



Oxfordshire

Association for the Blind

Newsletter

May
2015

Farewells and Hellos

There are a few big changes to report at OAB. We're very sad that our marvellous Administrator, Sarah Milrose, is moving on. She and her husband have an exciting opportunity to set up a new home in Ireland. We thank Sarah for all that she has done for us and wish her and her husband every success in their new life. We're pleased, however, that we have the ideal replacement. Gail Webb is joining us. Gail has lots of administration experience and we're sure that she is going to fit in very well to the team.

We're also sorry that our excellent Treasurer, Amanda Tilley, has departed due to the extra demands of her new job. We thank Amanda for all that she has done for us, not least of which was taking part in the gruelling Oxford Half Marathon

to raise much needed funds for us! Fortunately, our new Treasurer, George Little, is also a skilled Accountant and has already volunteered to do equally athletic fundraising for us. It's impressive the lengths to which our Trustees will go to support our work!

Also, sadly, our much valued Trustee, Sean Rainey, is departing, due to other commitments. Sean will still be supporting us "from the sidelines" as it were and we're delighted that Sean's wife, Yvonne, has become a Trustee, in Sean's place. Yvonne brings with her experience of the world of visual impairment and also the important realm of fundraising.

Once again, I'm pleased to report that OAB are working

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The Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

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Opening hours 9.00am - 4.00pm weekdays

Chair : David Warr; **Vice-chair** : Adrian Hill; **Treasurer** : George Little;

Director : Colin Cure; **Client Services Manager** : Mark Upton;

Administrator : Gail Webb; **Accounts** : Michael Ling;

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

Senior Sight Advisor : Judith Wood; **Volunteer Co-ordinator** : Caroline Ludden;

Fundraiser : Rebecca Benney; **Advice Worker** : Angela Howard;

Development Worker : Ana Novakovic;

Your Newsletter is compiled and edited by David Thompson

We are extremely grateful to Neil Stockton at Radio Cherwell

for his assistance in producing the audio edition of this Newsletter



Director's Article

in partnership with a variety of other agencies for the benefit of sight impaired people. For example, the Oxford Talking Newspaper, OxTalk, are currently preparing to run their much enjoyed service from our Resource Centre. If you live in Oxford and you don't already subscribe to their talking news, then do give us a call and we'll pass on your details. We also recently linked with the local optometrists group, the Local Optometric Committee, and the Macular Society, to run a training course for optometrists about reading techniques for people with peripheral vision, Low Vision Services and the work of OAB. It was great to share ideas and information about how we can assist sight impaired people. Of course, we showed the optometrists all the latest special equipment that we have in our Resource Centre. If you would like to come and try out the equipment for yourself, please do get in touch. We can make an appointment for you and advise on transport if you require. ■■■

Information Day in Wantage

I am pleased to say that we had another successful day running our last OAB information day at Witney Library in March. Thank you to all of you who came to see us and to the library staff for being so welcoming and helpful.

Our next stop will be Wantage Library, Stirlings Way, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 7BB on Wednesday 24th June 2015 from 10.30am until 2pm.

If you, or someone you know, has difficulty with their sight, why not come along and talk with one of our representatives who has expertise in special equipment and services.

We will bring a small selection of special equipment and will be pleased to meet you. For further information please contact Angela Howard on 01865 725595. ■■■

Come and join us

Don't forget you can show your support for us by joining our membership scheme. For more information call us on 01865 725595. ■■■

Tribute to Katherine (Katy) Talati

It is with much sadness that I report the passing of our dear friend and supporter, Katy Talati. Those of us who were lucky enough to know Katy were enchanted by her delightful personality and fascinated by her amazing life. Born in Peking, Katy was a talented painter of Chinese landscapes and mythology and her works were exhibited at several British museums.

As the Guardian newspaper said: "She was taught to view the world through "Chinese eyes" by her beloved teacher, Prince Pu Quan, as a young woman growing up in Beijing (then Peking) in the 1930s and 40s. He was a leading classical landscape painter, and a great-grandson of the 19th-century emperor Daoguang and cousin of the last emperor, Pu Yi.

