

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

OAB Newsletter

July 2006

A place to call our own!

After years of planning and tireless effort by all involved, your very own Oxfordshire Association for the Blind has its very own home! We intended to open our new resource centre in Bradbury Lodge, on 12th June 2006, but due to circumstances beyond our control it has taken us a little longer than we had hoped. We are settling in however and furnishing all the nooks and crannies of our buildings with the equipment essential to enable OAB to provide services for you. Look inside the newsletter to find out more about what is going on.

Important note

Although our address has changed, our telephone number 01865 725595 is still the same.



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

**On the back page you will
find a map showing our
new location ■■■**

For further information call us on

01865 725595

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

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

Telephone 01865 725595 ● Fax 01865 725596 ●

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

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

Chairman **Adrian Hill** Vice-chairman **Nigel Parsons** Treasurer **Chris Brand**
Operations Manager

Accounts

Home support officer **Marion 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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Tel. 01635 573300 e-mail info@altohiway.com Web site: www.altohiway.com ■■■

We weren't there but now we're here!

writes David Thompson

Firstly, our sincere apologies for being out of contact. A short period of "incommunicado" was expected. Unfortunately, problems with building schedules and utilities have kept us out of action for much longer than we thought we would have to be.

I find it a little poignant to be back on the site of the old Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre, as the Lodge is the only original building left standing, the site is largely unrecognisable. However there are reminders of when we were here before, a solitary stone wall, the large weeping willow by the river (home to the narrow boats and numerous waterfowl) and the squirrel haunted wood that Brian and myself look out on from our little office.

Not that we sit gazing at the scenery, on the contrary, the staff have busily set up their own workstations and are catching up on the massive backlog of work. Here I must give a special mention to Brian Howlett our administrator, who has been working his fingers to the elbow, packing, lifting, shifting, unpacking and setting up the equipment in the temporary resource demonstration centre as well as in our reception area in Bradbury Lodge. Without his unrelenting efforts we would still be packing up in Newtec Place! He is now busy wading through the piles of orders and requests for goods, so if you are waiting for something it is probably on its way!

We are largely ensconced in our almost pristine premises, and just about ready for action. As soon as

we have our noticeboards up I can take my staff telephone list off the wall and put it by picture of Valiant my Guide Dog!- We can at last deal with telephone orders and enquiries, but there are still a few nagging things that need to be sorted out to make access to our premises safe for our visitors, so it is very important for reasons of health and safety that you telephone us before you come to visit, as we may have builders back onsite. If that is the case we maybe unable to help you and you will have wasted your journey so, please help us help you and telephone us on 01865 725595 to find out whether our office is accessible. ■■■

Mo's last PAYE day

After many years of sterling service to the association, OAB has said farewell to our Accounts Officer and formerly Directors Assistant, Maureen Allsworth. 'Mo' joined us in 1999, when we were at the White House, working closely with our Director at the time Laurence Cummins. She also took on the essential role of looking after the association's financial 'ins and outs', such as running costs and salaries. A crucial task given our difficult fiscal position over the last few years, that she has carried out with great efficacy. Mo left us at the end of June and I am sure that all of our clients will join with everybody at OAB in sending their best wishes to her, post OAB. ■■■

Shooting hits the spot for Tim

Tim Gebbels tells us about target shooting for VIPs

Extreme sports seem to be all the rage these days and, to be honest, some of them do sound a bit weird. Target shooting, on the other hand, is an established sport pursued right up to Olympic level, but can you imagine anything more weird than achieving greatness in it if you can't see or only have limited sight?

Well, actually, you can and it is very interesting and lots of fun as I discovered at a recent demonstration given by Ken Nash.

Using an air rifle over a range of 10 metres, the main adaptation for blind or partially sighted shooters is a device that looks, at first glance, like a telescopic sight mounted on top of the rifle. This is basically a super accurate light probe, converting light into sound. The more light it sees, the higher the pitch of tone heard by the user over a set of headphones. The target is pale in the centre round the bull's eye and gets progressively darker coloured in concentric circles as one moves out from the centre of the target. Aiming the rifle, you listen for the highest note through your headphones and when you are steady on it (no easy matter let me tell you) you fire.

