

OAB Newsletter

November 2010

Annual General Merriment!

Well, maybe not quite “merriment” but I could not think of another word beginning with M to describe what a cheerful occasion our AGM was this year! Perhaps it was because of the excellent presentation that was made by Rasmeet Chadha, Deputy Head of Optometry at the John Radcliffe Hospital, about Optometry past, present and future. Perhaps it was because of the pleasure of awarding Honorary Life Membership to eight very worthy people whose wonderful efforts, over many years, to assist visually impaired people, deserved appropriate recognition. Or perhaps it was just the positive atmosphere formed by getting together, in one room, all of the people whose dedication and efforts over the year have helped OAB forward and enabled us to continue to provide our services to blind and partially sighted people in Oxfordshire.

A very enjoyable occasion then. On a sad note, Nigel Parsons and Tony Barringer both decided to step down from their role as trustees of OAB. I'd like to thank them both for all of their hard work and guidance, in supporting me and the team. We will miss them.

Fortunately however, all of the remaining trustees: John Hewitt,

Professor Adrian Hill, David Warr, Desmond Pimm, Sean Rainey and Margaret Simpson, kindly agreed to stand for re-election and were duly elected. Our Vice Presidents, Professors Adrian Hill and Tony Bron were also re-elected. In accordance with the Constitution, John Hewitt stood down as Chairman of the trustees as he has completed a maximum term of three years. I'd like to pay tribute to John for being such an excellent Chairman and a great support to myself over those years.

I'm pleased to say that David Warr, who has been doing a great job as our Treasurer, was duly elected as the new Chairman and David and I have already started work on our next schedule of plans. I'm looking forward to working with David, who I know is keen to continue the leadership, which has been so ably played by his predecessors. Adrian has kindly agreed to continue as Vice-chairman and John has taken over the role of Treasurer.

In Rasmeet's talk at the AGM she emphasised the close working relationship that we have with the Eye Department and the other members of the Low Vision Services Committee. Several members of that Committee

Please turn to page 3

First things First!

A gentle reminder!

With the festive season fast approaching I am prompted to remind our supporters that the OAB Annual Membership subscriptions will soon be due! Your support is vital and gives us a stronger mandate to work for you and membership gives you a vote at our AGM. For more information please look at pages 11, 12 and 13. ■■■

Avoid disappointment, Make an appointment!

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

Keeping it short and sharp

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

The Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

Registered Charity 273559

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

Telephone 01865 725595 ● Fax 01865 725596 ●

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Banbury Co-ordinator **Janet Payne**

Your Newsletter is written, compiled and edited by David Thompson

and other contributors were involved in a week of programming on BBC Radio Oxford from 4th to 8th October. Our aim was to attempt to publicise the services available to visually impaired people in the county. You may have heard some of the broadcasts. We regret that there was not time to inform people about this in our last newsletter but we hope that we reached a large audience.

At the time of writing, we are just putting the final preparations together, ably led by our own Judith Wood, for our Black Tie Dinner at the Randolph Hotel in Oxford on 15th October. We're very grateful to the hotel, who are offering the evening at no cost to the charity, and to our good friend, author, Colin Dexter, who has helped with the organisation. The occasion is already fully booked with 180 of our marvellous supporters. I'm sure that the evening will be a great success and the funds raised will help us to continue to develop our services.

Before I sign off, I'd like to mention, once again, the excellent groups and clubs for visually impaired people whose contact details are towards the end of each newsletter. I know that some people would like to socialise more but feel uncertain about going to a new group. I would urge you to give it a try. All of the groups are very welcoming and I'm often told by new members what a difference it makes to them.