Katherine came from a wealthy Indian Parsee background and had strong ties to Britain. Her parents had earlier moved to Beijing..... She grew up in a privileged home in the Legation Quarter, next to the Tartar City wall and attended the Peking American School, while also privately studying painting with Pu Quan. He taught her not only the techniques of the Chinese arts, but also formed

her philosophy and outlook on life. After the Japanese occupation, Katherine was imprisoned in Weihsien internment camp The civil war that resumed after the end of hostilities, and growing social and political instability, led to the family's departure from China. Katherine left for London in 1948, at the age of 26, to return only once to the country of her birth, for a brief visit in 2002."

Katy worked until retirement in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. With her great respect for her old teacher, she managed, in 2004, to encourage a major retrospective of Pu Quan's work at the Ashmolean Museum.

In later life, Katy's sight unfortunately deteriorated, but she maintained a strong sense of independence, with which we were keen to assist her. In return, Katy has been very kind to OAB, leaving a generous gift in her Will, helping us to continue to provide our services to others with sight loss. Katy was always great company: her intellect and good humour made the time pass very quickly. We will miss her very much. Colin Cure. ■■■

Meet the team: Caroline Ludden

Shortly after moving to Oxford two years ago, I started working at OAB as Volunteer Coordinator / Fundraiser, following in the mighty footsteps of my predecessor Ana Novakovic, now Development Worker at OAB. I've now well and truly settled into the OAB family, which became clear yesterday when I found myself talking to my new spider plant (named Primrose). This was kindly donated by one of our clients, Yvonne, who assures me that it's indestructible. Famous last words. Part of my time is spent travelling

around Oxford, Abingdon and Kidlington meeting OAB clients and volunteers, organising home visiting and computer support volunteers. This involves making sure that volunteers are trained, safe and comfortable in their role, whilst OAB clients are happy with the services we provide. Driving around Oxfordshire has been a bit of a baptism by fire, as I passed my test just after joining the team, and then spent many hours following a Sat Nav around country lanes, which in my opinion took quite a lackadaisical approach *continued overleaf >>>*



to delivering me in the right direction.

Now nearly two years in, I've started a new volunteer community fundraising group, who already have many fantastic ideas for raising funds for OAB and awareness of our services. This group is led by volunteers with my support, so their ideas will ultimately dictate its direction and success. After only one meeting they've already secured raffle prizes from Waitrose and plans are afoot for a fundraising and awareness day at Heyford Hill Sainsbury's on the 8th May. Watch out for updates of their work on Facebook and in upcoming additions of the newsletter.

Last but not least I'm also a fundraiser for OAB, joining the OAB fundraising team, which includes Colin Cure and Rebecca Benney. We regularly complete funding bids to trusts, organise events and appeals. See more details of our latest activities in the fundraising section of the newsletter.

If you are interested in any of the projects mentioned please feel free to call me at OAB on 01865 725595 or email me at volunteers@oxeyes.org.uk ■■■

ActivEyes

ActivEyes are back! We are now meeting at The Royal Blenheim pub in Oxford on the 3rd Thursday of the month. Our next meeting is 21st May at 7.30. A programme of activities will be coming soon. Contact Guy Lawful on 01865 725595. ■■■

Can you help?

Can you help Hanoria Baranovich write a book on visual impairment? She is looking for anecdotes from visually impaired people around the UK on living with a visual impairment. You can contact her on annibags1@msn.com or 01706 878052 to find out more. ■■■

Saturday Morning Opening

Our Resource Centre will be open to visitors on Saturday 30th May from 9.30am to 12.30pm. We will have our experts on hand to show you around the equipment and explain what services are available. To book an appointment please call us on 01865 725595. ■■■

Mel's Story



In April it will be two years since I lost all of my sight... overnight! Anybody reading this will know how debilitating and heartbreaking sight loss can be, for both the afflicted and the people close to them. So I thought it would be nice to write about some of the good things I've experienced since losing my sight.

Truly, the loss restored my faith in human kindness. It opened my heart to the depth of my family's love, how caring friends can be, and introduced me to some very special people working in our hospitals. I tried to ignore my blinded eyes, as I focused

on rebuilding my strength. I can't believe it now, but I was very ill. I couldn't move my head let alone get out of bed! After some pretty intense physiotherapy I eventually made it back onto my feet! It was only after I finished treatment for a tumour that I realised this blindness thing was permanent. I desperately needed to talk to somebody. I found her in the OAB. I will be forever grateful for the time spent talking with Judith. She understood exactly how I felt, offered a sympathetic ear whilst also sharing practical advice about living day to day with no sight. I hope she

7 *continued overleaf >>>*

knows how much I admire and care about her.