It was fascinating and uncanny trying to achieve the stillness necessary at the precise moment of squeezing the trigger to be even reasonably accurate.

You even have to stop breathing. Shooting at cardboard targets, you can feel after your course of fire exactly how high your score was as the holes made by the pellets are very clear to the touch.

There are over 100 visually impaired people target shooting competitively both at national level in the UK and at international competitions too.

Ken is willing to give a demonstration at a gun club in Oxford for any Oxford-based visually impaired person interested in having a go, whatever your age or experience.

If you would be interested in coming along to see if it could be for you then let me know so I can gauge the potential level of interest with a view to organising a demonstration.

Either email

tim@timgebbels.fsnet.co.uk

or call me on 0207 498 2308.



Did you know..?

Lucy, Odilia, Cecilia,
Dunstan and Raphael
the Archangel are all
..... Patron Saints
of Blind People!



Your friendly neighbourhood Community Fundraiser

Andrew Morley's column

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

Summer is here so I offer sunny greetings to all supporters and members of OAB both old and new. I am rather excited to be writing this column from our new home here at Bradbury Lodge at the entrance to what used to be Rivermead Hospital on the Abingdon Road.

As many of you will know, the move has taken slightly longer than anticipated, but we are now very much back in business. During the recent hiatus fundraising activities did not grind to a halt; we still rely very much on the financial support we receive through fundraising events.

One such event was the Oxford City Flag Day that took place on Saturday June 17. The event was very successful given the trying circumstances surrounding it, and I would like to say thank you to all who gave up their time to help out on a blisteringly hot day. The sunshine was 'cracking flags' as our friends in the North would have it!

Since the last newsletter the amazing Laila Allen of Kidlington jumped out of a plane to raise money for OAB. Laila, a 78-year old former auxiliary nurse, completed her parachute jump on May 31st. You may be aware of Laila not just from our last newsletter, but also through

her appearances in the Oxford Mail and other local publications. Everyone at OAB would like to say a huge thank you to Laila for her tremendous effort.

From one adventurous, hardy soul to another. Here at OAB we are always on the lookout for younger volunteers to get involved with their own fundraising initiatives. I was lucky to meet a fabulous volunteer last year called Ben Allcock. At the tail end of this year Ben will be attempting to climb the equivalent of Mount Everest on the indoor climbing wall at Brookes University in one day! It will be an amazing achievement for Ben and, having worked with this impressive young man several times in the past year, I have no doubt he will accomplish it. A website dedicated to Ben's endeavour is in the process of being created, whereby people will be able to sponsor Ben directly. Watch this space for details.

Returning briefly to Flag Days to round off, if anyone would like to volunteer for a couple of hours on a Saturday, please give me a call on 01865 725595, we have a full programme of days booked in the following months. Until next time, enjoy the rest of the summer!



Get a better web with Bunnyfoot

writes Maggie Thompson

Bunnyfoot Universality is a company that helps organisations make their web sites better so that they are easier for everyone to use. They research how to make websites accessible for people with a whole range of abilities and special needs. We are interested in how we can improve sites to make life easier for these people. As part of our research we perform 'real user' tests, on particular aspects of a site. For these tests, we maintain a list of contact details for people that are prepared to help us. All the user has to do is perform simple tasks on a site, while we watch. The task will be straightforward, such as buying a book from Amazon. Importantly, it is the sites that are under test and not the user. We learn from finding out where the site design causes problems - and we aim to fix those problems. It doesn't matter how experienced with the Internet users are their experiences and opinions will help us make improvements to the websites. Typically, a user test takes around 1.5 to 2 hours. We pay up to £20 pounds per hour, provide refreshments, and cover any travel expenses. For more information contact Maggie Thomson on 0845 644 0650 or email maggie@bunnyfoot.com ■■■

Talking Sudoku

Sudoku is a logic-based placement puzzle, invented by a blind mathematician in the 18th century. The numbers game which has been taking the world by storm is, at last, blind friendly in an accessible computer game version called Sudo-San.