As ever, I'd like to thank all of you who do so much to enable us to continue our work with sight impaired people. The trustees, the team and I are very grateful to you. Colin Cure. ■■■

Becoming a charitable company

At the AGM the trustees announced that OAB is to become a charitable company. This means that we will remain a charity providing all of our services to blind and partially sighted people, registered with the Charities Commission. In addition, we will become, like many other charities, an incorporated company registered with Companies House. Whilst our services remain unaffected, the legal status of being a Limited Company provides protection for our trustees in financial matters. As we are hoping soon to enter a contract to build our new Resource Centre, it is prudent to make this change in advance. It will also make it easier for us to recruit future trustees to help steer the organisation forwards. ■■■

Farewell to the Bicester VIP Group

It is with much sadness that we report that the marvellous Bicester Friends of the Visually Impaired have had their last meeting. The group was started in 1979 as the Bicester and District Friends of the Blind by Mrs Zia Watt. Since then, the group has provided a regular opportunity for local blind and partially sighted people to meet together, share experiences, companionship, outings and plenty of humour. We'd like to pay tribute to all of the people who have supported the group over many successful and enjoyable years, including the final group leader, Peggy Clarke, and her able assistants, Evelyn Humphries and

OAB on the radio

We know that many of you reading or listening to this newsletter feel frustrated by the lack of coverage that visual impairment and visually impaired people receive on the local radio and in the press. As a small team which exists primarily to support people, rather than to raise awareness for the sake of itself, this is a difficult issue for us.

You can imagine then how delighted we were to have secured the week of interviews and discussions about visual impairment and visually impaired people that was on BBC Oxford radio during the week of October 4th. During the week listeners heard from a number of local experts including our own Judith Wood, who is our Counsellor and Sight Advisory Officer, to the author Colin Dexter and the joint-head of Optometry at the John Radcliffe, Jo Steen. A number of local visually impaired people with whom we work were also interviewed about how they live with the range of visual impairments that each of them have. You can listen to the interviews on our website, www.oxeyes.org.uk.

We realise that this doesn't "solve" the issue of raising awareness about the many issues that a number of you face every day as a visually impaired person. However, we do believe that it helped more people in Oxfordshire to understand a little bit more about the support that is available for them if they are concerned about their sight and how we and many other groups, like Social and Community Services, can help. We will continue to raise awareness as best we can. ■■■

Help from the community

We feel very lucky. In the last few years we've received funds from a huge range of events. Local people have raised thousands of pounds for our cause in many ways over the years. From fast and thrilling, like parachuting out of planes, to a range of more pleasant and peaceful activities, like putting on a charity cheese festival in Chadlington, organising a charity auction, being sponsored to walk around Oxford's University Parks or collecting money while singing songs to people in pubs at Christmas.

We are very grateful to everyone who has organised an event or been sponsored to take on a challenge on our behalf. If you have an event that you would like to organise to help, or one which you know friends or family or yours would like to do for us, then do please let us know and we will try to support you as best we can. Thank you. ■■■

Looking ahead?

Don't forget we still have large print calendars, desk diaries and pocket diaries for 2011 available! These have been designed specifically for visually impaired people and gain in popularity every year. For more information contact Sarah on 01865 725595. ■■■

It's the I-phone 4 for me!

Many thanks for this very informative article from Vicki Thompson who is registered blind and now able to use a touch screen "smart phone".

I've been using a regular mobile phone for 12 years but as the accessibility options that came with the phones were so limited, I have never been able to read the screen so I have not had easy access to text messages or saving peoples' phone numbers and managing contacts lists, let alone access to all of the new fancy smart features available these days. OK, I could have gone out and purchased extra accessibility software such as Talks or MobileSpeak but, at £150 a go and with a transfer fee everytime I upgraded, this seemed a bit expensive. So, I was excited to learn that there is a screen reader facility built into the latest I-phone. When my mobile phone contract was up for renewal I decided to try one to see if it was any good and I am pleased to say that I was not disappointed, in fact I am delighted!

Ok, it is not immediately plain sailing as the accessibility options do not operate "out of the box". The helpful man at the phone shop did this for me, then within a minute the speech was up and running, and with a couple of quick tweaks to the settings I was off!

The phone is a touch screen device, so it does not have a regular set of telephone keys. The basic idea is quite simple, you run your finger over the screen and the phone speaks what ever your finger

touches, then you can double tap the screen to select the item, i.e. phone, messages etc. As well as simple tap control a series of swipe controls access other screens or read a body of text. This might sound a bit involved but don't worry, there is a tutorial which describes all the swipe and tap controls and what they do.

