

OAB Newsletter

May 2010

Spring forward!

Spring has finally sprung and it's brought with it some good news which will help us to move forward. We've recently been accredited as an "Approved Provider" of volunteering services by the Mentoring and Befriending Association. This award recognises volunteer schemes that are well managed. The achievement is due to a sterling effort by our Volunteer Coordinator, Ana, who steadfastly worked through all of the procedural requirements of the award and ensured that we adopt good practice in all aspects of our service. It also recognises the value of all of our excellent volunteer home visitors in Oxford and Banbury, ably led by Ana, and our Banbury Coordinator, Janet. You may remember in my last article that I highlighted the accomplishments of our marvellous volunteers and I'm delighted that this award officially recognises their generous contribution to improving the quality of life of blind and partially sighted people in the county.

I can also announce some further good news. We now, once again, have two Patrons of the Association. The Countess of Macclesfield, who has generously supported us for many years, is now joined by Robin Birch, one of the Deputy Lord Lieutenants of Oxfordshire. The Trustees, the team and I are delighted to welcome Robin, who already has strong links with us through his work as a member of the Oxford Rotary Club. Robin is also familiar with the sight impairment professions as, when he was a senior civil servant, he set up the nationwide network of Low Vision Services Committees (LVSC's). These committees comprise members of the different agencies supporting visually impaired people, working together for the benefit of people in their county. OAB is represented on the Oxfordshire LVSC, and this is one of the main ways that we link with: the hospital ophthalmic services; Social

Please turn to page 3

**Summer Raffle
Tickets Enclosed**

First things First!

A gentle reminder!

May I remind everybody that subscribing to our Annual Membership scheme is an excellent way of showing your support as it gives us a stronger mandate to work for you and membership gives you a vote at our Annual General Meeting, which is on 7th September at the NOA in Summertown Oxford. For more information on Membership and donation, see pages 9, 10 and 11. ■■■

Avoid disappointment Make an appointment!

In order to give you the best possible service, we need to know you are coming to see us. Then we can ensure that the right person is here to give you the best possible help. So, we would be very grateful if you could please ring us on 01865 725595 and make an appointment! ■■■

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 9-4pm weekdays (24 hour message service)

Chairman **John Hewitt** Vice-chairman **Adrian Hill** Treasurer **David Warr**

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

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

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

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

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

Banbury Co-ordinator **Janet Payne**

Your Newsletter is written, compiled, edited by David Thompson

and Community Services; the Education Department; and other local groups. I'm pleased to say that Robin has straight away embraced the role of Patron and keen to offer his support and guidance.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to let you know that, following a very enjoyable event last year, we are going to hold another Summer Garden Party, at Wadham College, on 4th July. If you'd like to attend, please see the application form for tickets on page 5. Unfortunately, we only have limited spaces, so please book early to avoid disappointment.

I would also like to give you advanced notice that we will be holding our Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 7th September, at 2pm, at the North Oxford Association Centre in Summertown. We'd be delighted to see as many of you there as possible and, if you would like to propose any nominations or motions for the agenda, please do let me know in advance.

I'd also like to remind you that, as well as supporting blind and partially sighted people, OAB is also keen to support carers of visually impaired people (and visually impaired people who are themselves carers). If you are a carer and you would like some advice information, or just an understanding "listening ear", please do contact us and we will do our best to assist you. We are also planning on setting up get-togethers for small numbers of carers, to share experiences and offer mutual support,

so if you are interested in this, do let us know.

Finally, I'd like to sign-off by thanking all those of you, who do so much to help OAB. Whether it's by volunteer visiting, doing some DIY for us, collecting stamps or used mobile phones, making a donation or remembering us in your will, we are immensely grateful to you. We know that we could not undertake our work without your assistance, and every contribution, in whatever form, gives us encouragement to continue to develop our services. Thank you.

Colin Cure.



Good news about home visiting

OAB's Volunteer Home Visiting Scheme has been awarded Approved Provider Standard (APS) by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.

APS is a nationally accepted benchmark recognising safe, effective and professional practice delivering a quality service. We're really pleased with this endorsement of the scheme, which pairs up volunteers with people who are visually impaired and could do with some extra help at home – whether it's dealing with correspondence, getting out for a short walk or just a bit of company.