This accessible version is free, the key commands are dead simple, and there are enough sounds and graphics to rival the best of them. So if you want to know more, check it out on the AudioGames.net website. ■■■

Make a date Order a calendar for 2007

At last we are able to supply an even easier to see, easy to use, large print calendar. Called The Big One it is an A3 calendar, with large print days marked in black on yellow and weekends white on black. There is plenty of room to write those all-important appointments and reminders. We can deliver as soon as we have your order. For more information or to order yours now call Brian at OAB on 01865 725595. Or to have a look visit the website on www.thebigone.org.uk. ■■■

VIP access to the Arts

Awaken your creative side

Are you interested in art?

Visual Impairment need not be a barrier to enjoying and participating in art

I am setting up an exciting new art group which will provide:

- Opportunities to visit and to make work at art galleries and museums in Oxford and London
- Regular meetings to discover and bring out your practical art skills
- Space to develop new friendships in a creative context

Come along and join the fun!

**Contact Anne Tockwell on 01189 845554
or email a.tockwell-v@clara.co.uk**

Vision Impaired Visually Active

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

Community Centre, Diamond Place, Summertown, Oxford:

Once again we have an interesting and varied programme for the months ahead.

Here is the programme until the end of the year and beyond.

September 12th - A holiday in Tunisia
with Ron Sears

October 10th - The meanderings of a
Mad Woman with Edith Parsons

November 14th - The Origins of Names
with Jean Pollard

December 12th - Christmas Lunch
TBA

January 9th - Business Meeting
to arrange programme for the year

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

A National helpline for visually impaired people

The 'Listening Eye' is a telephone helpline that has been set up to offer support for anyone with a sight problem throughout the United Kingdom.

It was set up by a group of blind people with long established experience of living with visual impairment, who are willing to listen or chat about particular problems or offer advice if asked.

This service was set up to signpost people to local agencies where necessary, and was established primarily to help those in rural areas who feel isolated by their visual handicap.

However, it is also as relevant for any visually impaired person or their carers where ever they live, and can often help by way of a sounding board or to allay fears about sight related problems.

Listening Eye offers support and empathy to anyone who needs the chance to talk about any aspect of failing sight.

The service is available between 6 and 10 pm Tuesday Wednesday or Thursday evenings on Freefone 0800 7831979.

For further information or leaflets please do not hesitate to contact me:
David Dick (co-ordinator)
Social Worker for the Blind, Retired.
16 Hay Street, Elgin, IV30 1NQ,
Scotland. ■■■

Your county council helping preserve your independence

The county council's Home Support Service works with people to ensure, as far as possible, that they can live comfortable, independent lives in their own homes. Your county council offers home support care 365 days a year giving practical help, with day-to-day, personal, social, rehabilitative tasks and enabling people to live at home rather than go into hospital or residential care. For more information on home support services, please call Social and Community Services on 01865 375515 or visit the council's website www.oxfordshire.co.uk ■■■

A light goes out in Oxford

My apologies to you all, but unfortunately I received notification too late for the last newsletter, that the Oxford Torch Trust, held their last meeting on 8th April at Shotover Community Centre Oxford. Should the meetings re-start we will let you know as soon as we know about it. ■■■

In the March edition we had news of visually impaired people doing amazing feats of daring. Well here is an update

Blind man skis, to world record!

