger says, "You play golf?" Wonder says, "Oh, yes, I've been playing for years." Woods says, "But you're blind! How can you play golf if you can't see?" Wonder replies, "I get my caddy to stand in the middle of the fairway and call to me. I listen for the sound of his voice and play the ball toward him. 22

Then, when I get to where the ball lands, the caddy moves further down the fairway and again I play the ball toward his voice." "But how do you putt?" asks Woods. "Well," says Stevie, "I get my caddy to lean down in front of the hole and call to me with his head on the ground, and I just play the ball toward his voice." Woods asks, "What's your handicap?" Stevie says, "Well, I'm a scratch golfer." Woods, incredulous, says to Stevie, "We've got to play a round sometime." Wonder replies, "Well, people don't take me seriously, so I only play for money. I never play for less than \$10,000 a hole." Woods thinks it over and says, "OK, I'm for that, when would you like to play?" Stevie says, "Pick a night." ■■■



Oxfordshire  
Association for the Blind  
Registered charity 273559

# Membership Scheme

To join our membership scheme just fill in the form below and send it, with a cheque or postal order made out to OAB, to:

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

I should like to become a member of the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind  
(Please tick relevant box)

I enclose five pounds for membership.....

I enclose twenty pounds to become a friend.....

I enclose two hundred and fifty pounds  
to become a life member.....

I enclose a donation.....

£10  £25  £50  Other

Please treat all of my donations from 6 April 2000 and until further notice as gift aid. My annual tax/or capital gains tax is more than OAB will reclaim.

*or*

Please tick : I am/we are not currently a taxpayer

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Clubs and groups for VIPs in Oxfordshire

**Abingdon & District  
Macular Group**  
Daphne Baker 01491 835157

**Banbury Society for the  
Visually Impaired**  
Call OAB 01865 725595

**Bicester Friends of the  
Visually Impaired**  
Mrs Peggy Clarke 01869 242290

**Carterton Social Club**  
Rosemary Gibbens 01993 842998

**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

**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 and Kevin Pamphilon  
01869 331778  
e-mail flashnp@aol.com

**VIVA, North Oxford**  
Liaison Officer  
Ron Sears 01865 553063

**Wantage Blind Social Club**  
Secretary  
Hazel Aldred 01235 765849

**Visually Impaired Group  
Witney Area**  
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**

**Out of hours social services, emergency freephone 0800 833408.**

**Specialist workers**  
John Fearn-Webster  
Paul Richardson  
Beverley Downs  
Kate Laybourne  
Nigel Lewis  
Elizabeth Jones,  
Meg Jones

**Manager**  
Hilary Grime