A very big thank you to all our Volunteer Home Visitors (more than 50 in Oxford, and 7 in Banbury) who make this possible. ■■■

OAB Summer Raffle

Following from the success of our “Summer 2009” raffle, we are happy to enclose a book of tickets for this year’s raffle with your newsletter.

The top prize on offer is £200, with £50 and a fine selection of wines as second and third prizes. Every pound of profit will go straight towards helping visually impaired people in Oxfordshire.

To stand a chance of winning, please remember to fill in your address and contact details on the stub for each ticket you’d like to enter. Tickets are £1 and each book contains ten tickets.

If you would like more tickets, please let the OAB team know and we will have more sent to you. If you would rather not receive any tickets in the future, we would also welcome your notifying us. We have done our best to not enclose tickets for those of you who requested this last year.

The draw will be held on Tuesday July 13th, with winners being notified that same week. We ask that all tickets for entry are completed and returned by Friday July 2nd. As a cost saving measure, we have decided to refrain from sending receipts confirming your entry this year, though we are very happy to do so if requested.

Thank you, and good luck! ■■■■

Garden Party 2009

The sun is shining; young men from Oxford’s Round Table are dressed in their finest waiting outfits and dashing around a marquee full of supporters for a local Oxfordshire charity; the author Colin Dexter is sitting down and speaking with his fellow guests after an entertaining talk on “Morse’s Oxford”; wine is circulating. This was the OAB’s 2009 Garden Party, on a sunny Sunday in July.

In the days and weeks following last year’s party, we received dozens of thank you cards from those who attended, and all mentioned how much they enjoyed Colin’s talk and the assistance which was provided by the Round Table and OAB volunteers. This is just one of the reasons why we were very appreciative to everyone who made the event possible.

We are, then, very grateful to Colin Dexter, The Oxford Round Table, and a number of our volunteers who have once again agreed to help us put on another party this year. We are excited by its prospect and hope that it may help the charity raise as much as possible for our new, important Resource Centre.

You are welcome to read about this year’s Garden Party and fill out our application form for a ticket on the next page. ■■■■

An Invitation to a Garden Party

In the early evening of Sunday July 4th we will host a Garden Party in the beautiful surroundings of Oxford's Wadham College: all OAB supporters and service users are invited.

The party will be focused in a marquee in the College's main gardens. Guests will be welcomed by live music, while a selection of finger food and a glass of wine will be provided. Colin Dexter has promised to return to provide another entertaining talk.

We want even more people to have the chance to enjoy the event this year and are happy to announce that tickets will cost £10 rather than the £15 which they did in 2009. We do, of course,

welcome any extra donations that you may wish to make. All proceeds from the event will go towards our new Resource Centre.

If you would like a ticket, please fill in the "Party Invitation Return Form" at the bottom of this page and send it to OAB at the usual address with a cheque for £10. You should return the form no later than Wednesday June 30th. The party's details will be enclosed with your ticket once we have received your form.

Please bear in mind that ticket numbers are limited and that we will operate on a first come first serve basis. We hope to see you at the party.



OAB Garden Party, Wadham College, Oxford. 4th July 2010

Please send me _____ tickets

I enclose a cheque/postal order in the sum of _____
made payable to OAB

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone Number _____

Return to : Oxfordshire Association for the Blind, Bradbury Lodge,
Gordon Woodward Way, Abingdon Road, Oxford, OX1 4XL.

News from the North

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

Dolphin Demo at Age Concern

The Dolphin computer software representative demonstrated how easy one of their newly acquired products is to use, particularly for people with some sight, at Age Concern in White Lion Walk, Banbury on February 15th to a group of VIPs and trainers who volunteer teaching older people to use computers.

The software is called Dolphin Guide, and is aimed at Visually Impaired People, (VIPs) who have not used a computer before. Instead of bombarding the VIP with lots of icons, toolbars and menus, it gives an easy list (which it reads out) of options such as email, internet search, addresses, correspondence and so on. These can mostly be accessed with three keys on the keyboard.

If you want a demonstration, a demonstration copy, or some training please make an appointment with Kasia on 01295 278040.

Bernard, a trainer there, also instructs in the use of Dragon talk-only software, which he mastered after he had had a stroke and could no longer use the keyboard.