One of them, a former soldier who had lost his sight, has set a new downhill speed skiing record by a blind person of 100.94mph. Kevin Alderton, 34, from Dartford, Kent, set the record at Les Arcs in France. Before the attempt he said: "You have to have a streak of lunacy in you to even attempt anything like this." Known as Kevin "Cannonball" Alderton, he said afterwards: "I feel absolutely amazing. It shows disability is no barrier to achievement. If I can inspire somebody to do something they would not normally do, my aims have been achieved. ■■■

One man and his dog on charity trek

Scott Cunningham, 35, from Larkhall, and his guide dog Travis, four, are setting out on an eight-day charity trek over the 112 miles of the Southern Upland Way from Bargrennan to Lauder in the Borders and hope to raise £10,000 for charity. He said: "This is without a doubt our biggest challenge yet, encountering varied tough terrain. We've been putting in lots of practice walking long distance training stretches and various Munros around Scotland. I am hoping to motivate and inspire other blind people to undertake challenges, no matter how big or small." ■■■

A leap into the deep

Another blind sportsman has defied many of the misconceptions about visually impaired people by becoming the first blind diver to reach a depth of 100 metres - something very few sighted divers have achieved. Mark Threadgold, from Saltdean, achieved the present

record in the Red Sea, in Egypt smashing his previous record by 30 metres, following months of intensive training. He said "Just because I'm blind, it doesn't stop me doing anything that anybody else does." He is already thinking about the next record. ■■■

Have the experience of a lifetime and give OAB a lifeline!

Here is your chance to experience a fabulous adventure and raise vital funds for Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

Even if you're convinced your dare-devil days are behind you, I'm sure you'll know someone who would jump at the chance to get involved, so spread the word! OAB has teamed up with "Skyline" who organise parachute jumps and other fantastic adventures enabling people to take incredible journeys.

You may remember 78-year old Laila Allen from Kidlington who successfully completed a parachute jump and raised lots of money for OAB. She said "I often do daring things just for fun so I thought it would be nice to do this jump, have a lot of fun and help Oxfordshire Association for the Blind".

So - if you or someone you know would relish an adventure, please fill in the form below and send it to us or give Andy, OAB's very own community fundraiser, a call on 01865 725595 and he can send you all the information you need.

Please send me information about the adventures I have indicated in the tick boxes below

- Sponsored Parachute Jump -
choice of 3 types of jump at a time to suit you
- Peru Trek -
Experience tropical rainforest, the Andes, visit Machu Picchu
- Iceland Trek -
Visit spectacular icecaps and glaciers, volcanic hot springs
- Vietnam Cycle Ride -
See beautiful green paddy fields, white beaches, rugged mountains

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Your email address _____

A sweep in the dark not a walk in the park for Andrew Strauss

At last, the long, warm, summer evenings, the chink of china tea-cup on saucer and the smell of fresh cucumber sandwiches. It's that time of year when one's thoughts turn to the sound of leather on willow, friendly banter and the applause of the admiring audience, lets talk cricket! Having limited vision need not mean you are excluded from playing. Cricket for Blind and Partially Sighted People has been played in England and Wales since the 1940's. The memory of being out first ball in a cricket match is always painful, even if you have eight Test centuries to your name. It first happened to temporary England cricket captain Andrew Strauss when as a 16-year-old he made his debut for Oxfordshire Under-19s. He may not have realised at the time but dismissal instantly made him eligible to join the

10,000 members of the Primary Club, the cricket charity for visually impaired people.

He recently took over as president of the Primary Club's new junior section. And he was persuaded to find out just what cricket is like for visually impaired players, who use a football, filled with ball-bearings, bowled underarm. He was blindfolded and managed one run off two balls before he was bowled out! Founded in 1955 and championed by late, great BBC cricket commentator Brian Johnston, the Primary Club funds sporting and recreational activities for blind and partially sighted people. It sponsors a national cricket competition and funds facilities for schools, other sporting facilities and holidays. For more information call David Thompson on 01865 725595.