In February I travelled to Norfolk to take part in various activities with other visually impaired young adults. We went biking, canoeing, climbing, swung between trees and navigated a terrifying high rope course. The most challenging and rewarding moment for me came in the cave! It involved clambering under, over and through some very tight spaces! I was head first into a tunnel so shallow I was crawling through completely flat on my stomach. It was strenuous and I panicked. But there was no escape. The only option was to carry on! Luckily adrenaline kicked in, as I shuffled and shifted through the long tunnel bruising my elbows and knees with every turn. It was a struggle, but so satisfying when I made it! I was reminded of our innate power to persevere through situations that seem insurmountable at the time. The tunnel is a bit like the challenge of losing sight. There is no turning back. There will be moments of panic and pain. But if you stay strong and take one step at a time you'll eventually find your way back into the light.

Mel, 25, Abingdon ■■■

Calling all Bookworms!

We are looking to open another chapter in the story of OAB and set up an audio book club, meeting initially once a month at our Resource Centre in Oxford. If you would be interested in joining in the narrative please call Angela on 01865 725595. ■■■

Time for Cream Tea!

For our next baking session, a little piece of Devon will come to Oxfordshire! We will be making our very own cream tea with scones, cream and jam along with a pot of tea to enjoy it with. It will be held on Tuesday 16th June at 10am until 12pm. If you would like to join in please call us on 01865 725595. ■■■

Client and Carer Advice Day

Are you newly diagnosed and/or do you think you might benefit from some advice and information on coping with the challenges of living with visual impairment? We are holding some advice days for clients and their carers and are compiling a list of attendees. For more information call us on 01865 725595 ■■■

The Sensory Garden in Bury Knowle Park

It might still be cold at times and then sunny at other times but, as I write, it is April and so Spring must be almost here. So 5 members of the Friends of Bury Knowle Park, Headington, met at the Sensory Garden in Bury Knowle Park. The task was to clear the raised flower beds of the Winter weeds, turn over the soil and add compost in preparation for planting the various plants selected by Robert Jacob, Head Gardener at Waterperry Gardens. Bob is the garden artist who creates the picture through the plants he selects and for the Sensory Garden there is the added bonus of many different fragrances. The plants are selected for their different shades of green and leaf textures and once in flower for the added colours of the blooms. As well as Lavenders, Bob has included many herbs and so the area will also smell like a kitchen garden. During the next few weeks the plants will take root, spread and grow and by the Summer there will be plenty of colour and a heavy

fragrance in this area of Bury Knowle Park.

Do go and visit the Sensory Garden, touch the plants, see the bright colours and smell the fragrances. You can sit awhile and enjoy the relaxation of the area.

Just a reminder where the Sensory Garden is located in Bury Knowle Park.

Walk to the Headington Library and stand with your back to Headington, facing the Library and then walk to the right, round the corner of the Library to the side of the Library and up the grass slope. You may begin to smell the fragrances or even hear the builders, who are building new flats where the Park Groundsmen used to keep the grass cutters, tractors and their other tools.

The Friends of Bury Knowle Park look forward to receiving your comments about the Sensory Garden. What would you like to have included next year? Send your comments via OAB.

Margaret A Simpson



Calling all theatre goers...

The Oxford Playhouse has some great audio described performances coming up.

On May 23rd it's Mermaid, a re-working of Hans Christian Andersen's tale by Shared Experience, a company renowned for its bold adaptations of literary classics (not suitable for children under 12).

Then July 18th brings Bernard Shaw's Mrs Warren's Profession to Oxford.

For both these shows, the audio described performance is the Saturday 2.30pm

matinee. Tell the box office you're booking for the audio description and you'll get a reduced price ticket for yourself and a companion. Most audio described shows also offer a free touch tour at 1pm – a fabulous opportunity to go on the stage and experience the set close up. You might even meet an actor or two!

Phone the Oxford Playhouse box office on 01865 305305. You can request an audio brochure by phoning 01865 305399. ■■■

VIP Dance Class

Spin the yarn,
days pass by,
dances weave in and out,
moving us through time.