Dolphin Guide can be used alongside Dragon but the combination can be tricky to use. There is a small fee for training, which for VIPs using Dolphin Guide, will happen on Wednesday afternoons.

Talking Newspaper

Banbury Talking Newspaper is pioneering new, very easy to use, technology in the form of memory sticks which slip easily into a small, easily managed, digital player. This is being issued to new subscribers. Peter Wroe and Dorothy Baker are also keen to consult with people to see if the group's selections from the newspaper are the ones you are wanting to hear. You can contact them on 01295 258474 and 01295 2554691.

Bowling group

This popular group continues to meet at Lakeside in Banbury at 1pm every Thursday contact me for more details!

MD Group

A new group has been formed for people who have macular disease in the Banbury area. It will meet at the Marlborough Rd Methodist Church in Banbury (OX16 5BZ) on the second Thursday of each month, from 2pm to 4pm.

Coming presentations will include topics covering holidays with the assistance of the Royal Blind Society, Calibre books and Oakhouse foods (with tastings!). The first meeting was very well attended and it looks as if it will be fun.

Banbury Blind Car Club

A very new group is forming as a result of a trip to Gaydon in January. Watch this space! Contact me, Janet Payne, if you are interested about knowing more – email banburycoordinator@oxeyes.org.uk; tel 07528688619 and I will put you in touch with the group or email sarahsalcombe@fsmail.net.

Help Desk

Don't forget that I am nearly always available on a Wednesday afternoon at Age Concern to demonstrate a small selection of gadgets, give information, or just chat if you want. Carers are also welcome – we know you need support, and I can possibly help or just lend an ear. Janet Payne 075286888619; email banburycoordinator@oxeyes.org.uk



What do you want on our website?

An increasing number of blind and partially sighted people are using the internet as a means of communicating with the world. Indeed, we know that a large number of you reading this will do so through our website (www.oxeyes.org.uk).

We are proud of our website but also believe it can be a lot better. We are currently planning a range of improvements to it. Our ideas include an FAQ section for newly registered blind or partially sighted people; much more information on OAB's funding, and how those funds are used to provide our services; better laid out information on the many groups and societies for visually impaired people which exist in the county; and a new section for carers of visually impaired people.

If you have any particular information or feature which you would like to see on our website, or have any particular frustrations or annoyances with our current design, please let us know and we will consider working these changes in to our new layout. We would also be grateful to you if you would like to volunteer to act as a "guinea pig" to trial the new website at the end of the developmental stage and offer us feedback before we open it up for everybody.

Please contact Ben Allcock on BenAllcock@oxeyes.org.uk or by calling him on the usual OAB number (01865 725595). Thank you. ■■■

Tribute to Joy Campoli

It was with much sadness that we learned earlier this year of the death of our dear friend Joy Campoli, at the age of 97.

Joy was a keen supporter of OAB and much loved, both here and at the Thame and District Society for the Visually Handicapped, where she regularly attended group meetings and outings.

Joy was born in York in 1912, but grew up in Thame. Whilst working in the BBC in 1937 she met her future husband the world famous concert violinist Alfredo Campoli and after they married, in 1942, she took on the business of arranging Alfredo's hectic touring schedule.

Those who knew Joy, were immediately struck by her kindness and compassion. Despite her own visual impairment and other health issues in later life, she was always thinking of other people.

She was extremely keen to see OAB flourish and a strong supporter of our aim to help as many blind and partially sighted people as possible. It is true to say that, without Joy's considerable help to us, we would not be in the favourable position that we are in today.

We will miss Joy, but always remember her generosity and thoughtfulness. Colin Cure.



Tribute to Enid Busby

It was also with sadness that we heard of the passing of a lady who voluntarily supported the blind people of Oxfordshire for many years.

For over 20 years Enid Busby was a tireless worker for those less fortunate than herself, she assisted with the running of the Chipping Norton Friends of the Blind club and she was so generous as to accompany and provide support for blind people on the bi-annual Oxfordshire Association for the Blind holidays. Her deeds of kindness were carried out quietly and largely unreported, little deeds such as helping a blind lady purchase new shoes, visiting those who could not get out and about and every year she would invite blind people to her house to spend Christmas with her.

Enid was also an active member of the League of Friends at Oxford's Radcliffe Infirmary, helping out 3 times a week and more if needed.

In 2001 her volunteering works, generosity and loyalty were recognised when she was invited to attend a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind has lost a good friend and Oxfordshire has indeed lost a lady of huge consideration, kindness and selflessness.

Mary Gregory, our Welfare Officer, who worked with Enid said of her "She did so much good work, she really was a marvellous lady". David Thompson



Giving more easily and effectively

by Michael Ling, *OAB Accounting Officer*

Gift Aid

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

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

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

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

Standing Order

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

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

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

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

Support OAB become a member!

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

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

Our sincere thanks to all donors

We are very grateful for all donations, whether given in support of the day to day running of the association, or toward a specific project, or in memory of a loved one,
Every donation very much appreciated. ■■■

Membership and donation

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

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

Membership

Please tick the appropriate box/es

Member

(£5.00 annually)

Friend

(£20.00 annually)

Life Member

(£250.00)

Donation

 £5 £10 £20 £50 £100

Other amount £.....

Gift Aid

Please tick the appropriate box

Please treat this payment as a Gift Aid donation

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

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

Signed

Date.....

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

OAB Oxfordshire Association for the **Blind**

1877-2010

*Helping blind people
for 133 years*

Registered Charity 273559

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

Phone : 01865 725595 Fax : 01865 725596

Standing order instruction

To the Manager:.....Bank plc

at:

.....

.....Post Code

Please pay to **CAF Bank plc, 25 Kings Hill Avenue,
Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4JQ**
Sort Code **40-52-40**

For the credit of Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

Account number is **00015471**

The sum of £..... (in words).....

on theday of200.....

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

Signed **Date**.....

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____



Have you remembered GiftAid?

VIBNO

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

We meet once a month on the first Wednesday of the month. We alternate between a meeting at a pub and then on the other month we do something completely different.

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

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed a drink and a catch up at the pub in Kidlington and had a delicious Chinese buffet in Summertown!

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

Wantage Blind Club

A social club for partially sighted and blind people living locally. Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month from February to December at the Wantage Day Centre from 3-5pm where members can socialise over afternoon tea. A raffle is held and there is often entertainment. There is also an annual outing. Transport is available by Special Transport Ambulance or in volunteer's cars. For more information call Hazel Aldred on 01235 765849 or Joy Ripley on 01235 763112. ■■■

Come Bowling!

Long summer evenings and the smell of cut grass, the thrilling sight of lignum vitae sweeping across manicured greens, cries of "You haven't sent it" and the satisfying clunk of wood on wood. What am I whittering on about you may ask? What else but flat green bowls!

You can play for recreation or as part of a team in competitions and the bowls league. However for most people Bowls is predominately a good opportunity for a social get together, a chat and a bit of fresh air! (Unless you are bowling indoors!).

Visual impairment need not be a barrier to enjoying bowls and you can have loads of fun, meet lots of people and make wonderful friends.

We have been asked to try and find out how many people would like to have a go at bowls in Oxfordshire, with a view to having regular sessions and perhaps even starting a club.

It doesn't matter what age you are, man or woman, experienced or not, if you are interested please let David Thompson know on 01865 725595. ■■■

Banbury Blind Club

Meets alternate Tuesdays 10.30am - 2.00pm at the WRVS Centre. Helpers are always welcome. For more information call Enid Smith on 01295 12269568. ■■■

Carers need caring for too!

Are you caring for someone who has a sight impairment?
Or are you a carer who has a sight impairment?

Many people spend a lot of time providing care to someone who is disabled or has other needs. They may be a spouse, another relative, or a good friend. They may not see themselves as a "carer", but are clearly providing a lot of support to someone else. At OAB, we understand that caring, perhaps for a visually impaired person, can be a demanding role and we wish to support carers as well as the people that they care for.

If you are a carer and would like to talk to us about your situation, please do not hesitate to call us.

We work with the Oxfordshire Carers' Centres (see below) and many other agencies in the county, so we can also signpost you to other sources of assistance.

We are also planning on arranging informal get-togethers, where carers can share experiences over a cup of coffee, and find out about what is available to support them and the person that they help, so if this is of interest to you, please let us know. For more information please contact us on 01865 725595.



Carers groups in Oxfordshire

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

North and West Carers Centre

27 Horse Fair
Banbury
OX16 0AE
01295 264545
cc.nwoxon@dsl.pipex.com

Oxford Carers Centre

174a Cowley Road,
Oxford, OX4 1UE
01865 205192
info@carerscentre.co.uk
Website:
www.carerscentre.co.uk

South and Vale Carers' Centre

5 Lydalls Road,
Didcot, OX11 7HX
01235 510212
carers@svcarers.org.uk
Website:
www.svcarers.org.uk

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

supported by

www.oxford.gov.uk



Do you enjoy theatre, cinema and TV?

Access to theatre, films (either at home or in the cinema) and TV used to be really difficult if you had sight problems. Things are gradually improving. Here's a quick overview of some of the ways you can continue to enjoy these forms of entertainment.

Audio description is a way of conveying the visual elements of a theatre performance, film or TV show – not only the action, but also the setting, how the characters are dressed, facial expressions, body language, lighting and visual jokes that you might otherwise miss. The audio description is delivered during natural pauses in the dialogue and it's a bit like having a friend sitting beside you, whispering in your ear.

In the theatre, the description comes to you live through a lightweight headset. No-one else can hear. There's usually a touch tour before the show starts - an opportunity to visit the set and get an impression of the scenery and props. An introduction, delivered through the headset a few minutes before the start of the performance, gives you information that there may not be time to explain as the action unfolds, including more detailed descriptions of the set, characters and costumes.

Information about audio described performances is usually given in the theatre's programme, which may be available in an audio format, and on the website, sometimes as an audio file. Ask to go on the mailing list. When you book, always explain that

you want to listen to the audio description - it may affect where you need to sit in the theatre and you, and sometimes a companion, will usually be eligible for a concessionary ticket price. Guide dogs may be allowed into the auditorium, or theatre staff may look after them during the performance.

Many cinemas are now equipped with a system that delivers audio description through a headset which is provided when you collect your ticket for an audio described showing. The audio description is undetectable to anyone not wearing a headset.

For those who prefer renting films and watching them at home, many DVDs now come with audio description. If you belong to one of the online rental schemes, the website will tell you what films have this facility (over 500 on LoveFilm for example).

Audio description is available on all major TV channels. Many popular soaps and sitcoms are audio described, not to mention loads of dramas, documentaries, cookery shows and other programmes. To get AD, you must be able to receive digital TV. If you can receive more than five channels or six channels then you're probably already digital. If you want to convert your TV, take advice first as not all set-top boxes and integrated digital TVs can receive AD.

Audio Description continued: Useful Contacts

This is far from an exhaustive list, but here is some information that may help to get you started with audio description.

- There are regular coach trips from Oxford to audio described shows in London – recent trips have included Phantom of the Opera and The Mousetrap – organised by Gwen Cruden 01865 373378
- RNIB's Big Print newspaper includes listings of audio described programming
- There is good information on the RNIB website www.rnib.org.uk about how to access audio description on your TV.
- Find up to date listings of cinemas showing audio described films at www.yourlocalcinema.com/ad.html or ask at your local cinema.
- The Oxford Playhouse produces an audio brochure. Contact Hester Bond Telephone 01865 305334
e-mail hester.bond@oxfordplayhouse.com and ask to go on the mailing list.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with OAB if you want to know more. Call us on 01865 725595

Vision Impaired Visually Active

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

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

VIVA Programme 2010

June 8th Outing, to be arranged
July 13th Ann Spokes Symonds, Lessons from Life
August No meeting this month

Sept 14th Queenie Hamilton talks about Wolvercote
Oct 12th Ralph Wilkins
Nov 9th Quiz and Bring and Buy Sale
Dec To be arranged

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

Target shooting

Deanshanger air rifle club is a sports target shooting club specifically for blind and partially sighted people. The club is a self funded organisation that is run by visually impaired people for visually impaired people and meets every Monday afternoon to hone their skills.

The club uses state of the art audio targeting equipment which allows each shooter to aim and shoot using audio tones that are heard through a pair of headphones that are worn when firing, this class of shooting is known as Acoustic Shooting and is recognised all over the world as a competitive sport. Each of the clubs' rifles is fitted with a special sight that utilises a luminous intensity captor projection device that pinpoints where the shot will hit, this combined with the audio equipment means that each shooter is capable of shooting as well as, or in some cases better than a fully sighted person.

The club is registered with both the NSRA (National Small-bore Rifle Association) and the BBS (British Blind Sports) organisations.

The club always welcomes enquiries and actively encourages those who are interested in visiting the club so they can see what it is all about. If you are interested in trying your hand at this fun and challenging sport, or you would like some more information about the club please contact: Mike Gurney on 01908 571 347.

A VIP invitation from Toastmasters

Men and Women all over the world share a common fear of standing up in public and expressing their ideas and opinions. Even when they overcome that fear they very often find that they have to concentrate more on how they are speaking than what they are actually saying.

Toastmasters are a non-profit making organization that provides a safe learning environment where you can practice those skills. It lets you experiment with speaking and listening skills in a safe and positive environment allowing the individual to find the courage and the ability to express their thoughts and opinions.

So whether it's that important presentation at work, a best man's speech, a local community meeting or its simply to overcome one of your most basic fears why not come along and see for yourself what Toastmasters can do for you, you may be amazed by what you learn and who knows you may find your voice.

There are five clubs in Oxfordshire, eager to welcome visually impaired people to their meetings. Initial admission is free for the VIP and a companion, it is intended that an accessible welcome pack will be provided and transport may be available where required. The Toastmasters are very keen to send out an invitation to any sight impaired person who expresses an interest. For more information lease let OAB know and we will pass on your details. ■■■

OAB Newsletter Now Available With QR Codes

At OAB, we are always looking at new and more convenient ways for you to access our quarterly newsletter. To this end, OAB are pleased to announce the introduction of a new QR Code for mobile phones.

Now, some of this may seem to be gobbledygook to many people and I must admit that, at first I was flummoxed, however, if you have a modern mobile phone with internet access, by following the instructions carefully, with enough residual vision and or some access software, it may be possible to use your phone to look at our newsletter on the go!

What is a QR Code? QR is short for Quick Response. Think of it as a bar code you see on food products in a supermarket. It is a two dimensional black and white bar code which, when scanned using your camera phone will enable you to access the OAB Newsletter on your mobile phone!



How does it work? For your mobile phone to work with QR Codes it needs a camera and connection to the internet. Additionally, you will need a QR Reader installed on your phone. There are many free readers on the market, but the most popular readers are BeeTagg [<http://www.beetagg.com/downloadreader/>] and Kaywa [<http://reader.kaywa.com>]. Alternatively, enter your mobile phone model in the search box (top right) of this webpage [<http://www.mobile-barcodes.com/qr-code-software/>] and it will list which readers will work with your phone.

Once you have installed and activated the QR Reader on your phone, aim your camera at the code. Ideally, the camera should be centred and on an even level with the Code. Also ensure your phone is near enough so that the code covers the majority of the screen but is not cut off by the edges.

Depending on the type of reader you have installed and your type of phone, you can take the photo yourself or it may do it automatically. Once you have scanned the code, the reader will then decode the QR code and present you with a link to the OAB Newsletter. Simply follow that link and you are now connected.

The new OAB QR Code will be printed on the back page of the newsletter hereafter. ■■■

OAB Demonstration Day

10am to 3pm on 15th June 2010

Four Pillars Hotel, Abingdon Road, Oxford

We are glad to announce another demonstration day in Oxford, an opportunity to see technology and equipment designed specifically to make life easier for people living with visual impairment. We are hoping to have 4 exhibitors.

Professional Vision Services with their range of fantastic electronic CCTV magnifiers, ideal for helping those who wish to keep up with correspondence, read magazines and look at pictures and photographs but don't want to use an optical magnifier. These devices provide automatic focus, full colour, a range of false colours and magnification up to 60 times.

Dolphin Systems with their range of computer accessibility software, providing ease of access for all levels of expertise, from beginner to computer whizz! Their products make your computer accessible by providing screen magnification and speech.

Computer Room Services are experts in the field of accessible mobile phones! They will bring along a small selection of them with software installed that can make a regular mobile phone read out text messages, announce the callers name and much, much more.

At the time of writing, we think that Cobolt Systems will be able to attend, with their range of brilliant talking daily

living equipment, from watches and clocks to blood pressure monitors and skipping ropes! We hope they can make it on the day. We look forward to seeing you too!

Free Accessibility Software Training

Later this month there will be two free demonstration and training days for computer accessibility software as Thunder and Webbie roll across the county! Thunder is a free screen-reader product and Webbie is a similar product that works on the internet. Please note that booking for the training is essential.

The venues are

Adult Learning Centre, floor two, Central Library, Westgate Centre, Oxford. Date: 25th May from 10.30am to 3.30

To book your place contact
Serena on 01865 894935.

Age Concern, White Lion Walk, Banbury on May 26th in the afternoon, from 1.30pm to 5.30pm.

To book your place contact
Kasia at Age Concern, Banbury
01295 278040

Janet Payne, OAB Banbury

Talk of the towns

This is an article that we are pleased to include from the South Oxfordshire District Council's Outlook Magazine

If you live in one of our market towns you probably know and love all its hidden gems. However many people living outside the district don't, and choose to shop, work or spend their leisure time somewhere else. So we decided to find out exactly what Henley, Thame and Wallingford's unique qualities were and what the towns could do to attract more customers, encourage them to stay longer and spend more money.

Some of the projects being explored include better promotion of local food in the towns and creating brands to promote the towns to residents and visitors.

Henley has a well-established reputation thanks to its annual regatta and many festivals. A lively town that has much to offer. With better signage, as well as encouraging visitors to explore more, it would ease pressure on central car parks.

Thame has a very loyal clientele and a wide variety on offer. Its strong rural links provide a great opportunity to develop rural shows and festivals, and promote outdoor pursuits. Yet the traffic in the centre slightly detracts from its market town charm and village atmosphere.

Wallingford with its Saxon history could be the most visited historic site in South Oxfordshire. However, some of the history is hidden and we need stronger links between the town

centre and the river, castle grounds and museum. The town has quirky independent shops and plays a starring role as the town of Causton in Midsomer Murders.

For more details visit the web pages www.southoxon.gov.uk/markettowns or call Caroline Wood on 01491 823313.

To read more from the magazine on the internet visit

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/news/outlook/>



Labels to enable?

How about a badge on your lapel or jersey to let those sighted people know so that they can assist where it is needed! For instance at a street crossing, in a shop or hospital or even at the Races. The badges come in yellow or black as the picture shows



Phone Sarah to order one (or two!) on 01865 725595.



Clubs and groups for VIPs in Oxfordshire

Abingdon & District Macular Group

Daphne Baker 01491 835157

Banbury Society for the Visually Impaired

Enid Smith 01295 269568

Bicester Friends of the Visually Impaired

Mrs Peggy Clarke 01869 242290

Carterton Social Club

Rosemary Gibbens 01993 846825

Chipping Norton Friends of the Blind

Mary Gregory 01608 810899

Didcot/Wallingford OAB affiliated

Pam Organ 01235 813391

Dorothy Drummond 01235 812614

Faringdon representative

Jean Young 01367 241467

Henley VIP Group

Mike Pooley 01491 628284

Look Oxfordshire Support for families of VI children

Alison Baker 01235 868262

Kidlington Macular Group

Tom Wright 01865 376482

Marita Ferrett 01865 373104

Oxford Macular Group

Daphne Dorman 01993 811084

Oxford Visually Impaired Club

Mary Gregory 01608 810899

'Oxpots' Pottery Class

Christopher Barry 01608 730407

Thame and District Society for the Visually Handicapped

Norman Lilley 01844 261041

Visually Impaired But Not Old!

Nicola & Kevin Pamphilon 01869 331778

VIVA, North Oxford

Liaison Officer, Ron Sears 01865 553063

Wantage Blind Social Club

Mrs Mary Greenfield 01235 764646

Secretary Hazel Aldred 01235 765849

Witney Area Visually Impaired Group

Mandy Bishop 01993 706824

Oxfordshire Social Services Sensory Impairment Team

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

Sensory Impairment Teams,

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

Telephone 01235 549395

VI Team

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

Manager

John Fearn-Webster

Out of hours social services, emergency freephone 0800 833408.