Lotti Perry aims to ease patients stress

Being ill and having to go into hospital is a worrying and stressful experience, more so if you are visually impaired. Our Access Officer Lottie Perry has been instrumental in setting up our hospital patients visual awareness scheme, with the aim of making a stay in hospital less stressful by informing hospital staff members that a particular patient has a visual impairment. Any VI patient can participate and it is purely voluntary, 11

you do not have to divulge anything you don't want to. Each hospital ward has a supply of visual awareness stationary that is used to identify a patient with VI needs. A sign is place by the bedside, stickers are used on patients notes and information leaflets are available to staff on how they can best help their visually impaired patient. For more information call Lotti Perry 01865 243990. ■■■

Visually Impaired But Not Old

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

writes Nicola Pamphilon

We meet once a month on the first Tuesday of the month. We alternate between a meeting at a pub and then on the other month we do something completely different which has included audio described theatre trips, ten pin bowling, playing Skittles, playing Aunt Sally, greyhound racing and dining.

We are always looking for new members 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. For more information contact Nicola Pamphilon 01869 331778 or e-mail flashnp@aol.com ■■■

Come and try tenpin bowling

writes Team Captain Kevin Pamphilon

Are you interested in joining visually impaired people from the Oxfordshire area to play Ten pin bowling?

We meet at the BowlPlex in Oxford and play other visually impaired teams from around Britain. Bowling is not very strenuous and there is no need for any training or to buy any equipment to play.

We are a friendly group of people your are guaranteed a warm welcome. For more information and to receive a fixture list please can you contact Kevin Pamphilon, club captain on E-mail kp16302@aol.com or Phone 01869331778. ■■■

Hangover cure

Few of us have escaped a close encounter with protruding foliage at some time or another, unfortunately white sticks and guide dogs aren't very good at finding these obstacles, especially those above shoulder height. If you have had trouble with overhanging foliage contact your local council and inform them of the problem. If you live in the City of Oxford, contact the City Works Department on 252910. ■■■

Disabled Persons Parking Badge

If you are registered blind or disabled you qualify for a disabled person's parking badge. This enables your driver to park in designated disabled persons' parking places and restricted areas for limited periods of time. For more information contact Liz Cundy, Disabled Parking, Oxfordshire County Council, Social Services Department, PO Box 221, Kidlington, OX5 1YD. Telephone Number 01865 854409. ■■■

What is Audio Description?

It is an extra audio commentary for blind or partially sighted people. When there is a gap in the dialogue on TV or at the theatre for instance, an extra voice jumps in to explain anything visual going on so that visually impaired people can follow the plot.

In short: it tells you what visual stuff is going on while the characters aren't talking. You may also see Audio Description referred to as a 'narrative' soundtrack or commentary.

For example, when watching a film, a blind person may hear a thirty second silence followed by a crash and a scream on the soundtrack. Add Audio Description, though, and suddenly it'll be clear what's going on:

"A tall man, dressed in dirty overalls, quietly sneaks into Jane's house. She is doing aerobics in her upstairs bedroom, blissfully unaware as the man creeps silently, toe by toe, up the staircase, looking left to right. He steels himself and runs at the door. When he bursts into her room, Jane sees he has a stick of dynamite in his hand. Terrified, she stares at him and her mouth begins to open ..."

You can access audio description on TV, on DVD, on video, at the cinema, at theatre performances, in museums and also at sports grounds.

Although you'll find references to Audio Description around, at the moment it isn't very widespread. But it is growing in popularity. Soon, Audio Description for blind people will be as well-known and widespread as subtitles are for deaf people.

Currently you can receive Audio Description on digital television via Sky Digital or Freeview, and to a much lesser degree, on cable with Telewest and NTL. You cannot receive it on an ordinary old-fashioned analogue TV. ■■■

Wallingford Herald's good news

Here Simon Harrop tells us about Wallingford Talking Newspaper.

The Wallingford and District Talking Newspaper is distributed freely to residents of the Wallingford, Cholsey, Crowmarsh, Benson, Brightwell and North Stoke Area.

We always welcome new listeners and if you would like to receive weekly taped highlights of the Wallingford Herald together with a monthly magazine compiled from various local publications, please contact Judith Payne of 140 Wantage Road, Wallingford, OX10 0LU. Or call Simon Harrop on 01491 825104. ■■■

Video game tackles 'lazy eye'

Do you remember being at school and the kid walking around with a patch on one eye or one lens of their glasses covered in lint and sellotape? The chances are that they had amblyopia, commonly called Lazy Eye. This is when one eye works better than the other so the brain decides to use the good eye. The traditional way of fixing the problem is for patients to force the bad eye to work harder by wearing a patch over the good eye for around 400 hours.

Tests involving a treatment using a virtual reality racing game where a computer sends images to each eye separately have encouraged researchers. They assumed that they would need a system that required about 400 hours of treatment like patching but they seem to have achieved the same effect in an hour.

Modern virtual reality has allowed different but related dynamic information to be sent to each eye for the first time. This means that both eyes get a workout and the risks of double vision are lessened. Also the visual stimulation is intense and could definitely cut down significantly on the amount of treatment required.

The early results are promising a rapid effective treatment. Maybe patches and taped-up spectacles will be things of the past and lazy eyes will get really active with virtually active reality.



A Christmas present everyday

writes Lorna Arnold

Two years ago, I was given a wonderful christmas present. It was a subscription to TNA (+UK) - the Talking Newspaper Association. Every week TNA sent me recordings of selections from three national newspapers or magazines of my choice. I now have a double subscription for six titles including the Sunday Times and the Observer. The choice is huge, covering interests as varied as sport, gardening and history as well as national newspapers.

The readers are all volunteers, and one quickly learns to recognize their voices and to feel that they are friends. We even exchange little personal notes. These volunteers come in to the office on Sunday mornings to scan all the newspapers, and make a selection of articles. On Monday mornings they come in to record them. All the cassettes are sorted and mailed on Monday afternoon and arrive on Tuesday. How's that for service?

The TNA UK range is very extensive, and you can vary your choice whenever you wish. To find out more about the Talking Newspaper Association simply call the friendly TNA switchboard on 01435 866102 or ring Lorna Arnold on 01865 721697. But don't wait until christmas! ■■■

Eye warning call for cigarettes

Experts are calling for cigarette packets to carry a warning that smoking - even passive smoking - can cause age-related macular degeneration. A progressive loss of central vision due to degeneration of the macula - a region of the retina responsible for fine, central vision and UK's leading cause of blindness. (AMD) affects 500,000 people in the UK. A European Eye Study of 5,000 AMD patients found 27% had disease that was directly attributable to smoking. (Smokers double their risk of going blind, if they don't die of disease caused by their habit beforehand).

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists has called for the government to add a 'Smoking Causes Blindness' warning to others currently carried on cigarette packets.

The prospect of losing one's sight - and putting the sight of family members at risk - purely because of a smoking habit, should be a compelling reason for tobacco users to quit. However smokers continue to ignore the scientific evidence of the link between smoking and blindness even though it is now as plain as that linking smoking and lung disease.

Meanwhile, the Department of Health is sitting on its hands, whilst agreeing that it is important to raise

awareness of the effect smoking could have on sight, it says that warnings on cigarettes packets are determined by the European Commission, therefore it cannot independently add a warning of the risk of blindness caused by smoking. Perhaps the government should be lobbying the EC to amend their cigarette warning criteria to include the fact that smoking can blind you before it kills you. ■■■

No nonsense tape prices

TapeSense is a service for blind and visually impaired people supplying audio media and accessories at greatly reduced prices. TapeSense sell tapes (60 minute ferric tapes at 25p each and 90 minute ferric tapes at 29p each) batteries (Duracell AA for £1.29 for a pack of four). They have many more products than we have space to list here - It is probably best to call for a brochure as offers change regularly. To take advantage of this service simply call for an application form; all customers must register with their first order and provide verification of their VIP status. Once this is done, customers can order as often as they like. For details and an application/order form please call Oxfordshire Association for the Blind on 01865 725595 or, Kim on 020 7357 9298 or e-mail kim@persula.org. ■■■



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 _____

The maintainence of my sock collection

writes David Thompson

Unfortunately, they are one of life's necessary evils. To be honest I have an aversion to them. For much of the time they inhabit that dark, unspeakable place between my feet and my footwear. After which they require a thorough wash, and here begins the trouble.

Even before my sight was impaired I used to end up with an odd one on the washing line, its companion stuck into the top of the washing machine drum. Sometimes the sock was lost for months and discovered hibernating under a seldom moved item, such as my Hoover.

Then my vision deteriorated and my socks ran riot. I ended up with pairs of one brown, one blue and vice versa, even combinations of socks that I didn't know I owned, for example the yellow one with sequins.

In order to gain control over my sock domain I have adopted a number of strategies. Firstly, I got rid of all my different coloured socks and bought a brand new stock of black socks, all in the same style. Black goes with everything and I have 100% chance of getting a matching pair. Secondly I made sure that I kept them together. I used to roll my socks into a ball and put them into the wash to keep them together, but they did not get a good enough wash. If they were long enough I would tie them to each

other, but this tended to stretch them after a while. I find that little bulldog clips work well, you can get coloured ones which are easier to spot. If you then put all your pairs in a tied up pillowcase you don't have the problem of them getting mixed up with and lost in the rest of the wash.

However there may be strange VIPs who wish to wear different coloured socks, but not at the same time. One longwinded solution could be Slad-colour buttons. These are literally little buttons that come in a range of different shapes. Firstly, you need to get your socks sorted into matching pairs (as they used to say on Blue Peter "You may like to ask a grown-up to help you with this). Then you need to attach, preferably sew, a particular shape of button on to the outside top-end of all socks of a certain colour. For example, all the the black socks get a triangular button, all blue ones a square button and all the pink ones a round button. Then, in the future, you only need to match the buttons to avoid that "un-co-ordinated footwear" look.

Finally, my Grandmother used to say that "wearing odd socks accidentally, was a sign of unforeseen, good luck or a happy event. So, in order to keep your options open, keep the odd "wild card" pair of odd socks handy, just in case.



Liquid crystal glasses

US researchers are working on glasses which can change focussing power. They say that this breakthrough offers the advantage of wearers being able to use the whole lens area and they believe they could one day replace bifocal and varifocal glasses. The glasses use thick lenses to help support the weight of a series of concentric rings of tiny, transparent electrodes that control the optical properties of a thin layer of liquid crystal trapped between two layers of glass. Although there is potential here I am unconvinced that, given the present technology, these glasses offer a viable alternative to bifocal and varifocal lenses. They are quite heavy, there is a delay with the focus function and more work still needs to be done to iron out these “wrinkles”. ■■■

Digital viewing may be coming to you soon

Researchers in Scotland are developing a prosthetic retina, using the technology found in digital cameras, the tiny device would be implanted into the eye to stimulate the retina. It would detect light, convert it into electronic signals, these would be “fed” to the retina and on to the brain which would interpret them as visual images. The aim is not to replicate perfect vision, rather to restore enough sight to enable people to be independent in their everyday lives. Such a device could help people with macular degeneration and retinitis pigmentosa, however trials are at a very early stage and human trials are not expected for a few years, until the device is deemed viable and safe to use. ■■■

Green algae may help restore vision

Scientists have been able to make eye nerve cells respond to light by adding a protein from green algae. There is hope that such treatment could one day treat degenerative retinal-sight problems, restoring sight to patients who’s retinas have degenerated to a point far beyond any of the treatments now being developed. However I must

emphasise that this is a very long way off. The present work involves mice and will require much more research and testing before a human application is available. Even so this is another branch of research that gives us hope of having useful vision in the future. As soon as they are able to do so we will be the first to tell you! ■■■

Clubs and groups for VIPs in Oxfordshire

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

**Banbury Society for the
Visually Impaired**
Mary Cayless 01295 264185

**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

How to find us

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

Bradbury Lodge, Gordon Woodward Way, Abingdon Road,
Oxford, OX1 4XL. Telephone 01865 725595