VIP Dance will feature in Tac-au-Tac's contemporary dance show From a Spinning Wheel at the Pegasus Theatre on 27 June 2015 at 7.30 pm. For ticket bookings and more information about the theatre visit www.pegasustheatre.org.uk/ or phone 01865 812 150

The next VIP Dance Sessions are

21st May, 11th June
and 25th June

Time 3.00pm to 4.30pm.

Venue St Luke's Church Hall,
Canning Crescent,
Oxford, OX1 4XB.

Cost: £5 waged,
£3 unwaged
to include refreshments.

To book call 01865 725595
email : admin@oxeyes.org.uk



Have you the IT skills to help OAB?

We're looking for new volunteers for two projects. In both cases, you need to be a confident and competent user of IT. The projects are:

Computer Support. Volunteers make home visits to people who have started to find it difficult to see their computer screen. A few fairly simple adaptations can make a huge difference and often mean the person you visit will be able to carry on using their computer. A visit usually takes an hour or two.

This project covers all Oxfordshire, so it doesn't matter where you live in the county. Computer Support volunteers usually make just one visit, at a time agreed between the volunteer and the person visited, which can include weekends and evenings. So this role might suit if you work full-time during the week. You need an understanding of how a computer works, but are not expected to make fundamental changes.

IT Training. Volunteers work one-to-one with people who need help. This could be

with a computer, tablet or smartphone, and at any level – from people who are beginners to experienced users whose needs are changing with their vision. The training takes place at OAB in Oxford.

Volunteers for this project need to be available on a weekday – any day, for at least two hours – and within reach of OAB (Abingdon Road, near Redbridge Park & Ride). We're looking for regular, confident users of IT rather than experts - though people with more advanced knowledge are very welcome. You also need patience and good communication skills.

For all our volunteers, we reimburse travel expenses and provide training. For IT trainers, this may include training in specialist software. We also have regular get-togethers, usually a combination of training and social, of volunteers from both projects. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact Caroline Ludden or Ana Novakovic on 01865 725595.



Can we be your charity of the year?

Do you work for an Oxfordshire based company, school or college or are you a member of a sports or leisure club, or a social club? If so why not consider nominating OAB to be your Charity of the Year?

Often, companies ask employees or members to suggest a charity to support. Perhaps you could ask friends or family members to consider putting our name forward at the place where they work?

Many organisations now aim to support a Charity of the Year. It is a fantastic way not only to raise funds for OAB, but also provides a great opportunity to raise awareness about us and our work to a wider audience.

In January, pupils at Rye St Antony School selected OAB to be their charity for the term. Following a special assembly at which one of our Trustees talked to the whole school about the work of OAB, the pupils organised a fundraising day in March, and designed a number of events including a blindfold obstacle race. They raised £278. They also held a display of information about sight loss and advice for

looking after your eyes.

On 26th February the Oxford Bus Company presented a cheque for £500 to OAB as a donation of unclaimed passenger change. Over the year all unclaimed passenger



change is put into a special account and then Bus Company staff are encouraged to vote on which local charities will receive a proportion of the funds. Oxfordshire Association for the Blind were once again selected to receive a donation.

Our thanks go to the Oxford Bus Company and their staff for voting for us.



Reading Run

Thanks to everyone who has helped to fundraise for OAB over the past few months – your support is much appreciated. In March, Jess Brown, part of the Social Services Visual Impairment Team, ran the Reading Half Marathon for OAB and raised £300! ■■■

Tough Challenge

OAB Treasurer George Little and Aman Sembi ran Tough Mudder on May 2nd for Oxfordshire Association for the Blind. This extreme challenge, originally designed by the marines, involved running a 13 mile course and negotiating 30 obstacles, including being electrocuted and swimming under ice cold water to name a few. Neither George nor Aman had ever run anything close to this distance, not to mention the 30 obstacles in the way! All the funds they raised will be donated to OAB. You can still visit their Justgiving page at <https://www.justgiving.com/littlesembi> to find out more and pledge your support. ■■■

Get them before they're gone

We still have some large print diaries and wall calendars in stock. However numbers are dwindling so we would advise you get yours soon! For more information or to order call us at OAB on 01865 725595. ■■■

Bike Oxford

On Sunday 13th September the Bike Oxford event will take place with three cycle routes around Oxfordshire. OAB will be organising a team to take part or you or your friends or family may wish to take part separately. Participants enter themselves in the event and then raise sponsorship for OAB. If people raise £100 or more in sponsorship then we will refund their entry fee (between £16 and £33) depending on the length of the ride.