I've found that the voice over will work on almost all of the features on the phone. I can use the internet, go onto Facebook, send and receive text messages as well as e-mails and use the media player to look at pictures and videos that I have taken with the camera or downloaded. Some of the applications that can be downloaded from the "app store" that are heavily graphics based don't work very well and the maps, for obvious reasons function is largely a no go area at the moment.

On the whole however, the speech provided by Apple on the I-phone 4 is pretty good and while it could be argued that an entirely touch screen device will never be a perfect solution for blind and visually impaired people, I think that Voice - over is by far the best "out of the box" option available for visually impaired people to date, allowing access to technology that has been, until now, largely unavailable to myself and other visually impaired users. ■■■

Exclusive Christmas Cards

in aid of Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

“Sleepy
Camels”



“Mother and
Child”



“Cheerful
Christmas
Robin”

Order your Christmas Cards now!

Just fill in this form or call us on 01865 725595

The brand new range of Christmas Cards that our good friend, artist Frankie Cummins has designed and painted are selling like the proverbial hotcakes! These cards are proving very popular, so don't delay, order yours now to avoid disappointment. We are also able to offer "Vintage Variety Packs" of 5 assorted favourite designs for 50p and some old favourites are also available in packs of 10 for just £1.00! Please fill in the order form below and return to us at

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

Your Name _____

Your address _____

Postcode _____

Number of packs required	New Designs	Size inches	Cards per pack	Price
	Sleepy Camels	8 x 6	10	£4.00
	Robin in holly	4.5 x 4	10	£3.00
	Mother and child	4.5 x 4	10	£3.00

Old Favourites

	Camels	Various	10	£1.00
	Partridge	6 x 4	10	£1.00
	Angel with Horn	6 x 4	10	£1.00
	Cows at manger	8 x 5	10	£1.00
	Variety Pack	Various	5	50p

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

Communiclock need never stop

You may remember that in a previous newsletter I told you about the Communiclock, a marvelous radio controlled calendar/clock that, once you have inserted batteries, sets itself and checks that it is always correct so you don't ever have to worry about the time and date! That is true until the batteries run out. Well now you can run it off the mains as we can now get an electric power supply designed specifically for the Communiclock. For more information call David or Sarah on 01865 725595. ■■■

LED Clock

Although the communiclock is very popular, some people have said that they would like to have a talking clock with a digital LED display that is large enough to see. As we are always anxious to please, we have sourced just such a device! The clock casing is rectangular and black in colour, by pressing a button on the top you activate a clear female voice and the display of red LED characters are about an inch tall, (or 2.5 centimetres if you are into metricity). This makes them visible for far more of our clients. You can have optional hourly reports, set alarms and, most important, have a snooze setting! For more information call Sarah or David on 01865 725595. ■■■

What colour is the wind?

Whilst rummaging through the dark depths that are the far end of the Portakabin, we came across a mysterious device that I had not seen for a while, a Talking Colour Detector. A device which, though it can't tell you the colour of the prevailing air currents, could be very useful for someone living independently, with limited vision. Very light and easy to use, this device has the potential for a wide range of useful applications from checking the colour of clothes to the ripeness of fruit while shopping! For more information or to arrange an appointment to come in and have a demonstration Sarah or David on 01865 725595. ■■■

Say Goodbye to bulky waste

Being visually impaired means you have largely to rely on friends, family and Public Transport. When it comes to getting rid of bulky waste items such as fridges, freezers, cookers, etc our options seem even more limited. However, all is not lost! Each district council in Oxfordshire operates a bulky waste disposal service that can prove extremely helpful to VIPs. For more information contact us on 01865 725595. ■■■

Need to keep in touch?... try the Penfriend

By the time you receive this newsletter we should have in our possession the PenFriend. No, not a correspondent from a distant and exotic location! It is a device that allows people to read audio labels on everyday objects and to be able to identify them by scanning them with this device that looks like a rather fat marker pen.

The PenFriend uses minute barcodes which - when scanned by a digital pen - trigger MP3 files recorded on the unit.

It can be used to label foods and medication as well as clothing, personal documentation and film and music collections.

Optical identification technology (OID) allows microdots on adhesive labels to be read by the scanner in the tip of the PenFriend. This in turn triggers an MP3 file, usually of the user's own voice, giving a spoken description of the item that is labelled. The PenFriend can hold up to 70 hours of audio recordings and can also be used as a standard MP3 player.

This means that people are not limited to just a few seconds to describe the object being labelled. Information such as a food item's sell-by date, its ingredients and even cooking instructions can be included. >>>

In the case of medication, the purchase date and dosing instructions can be added.

Furthermore, since the descriptions are not limited as they are on other devices, you can use the device as an "aide memoire", recording diary dates and appointment reminders, listing time date and venue, things to take with you, things to consider, questions to ask and so on.

For more information or to book an appointment to see the PenFriend call Sarah or David on 01865 725595. ■■■

Improved Synergy!

You may remember that this time last year we acquired a new, more affordable electronic CCTV magnifier called the Synergy. Well, we still have it but now it has been improved with a better camera so the images are even clearer! For some people with sufficient residual vision, this makes it the ideal device for looking at photographs, magazines, reading the newspapers, doing crosswords and keeping up with correspondence. If you would like to come and have a look at it please give David a call on 01865 725595. ■■■

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



News from the North

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

Health Walks update

The last Health Walk of the summer took place on a fine blowy day on 16th September and a good time was had by all. The number of walkers has been patchy this summer but we ended on a good note with two new walkers chatting and walking without even realising that they were not needing assistance. I can't emphasise enough how positive it is for people to just relax into walking normally because the group goes at a slower pace, and being able to chat to different walkers while appreciating the countryside's sounds and smells as well as its sights.

The calendar for next year will be announced in our next newsletter so do come along. Anyone is welcome whether VI or not, two legs or four. Meanwhile, our thanks and gratitude go to this year's walk leaders: Maurice, Lorna, Ali and Jim who have given sterling support to the walks for the past two years and are willing to continue in 2011. ■■■

Banbury Blind Club

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

Banbury Bowlers

The bowling group continues to meet at Lakeside on Thursdays at 1pm and now has some additional sessions on Tuesdays from 12pm onwards. For more information give me a call on 075286888619. ■■■

Help Desk

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

Coming in February...

An exhibition of Blind Art at Banbury Museum....

more in the next edition! ■■■

Banbury MD Group

MD is Macular Degeneration

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

The next talk will be from the Citizens Advice Bureau covering Financial Capability. A trip from the Banbury Group to OAB's resource centre is in the pipeline. For more information

10 contact John on 01608 685293 ■■■

Giving more easily and effectively

by Michael Ling, *OAB Accounting Officer*

Gift Aid

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

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

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

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

Standing Order

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

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

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

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

Support OAB become a member!

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

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

Our sincere thanks to all donors

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

Membership and donation

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

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

Membership

Please tick the appropriate box/es

Member

(£5.00 annually)

Friend

(£20.00 annually)

Life Member

(£250.00)

Donation

 £5 £10 £20 £50 £100

Other amount £.....

Gift Aid

Please tick the appropriate box

Please treat this payment as a Gift Aid donation

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

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

Signed

Date.....

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

OAB Oxfordshire Association for the *Blind*

1877-2010

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 of20.....

and the same sum on the same day in each succeeding

month / quarter / year (*delete as appropriate*) until further

notice and debit my account number

Signed **Date**

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____



Have you remembered GiftAid?

Have a look at Outlook

South Oxfordshire District Council produces its residents' newsletter 'Outlook' four times a year and delivers it to the district's 55,000 households. You can also download the latest edition from the website and they now have "Accessible Outlook" now you can listen to Outlook online. Or receive an email when the latest PDF of Outlook is available by sending an email to this address communications@southoxon.gov.uk A few residents ask why they don't just do Outlook online to save money. Unfortunately many people in the district do not have internet access so it would prevent them accessing information about the council. For more information contact the Communications team: Telephone 01491 823022 ■■■

Our QR code



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

Versa's little brother

Since our last newsletter many clients have come to our demonstration room to look at the Versa, a handheld electronic magnifier that is proving very popular, especially to people with stable residual vision. It is ideal for looking at labels, menus, bills and correspondence and is light and easy to carry around in a purse or jacket pocket.

Well now I am very pleased to announce that we have the "little brother" of the Versa, the rather strangely named "Awkey" for you to come and have a look at. It is smaller, lighter and cheaper than the Versa and although it has fewer functions than its big brother, it has the benefit of making it a simpler device to use. For more information or to book an appointment to look at these or any other equipment, call Dave on 01865 725595. ■■■

At what cost?

Unfortunately, we are unable to report the prices of equipment that we tell you about in this publication as this is not permitted under the terms of the Articles for the Blind scheme. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause and will of course, be able to help with advising on the cost of equipment over the telephone. Just call us on 01865 725595. ■■■

I've got petrol in my veins

by Sarah Salcombe

My history into motorsport goes back 30 years, when my dad and uncle took part in local rallies through the Witney Motor Club. They competed in what is now known as the Rally of Great Britain 3 times and the Rally of Catalunya once.

My brother started rallying at the age of 16, firstly co-driving and then driving, and I was his co-driver once, that was enough!

I was devastated when, 4 years ago, I had to give up driving. I have a macular condition called PIC, which I have had for 9 years, but which now affects both eyes. I felt I had lost my independence.

However, I was contacted by a member of VIBNO who said there was a driving day at Brands Hatch two years ago and did anyone want to go, so Paul Bambrook and I attended and had a great time. We drove BMW 1 cars around part of the circuit and it was great to get behind the wheel again.

Then Janet arranged a trip to Gaydon, which was brilliant, we got to go in a Land Rover around their test track and look at and touch a lot of old cars. Just the smell of them brought back old memories.

I then set up the Petrolheads group with the help of Jim Ellison and we had our first outing to Prodrive in Banbury. This was amazing as there are old rally cars that were driven by Colin McRae and my favourite Richard Burns. I managed to get into his car OK, but struggled getting out! ■■■

Petrolheads

A group for the VIP enthusiast of the internal combustion engine!

We have now arranged the following outings:- 7 November – trip to Morgan in Malvern for a factory tour.(TBC)

December – trip to Prodrive for a factory tour. The cost of this is £17 per person. The tours last 3 hours. These are conducted in the evening. We are also hoping to organise trips to Renault and Williams. At the time of writing this these trips have not been confirmed. Please note that it will be necessary for each visually impaired person to bring a carer. For further details please contact me Sarah by e-mail on sarahsalcombe@fsmail.net or telephone 01993 771828. ■■■

Driverless car Update

You may remember that in the last newsletter we reported on a project aiming to produce a driverless car. Now Google has built a car that can drive itself and they have tested it on more than 100,000 miles of public roads. The experiment, which was carried out in San Francisco, was almost incident-free. The sole mishap was when the driverless car was bumped from behind by another vehicle at a traffic light!

Although a driver was present to take control should the need arise, the car was left to drive itself with the help of video cameras mounted on the roof, radar sensors and a laser finder capable of detecting other traffic. As far as we know we are safe from such experiments here at this time. ■■■

Rotating (tactile) cones at traffic light controlled crossings

We are grateful for this article from Tim at Oxfordshire County Council

Where two or more controlled pedestrian crossings are close to each other we are unable to use audible beepers in support of the 'green man' which indicates when it is safe to cross the road. We sometimes get calls from pedestrians who are unaware of tactile cones. We would like to offer this information and target, more widely, those who are likely to use tactile cones.

Almost all traffic signal controlled crossings in Oxfordshire where a beeper cannot be used have a tactile cone fitted. For people who don't know about tactile cones, they are about the size and shape of a thimble and located on the underside of push button boxes. Once you have pressed the button to call the pedestrian phase, just slide your hand across the underneath of the push button box where you will find the cone. Hold it lightly. When the traffic has been shown a red light, and the steady green man is showing, the cone will rotate gently for the same period that a beeper would have operated. It is, of course, important to remember that cars may still be on the crossing if there are queues. You should use whatever means you have available to try and check that vehicles have stopped and your way is clear.

We recognise that green men lights, beepers and tactile cones are desirable at all controlled crossings to ensure that as many people as possible can use them. >>>

Every crossing installed since April 2001 will automatically have tactile cones fitted even where beepers are in use. Older sites generally have tactile cones fitted as part of the County Council's rolling programme of refurbishment.

It will be some years before all sites offer all features due primarily to the cost of refurbishment and the number of updates necessary. There is however some flexibility. Anyone who has difficulty making regular use of a particular controlled crossing which has beepers but no tactile device is invited to contact us and ask for that crossing to be improved. We will do our best to have these sites updated quickly. To discuss this or to make other enquiries about using traffic light controlled crossings, please contact: Tim Atkinson at the Traffic Signal Team 01865 815096 ■■■

A potted history of spectacles!

There had been an awareness of lenses for centuries before the first spectacles were invented and Salvino D'Armato is credited with inventing the first wearable eye glasses in Italy in 1284, (although there is no evidence he did). There is documented evidence of their existence in 1289. In the early 1700s an optician in London, Edward Scarlett, added arms that hooked behind the ears. About 100 years later, Benjamin Franklin, invented bifocals. ■■■

Get-together for carers

Are you caring for or giving support to a person who has a visual impairment?

Or are you a visually impaired person who is a carer? If so would you like to come along to a Carers' get-together? The Community Development Team of the County Council are hosting a morning, with the help of OAB, for carers to meet together to share their experiences and learn about what is available to support them in their vital role. The

meeting will be at the Abingdon Resource Centre, Audlett Drive, Abingdon, OX14 3GD, from 10am to midday on 9th December. Refreshments will be at hand. Transport may be available. To find out more about the event or to discuss transport please contact us on 01865 725595. We look forward to meeting you! ■■■

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

VIVA

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

Nov 9th 10.30am A visit to the Ashmolean museum.

Dec 14th Christmas lunch at Common Leys Farm

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

Dreaming Spires Tenpin Bowling

As I write we are in the final weeks of the Summer league and all 3 teams are in contention to qualify for the Summer finals in Swindon in November, but all teams have some hard games left to go. Good Luck to all! We play at the Bowl Plex in Oxford near the Kassam Stadium and anyone who wants to come along and have some fun will be more than welcome. For more information about playing ten pin bowling please can you contact Kevin Pamphilon. club captain. Phone 01869 331778. ■■■

Look out for a grand day!

Look Oxfordshire is a locally based support group for parents and carers of visually impaired children that has been running for over a decade. On Sunday 28th November: We are having

Christmas at Paultons Park!: As well as being a very popular theme park with over 50 different rides and attractions including thrilling and gentle rides, there are dinosaurs, play areas, exotic birds and other animals to visit. We will be meeting Father Christmas in his amazing grotto. Tickets will be issued upon request. Park opens from 10am. There are 2 restaurants on site and plenty of space for picnics.

For any further information about prices or booking phone Julie on 01189 722322. ■■■

Wantage Blind Club

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

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 including dining, playing skittles and Aunt Sally and going Greyhound racing. So if you are a VIP aged between 18 and 50 and want to socialise and have fun with people alike come and join us. Partners, friends and family are welcome to all events.

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed a drink and a catch up at the pub in Kidlington. We played skittles at Alvescot and Aunt Sally in Kidlington, which were both lots of fun. We won, we lost and we had lots of fun “at the dogs” when we went Greyhound racing.

We received funding from Oxfordshire Community Foundation from the Grassroots Projects to hire one of the Salter's Steamer boats. In August 32 of us with 3 guide dogs boarded the boat from Folly Bridge to enjoy an afternoon cruising up to Abingdon and back. We all took picnics and enjoyed the good weather we had as well as feeding the ducks!

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

Sharing holiday memories

The organiser of a new website for disabled travellers is appealing to members of the OAB to share their holiday experiences.

The Disabled Holidayer, website (www.thedisabledholidayer.com) has just been launched and now its founder, Oxford man Chris Chown, wants people to log on and submit their holiday reviews.

The website is designed to act as an information exchange – providing hints, tips and reviews on holiday destinations and day trips both in the UK and overseas. It doesn't recommend holidays but, through the reviews, aims to provide the information needed for disabled travellers to decide whether or not a particular destination may meet their needs.

Chris suffers from hemiplegia, a condition which has left him with limited mobility, and says it was a desire to share his own travel experiences with others that gave him his "eureka" moment.

The site is designed within DDA regulations and, to make it easier for visually impaired readers and it has a facility for changing the colours and font sizes.

The website is a not-for-profit venture and all contributors have to do is register online, then send in their review with up to four photos from their trip, plus a short overview (if they wish) of their own disability.

A changing place for you?

Oxford now has a Changing Place toilet in the Shopmobility Unit at the Westgate Car Park in Oxford. It is open between the hours of 8.30am - 6pm.

What are Changing Places Toilets?

People with profound and multiple disabilities often need extra facilities to allow them to use toilets comfortably. Standard disabled toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability – or their carers. Changing Places toilets are different to standard disabled toilets with extra features and more space to meet these needs.

Each Changing Places toilet provides: the right equipment - a height adjustable adult-sized changing bench, a tracking hoist system, or mobile hoist if this is not possible.

Enough space - adequate space in the changing area for the disabled person and up to two carers, a centrally placed toilet with room either side for the carers, a screen or curtain to allow the disabled person and carer some privacy.

A safe and clean environment - wide tear off paper roll to cover the bench, a large waste bin for disposable pads, a non-slip floor.

During the opening hours of Shopmobility (9.00am - 4.30pm) the unit will be open normally. Outside of these hours it will be necessary to obtain a key from the Car Park Office which is next to the Shopmobility Unit, Westgate Car Park, off Norfolk Street, Oxford. Telephone: 01865 248737

Clubs and groups for VIPs in Oxfordshire

Abingdon & District Macular Group

Daphne Baker 01491 835157

Banbury Society for the Visually Impaired

Enid Smith 01295 269568

Carterton Social Club

Rosemary Pierce 01993 841383

Chipping Norton Friends of the Blind

Mary Gregory 01608 810899

Didcot/Wallingford OAB affiliated

Pam Organ 01235 813391

Dorothy Drummond 01235 812614

Faringdon representative

Jean Young 01367 241467

Henley VIP Group

Mike Pooley 01491 628284

Look Oxfordshire Support for families of VI children

Alison Baker 01235 868262

Kidlington Macular Group

Tom Wright 01865 376482

Marita Ferrett 01865 373104

Oxford Macular Group

Daphne Dorman 01993 811084

Oxford Visually Impaired Club

Mary Gregory 01608 810899

'Oxpots' Pottery Class

Christopher Barry 01608 730407

Thame and District Society for the Visually Handicapped

Norman Lilley 01844 261041

Visually Impaired But Not Old!

Nicola & Kevin Pamphilon 01869 331778

VIVA, North Oxford

Liaison Officer, Ron Sears 01865 553063

Wantage Blind Social Club

Mrs Mary Greenfield 01235 764646
Secretary Hazel Aldred 01235 765849

Witney Area Visually Impaired Group

Mandy Bishop 01993 706824

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

Oxfordshire Social Services Sensory Impairment Team

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

Sensory Impairment Teams,

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

Telephone 01865 894935

VI Team

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

Senior

Elizabeth Agar
Manager
John Fearn-Webster

Out of hours social services, emergency freephone 0800 833408.