We will provide fundraising support and OAB T-shirts to all who take part for our charity. We ask that people visit www.bikeoxford.co.uk to book their place and then contact us on 01865 725595 or email fundraising@oxeyes.org.uk with your details and we will add you to our team list. ■■■

Faster internet

We are grateful to South Oxfordshire District Council for this edited article from their Outlook magazine ■■■

The Better Broadband for Oxfordshire partnership, has received a £5.1million boost to enable more than 30,000 premises across the county to have access to high-speed fibre broadband. This includes £1 million from South Oxfordshire District Council to help increase the numbers of premises able to access high-speed fibre broadband to 95 per cent. For more information visit.....

betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk ■■■

For Sale

A Hammond electric organ, good working order. For more information contact 01865 875297. ■■■

VIBNO

VIBNO (which stands for Visually Impaired But Not Old) is a group for people aged 18 - 50 to meet socially and have fun.

For more information about VIBNO please contact Nicola Pamphilon 01869 331778 or e-mail flashnp@aol.com ■■■

Dreaming Spires Tenpin Bowling

Late last year we held our Jonathan Mitchell, Memorial Tournament, (who was one of our founder members), won by Paul Bambrook. We have qualified for the BBS trios' final in Sheffield in May where we will play against the other top teams from all over Great Britain. Why not come along and play a great team sport and have some fun, we are a friendly team and a warm welcome will be given to you. All levels of bowlers are welcome.

Contact Kevin Pamphilon club captain Phone 01869331778. ■■■

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



Listening Learning Leading



Oxfordshire Community Foundation
Local people helping local people

supported by

www.oxford.gov.uk



Clubs and groups for VIPs in Oxfordshire

Abingdon & District Macular Group

Eleanor Dangerfield
01235 531857

Banbury Macular Group

John Critchlow 01608 685293

Banbury Society for the Visually Impaired

Enid Smith 01295 269568

Carterton Visual Impairment Group

Rosemary Pearse 01993 841383

Chipping Norton Friends of the Blind

Mary Gregory 01608 810899

Didcot/Wallingford

Pam Organ 01235 813391

Goring Macular Group

OAB 01865 725595

Henley VIP Group

Mike Pooley 01491 628284

Look Oxfordshire Support for families of VI children

Julie Hinton 01189 722322

Kidlington Macular Group

Tom Wright 01865 376482
Marita Ferrett 01865 373104

Oxford Macular Group

Daphne Dorman 01993 811084

Oxfordshire Retinitis Pigmentosa Group

Peter Jackson 01865 873246

“OXVIC” Oxford Visually Impaired Club

OAB 01865 725595

“Oxpots” Pottery Class

Angie 01865 373251

Thame and District Society for the Visually Handicapped

Jean Mander 01844 212983

“VIBNO” Visually Impaired But Not Old!

Nicola & Kevin
Pamphilon 01869 331778

“VIVA”, North Oxford

Liaison Officer
Ron Sears 01865 553063

Wantage Blind Social Club

Mary Greenfield 01235 764646
Secretary
Hazel Aldred 01235 765849

Witney Area Day Centre (Mon -Fri)

Lynne Pratley 01993 706824

Oxfordshire Social and Community Services Sensory Impairment Team

A countywide team of specially trained staff supporting people of all ages affected by sensory impairment

Manager Neelam Ahmed

Visual Impairment Team

Beverley Downs
Kate Laybourne
Meg Jones
Serena Glister
Sue Miles
Jessica Brown

Senior
Elizabeth Agar

Telephone 01865 894935

visual.impairment@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Hearing Impairment Team

Zelda Yarker, Catherine Thurbin,
Ben Smith
Rebecca Nolan,
Mark Cove

Telephone 01865 894925
SMS - 07713329501

Sensory Impairment Team
Abbey House
2nd Floor
Abbey Close
Abingdon
OX14 3JD

Out of hours social services, emergency freephone 0800 833408



Carers Oxfordshire

A service for all carers



To make it easier for Carers to access support

To listen to Carers' needs

To give information, advice and support to Carers

Please telephone 0845 0507666
Or email carersoxfordshire@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Or go to www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk

